THE DIDACHE AND THE DOMESTICATION OF DISSIDENTS

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Religious Studies and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date Defended: 11/9/2013

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Date approved: 11/9/2013

ABSTRACT

The Didache has often figured prominently in scholars' constructions of early Christianity, especially with regard to two groups: the nascent positions of the overseers (ἐπίσκοποι) and agents (διάκονοι) in one, and the prophets (προφήται), apostles (ἀπόστολοι), and teachers (διδάσκαλοι) in the other. While many scholars portray these figures on relatively peaceful terms, this work argues that the relationship between these two groups is characterized by antagonism and conflict. This conflict is based upon a struggle to control prophecy and teaching, thus ultimately being a contest to create doctrine. This early Christian quarrel was not settled by dialogue, debate, or democracy, but by the control of material goods to influence who would be allowed to teach, supporting only certain teachings and prophecies. Early Christian doctrine and ideology can therefore be seen as a product of material manipulation, subject to the constraints of physical and historical pressures that condition all human thought.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is dedicated to Elizabeth.

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Introduction

The Didache is a text that occupies an important position in scholars' knowledge and interpretation of nascent Christianity, especially with regard to the emergence of ecclesiastical structure and authority. In addition, the text is noteworthy for the passages in it which describes the personalities of prophets, apostles, and teachers – that is, charismatics – each of which is dealt with in a way that makes it apparent that these persons were in conflict with another group that is explicitly mentioned in the text, the overseers and agents (often translated by other scholars as "bishops" and "deacons," respectively). These two social groups – one representing the extempore and spontaneous act of prophesying, preaching, and teaching, the other standing for the institutional and liturgical maintenance of everyday life – have been cast in several different ways by numerous scholars, but each scholarly hypothetical reconstruction of the historical circumstances surrounding the Didache is wanting in some regard. It is to this end that this paper seeks to construct a synthesized hypothesis concerning the identity of the apostles, prophets, and teachers in the Didache, as well as argue for a relationship with the overseers and agents that is characterized by antagonism and a conflict over authority. Three points will be argued, each of which underlies and supports the others: first, that the terminological and categorical debate surrounding the identities of the apostles, prophets, and teachers can be analytically resolved by understanding the *function* of their common social position[1] and authority in relation to the social position and authority of overseers and agents; second, that the conflict in the Didache does not concern the abuse of hospitality by itinerant charismatics but

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[1] This shared social position will be described and analyzed herein, and it will be demonstrated that these persons inhabit a social space that is quite similar for all three personalities, enabling the use of the Weberian classification of them as "charismatics."

rather is about the authority to interpret scripture and tradition; and third, that the regulations on hospitality and standards of evaluation set for the charismatics in the *Didache* are not set to protect against abuses by itinerant persons, but rather in order to control what teachings and prophecies are conveyed by charismatics by controlling which prophets, apostles, and teachers would receive material support.

Manuscript History, Provenance, and Date

The Didache is a text that has a short but rather fascinating manuscript history. Prior to 1883 the text was virtually unknown, save for Eusebius's mention of it.[2] He includes it among works that are "spurious," and although it is not relegated to his group of heretical works, it is set apart from what he considers to be genuine texts of proper theological orientation. Rediscovered by Archbishop Bryennios in the monastery of the Holy Sepulchre in Istanbul, the Didache was contained inside a large manuscript collection that also held the Epistle of Barnabas, 1 and 2 Clement, and twelve letters of Ignatius.[3] The codex in which it was contained also held a text of Pseudo-Chrysostom, a letter of Maria of Cassoboloi to Ignatius, and an explanation of Jesus's geneaology.[4] Amongst all of these disparate writings it is not difficult to understand how scholars who visited the monastery in 1845, 1856, and 1876 overlooked the Didache; in fact, Bryennios himself only took notice of the codex for its old copy of the Epistle of Barnabas, and

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[2] *Hist. Eccl.*, III.25
[3] Draper (2010), 7.
[4] Milavec *Faith, Hope*, 4.

when he initially published his copy of Barnabas in 1875 he included the titles of all of the works in the codex, but still no one paid any attention to the Didache.[5]

Finally in 1883 the text of the Didache was published by Bryennios, and it immediately caught the attention of scholars in the West.[6] The manuscript itself is held within the Greek Orthodox Library in Jerusalem, and has been given the number H54. It is meticulously copied and dated to June 11, 1056 CE.[7] Written in Greek, it is the only complete manuscript of the Didache known; other fragmentary texts exist, such as *Oxy. P 1782*, as well as larger sections preserved in Coptic and Ethiopic.[8] Variants in readings do exist between these different copies, and as the Coptic and Ethiopic texts can be approximately dated to the 4th century CE, they may preserve an earlier tradition.[9] Despite the lack of hard evidence for dating, based upon redaction-critical analysis and ideological content most scholars now date the original composition of the Didache to the middle or late first century CE.[10]

Just as with its date, many scholars have argued for a location for the composition of the Didache, yet there is – as with many ancient texts – no direct evidence for an exact place of

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[5] Ibid.

[6] As a side note, prior to this the text of the "Two Ways," an extremely important section of the Didache, was known through the *Ecclesiastical Canons of the Holy Apostles* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*. In 1882 – a year before the publication of the Didache – the German scholar Adam Krawutzeky, employing the newly developed techniques of textual criticism, attempted to reconstruct the source he speculated was at the foundation of the "Two Ways" tradition from these two sources. What he ended up reconstructing was almost the entire first half of the text of the Didache. His hypothetical reconstruction was compared with the text of the Didache after its publication, and to the amazement of all it was extremely accurate. For more on this see Milavec *Faith, Hope*, 4-5.

[7] Draper (2010), 7.

[8] A good treatment of the Coptic text has been done by several scholars, but the more recent work done by Jones and Mirecki is quite thorough, especially in regard to scribal activity and with consideration of the actual nature of the manuscript. See also Draper (2010), 7, for information on the Ethiopic text.

[9] Ibid., 8. Jones and Mirecki, 47, declare that the Coptic text of the Didache (*BLOM 9271*) is the oldest preserved text of its section, and indeed perhaps of any text of the Didache.

[10] This is, of course, contingent upon the accompanying hypotheses of redaction which many scholars hold regarding the Didache. See van de Sandt and Flusser, 48-52, for a more detailed overview of the question of date and location.

origin. Some have argued that it was composed in Egypt,[11] but most scholars now argue for Syria as a general location, some postulating Antioch more specifically.[12] A compositional setting of Antioch would seem logical, a location of some consternation and conflict in the early church, and this would also accord well with the general tone of the Didache and especially with the sections being considered in this paper.[13] As far as authorship is concerned, few have ventured any hypotheses that attempt to discern the identity of the author(s); most commentators have taken to describing the author/compiler as the "Didachist," a simple way of denoting whoever decided to create the text we now possess.[14] This is how the author(s) will be described herein.

Why the Didachist composed this text is an issue of great import. Scholars have weighed in on this topic with immense force: many argue that the text is a composite history of redactional stages and layers,[15] and thus each layer or division (discerned – or perhaps more accurately, created – by the scholars themselves) is said to betray the impetus for the editorial work; others maintain the holistic or textual unity of the work,[16] and see the author's purpose as obviously quite varied, but still focused in its attempts to address what are seen to be issues of concern in the community which produced it. While the original intention of the author cannot be precisely known, the passages of the text itself are quite explicit on many issues, giving commands and handing down regulations for rituals, prayers, fasting, moralistic-purity concerns,

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[11] Harnack was the first to propose this, and since his writing on the text was the first influential work in history, the thesis stuck. Some authors in the mid 20th century agreed with this idea (see Rordorf and Tuilier, 97), but most now agree that Syria is a more likely location.

[12] Draper (1996) is the most adamant on this point, but others have posited Antioch to be the most likely location for the composition of the Didache, with the text of Matthew figuring prominently in most arguments for this. See Del Verme, 190-198; Jefford (1989), 128.

[13] For more on Antioch and its significance in early Christianity's development, see Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, especially pp. 129-164, 185-202, 210-215.

[14] This title is used often in modern scholarship on the Didache. It is employed by nearly all schools of thought (de Halleux, Niederwimmer, Draper, Jefford, etc.), and thus crosses ideological boundaries. Therefore it will be used herein to refer to the original composer of the Didache.

[15] For the more developed analyses on this point, see Draper (1995); Garrow, 11; Niedewimmer (1998).

[16] De Halleux, 302; Milavec *Faith, Hope*, xii.

and other behaviors. These edicts would not have been issued whimsically, and so one may assume that these rules have some rational foundation at their base – a sound historical assumption that is followed by every scholar analyzing the Didache. Scholars have debated the meaning and purpose of many passages and sections in the Didache, but the last few chapters have provided the most controversial fodder for scholarly debate; these are chapters 11-13 and 15, dealing with the regulations pertaining to the prophets, apostles, and teachers, and the position of the overseers and agents. Though there are numerous works that attempt to address the reasons for why this section was composed, consensus seems beyond any manner of reach. The question of why these charismatic personalities are dealt with as they are in the Didache has been given a myriad of divergent answers, and while most satisfy the question in some way, it seems that there is always a detail or aspect that is missing in the account of how and why the Didache treats charismatics as it does. It is to this question this paper seeks to provide a new and synthetic answer.[17]

Before introducing the primary characters of the Didache and developing an argument for understanding their role in early Christianity, it is important to note that the Didache is still a relatively unknown and considerably isolated text; "relatively unknown" meaning it is obscure in relation to popular knowledge of other major Christian texts, and "isolated" meaning that, as explained above, it has few explicit links to other texts with regard to geographical location, precise ideology, or date. However, this writing – like all other historical texts – can not and should not be analyzed in isolation; comparative evidence from antiquity should and must be

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[17] Synthetic in several ways: as Kurt Niederwimmer (1996) has declared, "That all assertions about the *Didache* bear merely hypothetical character, in view of the condition of our *Didache* tradition, has rightly been emphasized time and again." (322). Thus any assertion about the Didache is at the outset simply an historical attempt at hypothesizing, and comes to the fore perhaps more so than in consideration of other texts. But more importantly, the thesis of the current work seeks to *synthesize* the best hypotheses of Didache scholarship concerning the identity of the prophets, apostles, and teachers into a coherent and logical framework, while adding original analysis and positing a new thesis concerning control and authority in early Christian communities.

brought in to shed light upon the figures and processes described in the document. A multitude of writings from the 2nd century BCE up through the beginning of the 2nd century CE will therefore be brought to bear upon the Didache in an attempt to understand it in its own historical context.

The Layout of the Text and The Primary Players

The Didache is composed of several sections, each of which deals with a specific topic or theme. It has been divided into 15 chapters by scholars, and these serve to neatly separate the text into categorical units: chapters 1-5 are a very general introduction to the "Two Ways," the primary teaching of the Didache text. These chapters contain vague exhortations toward "the way of life" (ὁδὸς τῆς ζωῆς, Did.1.2) and admonitions to abstain from the "way of death" (ὁδὸς τοῦ θανάτου, Did.5.1), each of which is expanded in several ways.[18] The subsequent chapters of 6-10 are organized thematically; chapter 6 deals with food and the "yoke of the Lord" (τὸν ζυγὸν τοῦ κυρίου); chapter 7 addresses baptism, chapter 8 fasting and prayer, chapter 9 the eucharist ritual, and chapter 10 the prayer to be said after the eucharist meal. The majority of the text is thus a compendium of directions and rules for social behavior, addressing moralistic issues, boundary rituals, food customs and ceremonies, and public speaking rituals.

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[18] The "way of life" is to "love the god having made you," and "the way of death" is "murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries," etc. There are numerous other examples given in the text that expand these ideas, mostly charity and humility for the former, desire and duplicity for the latter. They can be found in Did.1-4, and Did.5, respectively.

Only in the concluding verse of chapter 10 and throughout chapters 11-13 are the prophets (προφήτης), apostles (ἀπόστολος), and teachers (διδάσκων/διδάσκαλος)[19] spoken of explicitly, and it is only in chapter 15 that overseers (ἐπίσκοποι) and agents (διάκονοι) are mentioned. Chapter 11 of the Didache speaks of how to interact with and evaluate prophets and apostles, as well as whether to welcome a teacher or not, depending upon his teaching. Chapter 12 deals with assisting passersby and integrating persons wishing to take up residency in the community; chapter 13 deals with residency and sustenance regulations specifically for prophets and teachers; and chapter 15 orders the appointment of overseers and agents, commanding that they not be despised and listing their qualifications. There is thus is a small but densely populated section of text near the end of the Didache that has as its subject numerous characters, their behavior, and how to behave in relation to them: this will be the primary point of reference for understanding how these figures are regulated and controlled with the text of the Didache, and though much space will be allotted to comparative historical analysis, the Didache will remain the centerpiece of the argument.

The Identity and Classification of Prophets, Apostles, and Teachers

The first issue of import is that of the identity of the prophets, apostles, and teachers. In 11:1-2 of the Didache teachers (διδάσκων) are mentioned explicitly, and the people of the community are ordered to welcome the teacher if he teaches something that "adds to the justice and knowledge of the lord";[20] however, the members of the community are ordered to ignore the

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[19] The participle διδάσκων is used in 11.2, "the one teaching," but the noun διδάσκαλος is employed in 13.2 and 15.1, "teacher."
[20] All translations of the Didache are my own unless otherwise noted.

teacher if he "turns to teaching another teaching in order to destroy." It should be noted that the standards by which the teachers are to be judged are rather open-ended, an important detail which has been overlooked by scholars. This nebulous aspect of institutional evaluation of charismatic teaching occurs again in 11:8, 12:1, and 13:1-2, and will be examined below, but for now it should be noted that there are no guidelines for evaluating the *content* of the teaching save the vague requirements of increasing "the justice and knowledge of the lord."

Next the apostles are spoken of explicitly in 11:3-6, and the prophets are mentioned explicitly in 11:3,7-11; 13, and 15:1-2. One might think that these verses are a simple matter to understand, but whether they originally were or not scholars have turned them into a semantic labyrinth. Initially, the groups seem separate enough, except that in verses 11:5-6 – which deal with methods of evaluating *apostles* – the apostles who behave incorrectly are denounced as "false *prophets*," thus confusing or combining the two. This caused problems for scholars in many ways, but Kurt Niederwimmer proposed a linguistic solution that kept the groups separate while retaining the phrasing: the Greek term for "false apostle" (ψευδαπόστολος) is unknown and unfamiliar to the Didachist, and so he elects to use the term "false prophet" (ψευδοπροφήτης) not only because it is a word familiar from "Old Testament language," but "out of sheer desperation."[21] Thus calling the apostles "false prophets" is a linguistic convention employed by the Didachist for its familiarity. This solution, however, has been shown to be rather hollow: de Halleux has used the "false apostle" terminology of 2 Cor. 11:13 – as well as that of the indirect phrasing of Rev. 2:2 and the term's usage by Justin and Hegesippus – to show that the term "false apostle" was not unknown in the first and early second centuries, and that

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[21] Niederwimmer (1998), 176.

therefore its usage would not have been unfamiliar at all.[22] Thus the phrasing of these passages in the Didache is most likely intentional, but still leaves the question of why the two types are so easily combined by the Didachist.

In the same vein, but in a different fashion, other scholars have maintained that these three groups – prophets, apostles, teachers – are distinct groups who influenced and interacted with the community of the Didache at different times, and therefore the sections of the text dealing with each of them belong to separate redactions. Draper makes a convincing case for this, though he fails to address the issue of the identity of the teachers with much detail in his schema, and essentially equates the teachers with prophets.[23] Garrow, who has by far the most intricately constructed hypothesis of the editorial history of the text, posits at least five separate redactions of the Didache, at least three of them being intended to address the individual groups of prophets, apostles, and teachers one at a time.[24] Following their logic, the three groups are utterly distinct, and this fact made it necessary to edit the Didache when each group was initially dealt with; that is, inherited tradition was compiled in separate redactions in reaction to different groups of charismatics. However, one does not have to venture far in this vein of scholarship to arrive at the conclusion of de Halleux:

> It is not surprising… that the dissections into redactional stages which have been proposed so far often appear very artificial. … The author was certainly not the creator of the traditions that he reports; but interpretation cannot confer on those heterogeneous elements a higher significance than the Didachist conferred on them when he collected them.[25]

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[22] De Halleux, 306-307. 2 Cor. 11:13, "ὅι γὰρ τοιοῦτοι ψευδαπὀστολοι…"; *Dialogue with Trypho*, XXXV.15, "Καὶ Ἀναστήσονται πολλοί ψευδόχριστοι καὶ ψευδοαπόστολοι…"; Hegesippus is quoted in Eusebius *Eccl. Hist.* IV.22.6, "ἀπὸ τούτων ψευδόχριστοι, ψευδοπροφῆται, ψευδαπόστολοι…"

[23] Draper (1995), 290-302. See also Rordorf and Tuilier, 49-62 for another analysis of the proposed redaction.

[24] Garrow, 11; 101-103; 107-110; 114-120.

[25] De Halleux, 302.

Thus, regardless of whether or not the text has several redactional layers, the combination of those layers is the primary object of analysis – as it was brought together by an editor or written for a purpose which most likely addressed a need for the Didache community – and the identity of the groups can no more be ascertained through the vague attempts at discerning editorial layers than it can by dividing the text randomly and guessing at the identities of characters or groups in these random divisions.[26] The text itself need not be divided into sections through the minutiae of semantics in order to understand how these groups were treated and viewed: the language provided reveals a distinct picture of persons who are non-native to the Didache community and are regarded with caution, and it is this fact itself which should be paramount in understanding their position in relation to other figures in the text.

Finally, at the opposite end of the spectrum lies a group of scholars who maintain that the apostles, prophets, and teachers were one and the same. Milavec has made this argument based on semantics of Greek and the use of the article in phrases dealing with both prophets and apostles, and this unitary identity he terms an "apostle-prophet"; that is, he argues that in 11.3 "the presence of the definite article before *apostolon* (τῶν ἀποστὸλων) and the absence of the definite article before *propheton* (προφητῶν)… would normally indicate that the second term is intended to function as an attributive modifier."[27] Likewise, de Halleux has argued against the idea of separate groups, and unites apostles and prophets as one group, again based on linguistic analysis and reformulations of certain passages, especially 11:3.[28] Whether or not this is any

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[26] While I in no way mean to discredit any form of literary or form criticism, after a time it becomes painfully obvious that the "redaction" divisions of the Didache by modern scholars are utterly arbitrary; Garrow's attempt to discern these "redactions" is especially indicative of this. See the quote of Niederwimmer in note 17 for a scholar's direct recognition of the tenuous nature of historical work on the Didache.

[27] Milavec *Faith, Hope*, 438-444.

[28] De Halleux, 307. This analysis is much more grammatically complex than that of Milavec, and as such it is all the more convincing; De Halleux employs comparisons with the grammar of previous verses in the Didache that use an article where the Didachist is describing two distinct persons (7.4; 11.8), as well as additional examples where he

more accurate than the previous hypotheses is might be quite clear at this point; while different evidence is used, the scope of historical data that can be applied to evaluate each claim is the same, and each claim remains equally uncertain, even by historical standards.

Yet this debate about the specific identities of these three groups has been missing the larger and more important point of their shared identity in ancient Mediterranean society. Indeed, to narrow the reconstruction of identity down to their individual personas would be to strive toward naming specific grains of sand when classifying the beach itself is more important for our analysis. What one can take away from this fastidious fiasco, and what all scholars seem to agree upon, is the unequivocal evaluation of the prophets, apostles, and teachers as exceptional personalities with whom the community of the Didache interacted. Indeed, they are even explicitly opposed to what might be the settled leaders of the Didache community, the overseers and agents (15:1-2). As Draper has noted, "prophet and teacher are opposed to bishop and deacon *in a way that indicates the opposition of charismatic to non-charismatic leadership of the community*."[29] Re-describing these prophets, apostles, and teachers as "charismatics" is not without foundation: the popular Weberian model for understanding various types of authority employs "charismatic" as one of its types, and it is this general model which will be followed herein. Weber offers the following definition for "charisma":

> The term 'charisma' will be applied to 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*.[30]

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claims hendiadys is applied in 9.3 and 10.2. Thus in 11.3 De Halleux translates the καί as being "in the explicative sense and not the additive sense: " 'on the subject of apostles who are also prophets…' " (307). He offers a similar grammatical explanation for grouping "prophets" and "teachers" in 13.1-2 (311). See also pp.315-318 in the same volume.

[29] Draper (1995), 302 (emphasis added).

[30] Weber, 241, emphasis added. Weber adds the additional qualification that "charisma can only be 'awakened' and 'tested'; it cannot be 'learned' or 'taught.'" (249).

This sense of exceptional, outlying status is corroborated by the term χάρισμα, found throughout many early Christian texts. Χάρισμα is generally rendered as "grace" or "favor," derived from χάρις, also meaning "grace" but also "gift," "favor done or returned."[31] Χάρισμα is also given as "that which is freely and graciously given," and in early Christian texts often has the special connotation of a gift or ability given to a human through the beneficence of a deity.[32] The shortcomings or antiquated nature of Weber's model aside, even the most incisive critic of his schema will admit that "it turns out that Weber's theory of charismatic legitimation…is at least somewhat useful in understanding the sequence of authority figures discerned through a critically examined sequence of the *Didache*…"[33] Thus, the prophets, apostles, and teachers can be analytically re-described as charismatics, having a special knowledge or exceptional ability in divine matters.

Not only are these three groups (or one group) founded upon charismatic ability, but they stand outside the normal group boundaries that would be drawn in the social milieu of 1st or early 2nd century Syria.[34] While each of them is apparently addressed distinctly, and in several verses each is given explicit mention, all three can be said to exist on the "outside" of the community; that is, none of the three groups is an official part of the community or group of people to whom the Didache is addressed.[35] All three exist apart and are described in terms and phrases that show

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[31] Liddell and Scott, 1978-1979.

[32] Danker, 1081; Liddell and Scott, 1979.

[33] Draper (1999), 45. This chapter by Draper is extremely insightful in its meta-analysis of historical models and their use, and should be read before attempting any analysis employing Weber's model of "charismatic" authority or Harnack's itinerancy model.

[34] Draper (1995), 284-290.

[35] This has of course been noted by many scholars, but most distinctly by Draper (1995) 286-287, who employs concepts of group identity to analyze the textual framework and phrasing of the Didache. Of course, chapter 13 shows that they could become part of the community, and most likely did, but their exceptional status as a resident was still retained in some manner due to their reception of the "first-fruits."

them to not be included within the official, mundane, day-to-day community of the Didache; it is for this reason that they should all more appropriately be called "charismatics," as their social position and function depended heavily upon unofficial personal dynamics of interaction.[36] For example, receiving the "firstfruits" was not a common gift given to the larger populace (13.3,6), nor was speaking "in the spirit" a mundane activity engaged in by common people (11.7-9). Indeed, being able to do things "for the earthly mystery of the community" and to be placed beyond judgment was surely not a common situation (11.11), and so it becomes clear that these persons are of exceptional status and social position in the Didache.

Thus, while there are three titles given to these persons, they all share the position and function of standing outside – and perhaps at times against – an already formed group of social leadership, that of the "overseers and agents." Conceiving of them as potentially separate groups who shared a common social position in relation to institutional authority is the synthesized position offered here, a compromise between the two positions commonly taken, and a useful analytic identity that can help one understand how all three groups *functioned* – and thus exercised authority – in a different way than the institutional authorities of the overseers and agents mentioned in 15:1-2. The authority of the apostles, prophets, and teachers is derived from personal charisma, and their actions are founded in this charismatic authority.

It is essential to understand the debate surrounding the identities of the prophets, apostles, and teachers in order to comprehend the various arguments that have been woven around these postulations; that is, each scholar has argued for a certain understanding of just who a prophet or apostle was, and this in turn drastically affects their interpretation of the relations between the

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[36] Niederwimmer (1996) emphasizes the personal dynamic carried by these charismatics, which would have been massively influential within the community of the Didache. Moreover, if they engaged in prophetic activity, their behavior and actions would carry even more influence. For more on the personal dynamics of the charismatics and prophetic activity, see Aune, 203-216; Boring (1991) 83-93; Chadwick, 87-88; Draper (1995) 290-295; Milavec, *The Didache*, 72; Rordorf and Tuilier, 56.

community (institutional authority) and these apostles, prophets, and teachers (charismatics). Most scholars, however, are in agreement about the status and position of the second group mentioned in the Didache, the overseers and agents. While this near unanimity of opinion is relatively accurate and useful in historical analysis, there are a few pieces missing in the schema of relations between these persons and their charismatic counterparts, and a re-evaluation of these two authority figures and their role in the Didache will yield further insight into how authority was manipulated in early Christian groups.

The Position of Overseers and Agents

Spoken of in Did. 15:1-2, overseers and agents, ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι, are prominent figures in much of early Christian writing. The term "bishop" is a later adaptation of ἐπίσκοπος, which actually means "overseer" or "examiner," denoting one who has charge of people, resources, or a process; that is, one who exercises oversight or management in one or many capacities.[37] The etymological derivation from the verbs ἐπισκέπτομαι and especially ἐπισκοπέω are significant: both convey the meanings of "to look upon or after, to inspect or examine, to oversee."[38] Ἐπίσκοπος has also been translated variously as "curator," "guardian," and "superintendent"; the word had a similar comprehensive sense from Homer[39] down through the first few centuries CE as one who oversees, watches, controls, and enforces rules or

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[37] Campbell, 124.
[38] Thayer, 242.
[39] *Iliad*, 22.255: here, Hector invokes the gods as μάρτυροι και ἐπίσκοποι of their pact, "witnesses and watchers/guardians"; *Odyssey*, 8.163, Euryalus taunts Odysseus in this passage, proclaiming him to appear nothing more than a sailor and an ἐπίσκοπος ("guardian" or "manager") of merchandise, being φόρτου τε μνήμων and κερδέων θ᾽ ἁρπαλέων. The sense of management and enforcement in the first example should not be overlooked, nor should the explicit economic concerns and involvement of the second example.

expectations.[40] Indeed, it has been variously glossed as "supervisor," "inspector,"[41] and "one who has the responsibility of safeguarding or seeing to it that something is done in the correct way."[42] In the plural, the term ἐπίσκοποι was generally "given to men who had a responsible position in the state,"[43] as someone controlling finances, contracts, political treaties, or other practical business:

> The title was given to officials… sent from Athens to dependent states to ensure order or to fix their constitutions. In Rhodes they are mentioned together with councilors, treasurers, secretaries and military strategists… Syrian records use the title for members of a committee of control for a building or a board of trustees.[44]

An ἐπίσκοπος was not normally associated with any explicitly "religious" function or ministry, at least not until perhaps a century later in Christian history.[45] In view of this, and with the previous demonstration of the term's official and salient connotations of power and social influence, the term ἐπίσκοπος will be translated as "overseer" in this work, as it more accurately conveys the activities and titular function of the ἐπίσκοπος while avoiding the potentially anachronistic associations of the English word "bishop."

A term closely associated with ἐπίσκοπος is πρεσβύτερος, "elder" or "old man." To properly understand ἐπίσκοπος and its associated functions, an analysis of the intimately linked πρεσβύτερος will be given to demonstrate how these terms are related. Generally employed to refer to someone more aged and bearing a greater status in society, [46] a πρεσβύτερος was a figure

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[40] Thayer, 243.
[41] Liddell and Scott, Vol. 1, 657.
[42] Danker, 379.
[43] Brown, C. Vol. 1, 189.
[44] Ibid., quoted in Milvaec, *Faith*, 584.
[45] Milavec, *Faith*, 584.
[46] For the argument against the idea that greater age was indicative of lessened authority and influence in antiquity, see Campbell, 1-95. Consider also the etymological association with πρέσβυς, "old man" or "elder," but also in adjectival contexts "more or most important, taking precedence, higher." See Liddell and Scott, 1462 for further

of authority and great influence within early Christianity, as represented by their prominence in the decision-making processes concerning doctrine, distribution of goods and resources, and other issues (Acts 6:1-7; 14:23; 15:1-29; 16:4). A πρεσβύτερος, given his position of dignity, was involved in civic and religious affairs within both Jewish and early Christian social groups.[47] While in certain early Christian texts, primarily gospels, the term can also refer to a member of the Sanhedrin – the civic and religious council of elders in Jewish society – the occurrences of this usage are tangential to the primary employment of the term within early Christian circles to refer to members of their *own* community, rather than a figure in a seemingly separate and potentially adversarial group (The occurrences of oppositional usage occur almost exclusively in gospel texts: Mk. 8:31, 11:27, 14:43, 53, 15:1; Mt. 16:21, 21:23, 26:3, 47, 57, 59, 27:1, 3, 12, 20, 41; Lk. 9:22, 20:1).[48] In contrast, there are numerous references to the elders in other early Christian writings (1 Tim. 5:1, 17-22; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5; 1 Clement 1:3, 21:6, 44:5, 47:6; Ignatius's Eph. 2:2; Mag. 6:1; Trall. 3:1; Smyrn. 8), each of which encourages submission to the authority of the elders, relates their significance and power (e.g. 1 Tim. 4:14), or describes their importance within the church structure (e.g. Ignatius). In all situations, the authority of their station is emphasized, as they are claimed to have been appointed by Paul in gentile Jesus-communities (Acts 14:23), and shared the government of the Jerusalem community with the apostles (Acts 15:6).

Based upon the contrasting evidence from gospel texts it may appear that ἐπίσκοποι and πρεσβύτεροι would be separate and distinct entities in early Christian culture, but this is not necessarily so. The term πρεσβύτερος appears from a very early point to be interchangeable and

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terminological associations and potential derivatives, all of which involve esteem, privilege, higher rank, and superior status or quality.
[47] Danker, 862.
[48] Ibid.

even nearly synonymous with ἐπίσκοπος: numerous verses in early Christian texts attest to the

apparent lack of difference between the two terms and concepts (Acts 20:17, 28; Tit. 1:5-7, 7:1;

1 Tim. 3:1, 5:17; 1 Clem. 44).[49] Scholars have long noted the equivalency of these two terms in

early Christian thought and writings,[50] and Campbell states it most clearly when he declares that

"in none of these letters do we detect any sign that elders were an innovation or that their

introduction had been in any way controversial."[51] Indeed, not only were they *not* blatantly new

creations that were resisted, but were easily combined and seemingly interchangeable in

meaning:

> The amalgamation of 'presbyterial' [sic] and 'episcopal' order
> seems to have been a painless process, as Luke (in Acts 20), the
> Pastoral letters and 1 Clement all see it as a matter of course and
> as having its origins in the days of the apostle(s).[52]

Most revealing are the examples of Acts and 1 Peter. In Acts 20:17-18, Paul sends to Ephesus

"for the elders of the community," μετεκαλέσατο τοὺς πρεσβυτέους τῆς ἐκκλησίας. When they

arrive, he delivers a speech to them (Acts 20:18-35), but the important occurrence is in verse 28.

There the *elders* are explicitly described as *overseers*, having been ordained by the holy spirit:

"Guard yourselves and all the flock of which the holy spirit has placed you as overseers,"

προσεχέτε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ, ἐν ᾧ ὑμᾶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους. They

are further exhorted to shepherd the community (ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν), thus indicating their

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[49] In each of these passages there is either a deliberate or (perhaps even more telling) unintentional slippage between the terms ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος, or there is mention of one in a certain context and then an immediate procession into other details where the different term is invoked but without any form of clarification that a different or separate position is being described.

[50] See R. Brown, 96-106; Burtchaell, 297; Campbell, 97-99, 194-204; Hall, 31; Milavec, 585. Campbell is more nuanced in his explanation, stating that although the terms were quite fluid in this time period (~ 50-120 CE), they *eventually* indicate the difference between the leaders of house-churches (πρεσβύτεροι) and the evolutionary development of the leader of the town-church (ἐπίσκοπος).

[51] Campbell, 98.

[52] Holmberg, 194. As quoted in Campbell, 98.

strength of influence and control. This same confluence of identity is again evidenced in 1 Peter

5:1-2, where the author explicitly addresses the elders, πρεσβυτέρους, encourages them to

"shepherd" the flock just as in Acts 20 (ποιμάνατε), then describes their activity as "being

overseers" or "overseeing" (ἐπισκοποῦντες). In view of this evidence it becomes clear that, for

functional purposes and even in title and position for almost all cases,[53] πρεσβύτεροι and

ἐπίσκοποι were intimately associated in early Christian communities and may be taken as nearly

synonymous in understanding the functional role of their authority and influence in these

communities.

The word διάκονος has been variously argued to be composed of several terms and concepts.

The first postulation would combine διά and κόνις, meaning "though dirt" or "thoroughly raising

dust," potentially conveying the idea of a runner, a messenger or attendant who travels or carries

out the orders of another.[54] It could also be derived from διήκω, allied with and similar to

διώκω,[55] both conveying the sense of "to extend," "to cause to run, to set in motion." The term

itself has been traditionally explained as meaning a table servant or waiter, and reflects the

meanings of the verb διακονεῖν, meaning to wait or serve at a table, then expanding to care for

household needs, and then expanding to a further meaning of to serve or wait upon in a general

sense.[56] Campbell agrees with J.N. Collins in his extensive work which concludes that διάκονος

should be more properly rendered as "agent" or "representative," conveying the sense that a

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[53] Campbell expresses reservations on this point, and as stated in the above note, the two terms may have become subtle differentiators between household leaders and the single town leader, though this development most likely did not occur until the mid-second century at the earliest, past the point in which the Didache was composed.

[54] Thayer advises against this etymological derivation, though he agrees that the term conveys the sense of serving or carrying out a task. See Thayer, 138.

[55] Thayer, 138. He attributes this derivation to Alexander Buttman in his work *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek*. Andover: W.H. Draper, 1873, p. 218. Unfortunately I was unable to procure a physical copy of this text to verify this etymological claim, but curiously the few digital copies in existence lacked any discussion of διάκονος on page 218.

[56] Brown, C. Vol. 3, 545.

διάκονος is an authorized intermediary who is empowered to fully represent the interests and authority of the one who commissioned or sent them.[57] In each case, however, it can be clearly seen that a διάκονος is someone who serves to carry out or fulfill the orders of another. This is the significant aspect of the identity and function of a διάκονος, the execution of the orders of a superior and the representation of and service rendered to an organization or individual. With such functions in mind, διάκονος will be translated as "agent" within this work, again avoiding the ecclesiastic connotations and potential anachronisms of "deacon."

The position of a διάκονος is something that has been debated for quite some time. Since the influential article published by Beyer in 1935, the terms διακονέω and διάκονος have been seen as never losing their fundamental meaning of waiting at table and being concerned with practical needs, and in Beyer's view διάκονος was given a new meaning by Jesus such that "the term comes to have the full sense of active Christian love of neighbor."[58] However, the translation given above by J.N. Collins further improves upon the dynamic of service rendered by a διάκονος: representation offered to an organization or individual, and the execution of orders, especially in the light of early Christian texts themselves. The conflict at Corinth revels this quite well: in 1 Cor. 3:5 Paul declares that he and Apollos are διάκονοι δι᾽ ὧν ἐπιστεύσατε, "agents through whom you believed/trusted." Here he is declaring his authority as a messenger and representative of the god who has selected him;[59] when in 2 Cor. 11:23 the opponents of Paul apparently call themselves διάκονοι Χριστοῦ, "agents/representatives of Christ," they are

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[57] Collins, pp. 146-150, 169-171. Collins further qualifies that it could be rendered in many ways, and "servant" or "aid" is a possible translation, but it would imply a lower, even base status to the duties of a διάκονος, which he clearly believes is incorrect. Thus he elects to avoid these potentially misleading terms and utilize others; Liddell and Scott, 398, render it in the first-century context as "attendant or official in a temple or religious guild," though based on earlier classical sources also offer "messenger" as a definition; Danker, 230, offers "attendant, assistant, aide," and "one who gets something done at the behest of a superior."

[58] Beyer, H.W. "διακονέω, διακονία, διάκνος." *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vol. 2, pp. 81-93. 1935. As quoted in Campbell, 132.

[59] This analysis and the following are summarized from the content of Campbell, 133-135.

likewise asserting their authority as trustworthy and authorized personnel who have an accurate and truthful message from the apotheosized Jesus. When deutero-Paul asserts that he became a διάκονος first of the gospel and then of the church in Col. 1:23-25, he is not playing a card of humility but is providing his credentials as a representative of the power of the message he carries. Paul designates himself as a διάκονος numerous times in other texts (2 Cor. 3:6, 6:4; Eph. 3:7; Phil. 1:1), and even elects to call Jesus himself a διάκονος in Rom. 13:4 and 15:8.[60] Campbell proceeds to relate that "the origins of the term διάκονος for a subordinate leader in the church lie not in the lowliness or loving kindness of the task performed, but in the idea of trust and responsibility."[61] Paul speaks of taking the collection of funds up to Jerusalem as διακονία not because it was an act of charity or kindness, but because he was acting as the trusted represented of the Jerusalem community (Rom. 15:25; 2 Cor. 9:1). Additionally, this sense of "authorized agent" or "spokesman" was present in other texts: Onesimus is utilized as an active participant in missionary efforts (Philemon 13); Tychicus is a faithful agent solely because he is the bearer of Paul's letter and message to the Colossians (Col. 4:7). This position of trusted representative and agent was not lowly or subservient as previous traditional definitions would have:

> In relation to those they assist, διάκονοι are subordinate, but
> in relation to others they share in the authority of the one whose
> assistants they are, whether of God, the gospel, the church, the
> apostle, or in due course the bishop.[62]

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[60] Both of these examples could easily be made to function well with the translation of διάκονος as "agent" or "trusted representative" rather than "slave" or "servant."

[61] Campbell, 134.

[62] Campbell, 134; see also Collins, 146, who argues forcefully against the sense of διάκονος as a menial, low position of service: "In no instance is there a disparaging edge to the usage [of the term διακονία and διάκονος]; the terms are rather designating functions performed in the main by prominent and respected figures in society of the day. The designated function is a subordinate function but not of a kind to reflect poorly on the status of the person involved or to detract from the moral quality of the function itself… If the words do not connote anything especially high-minded about these subordinate roles, they do not of themselves suggest anything derogatory about the kind of function they name."

Even those who might agree with the traditional perspective on the diaconate admit to the authority which a position like this would hold:

> Though in principle serving a secondary, even menial, role, the deacon was close to the bishop, and shared in the rise in importance of the bishop… But such a diaconate would itself be in a powerful position, since the day-to-day letter-writing and administration of money might fall to him…[63]

A διάκονος was therefore an authorized representative of a more powerful party or individual, and – sharing in the power of his superior(s) – was a figure of considerable influence and authority in his own right.

With the terminological identity and economic function of overseers and agents established, the social status and role of their functions must now be explicated. This status and function has been the subject of some debate.[64] Various theories position them as inheritors of the role of the ἀρχισυνάγωγος and the Jewish elders of the synagogue;[65] as Gentile converts lacking esteem in the earliest Jewish-Christian communities because of their inability to be "perfect" and bear the whole "yoke of the Lord" (Torah);[66] or as patrons and wealthy house-holders who hosted and supported the nascent Christian community.[67] This latter explanation will be developed and expanded further, and it will be shown how overseers and agents were not only important wealthy patrons of early Christian groups, but came to oversee the distribution of material and financial goods in the community, regulated who would be permitted to be fed and

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[63] Hall, 32.

[64] For the most recent work involving these figures in early Christianity, and with particular reference to the Didache, see Burtchaell, 228-338; Campbell's *Elders* in its entirety deals with this issue, but see especially 126-130, 151-169, 194-204; Draper (1995) 290-294, 298-299; Milavec (2003) 581-617; Niederwimmer (1998) 200-202; Riggs, 276-280; Rordorf and Tuilier, 72-80.

[65] Burtchaell, 274, 283.

[66] Draper (1996) 352-359; (1995), 291-294, 298-302.

[67] Campbell, 126-130.

be present at the eucharist meal, and controlled the teaching and flow of ideology in their respective communities.

Overseers, Agents, and Household Wealth

Theissen has already shown that those who owned a house played a prominent role in early Christianity; whose wealth, social status, and ability to provide hospitality to early Christian communities enabled them to be of service to Paul and become influential in these groups.[68] This leadership capability is already at work in the Pastorals and 1 Clement; the domestic setting of nascent Christianity is attested in numerous places throughout early Christian literature (Rom. 16:15; 1 Cor. 16:19; Philemon 2; Col. 4:15) and Acts provides the most detailed information in this regard. Household gatherings are a common occurrence in this text (2:46, 4:31, 8:3, 12:12, 17:5, 20:7-8, 20:20, 21:16, 28:30). In the first chapter of Acts the group meets in the upper room of a Jerusalem house, τὸ ὑπερῷν, Acts 1:13 (see also 20:8); this term was in general use at the time to refer to the upstairs room of a house, and only large houses would have a room such as this where twelve or more people could meet.[69] A person of some substance may legitimately be assumed to be in the background here, and the aforementioned work by Theissen also demonstrates that the people named in 1 Corinthians as leaders of the community are, in almost every instance, people of wealth and relatively high social standing.[70] The reference in Acts 2:46 to breaking bread daily κατ᾽ οἶκον surely indicates variable domestic settings of

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[68] Theissen, *Social Setting*, pp. 73-96.
[69] Campbell, 151. See n.29.
[70] See Theissen, *Social Setting*, 69-119.

gathering and prayer,[71] and the description of Saul's persecution of the early communities κατὰ

τοὺς οἴκους in 8:3 is extremely significant, "indicating as it does that Saul was raiding the houses

where the church was meeting to catch the believers *in flagrante delicto*."[72] These early Jesus-

believers held meetings, prayer, and meals in private residences, large houses with upper rooms

provided by hosts and patrons of substantial means.

The household setting of early Christianity established, it remains only to demonstrate

how this affects the social position and authority of those in whose houses these meetings were

held. As given by Campbell, the primary proponent of this domestic thesis:

> The references in the New Testament to the 'church that meets in
> your house' indicate not only the place of meeting but the leader of
> the church as well. We can no longer construct a Pauline church
> meeting simply on the basis of Paul's lists of *charismata* without
> at the same time reckoning with the leading role played by people
> whose age, wealth, status or education combined to place them in
> natural ascendancy over other members of the church.[73]

And further:

> But *if the earliest Christians met in homes, then they also had*
> *leaders at the household level, leaders provided by the household*
> *structure itself*. Not every citizen had a home in which he could
> show this sort of hospitality.[74]

The derivation of leaders from this "household structure itself" would not have been an alien or

innovative concept in the ancient world. Indeed, the concept of *paterfamilias* and the authority of

economic strength, social standing, education, birth, and simple familial structures of the ancient

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[71] Campbell maintains that this is not an idealizing tendency of the author, but reflects a practical reality; if anything is idealized by the author, he claims, "it is surely his stress on the early Christians' continued links with the temple." (152, n.31).
[72] Campbell, 152.
[73] Ibid., 118.
[74] Ibid., 153.

world extended into the larger spheres of society in numerous ways,[75] and the concept of "household authority" was very similar in both Jewish households and Greco-Roman.[76] If this is so, and channels of authority founded in domestic position can extend into society in numerous ways, then how much more so would this authority gain precedence in its own familial foundation of home were a social group to depend upon these private domestic residencies for continued existence. The leader of such a house, willing to open his doors to the group, host them, feed them – leading them in prayer and greetings at the table – and thus becoming a

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[75] These subtle and intricately interwoven connections reinforced each other in incalculable fashions, with leadership positions and social power being gained by people in a capacity that made them "not so much office-holders as counsellors [sic] and leaders spontaneously recognized by the people, *probably the heads of the foremost and noblest families*." Krauss, S. *Synagogale Altertümer*. Berlin: Harz, 1922, p. 143: as quoted by Campbell, 53, n.111, emphasis added. The space for illustrating the deluge of scholarly support for this ancient household authority and its interplay with various social structures is not available, but in the space of a footnote I will provide some of what might clarify and bolster this notion: Plescia,144: "The family [in Roman society] was organized as a miniature monarchy, i.e., under the rule of one person with one purse and one worship." The significance of *one purse* (control of economics and materials by the household leader) and *one worship* (control of ideological content and direction by the household leader) should not be overlooked. See Reinhold, pp. 15-54, for an overview of generational conflict in antiquity, but which still resolved itself into reaffirming the strength of position of elders and household-heads. Sanders, (1992), 485: "People who, because of birth, wealth, abilities, or position, were 'leaders' often acted on their own or collaboratively to get things done, with no reference to a formal body… These people did not become officials; they had no titles (except the high priest); they were simply responsible to maintain order and see that tribute was paid." The notion of titular-deficiency is here Sanders's evaluation of Jewish πρεσβύτεροι, who often mediated Jewish interests to Roman officials. What is to be noted in this instance, however, is that Sanders explicitly draws out the often unwritten and indefinite factor of privatized wealth and power in ancient society, arguing that even though a polity might have an organized βούλη or other governmental structure, it was frequently powerful individuals with no official capacity who were able to conduct the flow of pragmatic life through their own economic and social means. Sanders, (1990), 79: "'Elders' are the other candidates for the role of 'head of the synagogue.' *They were the heads of prominent lay families; and they, with the priests who were local residents, had always served as magistrates and rulers in towns and villages*." (emphasis added); Schürer, 429, maintains that in Jewish communities "the elders of the locality will also have been elders of the synagogue," asserting that the social status and prestige of heredity, wealth, or other factors go hand-in-hand with the status of religious offices, and the two reinforce and often lead into one another. See Campbell, pp. 20-96 for the most concise and direct evidence of the notion that the power of household leaders extended in numerous ways into society at large, and that early Christian communities were no exemption from this (see pp. 97-175 for the particulars of the early Christian situation). As Campbell once again neatly summarizes, "The leadership role of the householder was not something that had to be invented from scratch. It was already well established, sanctioned by custom, and understood both by those who exercised it and those who benefited from it." (153).

[76] Verner, pp. 44-47.

respected patron[77] would no doubt garner an amount of esteem and authority for his actions and

generosity. To summarize this particular argument:

> If the earliest churches, from Jerusalem onwards, met in houses,
> as Acts suggests, then those house-churches will have had leaders
> from the start, whatever they may have been called. In Aramaic-
> speaking areas they may have acquired the functional title of
> *mebaqqer*. In Greek-speaking churches, this would translate
> naturally into ἐπίσκοπος. The Christian ἐπισκοπή would then be
> seen to have originated *informally* in the earliest Jewish period
> of Christianity [from the household leaders already taking the
> station of overseer in their own homes during early Christian
> gatherings]…[78]

This then is the position from which the ἐπίσκοποι were derived; based upon wealth, social

standing, and household management, the overseers were unofficial leaders of the Christian

community in its earliest stages.[79] The considerable power already contained within this position

is easily understandable; engaged in business and affluent enough to not only own a decently

sized home but provide meals and accommodations for numerous others, these leaders were

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[77] Again, the space does not exist here for an extensive description of patron-client relationships in the ancient world, but the status of ἐπίσκοποι as patrons of early Christian communities is not without foundation. As given by Moxnes, 242, "Patron-clinet relations are social relationships between individuals *based on a strong element of inequality and difference of power*. The basic structure of the relationship is an exchange of different and very unequal resources. *A patron has social, economic, and political resources that are need by a client. In return, a client can give expressions of loyalty and honor that are useful for the patron*." (emphasis added); Crossan (1991), 64: "The patronal webs… involved not only individuals as patrons and clients… but also individuals as patrons with groups as clients, either associations, societies, cities, municipalities, or even larger entities." Crossan further explains the *influence* that would have followed from patronizing a group or cause: "Imagine, then, two or more less ideal types of society: a *patronal* society whose moral ideology expects offices and benefits by right of assistance from an influential power broker and a *universal* society whose ethical theory expects them by right of request to an appropriate civil servant. In the former case, for example, in the Roman world, influence was a moral duty: the emperors needed it, the moralists praised it, and countless inscriptions publicly proclaimed it." (65). See MacMullen, 59-63 for further details on the motivation and psychology behind public munifence and patronage, and Meeks, 25-32 for more intimate details on the social structures and avenues through which this form of patronage might have helped early Christianity flourish.
[78] Campbell, 158.
[79] Numerous scholars take this position, but among the most vocal are Campbell, Riggs, and Stewart-Sykes. See Campbell, 125-130, 136, 151-153, 158, 162, 166; Riggs, 276-280; Stewart-Skyes, *Prophecy and Patronage*, 174-175. Draper gives an adapted take on this thesis as his own position: see Draper (1995), 291-294.

already in a position of inherent material control and ascendancy in relation to those whom they hosted and patronized.

Yet even without the specific idea of substantial householders at the foundation of overseers, it is still beyond doubt that they were wealthy and powerful individuals. Indeed, even the other two theses concerning the identity and origin of the ἐπίσκοποι maintain this: the notion that they inherited the role of the synagogue elders and the ἀρχισυνάγωγος would still imply immense influence, social prestige, and considerable financial power,[80] and the remaining thesis of their being wealthy Gentile converts who were held in lower esteem still positions them as affluent individuals whose status as householders and *patres familias* would give them considerable influence in early Christian groups.[81] All of the various theses concerning the identity of the overseers point to the same conclusion: they were wealthy, influential members in early Christian communities, and their positions entailed the management of money and control of material resources.

Indeed, the text of the Didache itself indicates this. In 15.1, the text lists its requirements for overseers and agents: they must be ἀφιλαργύρους, "not avaricious/ not greedy," indicating that they may be of independent financial means and thus willing to share them.[82] In addition, the

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[80] Burtchaell is the primary proponent of this thesis and asserts that "what emerges from the evidence is an enduring perception from within the Jewish people that this officer, the ἀρχισυναγῶγος, was not simply a master of religious ceremonies. He was the executive of the local community, acting under formal oversight of the elders but the more active superintendent of the notables. He presided over the community, he convened it for activities, he superintended its staff. It was a position of some permanency, and one in which fathers might hope to see their sons succeed them. The community chief was, if not the most prestigious member of his community socially, the one who worked, often professionally, as the man at the forefront of his people." (244). In addition, Burtchaell, 298: "The elders held authority in the assemblies. Their duties seemed to have included preaching and teaching, as also the control of community finances, admonition and rebuke when the community was at risk, appointment of officers and endorsement of apostles, care for the sick and for the community's dependents. Their rank deserved honor and (a point raised even more emphatically) obedience."

[81] Draper (1995), 292: "In other words, in the world of the Mediterranean basin they must be patrons of the community. They would be the wealthier members of the community, with houses big enough in which to meet, with resources for building and supplying food and wine for the eucharist meal."

[82] Draper, ibid.

overseers and agents must be ἄνδρας πραεῖς, "humble/meek men." This humility, as de Halleux has concluded, is given in the *Duae viae* as a "virtue leading to the defence [sic] of the poor and the oppressed,"[83] an endeavor for which significant material power and social influence would be necessary. This humility and its attendant needs are similarly "close in significance to the concern that bishops and deacons should be free of avarice, in that it indicates that the function for which qualification is being sought is the handling of money."[84] The previous qualification that overseers and agents be ἀφιλαργύρους is repeated in 1 Tim. 3:3 and finds near equivalencies in 1 Pt. 5:2, μὴ αἰσχροκερδῶς, "not for ignoble gain," and in Tit. 1:7, μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ, "not greedy of gain." Quite early then, a common tradition of qualifications appears to exist surrounding the position of overseers and agents, perhaps indicating that "the office holder exercised responsibility for collecting and dispensing community funds."[85] With the historically sound hypothesis of household leaders and wealthy patrons as the models for and as the first ἐπίσκοποι, it is reasonable to believe that with such comparative evidence the ἐπίσκοποι in the Didache were also wealthy and exercised similar discretion in matters of material wealth.

The text itself may serve to further support this view. The Didache also requires the additional qualifications that overseers and agents be honest/true and tested, ἀληθεῖς καὶ δεδοκιμασμένους (15.1). Having to pass certain evaluations or tests, being known as honest and trustworthy, and in light of the previous requirements to be ἀφιλαργύρους and ἄνδρας πραεῖς, it may be observed with some assurance that "the qualifications given are those of an economic administrator."[86] Indeed, perhaps the most telling evidence about this position of financial

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[83] De Halleux, 313.
[84] Stewart-Sykes, *Prophecy*, 174.
[85] Milavec, 589.
[86] Stewart-Sykes, *Prophecy*, 174. Interestingly, these qualities bear some similarity to those required of a "steward/ trustee/ superintendent" (vilicus), ἐπίτροπος or οἰκονόμος, as described by Columella in his treatise *De Re Rustica* (XI 1.3-29, XII 1.1-6). The economic administrator and master-farmhand of absentee landlords, the vilicus was a

control is also from the Didache itself, and has been neglected in the majority of previous studies. This same passage in 15.1 proceeds to declare that the overseers and agents are to have all of these qualities, ὑμῖν γὰρ λειτουργοῦσι καὶ αὐτοι τὴν λειτουργίαν τῶν προφητῶν καὶ διδασκάλων. The crucial aspects of this line are the verb λειτουργοῦσι and the accompanying noun λειτουργίαν. The verb λειτουργοῦσι has been translated almost universally as "perform," joined by an almost equally universal translation of λειτουργίαν as "function," resulting in the phrase "for they themselves perform the function of the prophets and teachers for you."[87] Consequently, this has lead to the notion that the overseers and agents "perform the functions" that are identical to those performed by charismatics; this would seem to fly in the face of not only the evidence of the text,[88] but the accompanying interpretations by each of the scholars who give this somewhat inadequate translation.[89] A brief examination of the language in this passage will demonstrate how the nuances of translation can drastically affect the reading of the text, and through this brief analysis a fresh perspective on the position of the overseers and agents will be

position known throughout the ancient Mediterranean, and was required to be sober, temperate in sexual and other desires, and trustworthy in all his doings. These officials are also mentioned twice in the text of Luke (12:42-48, 16:1-8), where especially in Luke 16 the example of the dishonest bailiff is quite demonstrative, as it reveals the profound authority that he could hold over his master's economic affairs (Fiensy, 163).

[87] Cody, 13, "for they too perform the functions of prophets and teachers for you."; Garrow, xxi, "for they too perform the functions of prophets and teachers for you."; Milavec, *Text*, 35, "for to you they likewise serve (unpaid) the unpaid_public_service [sic] of the prophet-teachers."; Niederwimmer, (1998), 200, "for they too perform the services of the prophets and teachers for you."; Rordorf and Tulilier, 193, "car ils rempliseent eux aussi près de vous l'office des prophètes et des docteurs."; Van de Sandt and Flusser, 15, "for they too perform the functions of prophets and teachers for you." Milavec clearly comes the closest to conveying the force of money and materials being invoked as a rubric of esteem, but still misses the dynamics of how this might *actually, pragmatically* be playing out in the community.

[88] The prophets, apostles, and teachers are never said to do what the overseers and agents do, and in fact their qualifications are very different; the former are laid out as being constantly scrutinized, whereas the latter have been tested and are meek, honest, and not greedy. Furthermore, the charismatics are allowed to pray incessantly (10.7), receive stipends from the community (13.1-6), and can be denounced as false (11.1-12), while overseers and agents simply hold a position of honor *akin* to what charismatics have, but not necessarily the same (15.1-2).

[89] That is, each scholar who gives this translation – essentially *equating* the functions of both groups – still provides a schema in which "bishop and deacon" are very much differentiated in many respects from "prophet, apostle, and teacher."

forged, one which is not only supported by the Didache but by the economic and domestic-political relations already established as being the basis of these figures.

The verb λειτουργέω is defined as to render public service at one's own expense, to assume or discharge an office at one's own expense, or to serve the state or community at one's own cost; the noun λειτουργία is likewise a public service or endeavor which a citizen undertakes to administer at his own expense.[90] The implications of this action and its social significance cannot be stated more clearly than as given by Danker:

> In the Gr-Rom. [sic] world distinguished citizens were expected
> to serve in a variety of offices, including esp. as high priests, with
> all costs that such service involved, or to assume the costs of
> construction or maintenance of public buildings and productions
> of dramas and games; for their services they would be recognized
> as people of exceptional merit [s. ἀρετή] or benefactors [s. εὐεργέτης].[91]

This notion of λειτουργέω and λειτουργία is evidenced abundantly in classical authors, the majority of which explicitly involve money and material contributions.[92] The terms take on a slightly new meaning in early Christian literature and society, conveying the general sense of doing a service or performing a work, but still retain the connotation of utilizing one's own personal materials or finances, and in first century Christian usage they were used to described those "who aid others with their resources, and relieve their poverty."[93] Indeed, the verb λειτουργέω still carried the meaning of "to confer a special material benefit [upon]" or "do a service in material things."[94] The term is clearly involved in patronage and patron-client relations (see note 77), and could certainly be invoked to describe the activity of wealthy members of

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[90] Liddell and Scott, 1036; Thayer, 375.
[91] Danker, 590-591.
[92] See, amongst many other usages of λειτουργία and λειτουργέω, Andocides, *Against Alcibiades*, 42; Antiphon, *Herodes,* 77; Aristotle, *Politics*, 2.1272; Demosthenes, *Leptines*, 21; Isocrates, *Aegineticus,* 36; Lysias, *Bribes*, 19.
[93] Thayer, 375.
[94] Danker, 591.

early Christian groups who supported others with their affluence. There are several references to λειτουργία and usage of λειτουργέω in early Christians texts, again many of which refer to or are in the context of giving, receiving, or making use of material resources.[95]

With this in mind, a new interpretation of line 15.1 in the Didache is provided by Alistair Stewart-Sykes. Following the idea that λειτουργέω indicates a duty or service provided at one's own expense for the aid of another or for public benefit, Stewart-Sykes asserts that:

> … as the *Didache* says, they 'liturgize… the liturgy of the prophets.'
> It might be suggested that just as in *1 Clement* the *leitourgia* of the
> presbyters was a public office undertaken at one's own expense, so
> the term 'liturgize' is here likewise used in its ancient sense – that is
> to say, *the bishops provide financial support for the teachers and
> prophets, and enable them to carry out their ministry…* The liturgizing
> of the liturgy of the prophets and teachers is not the performance of the
> office of prophets and teachers, as is generally assumed, *but is social
> and economic support for those do who exercise this office…* The
> bishops and deacons should be honoured, states *Did.* 15.1-2, because
> they provide the means by which the prophets and teachers exercise
> their ministry, and should therefore receive like respect.[96]

As patrons of this Didache community, the ἐπίσκοποι and their assisting διάκονοι provide the material basis – food, clothing, etc. – for the charismatics, and perhaps for many others in the community as well. They λειοτργοῦσι the λειτουργία τῶν προφητῶν; they "liturgize/fund the public performance/works of the prophets." Just as the work of the charismatics is described as λειτουργία, a public work of teaching and prophesying, so too the overseers and agents are described as performing a public work, as they λειοτργοῦσι (fund, support at their own expense) another's public work.

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[95] See Rom. 15:27; 2 Cor. 9:10-12; Phil. 2:17, 30; Heb. 10:11 (In the verse in Hebrews the material resources, θυσίας, are argued to be offered in vain). Cf. Phil. 2:25 where Epaphroditus is a λειτουργὸν τῆς χρείας μου, a "minister/servant of my needs." Danker, 591, also offers this excellent summation of the early Christian usage and connotation of the noun λειτυργία: "[Denoting] acts that show forth Christian charity and other virtues that are beyond the call of ordinary duty and are therefore more like those rendered by public-spirited citizens [patrons] and this evoked God's special approval."

[96] Stewart-Sykes, *Prophecy and Patronage*, 183, emphasis added.

It may be objected that this passage in 15.1 asserts that both groups perform a λειτουργία of sorts, and thus the potential economic denotations for such an act should belong to both groups; however, the grammatical structure of the passage bears out that the foundation of one act is set in the necessary existence of the other. That is, that the charismatics teach and prophesy only because their λειτουργία is supported – liturgized – by the overseers and agents. The foundation for all of this is the fact that the overseers and agents λειοτργοῦσι the λειτουργία of the charismatics; while they could λειοτργοῦσι another set of people or persons and support them with material means, here the Didache asserts that they do so for the prophets and teachers and are not to be disregarded because of it.

In summation, regardless of their origin or development from synagogue leaders, gentile converts, or wealthy householders of either ethnic group, ἐπίσκοποι have been soundly argued to be the economic administrators – and thus the patrons – of the earliest Christian communities.[97] With the overseers and their assisting agents, the διάκονοι, holding the reigns of patronage, owning and regulating the distribution of funds and food, it is not difficult to perceive how this could affect the dynamics of power in early Christian communities. Just as in the modern world where the financing entities and producers (patrons) of a film have an immense, unspoken purview of control regarding many particulars in the filming process, likewise "patronage can hardly be separated from governance in the ancient world."[98] The further dynamic of patronage and power in the financial capacity of the overseers and agents will be briefly explored with regard to two issues of great import in the Didache, early Christianity, and the thesis concerning material control: the general economic situation of the Mediterranean world in the first and early

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[97] Brox, 38; Campbell, 74-75; 118-122, 159, 195, 202, 215; Draper, *First Fruits*, 242; *Social Ambiguity*, 290-294, 298-299; Hall, 31-32; Milavec, *Faith*, 586, 589-590, 599; Patterson, 324-326; Rapp, 25; Riggs, 276-280; Stewart-Sykes, *Prophecy*, 174-175, 182-183. Theissen, *Sociology*, 34-36, 38 demonstrates that charismatic activity would interact with wealth and power in an ambivalent way, and would inevitably be at the mercy of wealthy patrons.
[98] Stewart-Sykes, *Prophecy*, 175.

second centuries CE, and the allocation and management of food and finances – specifically the authoritative determination of who would and would not receive support, particularly at the eucharist meal.

The Economic State of the Ancient World

The economic situation of the ancient Mediterranean was a world removed from what one experiences in prosperous, modern nations of the 21st century. Land was the key resource in ancient economies, and *all* people lived off of the land in one form or the other, either through subsistence farming, market farming, or renting it to tenants.[99] The economy of 1st century Palestine and the surrounding lands of the eastern Mediterranean were no exception, being utterly agrarian and based almost entirely upon the production of food through subsistence-level farming by peasants working on arable land.[100] As the most thoroughly researched area in the eastern Mediterranean in terms of economy, Palestine will be offered as an example for the general state of this area; while the ancient Mediterranean was by no means an exactly uniform geographical location, the eastern lands contained reasonably similar topography and climates, and thus the potential locations for the Didache's community would not be very dissimilar from Palestine in this time. The comprehensive research done on the Palestinian economy for the first and second centuries CE will therefore serve well as a model for the basic economic background of the eastern Mediterranean, providing an historical context in which the dynamics of economic control in ancient society can be understood more clearly.

[99] Finley, 97.
[100] Arnal, 102-115; Finley, 97, 107-108; Harland, 515.

The peasantry composed over 90 percent of the population,[101] and itself was made up of three constituencies: farmers who worked their own small plot of land, tenants who paid rent and farmed the land belonging to a wealthy landowner, and an amalgam of landless people who worked on large estates as wage-laborers or were working in some manner of craft in cities and villages (or were engaged in banditry or other criminalized endeavors, a significant activity in antiquity).[102] A typical Palestinian person's diet depended heavily upon the staples of Mediterranean fare: bread, certain cereals for gruels (almost exclusively wheat and barley), pulses and peas, onions, garlic, cabbage, olives and grapes, and of course water and occasionally wine.[103] Meat was rare and extremely valuable, and to consume it was a treat usually done at a ceremony or great feast.[104] The vast majority of the populace lived an almost hand-to-mouth existence and were at the mercy of weather, war, and the whims of rulers to provide for themselves and their families. The statistics and numerical computations for average production and healthy consumption of foods in antiquity have been detailed elsewhere,[105] and the resulting picture of daily life is not one possessing much leisure or room for agricultural mishaps. As a concise description:

> What emerges is a Galilee that is dominated first by wheat production...
> and secondarily by olives and grapes, that is, in all cases, *direct crop
> production from the land*. Life in the countryside was normally of a
> standard peasant sort, rather than dominated by estates: people lived
> together in small villages from which they worked nearby moderately-
> sized tracts of land... The manner of life implied by all of this involves
> a high concentration of work: the amount of land required to feed a family
> comfortably is extensive enough to employ all of its members during peak

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[101] Fiensy, 155-176; Fiensy goes on to assert that "perhaps only about one percent of the population belonged to the elite class." (167). Regardless of the exact specificity of the numbers, the notion that those whose income hovered around the level of subsistence (the peasantry) were the overwhelming majority of the population in antiquity is hardly disputed.
[102] Harland, 515.
[103] Hamel, 9; Harland, 515.
[104] Arnal, 110; Hamel, 19-20, 25-29.
[105] See Arnal 107-150; Finley, 95-122; Hamel, 94-140.

periods, and the absence of economies of scale meant that concentration of holdings [of land] did not significantly diminish the labor-to-product ratio.[106]

In addition to the nature of the work, the materials and physical technology required in performing this agrarian activity were immense: aside from the actual tasks of plowing, weeding, digging, planting, burning stubble, and other necessary duties of farming, the tools and equipment needed were exacting in many respects. Plowing instruments, and – when on hillsides – leveling equipment to creates terraces for level cultivation were needed, not to mention the oxen required to operate them.[107] Oil presses and other larger equipment were sometimes held communally, and were maintained by those using them; this communal access was often to the benefit of the landlords as well as the peasants, as publicly accessible, oft-used equipment would be an ideal location to collect tithes, rent, and other dues.[108] It could be objected that this common form of property ownership was practiced by some of the earliest Christian communities, perhaps evidenced by Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-25. However, this is a "somewhat idealized presentation of the earliest Christian community"; it is unlikely that complete communal ownership of *all* wealth was practiced, and if it ever was it died out exceedingly quickly.[109] Harvesting tools such as hand sickles, threshing floors, milling instruments, and storage units were all needed as well. To cut to the chase, all of this description and detail about ancient farming is to say that the life of agricultural production – which was the primary occupation for over 90 percent of the Palestinian population – was not a whimsical lifestyle, free to be dropped and picked up at a moment's notice. It was not a manner of living conducive to

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[106] Arnal, 114, emphasis added.
[107] Ibid., 110-111.
[108] Ibid., 111.
[109] Kyrtatas, 543.

leisurely indulgence in lettered study, nor was it in any way favorable to travel or moving about

with one's produce. This type of life was by necessity exclusively sedentary, and to travel about

at length meant abandoning one's responsibilities and essentially one's livelihood.[110]

The elite, who owned the land and extracted the surplus of production from the lower

classes through taxes and rent, ate better than most and could afford to frequently hold

ceremonious dinners, serving meat (a very rare and valuable food in the ancient world, a sign of

wealth) and inviting friends, disciples, and clients.[111] They also enjoyed the ability to engage in

political, scholastic, and artistic endeavors; since Rome always entrusted the rule of its distant

subjects to wealthy local people, "political power always means wealth and wealth often means

political power."[112]

Here a very important distinction needs to be made between modern conceptions of

economics and how the ancients thought of money and production: the people of power – those

who controlled the land through various means – were associated with all manner of temples,

clubs, political alliances, etc., and in the ancient mind these social groupings were "inseparably

political-economic and religious-cultural and environmental-natural."[113] Indeed, from the

perspective of an ancient Palestinian "the modern compartmentalization of life into political,

social, economic, and religious sectors would be difficult to comprehend; these aspects of life in

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[110] Indeed, the very fact that rainfall in the area was "consistently insufficient" indicates the inevitability of a settled existence: it needed to be stored in cisterns for irrigation purposes during the dry seasons, a feat which could only be accomplished with large, heavy containers and a plot of land on which to use the accumulated water. As Arnal explains: "The village… would consist of a population cluster surrounded by fields and other agricultural land, sufficient to meet the needs of the actual population of the village itself… people did not normally live on the land they worked but traveled the short distance to it from their homes in the village. This… would have placed limitations on the amount of actual physical space a village could comfortably cultivate *and would have generated a disposition to a merely local orientation to production, since the cultivation of surplus… would have increased the size of land under cultivation and generated diminishing returns…*" (112). Not only would the requisite equipment and patterns of weather dictate a settled life for agrarian work, but the civil infrastructure of village composition (small village surrounded by farmlands) mandates a "merely local orientation to production."

[111] Hamel, 31.

[112] Fiensy, 157.

[113] Horsley, 12.

general comprised a unified whole for those living in first century Palestine."[114] Running

governmental and socio-religious organizations – all of which were conceived of as constituting

an inseparable, coherent reality in the ancient mind – the elites had enormous influence in

economic affairs. As magistrates, priests, elders, and any other form of ruler, "the people who

held the political-religious power… insisted that they [the god(s)] required not just worship but

service… The people were expected to yield up a percentage of their crops, the produce of their

labor on the land, as tithes and offerings…"[115] These peasants had little to give, as they

themselves lived "always at the margin of safety"; subsistence farming is not the production of

cash crops, but the growing of enough fruits, vegetables, and cereals to feed one's own family.[116]

Conceding a portion of their production to landlords, priests, elders, magistrates or governors,

the average farmer often had very little left to support himself and his family, let alone much to

spare for anyone else who asked for his charity.

In addition, here a remark on sound historical analysis should be made. As important as

agricultural production and monetary earnings may have been for early Christian communities,

> …very little is said in early Christian documents regarding community
> assets. We are told next to nothing about the productive and financial
> activities of churches or how they invested their capital. If we were to
> rely exclusively upon the few explicit statements made, we would get
> the impression that the only sources [of income] of the early churches
> were donations and firstfruits offered by the faithful. *Yet there is little
> doubt that from a very early period the Christian churches owned land
> as well as urban property. It would have been very strange if they had
> not made profitable use of their possessions, like all other property
> owners of the period.*[117]

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[114] Harland, 511.
[115] Horsley, 13.
[116] Finley, 107.
[117] Kyrtatas, 533.

Thus, though lacking explicit evidence as to the usage of wealth and property in early Christian groups, by employing principles of social-scientific analysis and sound historical judgment it can be reasonably deduced that wealthy early Christians engaged in commerce and made use of their wealth much like other humans living in antiquity.

With the incredible majority of people in 1st century Palestine being buried under a deluge of agricultural work, constant struggles to feed themselves and their families, and always scraping by to meet the demands of taxes, rent, and tithes, it would not be a shock to suggest that food and material sustenance were highly valued by the lion's share of the population, and with such a paucity of resources at their disposal any manner of food, patronage, or charitable support would have been a significant boon to their lives. Food and material support were more than consumable goods; they were lifeblood, and a hungry farmer, beggar, or transient teacher would not have looked upon a charitable meal with disinterest.

Food, the Eucharist, and Control

Indeed, with this general economic picture in mind, a charitable meal of any sort would be no small matter. To be sure, the centrality of sustenance in early Christianity is difficult to overemphasize: aside from the agrarian society's effect on making all early Jesus parables constructed in almost purely agricultural terms, there are miracle claims involving food (Mk. 6:30-44; 8:1-10 and parallels; John 2:1-11); primary references to Christ cult rituals utilizing food (1 Cor. 10:14-22; 11:23-30; cf. Acts 2:46); and debates and teachings about the proper eating, preparation, and social associations connected with food (Mk. 2:15-17, 18-22, 23-28; 7:1-23; 14:12-16 and parallels; Gal. 2:11-21; 1 Cor. 8:1-13; 10:25-31; 11:27-34; Acts 10:9-16; 11:1-

10; 15:29; Col. 2:21). This is not to say that all of these instances are exclusively concerned with food as *food*, for they also involve the serious consideration of ideological boundaries and the negotiation of social power – and yet this is precisely the point. The use of food to negotiate, reinforce, and control such boundaries is exactly what is occurring in most of these circumstances, even where it is not explicit. This is also the primary thrust of the Didache's use of food with regard to charismatics: it may not be explicit in its intentions, but ritual usage of food is not exempt from the purpose of reinforcing and contesting social power.[118]

Even more revealing are the explicitly contentious remains of concerns about the regulation of hospitality, occasional withholding of hospitality and food for various reasons, and the defense of those who wish not to be perceived as "burdens" upon the benefactors who might provide this food and lodging (Acts 4:32-37 into 5:1-11; 6:1-7; 20:33-34; 1 Cor. 9:1-14; 2 Cor. 8:16-9:5; 11:7-15; Phil. 4:15-19; 1 Thess. 2:9; 4:10-12; 5:12-15; 2 Thess. 3:6-13; Heb. 13:2; James 2:15-16; 2 John 10; 3 John 5-10). Hospitality and food were clearly very important things in early Christian groups. Keeping the Didache and the economic context of early Christianity in view, the example of the eucharist will serve to demonstrate one manner in which material control is explicitly laid out in these first century groups.

There were several types of meals and forms of dining in antiquity.[119] Some were festive, while others were daily and mundane. Generally, *communal* meals and group eating situations were part of a widespread and common social phenomenon in antiquity, the κοινωνία, or club. Quite typical from the Hellenistic period onwards, forming a κοινωνία was a typical venue for meeting people of different social status, making connections and establishing relationships. The

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[118] The space does not exist for a full development of this modern scholarly schema, but both McCutcheon (2001) and Smith (1990), (1982) have developed these themes at length.
[119] See Ferguson, 321; Kodell 38-52; LaVerdiere, 1-12; Mack, 114-115.

practice of forming such a club was always based on similar shared interests: people who shared similar political ideals, cultic devotions, or professional inclinations would regularly meet to discuss such interests and ideas, almost always during a meal.[120] Regardless of whether the group's interests involved politics, professional occupations, or any other endeavor, the κοινωνία was always formed around or at least named after a patron deity. The common pattern was to meet, dine together, then pour out a libation to the deity and sing a hymn or poem in the god's honor. Ranking systems for the club hierarchy as well as for the meal's proceedings (such as who would say the opening hymn/benediction, preside over the meal, the order of seating arrangements, etc.) were quite common, with positions of honor and esteem reserved for select persons such as the leader in whose house the meal was eaten, patrons and financial supporters who provided the means for the meal, and honored guests. Indeed, these κοινωνίαι were

> organized with officers, rules, and treasuries… and [were] conducted as a dinner club. *Who was to pay for the wine was a very big issue, written right into the rules with special precautions against admitting members who had not paid their dues*.[121]

Early Christian meetings and dining rituals have been shown to be quite similar to and potentially derived from this κοινωνία culture, and early Christian meal practice would have differed in perhaps only *one respect* from the typical Greek pattern of κοινωνία associations and their meal customs: the topics of conversation and the subject of the hymns being sung.[122] Meeting in private residences, the patrons and servants would have occupied the same social and economic roles that can be observed in descriptions of other club meetings in antiquity.[123]

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[120] This and the following are taken from Mack, 114-115.
[121] Mack, 81, emphasis added.
[122] Ibid., 115.
[123] Here a remark on the analysis and digestion of the sources must be made: as Mack notes, "The symposium literature offers the clearest picture of the Greeks at mealtime, but does need to be toned down a bit. Authors of this literature had fun describing philosophers at party, and so the genre tends toward parody and is limited to gatherings

The eucharist meal was an early Christian adaptation of this κοινωνία activity: meeting in homes, dining together, then hearing a lecture or teaching, debating and discussing texts and hermeneutical ideas, or anticipating the potential spirit-possession of prophets and other charismatics who might utter divinely inspired words. The conflagration surrounding the historicity of the original eucharist and its retro-construction in gospel texts aside,[124] there is little doubt that early Christians met together in the fashion of a κοινωνία, and by the mid to late 1st century, at least a generation *after* Jesus, the εὐχαριστία or some form of it was a typical feature of Christian meetings.

While in modern forms the eucharist can hardly be said to be a "meal," in its ancient form it most likely was an actual *meal*. At first, in early Jesus-believing groups, the gatherings involved a large dinner (the ἀγάπη meal or "breaking of bread") that concluded with the ritual of the eucharist as a capstone to the evening; in some locations the eucharist *itself* was a rather large meal.[125] Indeed, for a communal meal in antiquity, "eating bread and drinking wine were a shorthand reference to meals taken together."[126] Paul himself provides evidence for it to be something substantial: reprimanding the Corinthians for eating and drinking out of hunger and without consideration for the meal's significance in their κοινωνία, he commands that "when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together it will not be for your condemnation," (1 Cor. 11:33-34). While it may have been

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of the intellectual elite. Not every householder would have been able to provide entertainment that ran from song and dance through witty repartee and the rehearsal of poetry to hot and heavy philosophical discussions." (114). His caution, however, serves to reinforce the picture of early Christian society constructed herein: *not every householder* could provide these meals and the domicile in which to have them, and so naturally the few who could would become rather important in the early community.

[124] See Kodell, 22-37 for a survey of scholarship on the eucharist, as well as Riggs, 256-262. Mack's general argument concerning the eucharist's late construction in the text of Mark is particularly instructive (78-132, 247-268, 288-324).

[125] Hinson, 99-100.

[126] Mack, 116.

possible for some to eat "at home," the potential for a free communal meal in antiquity would most certainly have been an inviting prospect, especially if – in light of the economic circumstances outlined above – most people lived a nearly hand-to-mouth existence. Were this eucharist meal insubstantial and paltry, satiation of hunger would hardly be possible, especially for a decently sized group of people. Even so, a smaller or less sumptuous offering of rustic quality bread and diluted wine would have been quite the opportunity for anyone possessing social ties to a group who was meeting for club business and a meal.

It should be noted, of course, that in the earliest Christian texts the terms for eucharist (εὐχαριστία, ἀγάπη) and other ritualized meals that were formalized in later decades were not used, nor were "meals" themselves often explicitly referenced in the literature.[127] Rather, indirect means of writing were employed, such that what remains are references to "material benefits," "food and drink," "blessing," or, when money was involved, "gift," "collection," or "charity/public service"; again, the actual εὐχαριστία was most likely a later development of the κοινωνία process that was adapted for Christian purposes, thus the lack of explicit references to it in the earliest literature.[128] Even though the eucharist did not exist as a *formalized* ritual until, at the earliest, the later decades of the 1st century CE, a communal meal was the natural and most common avenue through which people of this time met to discuss business, political matters, and other issues:

> Jesus people must have met to talk about their common interests. Since
> the only model at hand for free association was the gathering for a meal,

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[127] Again, this is primarily due to the fact that the eucharist meal is a *later* invention of Christianity, retro-inserted into gospel texts and made to appear as a foundational myth for the legitimation of the eucharist tradition in later times. See Mack, *A Myth of Innocence*, for further explication of this thesis (78-132, 247-268, 288-324).
[128] "τὰ σαρκίκα," "φαγεῖν καὶ πεῖν," "εὐλογίας," "χάρις," "λογείας," "λειτουργία," respectively. See 1 Cor. 9:1-14; 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 9:1-5. See also Acts 6:1 where the terms διακονία and διακονεῖν clearly involve the controlled distribution of food! See the previous note on Mack's *A Myth of Innocence* for the details on the later invention of the eucharist. See also Riggs, 256-262 for a brief but solid overview of both scholarship and history that supports this conclusion.

that must have been what they did. Simple invitations by a patron or householder would have sufficed... Most of the things Jesus people and Christians did happened or could have happened most naturally at gatherings for meals. It was the place for the leaders to be heard, the householders to preside, ideas to be exchanged, the poets to share their pieces, questions to be raised, scriptures to be consulted, and prayers to be said.[129]

The gathering together of Jesus-believers to eat and talk in a κοινωνία was the predecessor of the εὐχαριστία, and it was the public food and support at these meetings that was often hotly contested.

As given above, there are numerous locations in early Christian literature where the remnants of heated disputes concerning material support and hospitality furiously burn. Also, as stated previously, the particular relation to the eucharist is difficult to ascertain in the *earliest* texts. However, there are several echoes in these initial writings of a conflict over food and drink, as well as a subtle effort at restricting access to communal meals, an attempt at "fencing the table."[130] Early efforts to fence off access to public food are evidenced by Paul himself, who enjoins self-examination before participation (1 Cor. 11:28), and may have implied exclusion from the ἀγάπη-meal when he prohibited eating with people who had committed moral wrongs and ordered that food be refused to those who refused to work (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:6-12). [131]

In addition, there are certain concerns about food obtained through other venues, especially if it has been offered to other gods (1 Cor. 10:19-21, 28; cf. Didache 6.3). This might be re-described as an attempt at restricting food sources to create a form of artificial scarcity, thus reformulating a notion of purity to force those in need of food to depend upon the one source of *always* pure foods: the new Jesus community and its leaders. As well, Paul seems

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[129] Mack, 81, 83.
[130] This phrase is borrowed from Riggs, 271, 278.
[131] Hinson, 104, draws out these points.

rather anxious about how the communal meal is being ravenously consumed without due reverence for the solemn ideas with which it is to be associated; in the early Corinth group people are apparently eating away and not giving pause to conceive of this ritual dinner in the manner that Paul would like (1 Cor. 11: 21-22). He even threatens that to consume the meal in this fashion is to bring judgment upon one's self, and declares that many in Corinth have recently become sick and died because of such impudence. (1 Cor. 11:27-30) Thus, from an early point, there is a clear trend of attempting to control who has access to this communal meal through the various means of guilt (self-examination), social ostracizing (exclusion based upon moral offenses or idleness), admonitions about how to properly behave and think during the meal, and even implicit death threats!

In a more explicit fashion, the community at Qumran provides very clear and potentially contemporaneous evidence of how food was both controlled and used to control. The texts, dated between ~150 BCE to 50 CE,[132] derive from the library of a Jewish group who had settled along the west bank of the Dead Sea in order to deliberately isolate themselves from surrounding society and particularly from other Jewish groups whom they perceived to be enemies and deceivers.[133] These texts reflect the concerns of a Jewish group settled in the eastern Mediterranean, and will be employed as comparative evidence in order to demonstrate how social groups related to the one that produced the Didache might have employed material resources in efforts to control people in their community. For the sake of brevity only The Community Rule will be consulted, but even with this one text the practices surrounding food regulation and dining in ancient Palestinian groups are corroborated with convenient clarity.

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[132] Radiocarbon tests have conclusively demonstrated that many of the manuscripts belong to the period between "the last two centuries BCE and the first century CE." (VanderKam and Flint, 32). In addition, paleographic dating techniques have yielded similar results, with most of the manuscripts falling between the extremes of ~200 BCE to 50 CE (Martínez, xlviii).
[133] Martínez, xlix-li.

In "The Rule of the Community," a document that contains the regulations for living in the Qumran group, the social conventions and dining rules reflect what is similarly found in early Christian groups.[134] A tightly regimented social structure is evidenced, wherein "whenever one fellow meets another, the junior shall obey the senior in work and in money." (1QS VI.2).[135] A fantastic passage describing group eating practices follows, detailing how "when they [a quorum of 10 men] prepare the table to dine or the new wine for drinking the priest shall stretch out his hand *as the first* to bless the first fruits of the bread and of the new wine." (VI.4-6, emphasis added). The priest is given precedence in presiding over the meal, showing how the meals would not be without hierarchy.[136] This quorum of 10 "should not be missing a man to interpret the law day and night" (VI.6), demonstrating that the common play of hermeneutics and scriptural recitation was done at Qumran gatherings just as in the common activities of κοινωνία.

The "session of the Many," what appears to be a public gathering for the Qumran group, is described next. An "Examiner" apparently has the ability to control speech and potentially censor anyone in the session, though he may be overruled; an "Instructor" tests those who wish to become a member of the Community and speak in the session, and it is dictated that no one can "speak before one whose rank is listed before his own."[137] (VI.10-11, 12-14). The upper

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[134] Of course, this is not without qualification. Early Christian groups did not explicitly lay out the seating arrangements or speaking order at their gatherings, nor did they compose a detailed penal code for offenses within their groups – so far as we know. However, the similarities between dining hierarchy, the display of deference to senior members of the group, the mandatory presence of an interpreter when scripture is recited (similar to the Ignatian demand of an overseer's presence), and the exclusion from communal food all beg comparison to early Christian practices, many of which may have been contemporaneous with earliest Christianity if the Qumran group were still in existence in the first century CE.

[135] All translations of Qumran materials are taken from Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*.

[136] Mirroring the general pattern in the Hellenistic world, especially what has been observed in κοινωνία, this hierarchy at the meals is further explicated in VI.8-9, where seating arrangements are described: "Each one by his rank: the priests will sit down first, the elders next and the remainder of all the people will sit down in order of rank." The same hierarchical system is followed in speaking at the gatherings as well, and is described in the line immediately following the previous quote (VI. 9-11).

[137] There is another position at Qumran, the "Inspector," which is described in the Damascus Document (CD). Possessing the same absolute authority to determine who can or cannot enter into membership of the Qumran

echelons of the Qumran order clearly wanted to control speaking and – what may be inferred

from common practices at this time – scriptural interpretation, both of which would have likely

occurred during meetings and meals.

But beyond these forms of control of speech, teaching, and interpretation, *food* is

employed as the ultimate form of control in the Qumran society. After someone has been

admitted to the group as a new proselyte, "he must not touch the pure food of the Many while

they test him about his spirit and about his deeds until he has completed a full year; neither

should he share in the possessions of the Many" (VI.16-17). After a series of tests and

evaluations, his property and wealth is thrown into the public pool, but even after a year of

membership "he must not touch the drink of the Many until he completes a second year among

the men of the Community" (VI. 20-21). *Food* is used as an initial barrier for membership, a

control mechanism for creating in-group/out-group boundaries. This is not to say that food was

kept absolutely from the inductee, for as a living organism he would have had to eat something;

rather, the point here is to observe that food is employed as a primary means of drawing

boundaries and negotiating power relationships, one group keeping a set of food to themselves

and depriving another of it for reasons of power and control of membership.[138]

Yet even more revealing is the manner in which food is utilized as a control device once

someone has been admitted. A meticulous penal code is laid down after the section on

membership qualifications, beginning with this situation: "If one is found among them [the

community (CD XIII.12-13), he is also the overseer of community funds, comparable to a CFO (CD XIII.15-16; XIV. 12-17). This "Inspector" is also mentioned in the Community Rule at 1QS VI.20, where he is also involved in the management of property and goods. Not to become oppressive in my emphasis on the financial aspects of authority in these ancient communities, but this position and its function to manage wealth and its dispersion is curiously similar to that of the overseer in early Christian communities.

[138] Schiffman (1994), 110, makes the point that individuals in the community and trainees must have been allowed "to possess their own food." He does admit, however, that food allocation and docking in rations would make no sense if every individual had their own private store of food; dependence upon being given food must have been important in Qumran members' lives.

Community] who has lied knowingly concerning goods, he shall be excluded from the pure food of the Many for a year and shall be sentenced to a quarter of his bread" (VI.24-25).[139] Expressing concern over *gaining* material goods as well as exacting a punishment *in the form* of material goods, this passage reflects the doubly dire disquiet that food and physical wealth might engender in those attempting to control it. However, the scroll does not stop at this: the entire system of discipline and punishment at Qumran was apparently constructed around food and timed periods of deprivation. If anyone speaks angrily against a priest, "he will be punished for a year and shall be excluded, under sentence of death, from the pure food of the Many" (VII.3). Whoever continues to slander a fellow member of the community "shall be excluded for one year from the pure food of the Many" (VII.17-18). Whoever leaves the community but decides to come back will be punished for two years, and "during the first year he shall not approach the pure food of the Many" (VII.21). There are numerous other references to periods of punishment, each of which is in the context of the previously quoted passages and most certainly refers to deprivation of food and drink.[140] If we follow Schiffman's linguistic argument that a deprivation of one-fourth of rations is to be assumed in each instance of timed punishment without a specified penalty, then we are left to wonder how those who were denied this food were to compensate for this gap in nourishment.[141] It has been suggested that he would most likely have been demoted to a position of inferiority, probably his previous position as a novice wherein he

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[139] Compare Acts 5:1-11 for a slightly more severe punishment for withholding goods from community stores in ancient Palestinian groups.

[140] 1QS VII.3-6, 8, 10-22; VIII.24; IX.1; cf. CD IX.21. Schiffman (1983), draws up a table that documents each instance of punishment, concluding that period of time that does not explicitly demand separation from "pure food" is to be understood as a timed diminution of rations by ¼ (mentioned only in VI.25) and not exclusion from the "pure food" (160). This extension of one phrase and not another into the ambiguity of following passages is a bit uncertain, but it nevertheless still upholds the idea that food is being used as a control device.

[141] Schiffman (1983), 159-160. These instances occur at VI.27; VII.3-6, 8, 10-15, 18-19.

would be forced to cook and associate with those were still novices.[142] In any case, the major

point to observe here is that food is clearly being used as a control mechanism and disciplinary

device in the Qumran community, providing a parallel to how it might be employed in other

social groups in antiquity. This is not a direct analogy by any means: the specific circumstances

of the Qumran group, such as their relative isolation, are important to consider, especially in the

light of early Christianity transitioning to a more urban setting after the death of Jesus. Yet the

Qumran people's use of food as a domesticating device within their social group still

demonstrates how it was and could actually be used in antiquity.

The Ignatian evidence for not only explicit control of the eucharist by the overseer but the

use of the eucharist *itself* as an instrument of control is perhaps the most exemplary of all texts

available. Writing around 100 CE, Ignatius is inflexible in his commands that the eucharist be

controlled by and never enacted apart from the overseer: "μηδεὶς χωρὶς ἐπισκόπου τι πρασσέτω

τῶν ἀνηκόντων εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. ἐκείνη βεβαία εὐχαριστία ἡγείσθω ἡ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον οὖσα…

οὐκ ἐξόν ἐστιν χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπισκόπου οὔτε βαπτίζειν οὔτε ἀγάπην ποιεῖν…" (*Smyrn*. 8:1-2).[143]

Indeed, this is repeated again in his command to come together and celebrate only *one* eucharist,

doing nothing separately and remaining in close proximity to one another: "Σπουδάσατε μιᾷ

εὐχαριστίᾳ χρῆθαι… ἵνα ὅ ἐὰν πράσσητε, κατὰ θεὸν πράσσητε." (*Phil*. 4).[144] This command to

never do anything separately or to never do anything without the consent or presence of the

overseer – especially the eucharist, eating, and praying – is repeated *ad nauseum* in the Ignatian

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[142] Leaney, 201: "It seems more probable that an offender was relegated to the position with regard to eating and cooking which he occupied as a novice…The deprivation of a quarter of his rations is more serious… Probably the man who was deprived of a quarter of his rations had to choose to do without that much or make it up by his own efforts; he was not prevented from obtaining food, but given only a proportion of the communal stock."

[143] "Let no one do anything that has to do with the church without the bishop [overseer]. Only that eucharist which is under the authority of the bishop [overseer] is considered to be valid… It is not permissible either to baptize or to hold a love-feast [meal] without the bishop [overseer]…" My translation follows that of Holmes, 189.

[144] "Take care, therefore, to participate in one eucharist… in order that whatever you do, you do in accordance with god." Again, I follow Holmes, 179, in my translation of Ignatius.

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letters; indeed, in the Ignatian corpus, the exhortations to do nothing separately, to gather together constantly, and do nothing apart from the community and the overseer's control (*Eph*. 5.2-3; 13.1; 20.2; *Magn*. 4; 6.2; 7.1; *Trall*. 2.2-3; 7.2; *Phil*. 4; 7.2; 8.1; *Smyrn*. 6.2; 7.2; 8.1-2; 9.1; *Polycarp*, 4.2; 6.1) are nearly as numerous as the vapid numerical analogies attempting to reinforce the monoepiscopate and the ubiquitous calls to give utter control to the one overseer.[145]

Why not do anything apart from the overseer? Why not perform any actions individually or meet separately? Why the emphasis on *public* gatherings and more frequent communal meetings *always under the overseer*? The answer should be glaringly obvious: control. Meeting apart from authority figures and potentially fraternizing with those of whom said authorities may disapprove, the control of meals, speech, and teachings would be out of the overseers' hands. A public, communal gathering was the perfect place for an authority to observe teachers and those who prophesy, direct the distribution of material goods, and expose any ideological deviants or expel them from the group. In any case, this public prayer and enactment of the eucharist under the guidance of the overseers would almost certainly result in a powerful sense of discretion and authorial direction on their part. As the "inspector" and "guardian," the overseer most likely was the enforcer of exclusive participation in the meal, being the leader that "decides who is qualified to take part in the eucharistic offering and receiving."[146] It has been shown that from an early point access to any form of communal food was restricted in numerous ways, from self-examination before participation (1 Cor. 11:28) to exclusion due to moral offenses (1 Cor. 5:11) to refusal to work and do labor (2 Thess. 3:12, 14), to restrictions on membership and potential

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[145] It is perhaps necessary to recognize the potentially late occurrence of Ignatius's letters, ~100 CE, a few decades after the hypothetical date of the Didache's composition. Even so, however, the tradition and ideas which Ignatius represents were certainly extant and in development in the decades preceding his writing, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that even in the mid-1st century CE – the time in which the Didache was most likely written – the emphasis on *public* rituals and *communal* dining and prayer were in effect even then.
[146] Hall, 32.

deprivation of food for disobedience and offenses (The Community Rule). With Ignatius's

adamancy that the overseer be present at and manage all communal gatherings, as well as his

exhortations to do nothing separately and to come together frequently, it would not be

unreasonable to suggest that in these situations the powers of management accruing to the

overseer – the one who already controls the finances and resources for many in early Christianity

– would result in quite an amount of discretion as to who is to receive food and who will not.

Indeed, in light of the numerous passages exhorting early Christians to be wary of false prophets,

idlers, and other undesirables,[147] it would only stand to reason that these disruptive sorts would

not be supported or welcome at communal meals and gatherings, and that someone in a

leadership position would make the call about whom to either exclude or include. As a patron,

householder, or elder, the overseer would be in such a position. Indeed, the overseers and agents

are assuredly managing not only money and materials, but are overseeing the distribution of food

and the enactment of the eucharist meal; they are both implicated in the eucharistic process, as

the overseers "would *at the least* be supervisors of the eucharistic assemblies. This would

occasion assistance at the eucharistic table by the deacons [agents]."[148]

In the light of such an illuminating context, the Didache's brief passages on the eucharist

and its performance may be properly analyzed. The eucharist meal, dealt with in chapter 9 of the

Didache, is composed of three sections: a prayer for the "cup" (ποτήριον), a prayer for the

"broken bread/fragment" (κλάσμα), and an admonition concerning who is to receive food. It

begins with an introduction utilizing the term εὐχαριστία, as well as employing its verbal source,

εὐχαριστέω: "Περὶ δὲ εὐχαριστίας, οὕτω εὐχαριστήσατε." As if it could not be clear enough

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[147] For a general overview of these references in commonly read Christian texts today, see Acts 20:28-30; 2 Cor. 11:1-7, 12:11; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-14; 1 John 2:19, 26, 4:1-3; 2 John 1:7, 10; 1 Tim. 1:3-4, 4:1-4, 6:3-5, 20; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 3:10-11; Phill. 3:2; Jude 4.
[148] Collins, 238.

from the description of dining ritual implements and the subsequent internal referents to sustenance in the prayers,[149] the εὐχαριστία is here clearly a meal. Even more to the point, it could perhaps be argued to have had quite an ample spread: immediately after the chapter describing the eucharist ritual, in 10.1 the company is directed to give thanks again "μετὰ δὲ ἐμπλησθῆναι," that is, "after you have had your fill." Just as in the example of 1 Cor. 11:33-34, it is reasonable to believe that actually being "filled up fully" is indicative of satisfying hunger and thirst with a decent meal.

However, the most important part of the communal meal in the Didache is the concluding verse of the section, 9.5, a security measure designed to restrict access to the meal and prevent unwanted guests: "But let no one eat or drink of your eucharist except those who have been baptized into the name of the lord, for the lord has spoken concerning this also: 'Do not give what is holy to dogs.'"[150] Unbelievers and the uninitiated are unwelcome at the dinner, being likened to dogs and forbidden to partake of the feast. J.W. Riggs is emphatic that this is an unabashed attempt at "fencing the table," and draws upon comparative evidence in sociology to underwrite the power of food to draw boundaries and enforce rules in social groups.[151]

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[149] The prayer concerning the cup, which would be filled with wine, plays with the concept of "vine" metaphorically, simultaneously giving thanks for the wine in the cup as well as the hereditary "vine" of David which provided the source of enlightenment and salvation for the group: "Εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, πάτερ ἡμων, ὑπερ τῆς ἁγίας ἀμπέλοθ Δαυὶδ τοῦ παιδός σου, ἧς ἐγνώρισας ἡμῖν διὰ Ἰησοῦ παιδός σου…" In addition, the prayer for the broken bread analogizes it to the contemporaneous ἐκκλησία, and appears to express an eschatological hope for unification and inclusion into the βασιλεία. One can easily imagine the presiding official at the meal – the overseer? – raising the cup and bread in turn, saying the respective prayer for each element while gesticulating solemnly with or towards the object in hand.

[150] "μηδεὶς δὲ φαγέτω μηδὲ πιέτω ἀπὸ τῆς εὐχαριστίας ὑμῶν, ἀλλ᾽οἱ βαπτισθέντες εἰς ὄνομα κυρίου, καὶ γὰρ περὶ τούτου εἴρηκεν ὁ κύριος· Μὴ δῶτε τὸ ἅγιον τοῖς κυσί." This same form of explicit restriction is observed a century later in Hippolytus's *Apostolic Tradition*, where he asserts: "Let everyone take care that no unbeliever eat of the eucharist, nor any mouse or other animal, and that none of it falls and is lost. For it is the body of Christ, to be eaten by believers, and not to be despised." (Ch. 36-37).

[151] Riggs, 271, 264. The classic studies of Malinowski, *Soil-Tilling and Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands*, Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger*, and Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders*, are employed as examples in his discussion, and are particularly instructive.

But after fencing off outsiders, the Didache extends further regulations for internal boundaries as well. At 14.1-2, communal dining is referenced again, but this time with a further qualification:

> On the lord's own day (κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ κυρίου) gather together and break bread and give thanks (εὐχαριστήσατε), having first confessed your errors so that your sacrifice may be pure. *But let no one who has a quarrel with a companion join you until they have been reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be defiled.*[152]

The table is additionally "fenced" with regard to internal membership, and anyone who has given offense to an associate or is in a dispute with another member is to be excluded. Any who have wronged another member of the community are also excluded from fellowship until they repent (15.3), thus providing an avenue by which they could eventually return to communal meetings – but only through the subservient act of repenting of their offense. That this regulation could be turned to many ends is quite clear, and the possibility for its use in restricting many a dissident or troublemaker from the meal is obvious. With the power of having potentially provided means for the meal, as well as being socially influential members in the community already, the overseers would be in a prime position to bar those whom they deemed unworthy or unfit on many grounds, including ideological differences. Indeed,

> Even more than baptism, it [the eucharist] too served as a point of reference in discipline. *It was, as it were, the checkpoint for examining whether the faithful adhered to the covenant morally, socially, or theologically.* As such, it would have served to keep alive the sense of exclusivism inculcated first in baptism and to remind the faithful continually of the obligation to *proper faith* and holiness… like baptism, it provided a focus for discipline – both in being prohibited to the unbaptized and *in being withheld for disciplinary reasons.*[153]

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[152] Emphasis added. My translation differs from that of Holmes in a few respects, but most significantly in translating παραπτώματα as "errors" rather than "sins."
[153] Hinson, 103; 285, emphasis added.

This would work well with the prohibition against those who are factious and engaged in disputes, for a conflict over ideology with an overseer would certainly negate a member's ability to participate in a meal *possibly being provided by* an overseer. Any who espoused ideas or points of theology of which an overseer disapproved might be excluded as well: any deviant prophecies or contrary teachings would certainly bring a charismatic into conflict with community authorities, thereby precluding their presence at the meal.

There are obvious objections to exclusionary practices being used against those in indigent need, and these might even be derived from the Didache itself. At and around Did.1.5 a lengthy discourse is given which maintains the notion of altruistic philanthropy, leading with the simple dictum of "Give to all who ask [of] you, and do not ask [for it] back." This is echoed again at 4.5-8, where sentiments of communal property are apparently observed and all are exhorted to "not turn away from someone in need." However, the Didache provides a loophole for such black-and-white constructions: immediately following the initial commands to charity at 1.5, the text provides a pragmatic recommendation: "Then again, it has also been said concerning this [charity]: 'Let your gift sweat in your hands until you know to whom you are giving it.'"[154] Beautifully providing a semantic avenue for discretion in the dispersion of community funds and the supplying of material support to certain persons, this same sentiment is given again at 12.1, where all who "come in the name of the lord" are to be welcomed, but they are then to be immediately tested to find out "δεξιὰν καὶ ἀριστεράν."[155] This is not only highly logical but also probably necessary, as some have observed that the eucharist itself may have been an "implicit

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[154] "ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τούτου δὲ εἴρηται· Ἱδρωσάτω ἡ ἐλεημοσύνη σου εἰς τὰς χεῖρας σου, μέχρις ἄν γνῷς τίνι δῷς."
[155] Literally, "right and left.," but meaning true/correct and false/wrong. Some translators place δεξιὰν καὶ ἀριστεράν as the object of ἕξετε, but the parenthetical phrase clearly has σύνεσιν as the object of ἕξετε, and so the preceding verb γνώσεσθε should take δεξιὰν καὶ ἀριστεράν as its object. Thus, "having tested him (δοκιμάσαντες αὐτὸν) you will know the truth and false [of his claims/of him]."

missionary activity,"[156] resulting in the necessity of evaluating charismatics and others who would seek to join in a communal meal.[157] Those who would freely dole out charitable gifts and philanthropic assistance are thus cautioned to be wary with their material support, and to take careful stock of whom exactly they are aiding.

The Issue of Itinerancy

The itinerancy of the charismatics has been seen as a large component of their identity since the foundational work of Gerd Theissen in the 1970s. In his *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* Theissen develops the thesis that prophets and apostles were itinerant, and that the early Jesus movement was perpetually nomadic:

> Jesus did not primarily found local communities, but called into being a movement of wandering charismatics. The decisive figures in early Christianity were traveling apostles, prophets, and disciples who moved from place to place and could rely on small groups of sympathizers in these places. From the point of view of organization, these sympathizers remained within the framework of Judaism… It was, rather, the homeless wandering charismatics who handed on what was later to take independent form as Christianity.[158]

Thus the community that hosts these traveling charismatics is sympathetic to them but, following the definition of charismatics offered in this thesis, the charismatics *are not* part of the actual community, and are bearers of a new religious tradition (nascent Christianity). Theissen's idea

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[156] That is, an activity which missionaries would encourage and exhort people towards as they were passing through a settlement in order to obtain a meal. This is not to say that it was the primary impetus for missionary work, but to highlight the fact that missionaries – like everyone else – are humans and thus would desire food and lodging for their travail. The eucharist would have been a perfect opportunity for them to solicit new converts with the enticement of communal inclusion and a meal, while they themselves would have been fed as well!

[157] Hinson, 103-110, 161-162,284-285; Riggs, 273-274.

[158] Theissen (1978), 8.

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that these charismatics were constantly itinerant was immensely influential,[159] and he further

developed this idea to assert that their authority of charisma was actually derived from this

itinerant (and thus impoverished) status:

> By doing so [living a life of poverty and itinerancy] they preached
> and lived a freedom from basic social responsibilities of a sort which
> could be put into practice only by those who had removed themselves
> from the stabilizing and domesticating effects of a continuing life of
> work – not by virtue of the privilege of possessions, but by means of
> the ascetic poverty of an insecure marginal existence… The question of
> subsistence therefore goes to the root of his spiritual existence and
> touches at the credibility of the way of life he expounds.[160]

Theissen here draws out two immense issues. The first issue is played with in modern

scholarship: that of charismatic authority and how itinerant status affected that authority. Second

is the pragmatic issue of how wandering charismatic figures made a living and were able to

support themselves (or be supported) in the early Jesus movement, since they had no permanent

residence and no stable occupation.

First, the issue of how itinerancy was related to authority has been noted by numerous

scholars. If the prophets moved about day to day with no stable source of income, nourishment,

or shelter, "the life of the prophet… must have made a deep impression on the community even

before their words were heard."[161] Likewise, Theissen argued that the lifestyle of the prophets

and apostles was primarily itinerant and ascetic. Many scholars have re-emphasized the link

between itinerancy and charismatic authority, and have argued that in the Didache the issue of

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[159] Almost all subsequent scholarship on apostles and prophets acknowledges that prophets and apostles were required to be itinerant, or *at least* that they were very often itinerant. For the divergent views on itinerancy and how it affected charismatic authority, see Boring (1991), 94-96; Crossan, 373-374; Draper (1995), 305-306, 309; Milavec *Faith, Hope,* 472-507; del Verme, 199. Verme and Draper represent a recent trend to assert that itinerancy is actually irrelevant to prophetic authority, a hypothesis that is both supported by the text of the *Didache* (chapters 12 and 13) and is the hypothesis argued in this essay.
[160] Theissen (1982), 27.
[161] Milavec, *The Didache*, 72.

charismatic itinerancy is the sole issue dealt with in chapters 11-13 and 15, even declaring that

"the problem is not just those of itinerant authorities but, much more profoundly, the authority of

itinerancy itself."[162] Traveling without a sustained source of food, income, or a certain place

wherein they could take refuge, the prophet has been argued to be a charismatic authority by

some scholars primarily *because* of their itinerancy: the foundation of their charismatic authority

was their liminal and extreme form of existence, seemingly more "spiritual" or "holy" than

common people.[163]

However, not all prophets were itinerant,[164] and so while there certainly *were* prophets

wandering throughout the Syria-Palestine area in the first century CE, the fact that some were in

fact sedentary negates the force of itinerancy as a primary factor in charismatic authority. More

to the point, several scholars have noted that the text of the Didache itself negates the importance

of itinerancy for prophecy, as it provides a way for prophets to settle down within the community

and establish a sedentary and stable life (Did.13:1).[165] Thus, there is

> …no evidence that the prophets were [always] peripatetic figures.
> The only evidence of the text [of the Didache] is that a prophet comes
> from outside the community and wishes to settle there (13.1). If wandering
> penury were the hallmark of the true prophet, how could a true prophet
> remain a true prophet if s/he settled in the community and received a
> stipend from the firstfruits of the community?[166]

Following this, the authority that some scholars have founded upon the itinerancy of the prophets

is itself unfounded, and itinerancy is not a factor of prophetic and apostolic activity that is being

disputed or contested in the Didache because it is not related to what *is* actually being contested

in the Didache.

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[162] Crossan, 374.
[163] For more on this, see Milavec, *Faith, Hope*, 425-474, especially 428-435; Theissen (1982), 27-32; (1978), 8-16.
[164] Boring (1991), 93-96.
[165] De Halleux, 305-306; Draper (1995), 305-306, 309; del Verme, 199.
[166] Draper (1995), 305-306.

However, although the idea of power based entirely upon itinerancy is unsound, early Christianity clearly *did* involve wandering on the part of charismatic figures, but to what degree is unclear.[167] This fact – that some prophets, apostles, and teachers actually *did* travel between communities throughout the Ancient Near East – is significant with regard to their livelihood, for with no stable occupation, source of income, or place to stay, these traveling charismatic figures would be utterly dependent upon a sympathetic following within the communities they occasionally visited. Being welcomed with a warm, hospitable setting and food was something that was needed by the charismatics who traveled from village to village. The idea of hospitality is attested in numerous spots in early Christian literature, with some of the passages being rather open and unguarded about freely giving hospitality to strangers and traveling charismatics (Mt. 10:40-42; Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 3 John 5-8). This is not to say, however, that this was never a concern for these wandering figures, nor that hospitality was freely given to all. In the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles*, Peter and the other apostles become anxious when they are told to go out and heal and preach:

> Peter answered and said to him, 'Master, you have taught us to
> renounce the world and everything in it. We have forsaken these things
> for your sake. Now we are concerned only about food for a single day.
> Where can we find what the poor need, which you ask *us* to give to *them*?'[168]

Many passages in early Christian literature reflect a concern with persons who would engage in this sort of "work" (prophesying, healing, preaching) and would expect to be fed and sheltered

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[167] One need look no further than the example of Paul as primary evidence for traveling charismatic personalities in early Christianity; Jesus's ventures throughout the towns and villages in Galilee serves as a similar model for traveling teachers, though on a smaller scale. Various texts record the sending of emissaries and envoys out from and to certain cities (Acts 13-21) as well as the various incidents where hospitality is encouraged by early Christian authors (Mt. 10:40-42; Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 3 John 5-8). See also the various missionary manifestos in the synoptics, Mk. 6:7-13; Mt. 10:5-12; Lk. 9:1-16. See Anderson, pp. 167-177 for an overview of "holy men" in antiquity and their habits of travel, including Apollonius of Tyana, Lucian's Peregrinus Proteus, and Alexander of Abonouteichos.

[168] 9.17-10.30, emphasis added. Translation taken from *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, Marvin Meyer, ed.

for it. In both of the letters to the Thessalonians in particular, the text expresses the sentiment that one should actually do manual labor and engage in work in order to earn one's keep, even going so far as to assert that the writer(s) prophesied and evangelized *while* working in order to not be a burden to anyone (1 Thess. 2:9). The people in the community should "admonish the idlers" and "work with your own hands," maintaining a livelihood for themselves and rebuking those who seek to live off of the material production of others (1 Thess. 5:14, 4:11-12). More to the point, immediately after a lengthy passage exhorting the community to abhor idleness and be engaged in work, the writer(s) of 2 Thessalonians commands the community to "take note of those who do not obey what we say in this letter; have nothing to do with them, so that they may be ashamed." (3:14). There is a clear effort to control the type of person who depends upon others for their livelihood, not engaging in agricultural work or any form of business in order to support themselves but simply depending upon the charity of others. These verses clearly demonstrate a concern to regulate the behavior of vagrants, transients, and any charismatics who seek to live off of charitable support and control the amount of exposure anyone in these early Jesus communities might have to them.

This control of charismatics and travelers is functional in another way as well, in which those giving hospitality would withhold it upon certain conditions, specifically doctrinal conditions. For instance, in 2 John 10, the writer warns the readers: "Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching." This echoes the passage in the Didache at 11:1-2, in which the community is told to "receive anyone who comes and teaches you all that has been said above," but also orders that anyone who teaches anything contrary is to be ignored. This same idea shown in 2 John and the Didache – of controlling the dissemination of doctrine through the refusal of material support – is evidenced throughout early

Christian writings.[169] Though some passages simply warn against "false prophets" or exhort believers to be wary of those who "cause dissensions" and teach things that "do not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ," the tone of the passages are clear: have nothing to do with these people, do not encourage them, and by ignoring them you will not support them by giving them food and shelter.

Of course, this did not go uncontested, and remnants of the debate over this subject echo throughout early Christian literature. The passage which seems to reveal the most explicit link between the work of these charismatics (preaching, healing, and prophesying) as worthy of payment is Matthew 10:9-10. As part of the famous section in which the twelve disciples are sent out to heal and preach (engage in charismatic pursuits), Jesus orders them to "take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for the laborer deserve his food" (ἄξιος γὰρ ὁ ἐργάτης τῆς τροφῆς αὐτοῦ). This exact sentiment is echoed again in Luke 10:7, where – in the same context as Matthew – it is declared that "the laborer deserves his pay/wage" (ἄξιος γὰρ ἐργατής τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ). Declared again in 1 Corinthians 3:8 as well as in *The Dialogue of the Savior* (139.8-13, as spoken by Mary) the idea that a "laborer" (in this case a person sent out as a prophet, apostle, or teacher) deserves to be financially and materially supported is woven into many texts, and gains special authority when placed in the mouth of Jesus or Mary.

However, the most famous and illuminating example comes in 1 Corinthians 9:1-14 when Paul launches into a diatribe on the merits of his line of work – preaching, teaching, prophesying, and founding Jesus-communities throughout the Mediterranean – and argues that

[169] See Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 6:2-8; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 2 Peter 2:1-3, 9-10. In addition, the writer of 3 John angrily denounces a certain Diotrephes for foolish talk, as well as for not welcoming the "brothers" when they stop in at his church, a situation similar to 1 Cor. 9 in which we are able to experience the "flip-side" of this sustenance-scuffle; the perspective we get is from the side of *not* being fed and welcomed, and when this happened people considered it important enough to take the time to compose a diatribe in a letter about it.

he should benefit by being materially supported by these communities as an apostle and preacher (charismatic). Interestingly he begins by explicitly asking "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" by which he indirectly asserts his authority as an apostle. Invoking this status marker, he proceeds to angrily inquire as to whether or not this social position entitles him to the material benefits that he clearly expects to receive from the members of the Corinthian community:

> This is my defense to those who would examine me. Do we not have the right to food and drink (φαγεῖν καὶ πεῖν)? … Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? … Who plants a vineyard and does not eat any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not get any of its milk? … If we have sown spiritual good (τὰ πνευματίκα) among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits (τὰ σαρκίκα)? If others have a share of this claim on you, do not we still more? … the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

Not only is the claim made that he is entitled to the food and drink of the community simply because he is an apostolic figure and a sower of "spiritual things," but he indirectly describes how "others" – apostolic or prophetic (charismatic) figures? – are profiting from the material support of the Corinthian community while he and Barnabas are refused the same support. This demonstrates that a process of selective support was occurring amongst early Jewish-Christian communities in the first century CE, wherein those prophets, apostles, or teachers who were approved by the community – most certainly with the involvement of its leaders and institutional authorities – were granted material support. Those that were denied support, such as Paul and Barnabas in this instance, had to muster rhetorical might in order to win back the favor of the community, for they had nothing else with which to support themselves. While there may have been several reasons for why this discrimination occurred, based upon the early Christian textual passages given above, as well as Didache 11:1-2, the fact that the teachings and message of the

charismatic figure played an important role in his approval and thus in the material support given to him is undeniably important.[170]

Of course, preaching, teaching, and prophesying were controversial actions even in the first century CE. The earliest surviving New Testament text, 1 Thessalonians,[171] already evinces a sense of conflict surrounding prophecy: "Do not quench the spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast to what is good, abstain from every form of evil." (5:19-22). Aune lays out what can be seen already in this passage in three points: (1) the concept of the "holy spirit" and prophesying are intimately connected;[172] (2) prophesying was a normally occurring activity insofar as *prophets* engaged in it, and (3) prophesying had, for some reason, already become a source of contention.[173] In the 2nd century CE Montanism arose and its prophecies were seen as heretical, indicating that this contention over prophecy was not anywhere near being resolved during this time, and as the Didache was most likely composed in the late 1st century, between the dates of 1 Thessalonians in the mid-1st century and Montanism in the mid-2nd, it was undoubtedly affected and involved in this conflict over prophetic authority and content.[174]

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[170] This idea is noted only by Draper (1995), who argues that this is the primary criteria by which prophets and apostles were evaluated.

[171] Aune, 190.

[172] For more textual evidence of the connection between the "holy spirit" and prophetic activity, see Acts 2:1-4, 15-21; 10:44-46; 19: 1-6. See also *The Letter of Peter to Philip* wherein "Peter opened his mouth," and "was filled with the holy spirit" and began to preach (139.9-140.1), and where "Peter and the other apostles saw and were filled with the holy spirit. Each one performed healings, and they left to preach the Lord Jesus." (140.1-27). Also, in *The Interpretation of Knowledge* (15-17) the writer admonishes the community of readers: "Someone has a prophetic gift. Share in it without hesitation. Do not approach your brother with jealousy... Does someone make progress as a speaker? Do not take that as a personal affront. Don't say, "Why does that one speak but I do not speak?' For whatever he says belongs to you as well." While this describes internal conflict over the prestige of oral prophecy and speaking, it also describes prophecy as a "gift," hinting again at the impersonal and "inspired" nature of prophecy, i.e. under the influence of the "spirit."

[173] Aune, 191.

[174] Ehrman (2003), 238, explicitly mentions Montanus and his prophetic action as a potential catalyst for wanting and needing to control prophecy and oral teachings during this time.

However, the fact that prophecy involving the "holy spirit" is shown to involve prediction of the future (Acts 11:27-28; 20:23; 21:10-11), the resolution of religious disputes (Acts 15:28, 32) guidance in making decisions (Acts 16:6-10) and the selection of particular people for special tasks (Acts 13:1-3)[175] demonstrates that prophecy contained and implied practical authority and practical power, a charismatic resource which would need to be contested in order to change or reverse any order or pronouncement made by a prophet, or even simply to assert more authority in opposition to prophets, teachers, and other charismatics.

The Didache and Adaptable Authority of Ambiguity

The Didache's section of control begins in 11.1 and runs through 12.5, containing a tangled mass of regulations and seemingly contradictory rules for observing, evaluating, testing, and ruling upon the authenticity of prophets, apostles, and teachers. Declaring that "if anyone should come and teach you all these things [the preceding material in the Didache], welcome him." (11.1). However, in 11.2 the text immediately clarifies that "if the teacher himself goes astray and teaches a different teaching in order to destroy/undermine [the Didache's teaching], do not listen to him" (ἐάν δὲ αὐτὸς ὁ διδάσκων στραφεὶς διδάσκῃ ἄλλην διδαχὴν εἰς τὸ καταλῦσαι, μὴ αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε). The section thus commences with a warning that even those who teach what is in the text may turn to teaching something εἰς τὸ καταλῦσαι, and if so they are to be completely ignored.

However, the real section of regulation begins at 11.3: opening with περὶ δὲ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν, "Now concerning the apostles and prophets," it immediately groups

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[175] The observation of these verses and the analysis of their particular function is taken from Aune, 192.

the two types together, lending credence to the analytical classification of them as charismatics

done at the outset of this work. Every apostle who comes is to be δεχθήτω ὡσ κύριος,

"welcomed as the lord" (11.4). This seems familiar and genial enough, but suddenly the tone

shifts to a more guarded hue:

> οὐ μενεῖ ἡμέραν μίαν· ἐάν δὲ ᾖ χρεία, καὶ τὴν ἄλλην· τρεῖς δὲ ἐάν
> μείνῃ, ψευδοπροφήτης ἐστίν: "But he is not to stay for more than one
> day, unless there is need, in which case he may stay for another. If he
> stays three days, he is a false prophet." (11.5)

Not only has the apostle who was the subject in 11.4 been called a "false prophet," thus

combining the two and further justifying seeing them as perhaps more than only similar, but a

direct and explicit regulation on hospitality has been laid down: one day, perhaps two if

necessary, but no more. If anyone stays more than this they are a charlatan and a cheat.

Yet the text does not stop there: in 11.6 the Didache declares that when the apostle

leaves, "he is to take nothing except bread," "μηδὲν λαμβανέτω εἰ μὴ ἄρτον," and also that "if he

asks for money, he is a false prophet," ἐὰν δὲ ἀργύριον αἰτῇ, ψευδοπροφήτης ἐστίν." Further

curtailing the access of a charismatic figure to material resources, the text places additional

explicit regulations on how charismatics are to be conceived of and treated.

And again, at 11.9 and 11.12 the Didache further restricts the behavior of charismatics:

"furthermore, any prophet who orders a meal in the spirit shall not partake of it: if he does, he is

a false prophet (ψευδοπροφήτης)." This term, ψευδοπροφήτης, seems to be the Didachist's

catch-all term for a charismatic figure – whether apostle, prophet, or teacher – who is ruled out

due to deviant or unapproved actions. Did.11.12 declares that anyone who asks for money "in the

spirit" is to be ignored as well, though it does not denounce anyone doing this as explicitly being

a ψευδοπροφήτης.

However, the more fascinating occurrences are in 11.7-8. While it is clear in the Didache that prophecy is a matter of contention and that it is also a normally occurring activity for prophets (two of Aune's points), the issue of speaking "in the spirit" is a rather unclear standard that is invoked not only in a plethora of early Christian literature but in the Didache as well. In 11.7 it is commanded that no one is to test or judge any prophet who "speaks in spirit" (λαλοῦντα ἐν πνεύματι). This seems clear enough save that the very next verse in 11.8 explicitly announces that "Not everyone who speaks in the spirit is a prophet," οὐ πᾶς δὲ ὁ λαλῶν ἐν πνεύματι προφήτης ἐστίν. Suddenly, as if it were known that contradictory directions were being given, in the middle of all of these regulations a loophole of hermeneutical convenience is placed: 11.8 continues to state that "Not everyone who speaks in the spirit is a prophet, *but only the one whose behavior is the lord's*," ἀλλ᾽ ἐὰν ἔχῃ τοὺς τρόπους κυρίου. Clearly some manner of game is afoot:

> It is only by the possession of the opaque τρόπους τοῦ κυρίου [sic] (way of life of the Lord) that the true prophet can be known from the false one. Thus the text hints at the presence of testing, notwithstanding the prohibition against testing, which appears in 11.11… we should note here that this ambivalence about prophetic activity must approach paranoia when the community expects that a person might suddenly 'turn and teach another teaching to destroy.' (11.2).[176]

Similar to the semantic outlet of Did.1.6 pertaining to charity, this escape clause in 11.8 allows for the "opaque" and utterly arbitrary τρόπους κυρίου to be employed as the indefinite paradigm by which those who control the materials – overseers and agents – measure the actions and ideas

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[176] Draper (1995), 296. It should also be noted that in the eschatological section of Did. 16:3, the text declares that "in the final days prophets and corruptors will be multiplied, and the sheep will turn into wolves…" The notion that once innocent "sheep" will transform into ravenous "wolves" might reveal a similar paranoia regarding members of the group, their supposed purity of membership no guard against temptation and deviousness in the "final days." Consistent evaluation and analysis of speaking and teaching may perhaps have been a general trait of the Didache community, being the singular method for knowing when a member of the flock had transmutated into a member of the pack.

of charismatics. The vagueness of the standards of being filled with the "spirit" and how this could be ascertained need not be detailed, as this standard of evaluation is clearly beyond the scope of rational human inquiry, but to compound the regulation for prophetic authenticity by adding "the behavior of the lord" is clearly an attempt at restricting prophetic influence. What speaking "in spirit" could have meant is difficult enough to know, but to say that some may do this and *still* not be a true prophet is an unmistakable attempt to control who is a prophet and who is not, i.e. whose prophetic pronouncements will be seen as authentic and whose will be ruled as negated by their behavior not being "the lord's." This open-ended standard of evaluation may have played into the hands of the writer(s) of the Didache, wherein those who spoke "in the spirit" were not to be judged (11.7), but just what it took for a prophet to be legitimately speaking "in the spirit" may have been at the discretion of the community authorities, and a further complication and loophole is added by the requirement that their behavior be "of the lord."

In addition, another vague rule of evaluation was given at the outset of Did.11.1-2, already mentioned briefly but demanding further unpacking. As stated previously, anyone who comes and teaches what is in the Didache is to be welcomed (11.1), but if he teaches something "in order to destroy," he is to be shunned (11.2). What exactly it might take to be qualified as teaching "in order to destroy," εἰς τὸ καταλῦσαι, is already vague enough, lending potential to the use of this rule for multiple ends, but the corollary to this ruling on spurning those who "destroy" is given in the remainder of 11.2: "However, if his teaching contributes to righteousness and knowledge of the lord (εἰς δὲ τὸ προσθεῖναι δικαιοσύνην καὶ γνῶσιν κυρίου), welcome him as the lord." Already observed as an "elastic rule,"[177] this *additional* tenuous

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[177] Milavec, *Faith, Hope*, 437.

typology is given for the scrutiny of charismatics. The indefinite nature of "contributing to righteousness" is clearly unclear, and one can hardly begin to delineate what the various members of the Didache's constituent congregation would specifically aver to be "righteousness" or "knowledge of the lord." The answer can only be that communal authorities used their position to assert and enforce what this would be, employing the foundation of their power – social prestige and control of materials – to effect this dichotomous ruling: those increasing "righteousness" are welcomed and shown hospitality, those who are deemed teaching ἐις τὸ καταλῦσαι – at an authority's discretion – are ignored.

More to the point, the fact that a prophet is not to be judged while speaking "in the spirit," (most likely determined by overseers and agents) combined with the *explicit* standards of evaluation (11.5-6, 8-10, 12) as well as the more important *indefinite* standards of evaluation (11.2, 8, 11) indicates that control of charismatics was clearly an objective of the writer(s) of the Didache. This only need be given a further "hypothetical" extension[178] to understand these indefinite and perhaps deliberately confusing standards of evaluation as an attempt by the institutional authorities demanding equal recognition in 15:1-2 (overseers and agents) to place prophetic pronouncements under their control.[179] As noted by Draper,[180] this desire to control prophets and apostles was not based in their abuse of the community's hospitality *but based*

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[178] Hypothetical with respect to all work on the text of the Didache. Again, as Kurt Niederwimmer, one of the most prominent scholars working on the Didache, has noted, "That all assertions about the *Didache* bear merely hypothetical character, in view of the condition of our *Didache* tradition, has rightly been emphasized time and again." (Niederwimmer, 1996, p.322). Thus these assertions about the positions of overseers are not a matter of pure guesswork but an historical attempt to place the Didache in its historical context by addressing the human factors that would have been at play at the time, i.e. economic, social, psychological, and biological factors. The hypothesis of overseer control and textual manipulation is supported by the evidence of surrounding history and texts from the period, and to help "fill in the blanks" of the Didache's text it is useful to observe what was happening in similar social circles in the probable time period of the Didache's composition.
[179] Several scholars have noted the Didache's vague and open-ended standards of evaluation and lack of detailed doctrinal content. See Draper (1999), 42-44; (1995), 295-297; Hall, 16; Milavec, *Faith, Hope*, 436-437.
[180] Draper (1995), 299-300.

upon the content of their message and the doctrine they were teaching.[181] The fact that the

Didachist does *not* seek to reconcile the tension between these two groups[182] but rather asserts

the power of one group to authenticate the other demonstrates that charismatic authority was in

conflict with another authority and that the issue of contention was the *content* of the teachings

of charismatics.

Orality and Text, Charismatic Speech, and Manipulation of Tradition

As a source of authority, prophecy and charismatic teaching at the time of the Didache

may have been an "alternative [authority] to the emerging hierarchical authority in nascent

Christianity."[183] As distinct from the main group of believers,[184] the prophet possessed a social

position outside of normal bounds,[185] and a social set of behaviors and actions "at the heart of

whose ministry stands the commission he has received in the mystery of the I-Thou encounter

with God,"[186] a vague but useful way of saying that prophets believed themselves to be the

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[181] Crossan, 373-374; De Halleux, 308; Milavec *Faith, Hope*, 454-470; Niederwimmer (1998), 175-182. De Halleux and Crossan explicitly emphasize that the doctrinal content of the prophets and apostles was not to be scrutinized, but their behavior would be the standard by which they would be judged. This assertion does not seem to be supported by the vague standards of the Didache, nor by the evidence of other early Christian writings (primarily 2 John and 3 John) and the opening lines of this section of the Didache, 11.1-2.

[182] Chadwick, 88, is rather forward in his hypothesis of a Didachist who seeks to achieve peace between the two groups, while Crossan and Milavec perceive the Didachist as attempting to assist traumatized refugees and downcast beggars who filled the social position of the "apostle-prophet." Even Draper (1995) eventually settles on the idea that the Didachist is attempting to resolve tension in the community rather than attempt to control or regulate a group and place it under the authority of another. This hypothesis, while heartwarming, is unsupported not only by the text, but by the historical developments of the 2nd and 3rd century CE wherein institutional authorities marginalized and eventually asserted control over prophetic activity and content.

[183] Rossing, 262.

[184] The idea that prophesying and prophecy was an activity engaged in by all believers is argued by several scholars, but this is not supported by textual evidence. See Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11-12; 1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14. See also the evidence in the Didache for prophets as a separate social group, primarily chapters 11-13.

[185] For more on the social relations of early Jewish-Christian groups at this time, and as they are reflected in the Didache, see Draper (1995), 284-308, as well as Harding, 314-316.

[186] McDonald, 29.

personal mediums through which the divine will was communicated; this "I-Thou" terminology simply conveys the notion that divine information is channeled directly through a prophet, the mouthpiece of a deity. This special orientation and "source" of information gave the prophet a potentially insulated social and theological position from which social critiques and pronouncements could be made with relative impunity. These pronouncements would not be cast aside as irrelevant or false, as "the prophet, through the intimacy of his I-Thou relationship with the Lord, was [believed to be] admitted to an immediate awareness of some aspects of the 'mind of Christ' in relation to not only himself but to community concern also…"[187] This prophetic dimension of activity was related to other branches of charismatic activity, as by the end of the 1st century "prophetic functions had become absorbed into preaching and teaching [the work of apostles and teachers], which were activities to which prophecy had always been related…"[188] Thus this "I-Thou" relationship dynamic, as well as its attendant social prestige and classification, may have extended to both apostles and teachers as well, whose activities were intimately related to and perhaps even became at times indistinguishable from the common work of prophets.

This foundational similarity between the charismatics and how their particular authority is enacted – through the "I-Thou" relationship with the divine, based upon personal authority and charisma – is also at the foundation of the conflict that is revealed in the Didache. Again, in the early stages of church development "a church leader drew authority from spiritual charisma… celebrating the mysteries, committing oneself to a pure and holy life and confessing one's faith in an act of 'witness' (Greek 'martyrdom')" were more important and much more influential and

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[187] Ibid., 35.
[188] Stewart-Sykes (2001), 16.

powerful than common liturgical functions.[189] The idea that the lifestyle, behavior, and

theological claims and actions of the charismatics made a deep and lasting impression is forcibly

made by Milavec, Crossan, and Theissen, and they are most likely correct in arguing that the

authority of these charismatics was derived primarily from their personal actions and interactions

with the common populace, the community of the Didache.[190] Here Draper is useful, too, as his

argument that the *content* of the preaching and teaching as the matter to be controlled is

important, but a second assertion of his should also be incorporated: that is, that "the prophet

[charismatic] may re-interpret traditional material in the light of new and changing

circumstances."[191] As the re-interpreter of scripture and tradition, the prophet – and by extension

the apostles and teachers, the charismatics – were able to alter existing ideas and forge new ones

which stood outside of the control of the overseers and agents, whose authority was derived from

position of office, potential wealth, and household leader status rather than personal charisma.[192]

      This fact, that the re-interpretation of tradition was central to the actions of the

charismatics, itself plays an important role in what the conflict in the Didache is about. Not only

were the overseers and agents attempting to put the content of the message of charismatics under

tighter control, but the very way of life of charismatic leadership was being put under the foot of

organized communal leadership, again as a way to control the content of charismatic speech. The

formation of the "canon" of the New Testament and other early Christian texts "has its *Sitz im*

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[189] Lössl, 195-196.

[190] Crossan, 374-379; Milavec, *The Didache*, 72; *Faith, Hope*, 425-474, especially 428-435; Theissen (1982), 27-32; (1978), 8-16.

[191] Draper (1995), 306.

[192] See Draper (1995), 291-294 and 303-312 for more on the authority and social standing of overseers and agents. Draper's assertion that these figures possessed a different type of authority than charismatics is maintained in this work, but his full idea that overseers and agents were the oppressed social group is not supported by either this thesis nor by the text of the Didache. His reasoning is based on Torah adherence and the social prestige this may have garnered, and while this is possible, there is very small evidence for how this could favor his argument of the charismatics having more authority than the overseers and agents.

Leben in the transition from oral to written tradition,"[193] and the Didache itself may be evidence

of this process. The notion that oral pronouncements carried the absolute authority and power of

the divine will, i.e. the authority of speaking in or for the "holy spirit," was receding into the

background as a new form of authoritative discourse was emerging: text as scripture. Indeed,

"the most decisive break in the history of Christianity was occurring during this time, and this

process entail[ed] an entirely new Christological orientation: from the living, heavenly Christ of

the oral tradition to the past and earthly Jesus of the written one."[194] This transition of authority

from oral to written not only mirrored the transition from charismatic authority to institutional

authority, but essentially caused it. That is, "through the institution's experience with prophetic

charisms [sic] of past centuries, it is able to accumulate experience and to develop criteria for the

assessment of true and false prophecy…".[195] This eventual accrual of prophecies and teachings

and its ossification as text only stands to reason:

> In terms of the development of early Christian tradition, one would
> expect that the emergence of prophetic virtuosi in the community
> would be accompanied by the collection and codification of the
> tradition, whether the preprophetic [sic] tradition or the prophetic
> tradition itself…[196]

As an extempore act,[197] prophecy and preaching were initially founded in the "inspired"

authority of speaking "in the spirit," giving "the charismatic, oral performer immense power,

since s/he spoke with the voice and authority of Jesus, realizing his presence in the

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[193] Hvidt, 82.
[194] Geert Hallbäck, "The Earthly Jesus, the Gospel Genre and Types of Authority." *The New Testament in Its Hellenistic Context*, Gunnlaugur A Jonsson, ed. p. 142. Reykjavik: Gudfraedistofnun-Skalholtsutgafan, 1996. Quoted in Hvidt, 83-84.
[195] Hvidt, 85.
[196] Draper (1999), 40.
[197] Stewart-Sykes, 13. The fact of the spontaneity and seemingly "inspired" nature of prophecy, preaching, and teaching being considered a crucial aspect of its authority is described well by Stewart-Sykes, pp. 12-23.

community."[198] However, "this 'oral christology' and the problems which were associated with its charismatic proponents" lead the Didachist, in this case, to "textualize the tradition, simultaneously recording, critiquing, and discrediting" the inspired spontaneity and extempore act of prophesying and preaching "in the Spirit."[199] While the charismatics were able to re-interpret and evaluate tradition, eventually their words and actions were compiled into a text and a standard was created by which to evaluate *them*, and "gradually the whole life of the community… is placed under the accumulating text"[200] which has been formed based upon the very words and actions of the charismatics themselves. In essence, the compiler of oral tradition into text "accomplishes the death of living words for the purpose of inaugurating the life of textuality."[201] Indeed, the very orality and uncontrolled nature of prophetic activity and charismatic speech made it a potential threat to the authority of others in early Christian groups such as overseers, an authority that sought to base itself in a more stabilized and manageable medium. Taking the later movement of Montanism as an example, it was clear to church leadership in the late 2nd century CE that so long as "Montanus and his two female companions could claim to have direct revelation from God, *there were no visible constraints to prevent 'heretical' Christians from making comparable claims*."[202] Perceiving this unchecked source of authority and discovering means to control it, the idea of literacy as a domesticating tool "led Christian leaders to more certain authorities. These were written authorities, solid and fixed,

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[198] Draper (1995), 305.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid., 307.
[201] Kelber, 131. Kelber, pp. 90-131, traces the development of this process in the text of Mark, concluding that, "in making the story culminate in the definitive rupture of oral communication, the author has narrated the justification for his own written narrative." (131). In the same way, Clifford Geertz has analyzed how the aristocracy in post-revolutionary Bali utilized the collection, codification, and wider dissemination of *texts* to re-authorize themselves and maintain their power (pp. 170-189, but significantly p.186).
[202] Ehrman (2003), 238, internal quotations and emphasis added.

rather than inspired prophecies in the Spirit, fluctuating and impermanent."[203] The emergent

textual tradition of early Christianity thus assisted in the selective breeding, so to speak, of

charismatics and their teachings.

This is not to say that the charismatics would have had no say in the matter, nor that it

occurred instantaneously. Rather, the entire process of conflict over authority and the control of

charismatic speaking was a delicate affair, and this is intimately revealed by the text of the

Didache. The Didache was composed in a time of transition, a period in which "structured

leadership seems to be on the ascent," but in which prophets are still honored and respected.[204]

This is reflected in the uneasy compromises and concessions that are made in the text of the

Didache. Absolute restrictions and enforcements are difficult to assert, and there is still much

"grey area" surrounding communal authority; that is, authority is being *contested*, not

indisputably asserted. There are numerous concessions made to charismatic authority within the

Didache, such as at 10:7, where prophets are allowed "to give thanks as much as they like," and

at 11:4, 7, and 11, where apostles are to be "received as the lord," prophets who speak "in spirit"

are not to be tested (though this is obviously with caveats),[205] and prophets are given leeway with

regard to acting for the "earthly mystery of the church."[206] Perhaps more significantly, however,

they are allowed to settle in the community and are seen to be "deserving of their food," and if

they choose to settle – most likely having been *already approved by communal authorities prior*

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[203] Ibid.
[204] Both Boring (1991), 83-84, and Jefford (1989), 127 make this point.
[205] While the text declares that prophets are not to be tested, some manner of test is obviously occurring due to subsequent references to "true" and "false" prophets, as well as the fact that the verse immediately following this declares that "not everyone who speaks in spirit is a prophet." Verses 11:7 and 11:8 would contradict each other save that there *must* have been a way to evaluate whether someone speaking "in spirit" is true or false. This is also supported by the fact that other explicit rules for evaluating prophetic behavior are given (11:5-6, 9, 12), which could reveal a prophet who "speaks in spirit" to be false if he contravened these regulations.
[206] This phrase has received much attention in scholarship simply because what it refers to is unknown. See Crossan, 378-380; Milavec, *Faith, Hope*, 466-470; Niederwimmer (1998) 179-181; (1996), 328-333.

to being allowing to settle – they are also given the "firstfruits" of each harvest (13:1-7). This is a concession made to charismatic authority by institutional authority, an attempt to placate unrest that may be caused by imposing the restrictions made throughout chapters 11 and 12. Numerous scholars have noted the "delicacy" and "diplomacy" of the Didache, observing that its rules and regulations concerning charismatics are "an intricate dance of containment."[207] This is a testament to the fact of a dispute over authority – not an absolute takeover – within the Didache, with one group on the ascent (overseers and agents)[208] needing to appease the group who still holds considerable influence (charismatics) with compromises and concessions that they perceive to be admissible.

This is the reason for how and why the Didache seems to maintain an ambiguous attitude toward charismatics, but there is a subtle caveat that no scholar has yet noticed: in each concession to a charismatic, there is the requirement that the prophet or apostle who is *not* to be judged or evaluated *has already been* "examined and found true" (11:11) or is already judged to be a "true prophet" (13:1). This status as "true" is bestowed by other authorities in the Didache community, and thus these concessions to charismatic authority would be welcomed by those receiving them, but in reality they come with the requirement that the prophet, apostle, or teacher must have *already* been evaluated and tested by the community and its authorities, otherwise no support or theological impunity is given. This is another form of control that is instituted to support the charismatic teachings that are approved and refuse material support to the ideas and theologies that are not favored.

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[207] Crossan, 376, 378-379. See also Chadwick, 87; McDonald, 31; Niederwimmer (1996), 337.
[208] Boring (1991), 83; Theissen (1978), 20.

Conclusion

With the extra textual evidence provided by early Christian literature, it can be seen that a tendency to limit material support to certain charismatic figures, most famously in the situation of Paul and Barnabas in 1 Corinthians, was already occurring in the mid-1st century CE. Following this it is not difficult to perceive how certain communities, such as that to which 2 John and the Didache were addressed, could refuse material support to charismatic figures not only based upon their behavior, but also based upon the doctrinal and theological content of their teaching and preaching. This could be an effective means of weeding out ideas and theologies that were not favored by the community and its authorities (ἐπίσκοποι and διάκονοι) and sustaining the ideas and theologies that became officially approved. Thus the food and support offered by sympathizers in the community of the Didache was contingent upon doctrinal approval from institutional authorities, and physical, material means were employed as a domesticating tool for manipulating the evolution of ideological content.

This concept and argument has, at both its foundation and logical conclusion, immense implications for the study of human thought. To reason that human ideas have their roots planted firmly in the soil of material conditions is to claim that thought is itself a materially produced thing, not beyond the bounds of physicality and human manipulation. As the Didache in the ancient Near East might reveal a process of such physical conditioning taking place within its community amongst the ideological farmhands (overseers) and their crops/weeds (charismatics), this process may be extrapolated into other geographic areas, chronological periods, and into other forms such as technology, war, social boundaries and physical space, biological composition, and other categories of a physical, material nature. As thought – especially what many regard as "religious" thought – is traditionally regarded as an exclusively mental and thus

separate sphere of human activity, this line of reasoning provides a productive alternative to the dated and slowly obsolescing conception of ideology and thought as a purely Platonic realm of creation, free from the muddying influences of materialism, the mess of history, or the meddling of man. The manufacture and shaping of ideology can be more profitably seen as a product of both human creativity and the material environment in which any humans live; to conceive of doctrine, belief, and thought in this way places all human thought firmly within the bounds of history, not outside or beyond it. With the evidence of the Didache and other early Christian literature, this technique can be efficiently applied to the beginnings of early Christian thought as well, providing an avenue by which it may be historicized and productively perceived through the lens of material conditions.

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