THE PASTORAL THEOLOGY OF THE

APOSTOLIC FATHERS

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A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Leland Davis Brown

May 2024

**APPROVAL SHEET**

THE PASTORAL THEOLOGY OF THE

APOSTOLIC FATHERS


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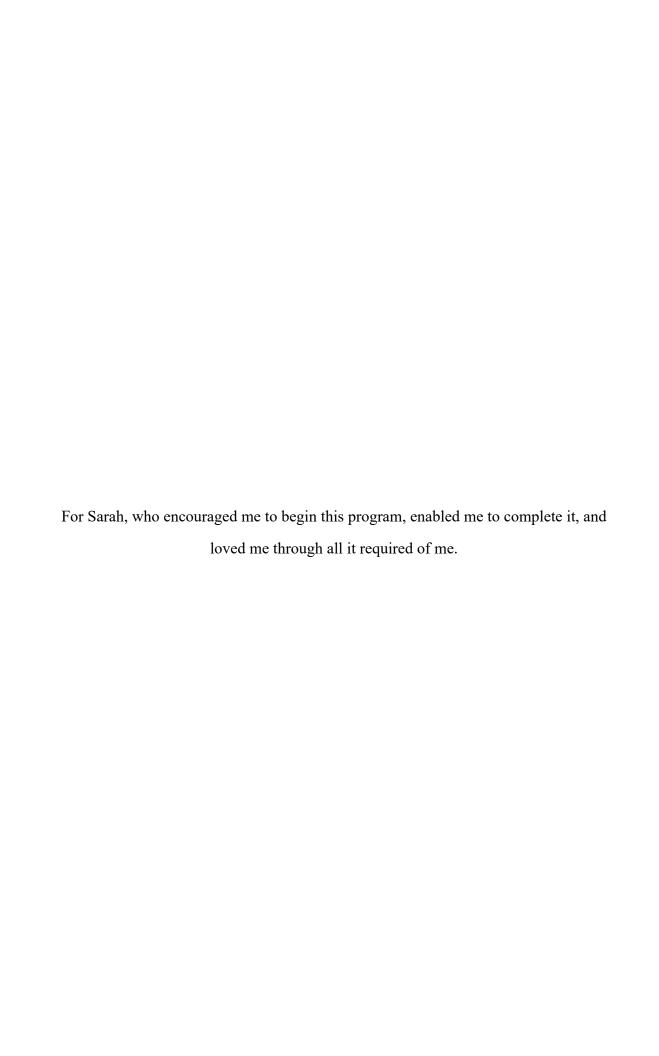

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For Sarah, who encouraged me to begin this program, enabled me to complete it, and loved me through all it required of me.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDAG          Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000

Did.           Didache

1-2 Clem.      1-2 Clement

Herm.         Shepherd of Hermas

Ign. *Eph.*      Ignatius, *To the Ephesians*

Ign. *Magn.*    Ignatius, *To the Magnesians*

Ign. *Phld.*     Ignatius, *To the Philadelphians*

Ign. *Pol.*      Ignatius, *To Polycarp*

Ign. *Rom.*     Ignatius, *To the Romans*

Ign. *Smyrn.*   Ignatius, *To the Smyrnaeans*

Ign. *Trall.*    Ignatius, *To the Trallians*

L&N            Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene A. Nida, eds. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2nd ed. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989

Mart. Pol.     Martyrdom of Polycarp

Pol. *Phil.*     Polycarp, *To the Philippians*

PREFACE

I am indebted to many for my formation as a person and a pastor. My home church, East Cooper Baptist, has been where I have learned how to love God's people and where I have been loved deeply by God's people. Watching my senior pastor Buster Brown live blamelessly and care for church members as individuals has been a particularly poignant example of the practical ways a pastor shepherds the flock. Family life, especially my wife's wisdom about raising our children, has impressed upon me the familial nature of church life and the requisite people skills, patience, and wisdom that leadership requires. To Southern Seminary I owe most of my theological formation and convictions about preaching and teaching; I am regularly surprised today by how much of what I now consider theological common sense was actually what I was patiently taught.

But it is to the Christian tradition that I owe my understanding of pastoral identity. This was the question that brought me to the Christian tradition and eventually the doctoral program at Southern Seminary: what *is* a pastor? Who am I as a pastor, how does pastoral identity impact my pastoral practice, and is there anything *peculiar* about being a minister of the gospel? Most modern counsel on pastoral ministry focuses on what a pastor is supposed to do; while the Christian tradition has much to say about that, more of the reflection is on who a pastor is. After an initial exposure to classics like *Lectures to my Students* and *The Reformed Pastor*, my curiosity about pastoral theology in the Christian tradition led me to pursue doctorate with a hope to research pastors or pastoring in the Christian tradition. I am grateful to Dr. Stephen Presley for steering me toward the Apostolic Fathers and for his patience, guidance, and immense helpfulness throughout the program. I have also had the great privilege of going through the program with a cohort of likeminded men, whose friendship and sharpening have been one of the

most unexpected blessings of this season. My research on this project and experience in Southern's program has already born great fruit in my life and ministry, convicting me about the kind of person I must become to be an effective minister and giving me many examples of brothers being faithful in different contexts.

My hope is that this project will bear both academic fruit and bless the church through the tradition's edifying influence. I also hope it will be useful to pastors broadly. The more I research this subject the more I am convinced that one of the most pressing needs of evangelical leaders today is a recovery of the tradition's vision for pastoral theology and practice.

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Charleston, South Carolina

May 2024

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Apostolic Fathers continue to witness to the life of the postapostolic[1]

church and have generated significant recent scholarly interest.[2] The nature of pastoral

leadership and the development of ministry structures in this period has been a particular

focus of research, with attempts to explain the rise of episcopal structure of later years

driving much of it.[3] While attention has been given to the theological vision of some

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[1] By "postapostolic," I mean the period of c.70-c.150, the generation of Christians after the apostles. Some scholars differentiate between "subapostolic" (c.70-c.100) and "postapostolic" (beginning at the end of the first century); I will not. See Francis A Sullivan, *Apostles to Bishops: The Development of Episcopacy in the Early Church* (Pine Beach, NJ: Newman, 2001), 54.

[2] The number of studies, editions, and translations produced of the Apostolic Fathers in the last two decades bear witness to this fact. Two new critical editions have been produced, Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Loeb Classical Library 24-25 (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2003); Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007). New translations have also been published, including Rick Brannan, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017); William Varner, *The Apostolic Fathers*: *An Introduction and Translation* (London: T & T Clark, 2023). With these significant studies on the corpus and postapostolic time period have been made, including: Michael F. Bird and Scott D. Harrower, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2023); Wilhelm Pratscher, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction*, trans. Elizabeth G. Wolfe (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2010); Clayton N. Jefford, *Reading the Apostolic Fathers: A Student's Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014); Clare K. Rothschild, *New Essays on the Apostolic Fathers*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 375 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017); Paul Foster, ed., *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* (London: T & T Clark, 2007); James Paget and Judith Lieu, eds., *Christianity in the Second Century: Themes and Developments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2017). A new commentary series on the Apostolic Fathers is also in production by Cascade books, called the Apostolic Fathers Commentary Series, with entries already published on the Didache, 2 Clement, and Epistle to Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermas.

[3] See Walter H. Wagner, *After the Apostles: Christianity in the Second Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 64-65, 115-25. More recently, see Michael J. Kruger, *Christianity at the Crossroads: How the Second Century Shaped the Future of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018), 75-85. Ignatius features large in this attempt at historical reconstruction of the rise of episcopacy because his letters most clearly resemble the later pattern of monarchial episcopacy. See Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy*, T & T Clark Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2009); William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 22.

postapostolic documents, the prevailing narrative that the Apostolic Fathers represent departure and diversity from apostolic models has precluded any attempt to articulate the corpus's theological vision for ministry or to connect this vision to the New Testament's.[4] Doing so is the burden of this project.

This introduction will lay out the background, argument, and methodology of my project. I will cover essential background information about the Apostolic Fathers relevant to my project, articulate my thesis, and outline my argument. Then I will describe my methodology, with particular attention being given to (1) my approach to early Christianity, (2) my analysis of texts, and (3) the use of "pastoral leaders" to group together several terms used for leaders in the Apostolic Fathers. The historical summary of research will be the subject of chapter 2.

## Background

With excellent introductions to the Apostolic Fathers widely available, only essential background features about the documents need to be covered here. First is the nature of the corpus. The Apostolic Fathers as a collection is a scholarly construct, gathered together in the seventeenth century and going through numerous editions and translations since.[5] In spite of its seemingly artificial nature and the claims by some

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[4] Nearly every commentary on the Apostolic Fathers and major studies on the individual documents attempt to describe the view of ministry in these documents because of the prevalence of these issues within the documents, with a variety of competing perspectives. Article-length treatments are rarer, but one focused treatment on Ignatius's pastoral theology is Kevin M. Clark, "'Being Bishoped By' God: The Theology of the Episcopacy According to St. Ignatius of Antioch," *Nova et Cetera* 14, no.1 (2016): 227-30, 237-39.

[5] The corpus was first gathered as an edition in Johannes Baptista Cotelier, *SS. Patrum Qui Temporibus Apostolicis Floruerunt; Barnabaue, Clementis, Hermae, Ignatii, Polycarpi Opera, Vera, et Suppositicia; Und cum Clementis, Ignatii, Polycarpi Actis atque Martyriis* (Paris: Petrli le Pettit, 1672), and first translated in William Wake, *The Genuine Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers: St. Barnabas, St. Ignatius, St. Clement, St. Polycarp, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Martyrdoms of St. Ignatius and St. Polycarp . . .* (London: Ric Sare, 1693). For an overview of the manuscript history and tradition, see Wilhelm Pratscher, "The Corpus of the Apostolic Fathers," in Pratscher, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1-6.

scholars that there is no basis for studying the documents together,[6] good reasons exist for grouping them together. Scholars historic and recent see the documents sharing a common theological heritage, context, parenetic concern, and historical reception.[7] So, while each work included in the corpus has a distinct purpose and manner of communication, the Apostolic Fathers are rightly grouped together as the postapostolic literature representing orthodox Christian communities between AD 70 and AD 150.

Giving that time period brings up the issues of date and manuscript tradition. While dating and locating each work has been extensively debated, a general consensus exists that they each fall within the approximate period of AD 70-150, with the Didache on the early side of this range and the Martyrdom of Polycarp at the end of this range or slightly later.[8] Regarding specific works in the collection and the manuscript tradition, I will follow the manuscript tradition represented by J. B. Lightfoot's seminal work and Michael Holmes's more recent editions that carry on the legacy of Lightfoot's work.[9]

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[6] Remarking to this end, Clayton Jefford says, among other comments about the documents' diversity, "the writings do not speak to a common concern." Clayton N. Jefford, "Ignatius and the Apostolic Fathers," in *The Routledge Companion to Early Christian Thought*, ed. Jeffrey Bingham, Routledge Companions (New York: Routledge, 2010), 108.

[7] Jörg Ulrich writes, "There are notable reasons that suggest that the established title and the collected canon of texts that appears under it should be retained," citing common historical origin, distinct manner of argumentation in distinction from the apologists, theological commitments, non-apostolic authorship, and historical usefulness. Jörg Ulrich, "The Apostolic Fathers Yesterday and Today," in Pratscher, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 244. The four classic categories cited by Ramsey may also be applied to the Apostolic Fathers, though they refer to church fathers more broadly: antiquity, holiness, orthodoxy, and ecclesiastical approval. See Boniface Ramsey, *Beginning to Read the Church Fathers* (New York: Paulist, 1985), 4-7. Regarding the parenetic tendency of the Apostolic Fathers and its likeness to the New Testament in its practical concern, see Berthold Altaner, *Patrology*, trans. Hilda C. Graef, 2nd ed. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), 98.

[8] Regarding the date and potentially layered composition of the Didache, see Clayton N. Jefford, "Didache," in Bird and Harrower, *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, 248-61. For considerations suggesting an earlier date, see Jonathan A. Draper, "The Didache," in Pratscher, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 8-10. For a c.150-c.170 date for Mart. Pol., see Gerd Buschmann, "The Martyrdom of Polycarp," in Pratscher, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 139-40. For a discussion on divergent opinions on the dating, see Paul A. Hartog, "Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp," in Bird and Harrower, *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, 237-39.

[9] Lightfoot's original work was published in 5 vols., J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Revised Texts with Introductions, Notes, Dissertations, and Translations* (London: MacMillan, 1889). It was made more accessible in J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Revised Texts with Short Introductions*

While each document has manuscript issues, such as claims of forgery or missing portions of the original Greek text, the manuscript tradition of the Ignatian epistles has seen the most significant debate.[10] I will work from the now established consensus that the Middle Recension of the Ignatian epistles is authentic, first proposed by James Ussher in the seventeenth century and recently confirmed against objections.[11]

This dissertation will primarily focus on the letters of Ignatius, 1 Clement, Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Didache, since these documents have the most relevant material for discerning postapostolic pastoral theology.[12] I will now briefly introduce each of these works and state their main features which are relevant to this project.

**The Letters of Ignatius**

Because of his insistence on the threefold order of bishop, presbyters, and deacons, Ignatius's epistles have always been of great interest to those studying leadership in the early church. Scholars agree that that Ignatius of Antioch was a real historical figure of the late first and early second centuries who was the bishop of Antioch, although even such a basic consideration is influenced by one's presuppositions

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*and English Translations*, ed. J. R. Harmer (London: Macmillan, 1891). For the relationship between Lightfoot's work and his carrying on of that work, see Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, ix-xiii.

[10] Rothschild has recently proposed that 1 Clem. is a forgery. See Rothschild, *New Essays on the Apostolic Fathers*, 67. For a response against Rothschild, see Janelle Peters, "1 and 2 Clement," in Bird and Harrower, *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, 187-89.

[11] Brent summarizes the history behind the establishment of the Middle Recension in Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 1-9. Typically, Zahn and Lightfoot are given credit for setting the Middle Recension on firm ground in the nineteenth century. See Theodor Zahn, *Ignatius von Antiochen* (Gotha, Germany: Perthes, 1873). Fresh challenges were raised in the late 1990s, chiefly by Reinhard M Hübner, "Thesen zur Echtheit und Datierung der Sieben Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochen," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 1 (1997): 44-72. See the response, representing the general consensus, by Mark J. Edwards, "Ignatius and the Second Century," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 2, no. 2 (1998): 214-26.

[12] I will also briefly reference 2 Clement and the Martyrdom of Polycarp, and when I do, I will cover relevant background material. The Epistle to Diognetus, the Epistle of Barnabas, the fragment of Quadratus, and the Fragments of Papias do not appear in this project.

about the rise of monepiscopacy.[13] The background and purpose of the Ignatian epistles have been matters of extensive recent debate, and I will follow the historic view that Ignatius was martyred as a result of persecution and authored these letters en route to his martyrdom in Rome, advocating for congregational unity and theological orthodoxy.[14] The main alternative to this view, first advocated by Pearcy N. Harrison, is that Ignatius's views of episcopacy fomented such strife within his own congregation that pagan authorities intervened and arrested Ignatius to restore public order.[15] Ignatius thus insists on unity and obedience to the bishop because he failed to achieve that in his own church and calls himself unworthy because of his failure.[16] In spite of its many proponents,[17] this view has significant problems, chief of which are its historical presupposition that monepiscopacy *could not* have been present in Ignatius's region in his day, its contradiction to the esteem Ignatius was universally held in historically, and its lack of plausibility given the content of the letters themselves.[18] While the early emphasis on the bishop's distinct role has been the hallmark area of focus in Ignatian scholarship, I will articulate his overall vision for pastoral leadership.

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[13] See Paul Foster, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch," in Foster, *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, 84-89.

[14] For a basic statement about this traditional view, see Helmut Löhr, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch," in Pratscher, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 96-97.

[15] Pearcy N. Harrison, *Polycarp's Two Epistles to the Philippians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1936), 85-88.

[16] Willard M. Smartley, in this vein, argues that Ignatius will be validated as a bishop when his church finally attains unity and peace. See Willard M. Smartley, "Imitatio Christi in the Ignatian Letters," *Vigiliae Christianae* 27, no. 2 (June 1973): 102-3.

[17] Three significant studies on Ignatius take this view: Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 152; Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 29 (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1992), 42-59; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 10-11.

[18] For other problems with this constructed background, see Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways*, 111-12, 163-202.

**First Clement**

Regarding leadership in the early church, 1 Clement is another document in the Apostolic Fathers chiefly studied with a view to understanding the rise of episcopacy, with a special interest in the key passage of 1 Clem. 42-45 and its picture of apostolic succession.[19] While disagreements continue about Clement's view of apostolic succession, a basic consensus exists that the purpose of the letter was to exhort the Corinthian church to restore its wrongfully deposed presbyters, bringing pastoral leadership to the center of the epistle's concern.[20] The specific nature of the conflict leading to the deposition of the presbyters is an open question.[21] Consensus also persists on a date in the last two decades of the first century,[22] though less agreement exists about the author of the epistle.[23] Tradition had Clement, the third bishop of Rome, as the author, but a variety of possibilities are suggested today.[24] Regardless of the specific author, the letter can be taken as representative of the pastoral theology of the Roman community around the turn of the first century, though attention must be paid to the

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[19] For the breadth of scholarship penned on this one issue, see John Fullenbach, *Ecclesiastical Office and the Primacy of Rome: An Evaluation of Recent Theological Discussion of First Clement*, Studies in Christian Antiquity 20 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1980).

[20] Andreas Lindeman, "The First Epistle of Clement," in Pratscher, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 59-62.

[21] Horatio Lona provides a variety of potential reasons for the conflict, including tensions between Jewish and Gentile Christians, charismatic and organized ministry, or disputes over teaching. See Horatio E. Lona, *Der Der erste Clemensbrief*, Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 79-80. More recently L. L. Welborn has presented a book length argument for intergenerational conflict being at the root of the deposition of the presbyters. See L. L. Welborn, *The Young against the Old: Generational Conflict in First Clement* (Lanham, MD: Fortress, 2018).

[22] Andrew F. Gregory, "1 Clement: An Introduction," in Foster, *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, 28-29; Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 35-36.

[23] As mentioned, Rothschild has even suggested the letter as a whole was a forgery intended to support the doctrine of apostolic succession, see Rothschild, *New Essays on the Apostolic Fathers*, 67.

[24] See Eusebius of Caesarea, *The History of the Church*, 3.4.9 and 4.23.11. For the typical options for the author of 1 Clem., see Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 34-35.

rhetorical purpose of its author in his exhortations for the restoration of Corinth's rightful leaders.[25]

**Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians**

On the matter of authorship, no serious doubts have been sustained that Polycarp of Smyrna wrote the epistle to the Philippians. Proposed dates depend on a variety of factors: the recent memory of Ignatius and the martyrs in the epistle, the date one assigns to Polycarp's martyrdom, and the unity of the epistle.[26] Whatever particular date one assigns to Pol. *Phil.*, it is squarely placed in the early second century within several years of Ignatius's martyrdom.[27] Harrison raised a major challenge to the unity of the epistle, arguing that the letter actually consisted of two epistles because of an apparent contradiction between 1.1, 1.9, and 13.2 regarding Ignatius's martyrdom.[28] However, with Paul Hartog, Holmes, and most other scholars today, I will treat Pol. *Phil.* as a literary unity, because the apparent contradiction is not unresolvable and Harrison's case creates more problems than it solves.[29] The stated aim of Pol. *Phil.* is to write about "righteousness" in response to the Philippians' request, and the work is noted for its extensive use of New Testament texts.[30] Two passages make Pol. *Phil.* relevant for this

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[25] The rhetoric of 1 Clem., especially its use of στάσις and ὁμονοία, is regularly analyzed. See Barbara Ellen Bowe, *A Church in Crisis: Ecclesiology and Parenesis in Clement of Rome*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 23 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 7-32.

[26] For all of the options for dating Pol. *Phil.*, see Zachariah Lee Vester, "Patterns of Shared Leadership in the Apostolic Fathers" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 146-47.

[27] Holmes, *the Apostolic Fathers*, 275-76.

[28] Harrison, *Polycarp's Two Epistles to the Philippians*, 15-19.

[29] See the discussion in Paul Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, Oxford Apostolic Fathers 2 (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), 33-40.

[30] For Polycarp's extensive use of the New Testament, see Paul Hartog, *Polycarp and the New Testament: The Occasion, Rhetoric, Theme, and Unity of the Epistle to the Philippians and Its Allusions to the New Testament Literature*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2, Reiche 134 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

project. First, in his discussion of righteousness, Polycarp describes the presbyters, their work, and obedience due to them in 5.3-6.3. He also grieves over the sin of the failed presbyter Valens in 11.1-2, revealing some of his convictions about pastoral ministry by way of contrast. Moreover, Polycarp explicitly commends Ignatius's letters in 13.2, which implies that Polycarp affirmed Ignatius's vision for ministry and suggests unity about pastoral leadership between the two most well-known authors of the Apostolic Fathers.[31]

**The Didache**

The rediscovery and publication of the Didache in 1883 led to massive revisions of previous understandings of early Christianity, including a major new theory proposed by Adolf von Harnack about the development of church offices.[32] This was in part because it witnessed to a Christian community where apostles and prophets were still prominent figures in the community's life. The Didache is usually associated with a Jewish Christian community and often connected to the Gospel of Matthew and epistle of James.[33] Uniquely among the texts of the Apostolic Fathers, the Didache contains extensive liturgical instructions, giving unparalleled insights into early Christian worship, catechesis, and gatherings.[34] A major issue in Didache scholarship is whether the Didache

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[31] Holmes notes that this affirmation in Pol. *Phil*. of Ignatius' epistles has led to theories about it being a forgery or interpolated, see Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 276.

[32] See literature review below for the commentary Harnack published on the Didache in 1884 expressing these views. Draper suggests that the Didache's discovery was the inspiration for Harnack's history of the early church. Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt, 2nd ed. (Williams and Nortgate, 1908). See Draper, "The Didache," 7.

[33] Draper, "The Didache," 10-11.

[34] Aaron Milavec calls the first section of the Didache "the life-transforming training program," getting especially at the catechetical and discipleship-oriented aim of the work. See Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope & Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C. E.* (New York: Newman, 2003), 49.

is a literary unity, compilation, or document edited and changed over time.[35] Its composition impacts dating the work, with a recent commentator admitting that dating the Didache was attended with "a domino effect of problems."[36] However, the variously proposed dates usually fall in the late first century and early second century, making the Didache another witness to postapostolic pastoral theology.[37] This theology includes a clear statement about the unity of charismatic and established pastoral leaders in regard to their identity and work.[38]

**The Shepherd of Hermas**

The Shepherd of Hermas is "one of the more enigmatic documents" from the postapostolic period, though it was by far the most popular of the Apostolic Fathers in the early church.[39] Regarding its date, its mention by Irenaeus (ca. 175) gives it a *terminus ad quem*, placing the work in the postapostolic period.[40] Outside of that, the work's author, date, and literary unity remain open questions, though it is usually regarded as representative of the Christian community in Rome.[41] I will follow Michael J. Svigel and Carolyn Osiek in seeing the thematic unity of the work indicating a "guiding hand throughout."[42] With many disagreements about Hermas, consensus exists about its

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[35] For a recent discussion about the impasse in scholarship on this issue, see Jefford, "Didache," 248-61.

[36] Shawn J. Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 18.

[37] Though one major Didache scholar, Milavec, dates it between 50 and 70 CE.

[38] Did. 13.1-2. See below for further discussion about the parity of pastoral leaders in the Didache.

[39] Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 442.

[40] Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 447.

[41] On its Roman province, see Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*: *Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 218-36. For Rome as the consensus province see David Hellholm, "The Shepherd of Hermas," in Pratscher, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 237-38.

[42] Carolyn Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 14. Michael J. Svigel and Caroline P. Buie's proposal that the work was written in stages

apocalyptic elements, ecclesial focus, and emphasis on repentance.[43] Within this focus,

Hermas gives a fluid picture of the structures of ministry but a clear vision for pastoral

leadership, including significant passages on the virtue necessary for pastoral leaders.[44] It

is also possible that Hermas himself was a pastoral leader and that the document

describes his own growth towards fitness for ministry, a proposal I will explore in chapter

7.[45]

**Summary**

  With ongoing debates about their specific provenances and dates, each of these

texts share three features that make them especially relevant for discerning postapostolic

pastoral theology. First, in spite of a variety of minor manuscript issues, the bulk of the

present manuscripts of these texts are reliable to the original documents. Second, these

texts are all reasonably dated between AD 70 and AD 150, making them representative of

the life and theology of the first generations of Christians after the apostles. Third, these

five works have significant reflections on pastoral ministry representative of the

postapostolic communities from which they originated. Though coming from distinct

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between 80 and 140 by the same author, Hermas, is convincing. See Michael J. Svigel and Caroline P. Buie, *The Shepherd of Hermas: A New Translation and Commentary*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary 4 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023), 27.

[43] Dan Batovici, "The Shepherd of Hermas as Early Christian Apocalypse," in Bird and Harrower, *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, 294-98; Hellholm, "The Shepherd of Hermas," 231-35; Joseph Verheyden, "The Shepherd of Hermas," in Foster, *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, 63-68. For an extended analysis of the work's focus on community and the church, see Mark Grundeken, *Community Building in the Shepherd of Hermas: A Critical Study of Some Key Aspects*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 131 (Boston: Brill, 2015). For the usefulness of allegorical images in interpreting the Shepherd of Hermas, especially in the vision of the tower, see Aldo Tagliabue, "Learning from Allegorical Images in the Book of Visions of the Shepherd of Hermas," *Arethusa* 50, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 234-37.

[44] The primary passages are Herm. 10.4-6, 13.1, 17.7-10. Throughout, I will use the newer reference system for the Shepherd of Hermas, see Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 450-51.

[45] For the proposal that Hermas himself was a pastoral leader, see Steve Young, "Being a Man: The Pursuit of Manliness in The Shepherd of Hermas," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 241-43; Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 250, Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching: In Search of the Origins of the Christian Homily*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 107. This proposal will be taken up fully in chap. 7.

communities, these reflections share a remarkable theological correspondence which will be the subject of this project.

**Thesis**

Placing these five works in conversation with the New Testament, I will argue that the history of the first 150 years of Christian pastoral leadership is not primarily a story of development, diversity, and conflict. I will demonstrate a *unified theological vision* for ministry in the Apostolic Fathers that accords with the vision of the New Testament, suggesting catholicity about key features of Christian leadership in the earliest period of the church. This unified vision for ministry will be shown along the lines of four shared themes articulated in the first 150 years: (1) the necessity of virtue for all pastoral leaders, (2) the authority of pastoral leaders, (3) the essentials of pastoral work, and (4) the reality of pastoral suffering. These four themes, shared across different Christian communities, suggest a profound consensus about pastoral leadership in the apostolic and postapostolic ages.

After a literature review in chapter 2, I will show these four themes in the New Testament in chapter 3. My survey of the New Testament will not be comprehensive but sufficient to demonstrate that pastoral virtue, authority, work, and suffering are present in the New Testament and correspond to the vision of the Apostolic Fathers. In addition to a synthetic analysis of the Pastoral Epistles, I will examine Acts 20:17-38, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Peter 5:1-5, Hebrews 13:7, and Hebrews 13:17 with a view towards understanding these texts' pastoral theology. Exegesis of these texts reveals the following: (1) that virtue was considered essential to ministry in the New Testament, with a public blamelessness required and humility, relational virtues, and a right relationship to money particularly highlighted, (2) pastoral leaders had spiritual authority, with exhortations to submit to pastoral leaders and a variously described relationship between leaders' authority and God's authority, (3) pastoral work was primarily preaching/teaching and spiritual oversight for the sanctification of God's

people, and (4) suffering is variously connected to faithful pastoral ministry.

Chapter 4 will argue that the Apostolic Fathers share the New Testament's commitment to public and exemplary virtue as essential to pastoral identity. Even with differences in context and manner of communication, each text shows a commitment to publicly recognized virtue as revelatory of genuine ministry. In these works, unvirtuous leaders are either unthinkable or viewed as false leaders. The Apostolic Fathers also emphasize a nexus of particular virtues as necessary for pastoral leaders: humility, gentleness with others, and a right relationship to money. These theological judgments made about pastoral virtue cohere with the pastoral vision of the New Testament.

The Apostolic Fathers also share the New Testament's vision for pastoral authority, the subject of chapter 5. While discussions about spiritual authority in the Apostolic Fathers have been concerned with the presence and development of episcopal structures, a theological focus reveals unity in the judgment that all postapostolic pastoral leaders had spiritual authority. The Apostolic Fathers commend and command obedience to pastoral leaders, tie a leader's authority to his virtue, relate a pastor's authority to God's authority in diverse ways, and often apply pastoral authority in concrete ways in congregational life. These documents share a clear vision for pastoral leaders having spiritual authority in their communities, an authority conceived of in ways parallel to New Testament portrayals of pastoral authority.

Pastoral work in the Apostolic Fathers will be examined in chapter 6. Analysis reveals five elements of pastoral work shared among these documents: (1) pastoral work is for the sanctification of God's people, (2) pastoral work consists of general oversight, (3) pastoral leaders teach and preach, (4) pastoral leaders preside at Christian gatherings, and (5), pastoral leaders oversee the care of needy members of the congregation. Most prominent are the themes of sanctification, oversight, and preaching; presiding at worship and caring for the poor are attested to by several documents but not universally shared. Once again, along the lines of those three most prominent themes, the Apostolic Fathers

are in lockstep with the New Testament.

Pastoral suffering will be the subject of chapter 7. While this theme appears to be less explicit across the corpus, it is clearly articulated in Ign. *Pol*., strongly implied in 1 Clem. and Herm., and probably present in Pol. *Phil*. and the Didache. Ign. *Pol*. 1-4 envisions suffering as part and parcel of faithful pastoral ministry. The use of the Old Testament and several direct statements in 1 Clem. imply that the norm for pastors is to suffer. Hermas himself appears to be a pastoral leader suffering for his ministry to his church. In a historical context marked by persecution and martyrdom, each of these texts surprisingly locates the main source of pastoral suffering within the church's own life.

In a concluding chapter, I will summarize the findings of this study, suggest an alternative narrative for the development of Christian leadership based on them, and suggest avenues for theological retrieval.

## Historiography and Methodology

Arguing for theological unity about pastoral leadership in the first and second centuries requires addressing three aspects of my methodology. Below I will address (1) my approach to first and second century Christianity, (2) how I will analyze texts, and (3) my use of the term "pastoral leaders."

### The Second Century: Continuity, Change, and Illumination

The dominant historical narrative about the first two centuries emphasizes the early diversity and disorganization of apostolic Christianity, notes its remarkable development by the mid-second century, and concludes that apostolic and postapostolic Christianity stand in basic discontinuity with one another. The second century is thus "the age of the laboratory,"[46] or a period the church entered "in disarray, a bundle of slippery

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[46] Judith Lieu, "Modeling the Second Century as the Age of the Laboratory," in Paget and Lieu, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 294-308.

and clashing opinions."[47] Nowhere is this narrative more prevalent than in scholarship about early Christian patterns of leadership. I will describe the source of this narrative in Walter Bauer's work, give some concrete examples of it, and provide the basis by which my project seeks to provide an alternative narrative for early Christian leadership.

      This now dominant perspective on early Christianity began with a new theory about heresy and orthodoxy proposed by Walter Bauer in 1936.[48] Bauer cautiously asserted that scholars should assume that groups later deemed heretical were simply practicing one of the various earliest expressions of Christianity.[49] In contrast to the traditional view that heretics had departed from an original apostolic teaching, Bauer suggested that in many regions "heretical" teaching was original and preceded the later-emerging "orthodoxy."[50] One can see how this pits postapostolic Christianity against its historical roots and suggests a kind of diversity which makes it impossible to identify an early Christian theological center. While Bauer's theory has been disproven in many specific facets,[51] it "has in more recent decades become axiomatic for many scholars."[52] Bauer's influence has been especially prominent in a school of thought that describes Gnosticism and other early heresies as evidence of "lost Christianities" and "pluriform Christianities."[53]

[47] Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 64-65.

[48] Bauer's work was translated into English in 1964.

[49] Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, trans. Georg Strecker (1971; repr., Fermanagh, PA: Sigler, 1996).

[50] For a summary of Bauer's thesis, see Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 23-40.

[51] For a thorough-going critique of Bauer's thesis, see Paul Hartog, ed., *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer Thesis* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015).

[52] David E. Wilhite, "Second Century Diversity," in Bird and Harrower, *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, 55.

[53] For a representative example, see Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2003), especially 95-158. Other

The influence of Bauer's theory about heresy and orthodoxy expanded well beyond its initial claims to impact many scholars' entire approach to first and second century Christianity.[54] Scholars like James D. G. Dunn make diversity and conflict the primary historical background for the church from AD 70 to AD 180. According to Dunn, this era was

> much more of a tension and struggle between competing ideas/faiths/practices than the disputed but apparently irresistible emergence of the great church with a clearly defined rule of faith and clearly defined structures. . . . The identity of what was and what should count as "Christianity" was still in process of definition, and contested on all the main factors which make for identity.[55]

Dunn's remarks go well beyond discussions of the nature of heresy in this time period to characterize the entire experience of the postapostolic church—"all the main factors"—as contest, struggle, and competition between mutually exclusive Christian identities.

Assertions of leadership conflict behind postapostolic texts and flat denials of any postapostolic theology of ministry show that Dunn's assumptions are characteristic of modern scholarship on early Christian leadership. Willy Rordorf goes as far as to say that when one speaks of ministry in the early church, one must speak of many ministries; early Christianity has no single discernible theology of ministry.[56] Assertions of ministerial conflict behind postapostolic texts are also very common. Christine Trevett's major study on Ignatius presumes competing Christian traditions in the congregations

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scholars go further, arguing that the label of Gnosticism was created through early rhetoric about orthodoxy and heresy and not adequately account for the pluriform diversity of first and second century belief, see Karen King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2003), 3-4.

[54] Michael J. Svigel, *The Center and the Source: Second Century Incarnational Christology and Early Catholic Christianity*, Gorgias Studies in Early Christianity and Patristics 66 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2016), 10.

[55] James D. G. Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity*, Christianity in the Making 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 40.

[56] Willy Rordorf writes, "Nous n'avons pas affaire à un seul et unique ministère dans l'Eglise ancienne, mais dès les origines du christianisme nous nous trouvons en face d'une diversité de plusieurs ministères bien distincts. En plus, on ne peut pas parler d'une seule et unique théologie du ministère dans l'Eglise ancienne." Willy Rordorf, "La théologie du ministère dans l'Eglise ancienne," in *Church, Ministry, and Organization in the Early Church Era*, ed. Everett Ferguson, David M. Scholer, and Paul Corby Finney, Studies in early Christianity 13 (New York: Garland, 1993), 58.

Ignatius wrote to and an anti-episcopal rebellion behind Ignatius's exhortations to obey the bishop; she also compares Ignatius's embattled situation with the ministry tensions she argues are behind the Didache.[57] Some scholars even posit radical disagreement between authors that explicitly agree with each other. In spite of Polycarp and Ignatius's mutual commendation of one another,[58] Allen Brent suggests that Polycarp would have "scratched his head" when Ignatius addressed him as a bishop because of the clearly irreconcilable differences between Ignatius and Polycarp about leadership in the church.[59] Brent draws on Harrison's previously mentioned theory that Ignatius was given up to martyrdom by his own congregation's rebellion; this theory is only plausible for one who already views early Christianity through the lens of conflict and disorder.[60] R. A. Campbell has suggested that this emphasis on diversity and conflict is more a matter of presuppositions than evidence: "Finding diversity in the early church has thus been as fashionable as it once was to go to the New Testament to find one's own church's form of government set forth."[61]

Instead of the more radical discontinuity argued for by Dunn and others, evangelicals often view postapostolic documents as a departure from the quality of apostolic works. B. B. Warfield has classically stated the evangelical judgment about postapostolic literature:

> There is no other such gulf in the history of human thought as that which is cleft between the apostolic and the immediately succeeding ages. To pass from the latest apostolic writings to the earliest compositions of uninspired Christian pens is to fall

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[57] Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch*, 40-55. Throughout the work she assumes a discontinuity between various Christian traditions, which she sees represented by the Gospel of Matthew, the Petrine tradition, and the Pauline tradition.

[58] See Pol. *Phil.* 13.3 and Ign. *Pol*. 1.

[59] Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 41.

[60] Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 152. Trevett and Schoedel also posit that conflict in Ignatius's congregation was the reason he was handed over to the Roman authorities, see Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch*, 42-59; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 10-11.

[61] R. A. Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 252.

through such a giddy height that it is no wonder if we rise dazed and almost unable to determine our whereabouts. Here is the great fault—as the geologists would say—in the history of Christian doctrine. There is every evidence of continuity—but, oh, at how much lower a level! The rich vein of evangelical religion has run well-nigh out; and, though there are masses of apostolic origin lying everywhere, they are but fragments, and are evidently only the talus which has fallen from the cliffs above and scattered itself over the lower surface.[62]

Warfield's claim goes beyond the right assertion that Scripture is unique in its inspiration, truth and perfection. Revealing a common Protestant presupposition,[63] he essentially asserts a "fall" of the church that is evident in reading postapostolic literature, which for him, shows the heart of Christianity "run well-nigh out." Warfield and those who approach the postapostolic documents like him assume that the main way in which they illuminate the New Testament is by way of contrast. In doing so, they downplay the fact that the same generation of Christians that recognized the unique authority of the New Testament documents also authored the postapostolic documents. Helmut Koester, admittedly overstating the case, has argued that because the generations who received canonical documents wrote postapostolic writings, it "should become a general rule that the literature of the first three centuries must be treated as one inseparable unit."[64] To state the matter more mildly, it is more plausible that postapostolic Christians receiving and recognizing Scripture would have stood in basic continuity with apostolic theology and practice. Discontinuity ought to be textually demonstrated rather than assumed *a priori* because of Scripture's inspiration. Unless there is evidence to the contrary, it is

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[62] B. B. Warfield, *The Significance of the Westminster Standards as a Creed* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1898), 4.

[63] John McRay writes, "The men who wrote in the second century provide an interesting paradox in the history of Christianity. To the Catholic they represent the beginning point of extra-biblical tradition which has come to be a source of authority in many respects comparable to the canonical scriptures. To the non-Catholic mind they are most often regarded as the beginning point of apostasy from the purity of apostolic teaching," John McRay, "The Church Fathers in the Second Century," *Restoration Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1968): 209.

[64] James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 273.

best to see postapostolic writings as illuminating the apostolic.[65]

Historiographical considerations also commend studying apostolic and postapostolic literature together rather than presuming discontinuity and diversity. Albert Outler argues that historians need an "intelligible field" for historical inquiry.[66] This field either needs to be "an extended and significant span of time" or a period marked off at the beginning and ending with "massive and decisive changes in antecedent historical patterns."[67] He then makes the following criticism of the typical bifurcation between the New Testament and postapostolic Christian writings, which he says

> only serves to split the apostolic age off from its successors and then to raise invidious questions about which is superior to what and why? . . . The New Testament may be studied as a singular corpus [while] . . . the second century can be ignored or dismissed. . . . "New Testament" scholars seem not to be as interested as one might think they should be in the historical aftermath of the production of the New Testament. . . . This tends to blur the distinction between the data of revelation in the New Testament and the theological ideas of the New Testament writers, and to invest the later with the decisive authority of the former.[68]

Outler brings up a consideration I will explore further below: the distinction between specific textual articulations ("data of revelation") and the theological judgments rendered by those articulations ("theological ideas"). Outler argues that a neglect of the historical aftermath of the New Testament invests the particular textual articulations of the New Testament with the authority of its theological judgments and then presumes its disunity with later generations. To state his concern positively, it is sounder to assume a basic continuity of theological judgments and allow for differences of expression between apostolic and postapostolic Christianity unless there is tangible evidence to the

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[65] Some scholars suggest retrieving patristic interpretation of the New Testament to illuminate aspects of Scripture neglected in historical-grammatical exegesis. See Markus N. Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006). This principle is also present in Ben C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Engaging Paul's Soteriology with His Patristic Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

[66] Albert Cook Outler, "Methods and Aims in the Study of the Development of Catholic Christianity," *Anglican Theological Review* 50, no. 2 (April 1968): 119.

[67] Outler, "Methods and Aims," 119.

[68] Outler, "Methods and Aims," 123.

contrary. Outler himself suggests that better intelligible field of inquiry would be "the development of catholic Christianity from its origins to its maturity;" the shortest period he suggests is from the passing of Palestine to Roman authorities to the death of Septimius Severus.[69] This study, while not encompassing that entire historical period, seeks to be a step in the direction of this sort of analysis of early Christian pastoral theology.

A recent article by Svigel points these methodological considerations very directly at studying and applying leadership in the early church:

> Scripture, when read in its historical context, is sufficient and clear (or at least sufficiently clear) with regard to apostolic church order. However, in order to establish the historical context of the New Testament, one must rely on a careful, critical, and constructive reading of first- and early second-century writings that are not part of the canon. There is simply no other way to establish the historical context of the apostolic writings. In fact, one cannot affirm a "grammatical-historical" hermeneutic while disallowing testimony from the written sources necessary to establish the historical context. The theologian is therefore just as responsible for rigorous historiography as for rigorous lexical, grammatical, and syntactical analysis of the biblical writings.[70]

Put more bluntly, one cannot accurately interpret the New Testament's ecclesiology and structures for leadership without illumination from postapostolic writings. Svigel asserts that ecclesiology can be "biblical" but not apostolic: that one can be faithful to the literal words of Scripture, but miss the apostolic meaning and application through neglect of the context and application given by their nearest historical witnesses.[71] Svigel makes a convincing case for seeing postapostolic authors as faithful to the apostolic forms of ministry.[72]

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[69] Outler, "Methods and Aims," 216.

[70] Michael J. Svigel, "Can an Ecclesiology Be Biblical and Not Apostolic?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 176, no. 701 (2019): 63.

[71] Svigel, "Can an Ecclesiology Be Biblical and Not Apostolic?," 62.

[72] See Svigel, "Can an Ecclesiology be Biblical and Not Apostolic?," 63-68. His case for 1 Clement as a faithful interpreter of the apostolic model is convincing.

These things being considered, this study will approach early Christianity from the perspective that, unless there is tangible evidence to the contrary, (1) postapostolic Christianity has a definable theological center, and (2) that center is in continuity with apostolic Christianity and serves to illuminate it its theological convictions.[73] While this perspective is the minority in the field, my study will not be the first to argue for theological unity among the Apostolic Fathers or their continuity with apostolic Christianity. For example, Svigel's study *The Center and the Source* has persuasively argued that the "incarnational narrative" was a binding source of theological unity for catholic Christians in the late first and early second centuries.[74] This narrative asserted that the "one Creator God sent His divine Son/Logos to become incarnate as a fleshly human being, who died for the sins of humanity, rose bodily from the dead, and ascended bodily to heaven."[75] Svigel works through the Apostolic Fathers and convincingly demonstrates from the relevant texts that this narrative was shared by these early Christian communities. Lewis Ayres has also recently argued "against the trend" for "fundamental continuities" in the Christological "narrative patterns" in all Christian texts between AD 60 and AD 120, coming to very similar conclusions as Svigel and connecting these fundamental continuities to those of Christian writers a century later.[76] Significantly for what follows, Ayres argues that this unity ought not to be sought in exact literary correspondence but "parallel patterns."[77] In the most recent contribution to this subject, David Wilhite also affirms a large degree of unity in the second century.[78]

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[73] As I will show in the literature review in chap. 2, this was the historic approach to these documents, especially in the Reformation and its aftermath.

[74] Svigel, *The Center and the Source*, 19-20.

[75] Svigel, *The Center and the Source*, 20.

[76] Lewis Ayres, "Continuity and Change in Second-Century Christianity: A Narrative against the Trend," in Paget and Lieu, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 107, 110.

[77] Ayres, "Continuity and Change," 108-9.

[78] Wilhite, "Second-Century Diversity," 66-72.

However, no scholar to my knowledge has suggested this sort of unity present in second century pictures of pastoral leaders, and this is the primary way in which my project seeks to contribute.[79]

Methodologically, Svigel and Ayres rightly look for parallel patterns, or as David S. Yeago calls them, shared "theological judgements," to demonstrate theological unity. Yeago describes this concept in an article defending the Nicene term *homoousia* as faithfully communicating the teaching of Scripture. He argues that

> It is essential . . . to distinguish between judgments and the conceptual terms in which those judgments are rendered. We cannot concretely perform an act of judgment without employing some particular, contingent verbal and conceptual resources; judgement-making is an operation performed with words and concepts. At the same time, however, the same judgment can be rendered in a variety of conceptual terms, all of which may be informative about a particular judgment's force and implications. The possibility of valid alternative verbal/conceptual renderings of identical judgment accounts for the fact that we ourselves often do not realize the full implications of the judgements we pass: only some of their implications are ever unpacked in the particular renderings we have given them.[80]

Yeago argues the following: (1) "judgments" are essential teachings or conclusions (e.g., the full deity of Jesus Christ), (2) "concepts" are the particular words used to express them (e.g., various expressions of Christ's deity in the New Testament and later Christian Tradition, culminating in Nicaea's expression *homoousia*), and (3) unity should be sought at the level of judgment rather than concept. Yeago goes on to specify that to show unity of judgment, one must demonstrate unity on the subjects spoken about, what exactly is the judgment rendered of those subjects, and the purpose of that judgment in its rhetorical context.[81] With Ayres and Svigel, I will demonstrate shared theological judgments in early Christianity, but will do so regarding the identity and work of pastoral leaders. Focusing on shared theological judgments has another implication for my methodology:

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[79] In fact, some authors who argue strongly for theological unity/continuity elsewhere point to Christian leadership in this age as chief evidence of change. See Ayres, "Continuity and Change," 106.

[80] David S. Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis," *Pro Ecclesia* 3, no. 2 (1994): 159.

[81] Yeago, "The New Testament and Nicene Dogma," 160.

while intertextuality and lexical continuity between particular passages will be utilized when illuminating, these will not be central features of my work. As Yeago suggests with a biting illustration, when it comes to determining unity between sources, it is more important to demonstrate that they agree in substance than that they have the same intellectual framework or have read the same books.[82]

Ludwig Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances, which Ayres draws upon, sheds further light on how my analysis will proceed.[83] Seeking to find philosophical grounding for the concept of "languages," Wittgenstein uses an illustration about games to describe a common set of affinities as a basis for concepts like "language" in the midst of diverse languages:

> Don't say: "They *must* have something in common, or they would not be called 'games'"— but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. For it you look at them, you won't see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, affinities, and a whole series of them at that . . . we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: similarities in the large and the small. I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family—build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, and so on and so forth—overlap and criss-cross in the same way . . . the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres.[84]

Wittgenstein's contention is that unity is found through various concrete practices (or languages, etc.) sharing some aspects of a set of characteristics rather than a singular binding characteristic being present in all. Ayres applies this framework historically to

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[82] Yeago writes,

Thus if one concluded that one's psychiatrist-friend and one's elderly relative were indeed talking about the same individual, that the clinical description offered by the former and the latter's "a most disturbing young man" were predicates of the same type within their respective idioms, and that the point of both statements was to give warning, one would say that both of them had "said the same thing" about the person in question. Nor would we be inclined to revise this conclusion on the basis of a learned account of the Freudian background of the terms used by the psychiatrist, accompanied by an exhaustive demonstration that one's uncle had never studied Freud. (Yeago, "The New Testament and Nicene Dogma," 160)

[83] Ayres, "Continuity and Change," 110-11.

[84] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte, 4th ed. (Chichester, UK: Wiley, 2010), 36$^e$.

show the implausibility of the "scholarly construct of a second-century Christian smorgasbord" and demonstrate a "second-century tradition that can fairly claim close family connections with themes that seem fundamental to our earliest Christian texts," especially concerning Christ and his work on behalf of his people.[85] Christoph Markschies has identified additional elements of this "theological common sense" of the earliest Christians, what he calls an "identity forming theological center."[86] This center included at least monotheism, ethics, ecclesiology, the sacraments, and the Scriptures.[87] I will demonstrate that this theological center also included a vision for pastoral leadership.

I will not, however, gloss over the evident changes in this period. With the majority of scholars, I see evidence of changes in the structure and organization of Christian leadership in the postapostolic period, with Ignatius of Antioch giving witness to the move towards a more well-defined monepiscopacy.[88] I also believe that it is plausible that this development occurred in part because of the need for unity and theological fidelity in the midst of the conflicts with heretical groups.[89] However, what I will argue is that this structural change was made in a within a *basic theological continuity* with the apostolic church on the identity and work of pastoral leaders. The

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[85] Ayres, "Continuity and Change," 119.

[86] Christoph Markschies, *Christian Theology and Its Institutions in the Early Roman Empire: Prolegomena to a History of Early Christian Theology*, trans. Wayne Coppins (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), 343.

[87] Markschies, *Christian Theology and Its Institutions*, 343-44.

[88] See Kenneth A. Strand, "Rise of the Monarchical Episcopate," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 4, no. 1 (January 1966): 65-88; Eric George Jay, "From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters: Christian Ministry in the Second Century; a Survey," *The Second Century* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 125-62; Kruger, *Christianity at the Crossroads*, 75-85; Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 64-65, 115-25.

[89] Michael A. G. Haykin's analysis of the historical development of the episcopate is convincing. While resisting the urge to give a singular narrative and recognizing the issue's complexity, he lists six key factors attributing to the development of monepiscopacy: (1) the practical helpfulness of one main preaching elder in the midst of heretical teaching and Roman persecution, (2) the practice of bishops corresponding for their churches, (3) early ordination practices, (4) the presidency of the Lord's Supper by the bishop, (5) the complexity of larger urban churches, and (6) cultural preferences for hierarchical structures. Michael A. G. Haykin, "The Development and Consolidation of the Papacy," in *Shepherding God's Flock*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 120-22.

possibility that leadership structures could develop within a stable pastoral theology has yet to be seriously considered in the study of early Christian leadership.

**Textual Analysis**

I will show these shared theological judgments through a text centered analysis, focusing on the theological visions of the texts themselves rather than potential backgrounds or rhetorical ploys behind them. In other words, I will attempt to take the vision for pastoral ministry presented in the texts at face-value as indicating what authors actually believed about ministry, instead of reading enculturation, social dynamics, or battles for power behind their statements. Svigel has rightly suggested that in much modern scholarship on early Christianity the "hermeneutic of suspicion" has "displaced exegesis as a major tool for interpreting texts."[90] My analysis will seek to return to exegesis of texts with the belief that they faithfully communicate the pastoral theology of this age. Similar to John Behr's recent sentiment about Irenaeus, I will seek to read these ancient authors "on their own terms" and construe their vision for ministry in ways they might recognize.[91]

In being text centered, I will seek to avoid historical background reconstruction in my interpretation of the Apostolic Fathers. Numerous studies on leadership and ministry in the first two centuries reconstruct tenuous historical backgrounds, with scholars admitting that these background lack evidence but still going on to narrate early Christian leadership from them.[92] Other studies place so much emphasis on the Greco-

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[90] Svigel, *The Center and the Source*, 13.

[91] John Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity*, Christian Theology in Context, (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), 2-10.

[92] A variety of scholars admit this but go on to make their primary arguments based on historical reconstructions. See for example Paul Bradshaw, who admits his reconstruction of the offices of earliest Christianity is "tentative"; William R. Schoedel, who posits that he must reconstruct Ignatius's situation "as best as we can" and then bases much of his commentary on that reconstruction; Harry O'Maier, who freely admits that his sociological approach "reads between the lines", and James Burtchaell infers Jewish influence on early Christian offices, saying it is a "possibility." Paul Bradshaw, *Rites of Ordination: Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2013), 21; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 10; Harry O'Maier,

Roman or early Jewish context of Christian leadership that one gets the impression that the Apostolic Fathers drew more from Greek philosophy or the synagogue than from Paul or apostolic teaching.[93] Restraint regarding background reconstruction seems a particularly fruitful approach to the Apostolic Fathers because of the dearth of verifiable background information for each document. Simply put, the lack of evidence makes reconstructions and the conclusions gleaned by them tenuous at best. My study, while not ignoring historical and contextual considerations, will rather center them on the general historical context of the postapostolic period and verifiable or textually-rooted elements of each document's background and intellectual framework. One fruit such an analysis may yield is that Christian leadership was a Christian distinctive in the ancient world, neither sociologically determined nor dependent on Greco-Roman or Jewish patterns for its essentials.[94]

As a text centered analysis of early Christian works related to pastoral ministry, this project will be a work of historical pastoral theology: a discipline that articulates the theology of pastoral identity and practice from a historical source in the Christian tradition. Pastoral theology has a rich tradition in the history of the church with numerous classical works articulating a theology of pastoral ministry.[95] Several modern authors have written broad historical pastoral theologies articulating the visions of these

_The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius_ (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1991), 6; James Tunstead Burtchaell, _From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities_ (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992) 196-201.

[93] Schoedel's standard commentary on the letters of Ignatius, while helpful in many ways, is an example of interpreting the Apostolic Fathers as if Hellenism was the _primary_ intellectual and theological framework from which they wrote.

[94] Larry Hurtado, _Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World_ (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2016), 1-13.

[95] Gregory of Nazianzus's _Oration 2_ is the first full length treatise on pastoral theology in the history of the church. Chrysostom's _De Sacerdotio_, Gregory the Great's _Regula Pastoralis_, are the two major patristic works of pastoral theology. There are numerous works of pastoral theology starting with the Reformation to the present day.

classic works. Thomas Oden's *Pastoral Theology* is a definitive introductory work that articulates a theology of the ministry from a broad historical perspective. Andrew Purves's *Pastoral Theology in the Classic Tradition* exposits five key works of pastoral theology in the Christian tradition. A variety of focused studies exist on the pastoral theology and practice of time periods and individual theologians in the Christian tradition.[96] There has yet to be such a study on the Apostolic Fathers.[97]

Regarding my particular method of analysis, I have used Michael Holmes's edition of the Greek texts of the Apostolic Fathers and read the corpus carefully for both explicit and implicit theological judgments about pastoral leadership. For example, I have worked from the presupposition that positive passages describing a leader's virtue and negative passages that rebuke unvirtuous leaders both make theological judgments about virtue's necessity for leaders. At the same time, I have sought to weigh texts according to their clarity. A symbolic vision about pastoral leaders from Herm. and Poly *Phil.*'s straightforward description of presbyters may render the same theological judgments, but they do so with different degrees of certainty. I have sought to give my conclusions about these texts' pastoral theology in ways commensurate with their clarity.

[96] Broader introductory surveys of traditions and time periods include Christopher A. Beeley, *Leading God's People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); Robert Creech, *Pastoral Theology in the Baptist Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021); Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536-1609*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), which exposit the patristic, Baptist, and early Reformed pastoral theology and practice respectively. Monographs on the pastoral theology of singular figures include J. William Black, *Reformation Pastors: Richard Baxter and the Ideal of the Reformed Pastor*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2004); Geoff Chang, *Spurgeon the Pastor: Recovering a Biblical and Theological Vision for Ministry* (Nashville: B & H, 2022); Michael Wade Crisp, "The Pastoral Theology of B. H. Carroll: An Examination" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).

[97] But see Vester's dissertation, which approaches the Apostolic Fathers as a whole seeking a unified pattern of leadership. His dissertation focuses narrowly on the presence of shared leadership and does not, however, exposit these documents' full-fledged vision for pastoral leadership. Vester, "Patterns of Shared Leadership." See also Kenneth Berding, who seeks to draw out common ministerial themes in the Apostolic Fathers. Kenneth Berding, "'Gifts' and Ministries in the Apostolic Fathers," *Westminster Theological Journal* 78 (2016): 135-58.

Most translations are my own, though for debated passages I have consulted the translations by Holmes, Bart D. Ehrman, William Varner, and Robert M. Grant; my translations are particularly indebted to Holmes. For lexical work, I have used BDAG, L&N, Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, and the standard commentaries in the field. The chapter on the New Testament is by nature less technical; I work primarily from the English Standard Version but do original language exegesis when necessary. In the four chapters on the Apostolic Fathers, I begin with Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp and give it extended attention for two reasons: First, Ign. *Pol*. is the one postapostolic document directly concerned with pastoral leadership, arguably representing the views of both Ignatius and Polycarp. Secondly, the lack of attention to Ign. *Pol*. as a significant postapostolic document is remarkable;[98] a secondary contribution of this project will be to give it more attention.

**Pastoral Leaders**

A final methodological consideration is that I will be treating several early Christian offices under the general term "pastoral leader." While one could argue that this unnecessarily blends together distinct offices in the early church, there is significant evidence for theological and practical overlap between the various terms used of leaders in these documents.[99] So while this label may be in a sense heuristic, it actually best reflects the historical use of the various terms, as I will show below. In arguing this, I will not argue that deacons were conceptually on par with bishops, presbyters, or parallel

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[98] For example, Mikael Isacson's study on the rhetorical strategies of Ignatius's epistles does not look at Ign. *Pol*. Many commentators see the letter as pastoral encouragements without further significance for the postapostolic age. Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004).

[99] The primary terms used are: ἐπίσκοπος, πρεσβύτερος, προφήτας, διδάσκολος, and ἡγουμενω.

leaders, but for the sake of the scope of this project, largely leave the diaconate out of my analysis.[100]

Benjamin L. Merkle's *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church* has persuasively demonstrated the parity of ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος in the New Testament.[101] His central argument is that the terms are used in such close proximity and association in several key passages that "elders and overseers are two different designations for the same office."[102] In fact, in the two central biblical passages where these terms appear closely together, Acts 20:17-35 and Titus 1:3-7,[103] one seemingly needs to do violence to these texts to argue for significant distinction between the terms.[104] Tacitly admitting this, many scholars who insist that the terms are distinct in the

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[100] For a recent compilation work that gives modern perspectives on the diaconate in early Christianity see Bart J. Koet, Edwina Murphy, and Ryökäs Esko, eds., *Deacons and Diakonia in Early Christianity: The First Two Centuries*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 479 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018). The editors rightly call the deacon the "assistant leader" in early Christianity; my analysis will focus on a theology of what they call "first leaders" (3-4).

[101] Benjamin L. Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church*, Studies in Biblical Literature 57 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003). Another modern work that argues for this view is Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 105, 268-80. Historical examples of this view also include J. B. Lightfoot, *Philippians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 111; Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, Handbuch Zum Neuen Testament 13 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966), 40-47; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1963), 13.

[102] Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 693. See also George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Donald A Hagner, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1993), 389. Jochen Wagner has also argued that the terms are nearly identical but have shades of nuance between them. See Jochen Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche: Presbyter und Episkopen in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2011), 164.

[103] For Merkle's analysis of these texts, see Merkle, *The Elder and the Overseer*, 129-61.

[104] Though there are significant disagreements between them, the view I am advancing is explicitly argued against in Campbell, *The Elders*, 244-45; O'Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry*, 4; 63-64; Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Original Bishops: Office and Order in the First Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 15-16. Frances M. Young essentially agrees with Campbell's view that the elders were just the honored elderly members of the congregation. Frances M. Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1994), 108-10.

earliest church argue (with a clear "hermeneutic of suspicion") that Luke is writing anachronistically in Acts 20:17-35 and "tidying up" the practices of the early church.[105]

Evidence for parity between ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος is also quite strong in the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers, in spite of a variety of attempts to clearly distinguish the terms.[106] A variety of scholars agree that ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος are synonymous in 1 Clement.[107] The terms appear immediately together 1 Clem. 44.3-4 and almost certainly refer to the same group of ordained and unjustly deposed men: "For it will be no small sin of ours if those who blamelessly and in holiness offered the gifts we cast off from the office of bishop. Blessed are the presbyters who have died, who had their departure fruitful and complete, because they no longer need to fear lest someone remove them from their established position."[108] Those who were cast off were those in the office of the "bishop," and they are contrasted with dead "presbyters" who had the blessing of finishing their ministry before someone could cast them off and thus no longer need to fear this possibility. The terms are used interchangeably.[109] It is nearly inconceivable that these groups could be different offices in the church—Clement's reasoning for calling the

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[105] Dunn is characteristic of this circular reasoning when he writes, "We have to say that Luke's account is at least anachronistic and involves what can properly be called an early catholic tidying up the initial rather diverse forms into the more uniform patterns of the later decades," James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1977), 356.

[106] Two major works that argue for distinguishing the terms are Campbell, *The Elders*; O'Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry*.

[107] See Adolf von Harnack, *The Constitution & Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries*, ed. H. D. A. Major, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: Williams and Norgate, 1910), 70; Sullivan, *Apostles to Bishops*, 96; Jay, "From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters," 136; Welborn, *The Young against the Old*, 181; Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 23.

[108] "ἁμαρτία γὰρ οὐ μικρὰ ἡμῖν ἔσται, ἐὰν τοὺς ἀμέμπτως καὶ ὁσίως προσενεγκόντας τὰ δῶρα τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς ἀποβάλωμεν. μακάριοι οἱ προοδοιπορήσαντες πρεσβύτεροι, οἵτινες ἔγκαρπον καὶ τελείαν ἔσχον τὴν ἀνάλυσιν· οὐ γὰρ εὐλαβοῦνται μή τις αὐτοὺς μεταστήσῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱδρυμένου αὐτοῖς τόπου." 1 Clem 44.4-5.

[109] Annie Jaubert describes the terms elder and bishop as "pratiquement interchangeables." Annie Jaubert, *Epître aux Corinthiens*, Sources Chrétiennes 167 (1971; repr., Paris: Cerf, 2000), 83-84.

dead presbyters blessed simply does not hold if these figures did not hold the office of bishop.[110]

A parity between ἐπίσκοπος, πρεσβύτερος, and other office terms also appears warranted in the Shepherd of Hermas, primarily because of a lack of explicit distinction or definition given to specific offices. All one scholar can say clearly about the offices in Hermas is that the "presbyters are present and they are presiding."[111] Osiek is representative of the majority view of scholars when she says, "Hermas mentions various kinds of church leaders in several passages . . . in a way that defies any kind of ordering."[112] Osiek also argues that Herm. does in several place equate the offices of presbyter and bishop in a way very similar to 1 Clem. 44.[113] Many scholars agree with this view and criticize those who have tried to parse out clear distinctions between the offices in Herm.'s account of leadership.[114] While not as explicit as the evidence in 1 Clem. or the New Testament, the evident parity of presbyters and bishops with the relative lack of clarity on anything else suggests a situation where the leaders of God's people were viewed, even if with some nuances between them, as "pastoral leaders."

The Didache does not mention presbyters; however, it explicitly states that bishops and deacons "themselves minister the ministry of the prophets and teachers."[115] While some scholars have restricted the meaning of λειτουργέω in this context to the

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[110] See Downs, "Church, Church Ministry, and Church Order," 158-59; Peters, "1 and 2 Clement," 186-87.

[111] Dan Batovici, "*The Shepherd of Hermas* as Early Christian Apocalypse," in Bird and Harrower, *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, 302.

[112] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 22. See also J. B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 60-61.

[113] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 23.

[114] Jochen Wagner states, "Die Amter der πρεσβύτεροι und der ἐπίσκοποι sind identisch, auch wenn fur die Gemeinde in Rom die Amtstrager als πρεσβυτεροι bezeichnet warden." Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 289. See also Young, who criticizes O'Maier's attempt to distinguish the offices clearly in Hermas. Young, "Being a Man," 246

[115] "λειτουργοῦσι καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν λειτουργίαν τῶν προφητῶν καὶ διδασκάλων." Did. 15.1.

leading of public worship, there is good reason for seeing it as referring to general, public ordained service to the community.[116] At the absolute least the Didachist indicates that these offices have a shared ministerial function in the community, though some Didache scholars argue that the only thing they share is unremunerated public service.[117] Moreover, as I will show in chapter 3, its moral vision for bishops, deacons, and prophets essentially aligns. The Didache thus appears to be distinctive witness to the concept of "pastoral leaders" being plausible in the early church: it makes distinctions between travelling and settled pastoral leaders but affirms their shared ministry to the community.

Ignatius's epistles, with their emphasis on the preeminence of the bishop, may be the last place one would expect to see conceptual parity between pastoral leaders. However, there is a complex relationship between the bishop and presbyters that suggests the differences between them were of preeminence rather than kind. Brent points out this subtlety, citing four ways in which these office are related: (1) both the bishop and presbyters are called preeminent, (2) the presbyters are never instructed to submit to the bishop, (3) a mutual cooperation between them is assumed, and (4) there are numerous commands for congregations to submit to the bishop *and* the presbyters.[118] He concludes rightly that the presbyters and bishop are "part of an ecclesial constitution in which different organs co-operate freely to provide unity."[119] At the very least, the bishop and presbyters share a nexus of qualities and functions in Ignatius's vision for pastoral leadership.

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[116] See BDAG, 590-91.

[117] Milavec, *The Didache*, 595-96. Milavec's analysis seems very tied to a particular understanding of λειτουργίαν that downplays its use in other early Christian literature such as 1 Clem. Moreover, he is presupposed to see marked differences between itinerant and local leaders.

[118] For examples of passages where bishops and presbyters are submitted to together, Brent lists Ign. *Smyrn.* 8.1, Ign. *Magn.* 2 and 7.1, and Ign. *Trall.* 2.1-2. Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 32-33.

[119] Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 33.

The above considerations commend taking descriptions of the various terms together, rather than parsing out particular visions for particular offices. This not only allows one to seek a unified pastoral theology across various terminology for leaders but appears more faithful to the historical reality.

## Summary

The substance and approach of this dissertation can be summarized with three contrasts. First, in a field assuming conflict and disunity in earliest Christian leadership, I will demonstrate theological unity about its essentials. Second, with many scholars attempting to understand early Christian ministry through historical reconstruction, I will deal primarily with the explicit vision for pastoral leaders in the text themselves. Finally, with many studies parsing out differences between early offices, I will group them together because that appears most faithful to the historical reality. In all of this, I will show that the primary story of early Christian leadership is not one of departure and discontinuity, but of faithfulness to a received pastoral theology. However, this story has been told many times, and previous narratives need attention before I seek to give my own. Summarizing the main ways early Christian leadership has been studied and articulated will be the subject of chapter 2.

# CHAPTER 2

## CONFESSIONALISM AND THE CONSENSUSES:
### A HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

Reflections upon ministry in early Christianity have spanned the history of the church but have been especially pronounced since the renewed interest in pastoral leadership sparked by the Reformation. A massive corpus of literature has come from this interest, shown by the fact that two relatively recent volumes consist mainly of summaries of previous scholarship.[1] The breadth of previous research being recognized, this summary will not attempt to be exhaustive but rather engage the major historic approaches to early Christian leadership and take a closer look at research in the last two decades.[2] What I will argue below is that early Christian leadership has been approached in three main ways: (1) confessionalism: early Christian literature as supporting present ecclesiological positions, (2) the "first consensus": postapostolic literature demonstrating discontinuity, departure, and development from a less structured apostolic model, and (3) the "second consensus": outside influences being determinative on early Christian leadership. In recent works, these three approaches are variously appropriated, modified,

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[1] For example, John Fullenbach's 500+ page published dissertation summarizes German Protestant scholarship on the nature of ecclesiastical authority in 1 Clement. See John Fullenbach, *Ecclesiastical Office and the Primacy of Rome: An Evaluation of Recent Theological Discussion of First Clement*, Studies in Christian Antiquity 20 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1980). Additionally, over half of James Tunstead Burtchael's major work on this subject summarizes and criticizes previous scholarship on this subject, see James Tunstead Burtchael, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 1-190.

[2] This approach is fairly common in recent works on early Christian leadership. See Jochen Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche: Presbyter und Episkopen in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2011), 15.

combined, or argued against. Recent studies also suggest the need and possibility for fresh approaches to this subject.

## Confessionalism: Early Christian Literature as Supporting Present Ecclesiastical Positions

The use of the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers in the various ecclesiological debates since the Reformation shows scholars seeking to be biblical, seeing the postapostolic church as faithful to apostolic models, and usually tethered to their own ecclesiological positions.[3] Here I will briefly cover views in the Reformation, cite the debates in early Anglicanism as paradigmatic of the historical pattern, and describe the "divine development" view characteristic of Roman Catholic approaches to this topic.

Ecclesiological authority was a key theological issue in the Reformation and drove Protestant authors to engage with the claims of the Roman Catholic hierarchy biblically, theologically, and historically. Apostolic and postapostolic literature was key to this engagement, because it represented an era of ecclesiastical purity regarding leadership in the church.[4] Scholars put forward various periods of departure from this apostolic purity, with many citing the Constantinian era but with Luther seeing the "fatal swerve" towards episcopacy as early as Ignatius of Antioch.[5] Wherever they placed departure for apostolic norms, Matin Luther and other Reformers pointed to the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers as consistent witnesses to virtuous care for God's people and the preaching of the Word as the essentials of pastoral leadership. These readings often occurred in polemics against the Roman Catholic hierarchy, which insisted

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[3] Michael A. G. Haykin, "The Development and Consolidation of the Papacy," in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 151n8.

[4] Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 3. I am largely following Burtchaell's summary and engagement of Reformation views on this subject.

[5] Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 3.

on ecclesiastical ordination as essential for pastoral leadership.[6] John Calvin and Theodore Beza centered their theology of pastoral leadership on the New Testament, allowed postapostolic practice to influence New Testament interpretation, and argued that Roman Catholic leadership practices were faithful neither to the New Testament nor the postapostolic writings.[7] The Reformation approach rightly recognizes the importance of postapostolic leadership patterns for New Testament interpretation and also places theology at the center of its analysis.

However, the polemical and confessional use of these documents would grow out of control in succeeding generations. Reformation interpretive patterns continued alongside multiplying ecclesiological positions, revealing scholars' capacity to find opposed theologies of pastoral leadership from the same sources. This trend was perhaps nowhere as pronounced as in seventeenth to nineteenth-century England, where continual ecclesiological debates between Anglicans and Independents produced contradictory literature.[8] Debates were so fierce in early Anglicanism that they lead to reconsideration

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[6] See, for example, Martin Luther, *Answer to the Hyperchristian, Hyperspiritual, and Hyperlearned Book by Goat Emser in Leipzig—Including Some Thoughts Regarding His Companion, the Fool Muner*, in *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1988), 39:152-57; *Against the Spiritual Estate of Pope and Bishops Falsely So Called*, in Pelikan and Lehmann, *Luther's Works*, 39:281-84.

[7] Burtchaell describes Calvin's method as looking primarily at the New Testament but disallowing "those offices which did not survive into the later tradition. Thus his method is not purely an appeal to Scripture, but takes account also of tradition beyond the earliest tradition." Burtchaell, *Synagogue to Church*, 24. The fact that Calvin affirms pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons, but does not affirm prophets and apostles as present officers in the church seems to affirm this. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 4.3.5. Theodore Beza likewise engaged with Roman Catholics by arguing that their leadership practices were not practiced in the earliest church as witnessed by the postapostolic writings: "Now if the traditions and ceremonies that our opponents advance today were apostolic, the church *would have used them from the beginning.*" Theodore Beza, quoted in Donald Jenks Ziegler, *Great Debates of the Reformation* (New York: Random House, 1969), 236, emphasis added.

[8] A broad introduction to Anglican apologetics regarding the episcopacy is found in Norman Sykes, *Old Priest and New Presbyter: Episcopacy and Presbyterianism Since the Reformation with Especial Relation to the Churches of England and Scotland*, Gunning Lectures (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1956).

of the authenticity of the Ignatian manuscripts.[9] Works like David Clarkson's *Primitive Episcopacy Stated and Cleared from the Holy Scriptures and Ancient Records* (1688) argued along Independent lines that the ἐπίσκοπος in the early writings was just the pastor of a local congregation; these kinds of works produced responses asserting the legitimacy of episcopacy from the same writings.[10] Even mediating positions like James Ussher's would ground their proposed models on the Apostolic Fathers, with Ussher particularly leaning on Ignatius's vision for presbyters and bishops working together in matters of church authority for the sake of unity.[11] Later advocates of Independency would be more thorough in their analysis of the Apostolic Fathers and more trenchant in their Independency; once again, Anglicans responded with thoroughgoing defenses of episcopacy from the same sources.[12] That this remained a live issue in the Anglican Church through the twentieth century is shown by a major compilation volume defending episcopacy in 1946.[13]

Parallel to the intra-Protestant debates, Roman Catholic scholarship has put forward a distinct view on this subject throughout the centuries. Instead of seeking to establish present ecclesiological systems from the New Testament and validate them by

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[9] The story is related in Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy*, T & T Clark Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 1-9.

[10] David Clarkson, *Primitive Episcopacy Stated and Cleared from the Holy Scriptures and Ancient Records* (London: Nathan Ponder, 1688). A response was made by Henry Maurice, *A Defense of Diocesan Episcopacy, In Answer to a Book of Mr. David Clarkson, Lately Published, Entitled Primitive Episcopacy* (London: H. Bonwick, 1700).

[11] James Ussher, *The Reduction of Episcopacy Unto the Form of Synodical Government Received in the Ancient Church: Proposed in the year 1641 as an Expedient for the prevention of those Troubles, which afterwards did arise about the matter of Church Government* (London: Printed by E. C. for Richard Royston, 1656).

[12] Joseph Fletcher, *The History of the Revival and Progress of Independency in England, with an Introduction, Containing an Account of the Development of the Principles of Independency in the Age of Christ and His Apostles, and of the Gradual Departure into Anti-Christian Error, until the Time of the Reformation* (London: John Snow, 1847), 1:101-62. For a defense of episcopacy from a similar time period, see Charles Gore, *The Church and the Ministry* (London: Longmans, Green, 1886).

[13] Kenneth E. Kirk, ed., *The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and the Doctrine of Episcopacy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946).

postapostolic writings, Roman Catholic scholars argue for a divinely directed theological development in the early church. In other words, later patristic developments—especially the early establishment of episcopacy and later growth of the hierarchy—were legitimate developments of doctrine.[14] The confessional nature of this approach is upfront; it presupposes that whatever leadership structures the church developed and are now present in the Roman church are the correct structures. Both modern and historic Roman Catholic scholars have taken variations of this perspective,[15] though there are notable exceptions.[16]

The mutually exclusive views proposed above indicate scholars' tendency to find their own ecclesiology in apostolic and postapostolic literature. A classic statement of the near hopelessly biased nature of confessional scholarship on early Christian ministry came from Burnett Hillman Streeter in 1929:

> For four hundred years the theologians of rival churches have armed themselves to battle on the question of the Primitive Church . . . they have at least *hoped* that the result of their investigations would be to vindicate Apostolic authority for the type of church order to which they were themselves attached. The Episcopalian has sought to find episcopacy, the Presbyterian Presbyterianism.[17]

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[14] For the most recent and balanced of these treatments, see Francis A. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of Episcopacy in the Early Church* (Pine Beach, NJ: Newman, 2001).

[15] Historical examples include John Henry Newman, "The Theology of the Seven Epistles of St. Ignatius," *Essays Critical and Historical*, 8th ed. (London: Longmans, 1888), 256; Jean Réville, *Les origines de l'épiscopat: étude sur la formation du gouvernement ecclésiastique au sein de l'église chrétienne dans l'Empire romain (première partie)*, Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études; Sciences religieuses 5 (Paris: E. Leroux, 1894), 1-226, 223-60, 267-88; Pierre Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, trans. Henri Briancaeu (London: Longsmans, Green, 1911), xx-xxii, 97-142. Aside from Sullivan, Kenneth Howell's recent commentaries on the Apostolic Fathers contain this argument as well, see Kenneth Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna: A New Translation and Theological Commentary*, Early Christian Fathers Series 1 (Zanesville, OH: CHResources, 2009); Kenneth Howell, *1 Clement and the Didache: A New Translation and Theological Commentary*, Early Christian Fathers Series 2 (Zanesville, OH: CHResources, 2012).

[16] Hans Küng is a Roman Catholic theologian who agrees with the historical development of the offices but draws an opposite conclusion typical of Roman Catholic scholars: this historic development means that episcopacy is not binding or normative but gives the church freedom in its leadership structures. Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray Ockendon and Rosaleen Ockendon (1967; repr., London, Burns and Oates, 2001), 429-30.

[17] Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Primitive Church: Studied with Special Reference to the Origin of Christian Ministry* (London: Macmillan, 1929), viii. The recognition of confessional or theological bias

In a striking instance of irony, Streeter, a committed ecumenical, went on to argue that *every* form of church government could be found in the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers, with different practices in different regions.[18] He thus does precisely what he criticized previous scholars for doing.[19] While Streeter's unreflective criticism of others is remarkable, he is emblematic of the theme seen above—the strong tendency to work in apostolic and postapostolic literature seeking to ground one's own ecclesiological commitments. A similar criticism, leveled at German scholarship that argued for discontinuity and development in early church leadership structures, was made by Olof Linton, a contemporary of Streeter's.[20]

## Discontinuity and Development: The "First Consensus"

Linton's criticism aimed at the second major approach to leadership in the early church, what I will call "the first consensus."[21] This consensus argued for significant discontinuity and development in early Christian leadership structures and differs from previous approaches in its assumption that the postapostolic era was not faithful to the apostolic. Primarily seeking to explain the rise of episcopacy, proponents argued that earliest Christian leadership was charismatic and unrelated to office or institution. However, as the church progressed through the late first and early second century, it lost this early flexibility and became more institutionalized, appointing ordained leaders who exercised authority over congregations. This new consensus was

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in interpreting the Apostolic Fathers is recognized by many. See Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 4; Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 71, 98, 101, 112, 115, 127-28, 135.

[18] Streeter, *The Primitive Church*, ix.

[19] Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 112.

[20] Olof Linton, *Das Problem der Urkirche in der neuren Forschung: eine kritische Darstellung*, Uppsala universitets årsskrift Teologi 2 (Uppsala, Sweden: Almqvist & Wirksells, 1932).

[21] Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 61. Burtchaell coined the term "The consensus" for this approach. I am calling it "the first consensus," arguing that Burtchaell and other scholars in his era are actually part of a "second consensus," which is discussed later in this chapter.

closely related to advent of the historical-critical method, which precisely dated New Testament documents and sought to trace development between them.[22] Key to this narrative was denial of Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles because of their witness to organized ministries, though critics have noted the circular nature of this argument.[23] Below I will list major figures in this movement and how they articulate this narrative. Richard Rothe, F. C. Bauer, Adolf von Harnack, Rudolph Sohm, and Hans von Campenhausen, in spite of their various debates with one another, all draw from historical-critical assumptions and propose an essential narrative of discontinuity and development, in large part neglecting the pastoral theology of the Apostolic Fathers. J. B. Lightfoot, without these historical assumptions and engaging in more theological reflection, still concurs with the consensus about development and discontinuity.

**Richard Rothe**

Rothe is significant primarily for being one of the first scholars to argue for a narrative of discontinuity and development.[24] Rothe argued that apostolic congregations had no official leadership or connection to one another; rather, congregations were relatively isolated from one another and connected primarily to particular apostles.[25] However, in the days before the deaths of the apostles and in conflicts in the late first century, the need for ordained and centralized leadership became apparent; the crisis of the destruction of Jerusalem provided the impetus to form the sort of ordained leadership witnessed to in the Apostolic Fathers.[26] Rothe hypothesized that a counsel met between AD 70 and AD 100 to establish the forms of leadership witnessed to in postapostolic

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[22] Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 61.

[23] See for example, Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 72.

[24] His work articulating this theory is Richard Rothe, *Die Anfänge der Christlichen Kirche und ihre Verfassung* (Wittenburg: Zimmerman, 1837).

[25] Rothe, *Die Anfänge der Christlichen Kirche*, 310.

[26] Rothe narrates this in *Die Anfänge der Christlichen Kirche*, 311-551.

literature. Although his proposal is distinctive, he set the trend for later scholars by doing three things: (1) assuming discontinuity, (2) focusing on ministry structures rather than theology, and (3) proposing a plausible but unfounded historical narrative to explain the development of ministerial structures.

## F. C. Bauer

While F. C. Bauer first articulated his view largely in response to Rothe and Albrecht Ritschl's narratives of the origins of Christian leadership, his main assumptions and method concur with Rothe's.[27] Bauer argued that the office of bishop was not original to the teaching of Jesus or the apostles because Paul's genuine epistles were not witnesses to it.[28] Instead, the office and especially the supremacy of the bishop developed in response to Gnosticism and Montanism through the influence of the Jewish branch of the early church, which resorted to authoritarianism to deal with the threat of heresy and schism.[29] In his narrative, the Apostolic Fathers—patently false in their claims that the episcopate was established by the apostles—represent a transitional period where the bishop has gained significant authority but was not yet authoritarian.[30] Bauer's basic narrative accords with Rothe's in that church offices developed in response to conflicts and difficulties within the church and were a departure from apostolic norms.

## Adolf von Harnack

A generation after Rothe and Bauer, Harnack wrote extensively—and changed his views several times—on early Christian leadership during his career. The discovery

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[27] His first publication on this subject was directly in response to Rothe. See Ferdinand Christian Bauer, "Uber den Ursprung des Episkopats in der Christlichen Kirche," *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* 10, no. 3 (1838): 1-185.

[28] F. C. Bauer, *Christianity and the Christian Church of the First Three Centuries*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 211. This translates Bauer's original *Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1860).

[29] Bauer, *Christianity and the Christian Church*, 219.

[30] Bauer, *Christianity and the Christian Church*, 209.

of the Didache in 1885 was decisive in shaping Harnack's mature views.[31] He argued that the charismatic ministers central to the Didache—the apostles, prophets, and teachers—were the earliest church's inspired leaders and teachers, with recognized charismatic authority across congregations. The elected leaders—bishops and deacons—were primarily administrative figures. As the charismatic leaders died and were not replaced, the bishops and elders took on both teaching and administrative authority, becoming the "backbone of the church."[32] Once again, with a different story told, Harnack posited charismatic leadership in earliest Christianity which gave way to institutional leadership out of practical necessity. While nuanced and adjusted by future scholars, Harnack's version of the development narrative, with its focus on charismatic passing to institution, would be widely adopted.

**Rudolph Sohm**

Rudolph Sohm was an exception to this trend and one of the most radical proponents of the narrative of discontinuity and development. While most other first consensus scholars argued for the development of ordained leadership as a practical necessity, Sohm presupposed that any sort of organized and authoritative ministry was antithetical to the spirit of early Christianity.[33] Thus, early church ministries were purely charismatic; the authority of the charismatic leaders (apostles, prophets, and teachers) rested on their giftedness and proclamation of the Word.[34] Sohm went as far as to

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[31] Harnack published a translation and commentary on the Didache a year after its discovery with some of his new thoughts about early Christian ministry included. Adolf von Harnack, *Die Lehre der zwölf Apostel, nebst Untersuchungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Kirchenverfassung und des Kirchenrecht* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1886).

[32] Adolf von Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt (London: Williams & Norgate, 1904), 2:57.

[33] Rudolph Sohm, *Kirchenrecht* (Leipzig: Duncker & Homblot, 1892), 1. On the first page of this work Sohm stated his presuppositions starkly: "Das Kirchenrecht steht mit dem Wesen der Kirche in Widerspruch."

[34] Rudolph Sohm, *Wesen und Usprung des Katholizismus* (Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1912), 51-53.

describe genuine Christian organization as spiritual anarchy.[35] The ordained offices developed from early Christian Eucharistic gatherings. Originally, the offices that became presbyters and bishops merely sat in honored places during the Eucharistic meal. However, as the Eucharistic meal became more important these leaders approached ordained authority.[36] First Clement takes a central, and very negative, place in Sohm's narrative. Clement's insistence on the apostolic origin and lifelong nature of the offices of bishop and deacon is the beginning of the end of the original charismatic organization of the church.[37] While Sohm's work was never translated into English, it has been picked up by many English speaking scholars and is emblematic of the first consensus tendency to work from presuppositions and downplay theology.[38]

## J. B. Lightfoot

J. B. Lightfoot is most famous for his seminal manuscript and background work on the Apostolic Fathers. However, he also proposed a new version of the first consensus narrative of the origins of the Christian ministry, unencumbered by the presuppositions that other scholars held about the date and authenticity of the Apostolic Fathers.[39] Lightfoot's basic contention was that a collegial presbyterial system, a holdover from the synagogue, was the original leadership structure of early Christianity.[40]

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[35] He called it "pneumatischem Anarchismus." Sohm, *Wesen und Usprung des Katholizismus*, 54-55.

[36] Sohm, *Wesen und Usprung des Katholizismus*, 62-65

[37] Sohm, *Wesen und Usprung des Katholizismus*, 66-67.

[38] Walter Lowrie published an English study of Sohm's views on the history of offices in the church in 1904. Walter Lowrie, *The Church and its Organization in Primitive and Catholic Times: An Interpretation of Rudolph Sohm's Kirchenrecht* (New York: Longmans & Green, 1904). Sohm's views are also the starting point for R. A. Campbell's major study in 1994, see Campbell's section later in this chap.

[39] Albrecht Ritschl is an example of a scholar who not only dated the Ignatian epistles later but cast the entire Ignatian story of martyrdom as false because of their witness to episcopacy. See Albrecht Ritschl, *Die Enstehung der alkatholischen Kirche* (Bonn, Germany: Adolph Marcus, 1855), 365-475, 577-603.

[40] J. B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 20-25.

Over time, largely for the sake of unity and protection from heresy and schism, presbyters chose to elect the bishop as a chief of the elders as a practical, and in Lightfoot's view, legitimate strategy.[41] This is the reality to which Ignatius especially bears witness.[42] Only later would the bishop be given unilateral power and sacerdotal notions to accompany his office.[43] Lightfoot's narrative, while more positive in its estimation of the Apostolic Fathers and with more consideration of their theology of ministry, asks the same questions and gives similar answers as the rest of the consensus.[44]

**Hans von Campenhausen**

Many scholars adopting variations of this consensus wrote during the time period between Lightfoot's (1868) and Hans von Campenhausen's (1953) work on early Christian leadership,[45] but Campenhausen will be treated alone because his work is a classic and culminating work of the first consensus.[46] Beginning with Christ and his twelve disciples, Campenhausen argues that their original authority was purely

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[41] Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, 32, see also 40-42 and 97-98.

[42] Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, 45-46.

[43] Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, 82-108.

[44] For some of Lightfoot's comments regarding pastoral theology in his work, see, *The Christian Ministry*, 129-35.

[45] For example, August Sabatier largely held to Sohm's views, see Auguste Sabatier, *The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit* (London: Williams & Nortgate, 1904). Karl von Weizsäcker and Hans Lietzmann largely expounded Harnack's position, see Karl von Weizäcker, *The Apostolic Age of the Christian Church*, trans. James Millar, 2 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1895); Hans Lietzmann, *The Beginnings of the Christian Church*, trans. Betram Lee Woolf (London: Lutterworth, 1949), 144-46. Rudolph Bultmann largely followed Harnack's history but shares Sohm's poor evaluation of that history, see Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007) 2:97-113. Bultmann's work was originally published between 1951-1955. See also John Knox, "The Ministry in the Primitive Church," in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, ed. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (New York: Harper, 1956); George H. Williams, "The Ministry of the Ante-Nicene Church (c.125-325)," in Niebuhr and Williams, *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*.

[46] That Campenhausen's work on this subject is the classic statement of the consensus position is shown primarily by how he is one of the few of these authors quoted by modern works. See for example Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry among the First Christians* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 6. Burtchaell says that Campenhausen's work "among all works in this century has settled in as a most appealing formulation of the consensus." Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 143.

charismatic, with no concept of office whatsoever.[47] Additionally, Paul the apostle guided and directed his churches but never insisted on his official authority: the "apostolate [was] entirely a matter of proclamation, not of organization."[48] Did., dated early, also witnesses to this free charismatic organization of the earliest churches, with authority of leaders connected directly to their virtue.[49] Ignatius, Herm., 1 Clem., and the Pastoral Epistles, treated as contemporaneous, are the first departures from this norm, with ordained leaders exercising authority. Distinctively, Campenhausen traces three different pastoral theologies in various regions in the time of the Apostolic Fathers,[50] concluding with puzzlement that such distinct conceptions of power and authority cohered into a nearly uniform episcopacy by the third century.[51]

**Summary**

With many other advocates historic and recent, this consensus shares several features.[52] First, the driving research question is "how did the relatively unstructured apostolic church evolve so quickly and uniformly into episcopacy?" Second, in seeking

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[47] Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. J. A. Baker (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 196), 10-14.

[48] Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power,* 53. Here Campenhausen assumes non-Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles and Ephesians.

[49] Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 72.

[50] On the three distinct pastoral theologies, Campenhausen says,

The documents of the sub apostolic ate which we have discussed thus fall naturally into three definite groups, from three different provinces of the Empire; . . . In Rome the bishop is primarily the supreme cultic official of the congregation, in Syria he is its spiritual example and sacral focus, in Asia minor he is above all the ordained preacher of the apostolic teaching. These are the three main possible evaluations of church office; and in later Church history we hardly ever again find them in isolation and in such pure form as we do here in Clement, Ignatius, and in the Pastoral Epistles. (Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 120)

[51] Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 297.

[52] An important and more recent article within this consensus is Eric George Jay, "From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters: Christian Ministry in the Second Century; a Survey," *The Second Century* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 125-62. See also Williams, "The Ministry of the Ante-Nicene Church (c.125-325)."

to answer this question, apostolic and postapostolic documents are approached primarily as witnesses to a historical process of development in the church's leadership structures; the pastoral theology of each early Christian author is neglected. Finally, as many have pointed out, evaluative presuppositions have disposed some scholars to read charismatic disorganization into the earliest churches, view the development of ordained leadership as a loss, and even use circular reasoning to date New Testament documents later to fit their narrative of development.[53]

## Outside Influences: A Second Consensus

In recent decades a second consensus has come to dominate the study of early Christian leadership: the assessment that it was decisively influenced by outside cultural or sociological forces. Like the first consensus, the second consensus displaces the pastoral theology of the early church as central to its leadership, but for different reasons. While the first consensus's interest was more historical, using early texts as witnesses to institutionalization, the second consensus's interest is more cultural and social. Second consensus scholars assume that early texts witness to the influence of outside cultural forces. Since Harnack's Hellenization thesis this has been a common scholarly theory about Christianity in general, but its application to Christian leadership took longer to take hold.[54] Some scholars argue that Hellenistic leadership structures and ideas were decisive in shaping early Christian ministry, while others argue that sociological factors or synagogal leadership patterns were the primary shapers. Below I will trace the genesis of this view in Edwin Hatch and its most influential proponents in Harry O'Maier, James Tunstead Burtchaell, and R. A. Campbell. Additionally, I will examine aspects of the

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[53] See Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 180-90. See also Benjamin L. Merkle, "The Pattern of Leadership in Acts & Paul's Letters to Churches," in Merkle and Schreiner, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 59-88. Merkle engages significantly with scholars who deny organized ministry in the earliest New Testament documents.

[54] Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (London: William and Norgate, 1902), 208-9.

works of Max Weber, Gerd Theissen, Bengt Homburg, Wayne Meeks, and Roger W. Gehring because of their significance in bringing sociological and household readings into the study of early Christianity.

## Edwin Hatch (Nineteenth Century)

Edwin Hatch was the first scholar to propose decisive influence of outside forces on leadership structures in early Christianity, and he did so comprehensively. Going against the assumptions of nearly all previous scholars, Hatch denied that the most primitive forms of church government had more significance than later developments.[55] Moreover, while previous scholars had argued for various ways the church had borrowed from secular society, Hatch argued that "when we descend from poetry to fact . . . the forces which welded [Christian societies] together and gave them shape are adequately explained by existing forces of human society."[56] In other words, the culture in which the church was formed was a *sole* explanation for its organization and leadership structures: "Not only some but *all* the elements of the [church's] organization can be traced to external sources."[57] In Hatch's view, the earliest churches were organized based on the Greco-Roman associations, with the ἐπίσκοπος, coming out of these associations' use of financial officers.[58] The πρεσβύτεροι, on the other hand, were derived from Judaism, responsible for worship and discipline.[59] In partial agreement with the consensus of departure and development, Hatch believed that the ἐπίσκοπος eventually gained primary authority because of the need for unity and church's conflicts with heretical groups,

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[55] Edwin Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches: Eight Lectures Delivered before the University of Oxford, in the year 1880*, 3rd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1892), 216-17.

[56] Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, 18.

[57] Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, 214.

[58] Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, 32-44.

[59] Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, 56-81.

though he traced the origin of this thinking to Jewish schools of philosophy.[60] Most notable about Hatch's approach is his contention that social and cultural context was the *sole* and *decisive* factor that shaped the church's leadership.

**Weber, Theissen, and Holmberg**

While Hatch's perspective did not take hold in his own time, it was revived by the twentieth century rise of sociological analysis of early Christianity. Max Weber, Gerd Theissen, and Bengt Homburg were the foundational thinkers that applied sociology to the study of early Christianity. While none of these scholars attempted a full-fledged history of the ministry in early Christianity, they created categories and perspectives that would be very influential in later works. Weber largely followed Harnack's narrative of charismatics being replaced with institutional leaders but did so explaining the process with sociological categories, with his description of charismatic, traditional, and rational authority being especially influential.[61] Theissen situated Christian congregations firmly in their first-century socio-economic contexts and emphasized that these forces transformed a radically world denying Jesus movement witnessed to by the Synoptics into one more firmly rooted in first-century culture and values.[62] Holmberg used sociological analysis to dismantle the first consensus's assumption that Pauline Christian communities were organized around purely charismatic authority.[63] Anticipating the

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[60] Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, 88-103.

[61] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: A New Translation*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2019), 136, 342, 382. This is a new translation of Weber's German work published in in 1921. For Weber's relationship to Harnack's narrative see also Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 138-40.

[62] See for example his analysis of Paul, the Corinthian congregation, and different kinds of leaders in Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*, trans. John H. Schütz, ed. John H. Schütz (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 27-53. This newer volume translates essays from 1974-1975.

[63] Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 193-204. For his criticism of main German scholars, see pp. 201-2. This is a reprint of Holmberg's original work in 1978, which was his published dissertation from Lund University.

presuppositions of further works in this field, he stated that sociological analysis—especially power dynamics—ought to be more fundamental than theological analysis in examining early Christian works regarding pastoral ministry.[64] At the conclusion of his analysis he implies that theological analysis is guilty of "idealism": the assumption that ideas are chiefly formative in the formation of communities, and in this case, authority and leadership.[65] While developing Hatch's general outlook in a very specific reading of early Christian texts, these scholars argued that outside forces were the decisive ones in shaping early Christian leadership, downplaying a theological approach as "idealistic."

**Wayne Meeks (1983)**

Stating similar presuppositions more mildly than Holmberg, Meeks began his classic study *The First Urban Christians* by defending sociological analysis against its theological detractors and by saying he would adopt sociological analysis in a "piecemeal" and pragmatic fashion.[66] He proceeded to describe early Christianity as related to various social institutions in the first century world—particularly analyzing the household, voluntary association, synagogue, and philosophical school—but noted that none of these first-century institutions "quite fits" the social community of the church.[67] While each of these institutions had influence, they do not explain some factors of the early Christian community such as rituals like the Lord's Supper.[68] Regarding leadership,

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[64] Holmberg writes, "Too often the material is interpreted by raising questions about 'the ministry' in the New Testament—a later theological category—instead of by analyzing more fundamental phenomena, such as who emits and transmits authoritative words, who has the decisive word in new situations, who receives financial support for work in the Church or its missions, etc." Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 2. Holmberg goes as far as to say he will not be engaging in traditional exegesis of these texts in his work (5).

[65] Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 201-2.

[66] Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 2nd ed. (1983; repr., New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2003), 2-6.

[67] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 73.

[68] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 77, 80, 84.

Meeks denies that formal offices were present in early Pauline communities, affirms that leadership functions were still recognized, and argues that the lines between distinct types of authority were blurred.[69] Meeks is thus an example of a scholar coming to similar historical conclusions as first consensus scholars using a sociological methodology typically very critical of this consensus. He is also more balanced than some second consensus scholars, noting peculiar elements of Christian communities that cannot be explained by social categories. However, he continued the trend of looking behind the stated views of New Testament texts to social realities of which the texts may have witnessed.[70]

**Harry O'Maier (1991)**

Most of the sociological analysis cited so far has been focused on the New Testament. Harry O'Maier's *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius* brought this perspective to bear on leadership structures in the Apostolic Fathers. Like other scholars using sociological analysis, O'Maier argues against a primarily theological analysis of these documents, saying, "ideas in and of themselves are not sufficient to explain how the ministry evolved."[71] Instead, O'Maier proposes an "interactionist" account between theological ideas about pastoral ministry with the household setting of the early churches, which he argues necessitated church leaders to be wealthier members of the congregation and to be seen as a Greco-Roman *paterfamilias* in their communities.[72] He admits that his approach

[69] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 134-36.

[70] See Burtchaell's comments about Meeks's methodology and historical conclusions in *From Synagogue to Church*, 166-67.

[71] Harry O'Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1991), 4.

[72] O'Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry*, 4.

"reads between the lines" and builds unprovable hypotheses upon one another.[73] A striking example of the results of his approach is his assertion that Tertullian's remarks about leaders not gaining their position by money was the opposite of reality in the early church.[74] In his analysis of the Apostolic Fathers, O'Maier views Herm. as indicative of problems arising from wealthier leaders, 1 Clem. as evidence of the development of house church leadership, and Ignatius as a charismatic leader who used his impending martyrdom as an opportunity to establish more structured leadership patterns in the communities of Asia Minor.[75] O'Maier's monograph made the second consensus approach to postapostolic literature normative.

**James Tunstead Burtchaell (1992)**

Published within a year of O'Maier's monograph, Burtchaell's *From Synagogue to Church* advocates for a different version of the second consensus narrative, focusing on the synagogue rather than sociological forces as the chief outside influence on early Christian leadership. His work begins with a 180-page summary of previous scholarship on the development of leadership in the early church which is mostly an extended criticism of the first consensus.[76] As an alternative, Burtchaell posits that early Christian leadership developed primarily from the Jewish synagogue, stating that "it is impossible to understand primitive Christian worship unless in continuity with Jewish worship."[77] He states as a presupposition that antecedent historical contexts are essential for understanding historical developments, both because those contexts determine what innovations are made and because innovators quietly carry over much from their previous

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[73] O'Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry*, 6-7.

[74] O'Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry*, 23. Tertullian asserted, "The tried men of our elders preside over us, obtaining that honor not by purchase, but by established character." *Apology* 39.

[75] O'Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry*, 10.

[76] Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 180-90.

[77] Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 190.

context.[78] In other words, early Christian leadership developed both in response to leadership structures already present in the synagogue and quietly carried over many synagogal patterns that went without comment in the early Christian literature. Burtchaell argues that both the πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος were carry over officers from the synagogue, with the ἐπίσκοπος being: (1) the πρεσβύτερος *par excellence*, (2) parallel to the chief officer of the synagogue, and (3) a figure whose role became more pronounced in the struggles of the late first and second centuries.[79] Burtchaell's work remains the classic study that situates early Christian leadership in a primarily Jewish context; his narrative appears more plausible than sociological readings because his historiographical presuppositions are more warranted. Still, with the rest of second consensus scholars, Burtchaell downplays the theology of the early church and assumes outside forces as central.

## R. A. Campbell (1994)

With nearly opposite presuppositions and conclusions as Burtchaell, R. A. Campbell's *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* draws from first-century context, sociological readings, and household readings of earliest Christianity.[80] He contends, taking up Sohm's forgotten view of the elders, that "in the ancient world the elders are those who bear a title of honour, not of office, a title that is imprecise, collective and representative, and rooted in the ancient family or household."[81] Freely admitting the tenuous nature of his historical reconstruction, Campbell draws from household readings and argues that these elders—initially called ἐπίσκοποι but later given

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[78] Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 194-96.

[79] Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 345-49.

[80] Campbell is opposite of Burtchaell in two main ways. First, he is appreciative rather than critical of the consensus, explicitly taking as his starting point the work of Sohm, see *The Elders*, 5-10. Second, while giving Judaism as a primary context with which to understand the elders, he contends that they were not office holders in the synagogue, see 238-40.

[81] Campbell, *The Elders*, 3-4, 246.

the honorific, communal title of οι πρεσβύτεροι—led house church gatherings.[82] The conflicts of the postapostolic period led to an overseer being drawn from elders who would oversee one Eucharistic gathering with all the Christians from a city.[83] This led to a loss of prestige for the elders who no longer led worship gatherings; conflict resulting from this loss of prestige is the main background Campbell presupposes in his readings of the Apostolic Fathers.[84] Campbell is similar to Meeks in his strong contention of the power of outside forces on the early offices and that his different methodology leads to similar historical conclusions as the first consensus.

**Roger W. Gehring (2000)**

Many previous studies incorporated household readings into their narratives of early Christianity, but Roger W. Gehring's *Hausgemeinde und Mission* was the first to do so comprehensively.[85] While providing evidence for the presence of house churches from New Testament texts, Gehring argues from silence on the effect of this context on early Christian leadership:

> There *seems to be some indication* that house churches already played a significant role in the development of leadership. . . . The homeowners, as the heads of the household and hosts of the house church, may well have had more authority and influence, because of their social position, in the group that met in their home. After all, the community met in their home . . . they met in the social context of the oikos, that is, the extended family with its built-in authority structures. *We can assume* that some of the hosts became the leaders of the church that met in their home.[86]

Gehring embraces both the measured tone of other second consensus scholars and their tendency to make significant claims from sparse evidence. For example, he argues early

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[82] Campbell, *The Elders*, 242.

[83] Campbell, *The Elders*, 243-46.

[84] Campbell, *The Elders*, 210-28.

[85] Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004). This is Gehring's translation of his 2000 *Hausgemeinde und Mission*.

[86] Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 117, emphasis added.

Pauline literature refrains from specifying particulars about leadership because the specifics were already provided by the household context.[87] At the same time, Gehring departs from the usual second consensus view of the term πρεσβύτερος by suggesting that early Christians used this term originally and were not dependent on the synagogue or other first-century context for its meaning.[88] Like many other second consensus works, Gehring argued for some particulars outside the mainstream with a general analysis still well within it.

**Scholarship on Individual Texts**

A variety of focused studies on individual texts of the Apostolic Fathers in the 1980s and 90s embraced the perspective of the second consensus. Some commentaries read the Apostolic Fathers with a focus on the influence of Hellenistic concepts on an author's vision for pastoral leadership.[89] Other studies situate authors in particular historical reconstructions or in social situations that become determinative to interpreting the texts and their portrayals of pastoral leadership.[90] The prevalence of these readings in

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[87] Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 226, 298.

[88] Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 105.

[89] See for example William R. Schoedel's commentary on Ignatius's epistles, especially his commentary on Ign. *Pol*. William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). See also Horatio E. Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief: Übersetzt und Erklärt*, Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998). Lona interprets much of 1 Clement in light of Alexandrian Hellenistic Judaism. For a more systematic work that reads both Ignatius and Clement in light of first-century Roman context, see Allen Brent, *The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order: Concepts and Images of Authority in Paganism and Early Christianity Before the Age of Cyprian*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 45 (Boston: Brill, 1999).

[90] Christine Trevett has published several studies on Ignatius with this perspective, see Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 29 (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1992); "Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity: A Third Error Combatted by Ignatius?," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34, no. 1 (1983): 1-18. For a major work reading Hermas and 1 Clement with a sociological view, see James Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991). For a partially social reading of the Didache's vision for ministry, see Jonathan A. Draper, "Social Ambiguity and the Production of Text: Prophets, Teachers, Bishops and Deacons and the Development of the Jesus Tradition in the Community of the *Didache*," in *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History and Transmission*, ed. Clayton Jefford (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 284-312. O'Maier also published a significant article examining the Pol. *Phil.* from a social

individual treatments of the Apostolic Fathers show the significant influence of the second consensus on these works, though there are some notable exceptions to this approach in this time period.[91]

**Summary**

Culminating in the 1990s with the seminal works of O'Maier, Burtchaell, and Campbell, the second consensus took a decisive step beyond the texts of the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers. While the first consensus largely saw apostolic and postapostolic literature as historical witnesses to development and diversity regarding pastoral leadership, the second consensus looked behind these texts to plausible historical realities behind them. Thus, while sometimes sharing historical conclusions with the first consensus—such as the conflicts of the late first and early second century being decisive points in the development of leadership structures—this second consensus embraced a new methodology that read "between the lines" in these texts, no longer taking them at face value. Instead, forces beyond Christian theology and practice were seen as ultimately determinative on the course of Christian leadership. In my view, the second consensus approach to leadership in the early church is open to the devastating criticism leveled by R. P. C. Hanson years before it became a consensus:

> The fluidity and wide-ranging use and meaning of the terms chosen by the Church to describe its main official ministries make the search for predecessors of these ministries in Jewish institutions and in Greek or other pagan society an almost completely futile one. Inspector (episcopus), assistant (diaconus), older man (presbyteros)—these are names of such wide use and general application that scholars ought to be convinced that they were chosen to describe new and

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perspective: Harry O'Maier, "Purity and Danger in Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians: The Sin of Valens in Social Perspective," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993): 229-47.

[91] For a significant exception, see Ray Robert Noll, *Christian Ministerial Priesthood: A Search for Its Beginnings in the Primary Documents of the Apostolic Fathers* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars, 1993). Noll's analysis is primarily theological and largely concerned with the presence of Old Testament sacramental language regarding pastoral leadership in the Apostolic Fathers. See also Barbara Ellen Bowe, *A Church in Crisis: Ecclesiology and Parenesis in Clement of Rome*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 23 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989). Bowe argues that the letter's focus on ecclesiastical office ought to be interpreted in light of its ecclesiological perspective, especially focusing on the theological concepts of unity and corporate ethics in the Christian community.

untraditional functions rather than that they were modifications or re-interpretations of offices or functions already existing in Jewish or pagan society. The extraordinarily wide range of suggestions as to the origin of the bishop made by scholars in the last hundred years should be sufficient to convince readers of this point.[92]

As Hanson points out, the numerous and often mutually exclusive theories in the works cited above point strongly to the futility to attempting to explain early Christian patterns of leadership primarily by their historical and cultural context.

## Since 2000: Appropriations and Responses

Since 2000, most scholarship on pastoral leadership in early Christianity has variously appropriated, furthered, or responded to the first and second consensuses. As an indication of scholarship moving in different directions, some studies articulate shared aspects of pastoral leadership in postapostolic works while others show a renewed appreciation for the theological nature of pastoral leadership in this age. Below, I will individually review the major studies and then group other relevant literature together in several categories.[93] All of the authors of major monographs (Alistair Stewart-Sykes, Ritva Williams, Jochen Wagner, and Kevin Giles) embrace aspects of the first and/or second consensuses. While numerous shorter studies also do so, many of them show promising new approaches to early Christian leadership in apostolic and postapostolic literature.

**Alistair Stewart-Sykes (2001, 2014)**

Alistair Stewart-Sykes has produced two major studies on pastoral leadership in apostolic and postapostolic Christianity that appropriate and further the perspectives of the first and second consensus. His 2001 *From Prophecy to Preaching* largely narrates the transformation of charismatic prophetic ministry to preaching along the lines of the

[92] R. P. C. Hanson, *Studies in Christian Antiquity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), 120-21. This book republishes an article Hanson wrote in 1978, "Office and Concept of Office in the Early Church."

[93] Sullivan's *From Apostles to Bishops* is another major study published in this period (2001), but since he has already been mentioned as an author writing from the Roman Catholic perspective of divine development of the episcopacy, he will not be reviewed here.

first consensus's narrative of institutionalization.[94] He also situates the earliest Christians within the synagogue and posits that the transformation from prophecy to preaching was the result of the parting of the ways between Jews and Christians.[95] Notably, he departs from the consensus by arguing that there was no conflict in the transition between charismatic and institutionalized ministry; in fact, just as ordained leaders took on prophetic activities like preaching, so charismatic leaders took on leadership roles previously held by ordained leaders.[96] Presupposing a household structure for early churches, Stewart-Sykes's second major study, *The Original Bishops* (2014), argues that the ἐπίσκοπος was originally the leader of an individual house church and primarily an economic officer of his congregation.[97] He also argues for distinction between the terms πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος, based in part on his reconstruction of Christian house churches that met exclusively in homes and did not gather as city-wide congregations.[98] The conclusion to *Original Bishops* advocates for retrieving the economic focus of ordained leaders for modern ministry.[99]

**Ritva Williams (2007)**

Ritva Williams's *Stewards, Prophets, Keepers of the Word* furthers second consensus scholarship and takes it into new directions. Williams begins by arguing strongly for a household setting for early Christianity and first-century patronage as a context for early Christian leadership, although she does not draw from Gehring's

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[94] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching: In Search of the Origins of the Christian Homily*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 15.

[95] Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 15, 22.

[96] Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 16.

[97] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Original Bishops: Office and Order in the First Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 2-5, 55-118.

[98] In this reconstruction Stewart-Sykes proposes that the πρεσβυτεροι are all the επισκοποι of a particular city or region considered together, Stewart-Sykes, *Original Bishops*, 15-17.

[99] Stewart-Sykes, *Original Bishops*, 355-56.

monograph.[100] She then analyzes the steward image of leaders in the New Testament as rooted in Hellenistic conceptions, a standard feature of second consensus scholarship.[101] However, her analysis of prophets and leaders as keepers of the Word brings in psychological categories like "altered states of consciousness" and social memory as illuminating for early Christian conceptions of leadership.[102] She seeks to retrieve this vision for early Christian leadership by applying the concepts of steward, prophet, and keeper of the word for modern Christians, though she essentially redefines these concepts from their ancient usage.[103] Williams's work furthers the second consensus perspective by applying new categories as determinatively influential on early Christian leadership.

**Jochen Wagner (2011)**

Also working within the second consensus but drawing primarily from Gehring, Jochen Wagner's published dissertation *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche* sought to test Gehring's household reading of early Christian leadership.[104] With Gehring, Wagner presupposes that households were the nearly exclusive gathering contexts for early Christians, that householders were the leaders of these gatherings, and that the leadership patterns already present in the Greco-Roman household were adapted by early Christians.[105] Surveying evidence in both the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers, Wagner comes to the following conclusions: (1) early Christian householders had only

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[100] Ritva Williams, *Stewards, Prophets, Keepers of the Word* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 21-54.

[101] Williams, *Stewards, Prophets, Keepers of the Word*, 91-92.

[102] Williams, *Stewards, Prophets, Keepers of the Word*, 94-101, 146-51.

[103] Williams, *Stewards, Prophets, Keepers of the Word*, 192-97.

[104] Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 30.

[105] Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 31, 48.

functional and sociological leadership that later tended towards office,[106] (2) the move towards ordained office was a result of the death of the apostles and authority gradually being vested in these household leaders, (3) the πρεσβύτερος was not an office borrowed from the synagogue but one distinctly Christian, and (4) the ἐπίσκοπος was a general leadership term borrowed from Hellenistic culture, first primarily administrative and later including teaching.[107] Wagner's work is an example of a nuanced appropriation and critical response to aspects of the consensuses, but his methodology largely coheres with the second consensus.

**Other German Studies**

Several German studies have worked within and responded to elements of the consensuses. *Das Charisma* (2009), a compilation volume examining the concept of charisma across a variety of disciplines, contains one chapter that appropriates the first consensus institutionalization theory and another that interacts with sociological readings of Paul's understanding of charisma.[108] Catholic professor Johannes Mühlsteiger also wrote a volume on canon law and church order that in part analyzes texts in the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers with assumptions of the first consensus and with some Roman Catholic presuppositions.[109] There is also a three volume publication from a joint Lutheran-Catholic effort towards ecumenical dialogue; volume two contains two chapters about the historic offices of the church which expresses an agnostic position about the

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[106] "Insofernist ihre Leitungsposition sowohl funktional als auch soziologisch bedingt; sie tendiert jedoch schon recht bald in die Richtung eines Amtes." Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 49.

[107] Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 48-49, 65-66, 76-79, 299-303.

[108] See Hildegard Scherer, "Charismen in Korinth—das Konzept des Paulus," in *Das Charisma: Funktionen und Symbolische Repräsentationen;* ed. Pavlína Rychterová, Stefan Seit, and Raphaela Veit, Beiträge zu Den Historischen Kulturwissenschaften 2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009), 59-72; Ernst Ludwig Grasmück, "Von der charismatischen Struktur der christlichen Gemeinden in 'apostolischer' Zeit zu den frühen Formen von Hierarchie und Institutionalisierung," in *Das Charisma*, 73-82.

[109] Johannes Mühlsteiger, *Kirchenordnungen: Anfänge Kirchlicher Rechtsbildung.* Kanonistische Studien und Texte 50 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2006).

factors leading to development in the offices of early Christian leadership, a significant

departure from consensus positions.[110]

**Kevin Giles (2017)**

The most recent major study of apostolic and postapostolic leadership is Kevin

Giles's *Patterns of Ministry among the First Christians*, a thematic study of pastoral

leadership in the first and second century which largely furthers and applies the

conclusions of the first and second consensuses.[111] Giles embraces the following as

presuppositions: (1) that institutionalization of the church took place in the first and

second centuries, (2) that the house church is central for understanding early Christian

ministry, and (3) that the Pastoral epistles represent a departure from early Pauline

theology of pastoral leadership.[112] Giles also implies throughout that the development of

structured ministries was a loss for the church's life and health, showing similar affinities

to first consensus scholars.[113] One distinctive feature of Giles's work is his attempt to

retrieve an egalitarian vision for ministry from the early church using aspects of each

consensus.[114] He argues that since the earliest Christian churches met in households,

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[110] Theodor Schneider, "Das Amt in der frühen Kirche: Versuch einer Zusammenschau," in *Das Kirchliche Amt in apostolischer Nachfolge*, ed. Dorothea Sattler and Gunther Wenz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 2:11-38; Peter Walter, "Der Verhältnis von Episkopat und Presbyterat von der Alten Kirche bis zum Reformationsjahrhundert," in Sattler and Wenz, *Das Kirchliche*, 2:39-96. The findings of the 3 volumes are summarized and discussed in Gunther Wenz, "Das kirchliche Amt in apostolischer Nachfolge: Historische Reminiszenzen und systematische Perspektiven," *Catholica* 68, no. 2 (2014): 126-50.

[111] Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry among the First Christians*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017).

[112] Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 1-8. Importantly, while Giles agrees with the basic contention that institutionalization happened, he disagrees with scholars of the first consensus that all early Christian leadership was charismatic. Giles contends that charismatic and institutional leadership functioned side-by-side, and only later was charismatic ministry stamped out, see p. 168. See also pp. 57-63 for his depiction of "early Paul" versus "late Paul." Giles does not go as far as to deny Pauline authorship of the Pastorals but sees their theology of the ministry as demonstrating discontinuity with early Pauline theology.

[113] See, for example, his treatment bishops as developing from "house church leaders to prelates" in Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 56-68.

[114] Giles, *Patterns of Ministry,* ix.

women necessarily had more leadership opportunities. Moreover, since the barring of women from ministry is only evident in the institutionalization of the "later Paul" of the Pastoral Epistles, a return to primitive Christian patterns of leadership necessitates egalitarianism.[115] As an Anglican egalitarian himself, Giles also represents the confessional tendency to ground one's ecclesiology in early Christian literature.[116]

**Evangelical Responses to the Consensus**

Several evangelical scholars have made thorough responses to aspects of the consensuses, especially in New Testament studies. Most notably, Benjamin L. Merkle's published dissertation (2003) was a comprehensive defense of the traditional position that elders and overseers were one office in the early church.[117] He also argues extensively that the entire New Testament has a clear "concept of office," pushing back against the position that all early Christian leadership was charismatic and informal.[118] A recent compilation volume by evangelical scholars, *Shepherding God's Flock* (2014), includes criticisms of the position that the early church borrowed leadership structures from the synagogue,[119] a theology of pastoral ministry in the New Testament,[120] and a balanced historical treatment of the rise of monepiscopacy in the second and third centuries.[121]

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[115] Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 63-64, 184-86. Giles also gives egalitarian arguments about the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:12 on pp. 195-216.

[116] For the most recent articulation of Giles's commitment to egalitarianism, see Kevin Giles, *What the Bible Actually Teaches about Women* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018).

[117] Originally published as Benjamin L. Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church*, Studies in Biblical Literature 57 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003). The version cited in this dissertation will be Benjamin L. Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth, 2022).

[118] Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer*, 91-118.

[119] Jim Hamilton, "Did the Church Borrow Leadership Structures from the Old Testament or Synagogue?," in Merkle and Schreiner, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 13-32.

[120] Andreas Köstenberger, "Shepherds and Shepherding in the Gospels," in Merkle and Schreiner, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 33-58; Thomas R. Schreiner, "Overseeing and Serving the Church in the Pastoral and General Epistles," in Merkle and Schreiner, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 89-118.

[121] Haykin, "The Development and Consolidation of the Papacy," 120-22.

These evangelical responses represent a return to exegesis of texts and pushback against some of the unwarranted assumptions of the consensuses.

**Ignatian Studies**

Ignatius has always been a central figure in studies of early Christian leadership and studies continue to be published on him and his views of pastoral leadership. Allen Brent has authored two major studies in line with the second consensus which radically situate Ignatius and his vision for pastoral leadership in early Hellenism; he also reconstructs church conflicts, Ignatius's failure to pastor his own church, and disagreement between Ignatius and Polycarp as the historical background of the epistles.[122] Other studies continue to view Ignatius's articulations of ecclesiology in light of Hellenistic conceptions.[123] Notable responses to the consensus views of Ignatius have also been written. Thomas Robinson's volume pushes back on a variety of aspects of the first and second consensuses. He argues against the following features of the consensuses: (1) diverse "Christianities" in Ignatius's day, (2) conflict as the background to Ignatius's epistles, (3) early Christian reliance on the synagogue, (4) the centrality of house churches, (5) and the narrative that Ignatius witnesses to a drastic development in early Christian leadership.[124] Several major works published after 2000 represent a revival of interest in Ignatius's theology generally and of the ministry specifically, though these works do not robustly connect Ignatius's theology to the other Apostolic Fathers or New

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[122] See Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*; Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Second Sophistic: A Study of an Early Christian Transformation of Pagan Culture*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 36 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

[123] See John-Paul Lotz, *Ignatius and Concord: The Background and Use of the Language of Concord in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Patristic Studies 8 (New York: Lang, 2007). While Lotz's study is not particularly focused on Ignatius's view of pastoral leadership, it contains readings of it in light of the Hellenistic concepts of concord.

[124] Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways: Early Jewish-Christian Relations* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 79-87, 95-102.

Testament.[125] A Norwegian work translated in 2005 places Ignatius's view of the episcopate, described theologically, in continuity and conversation with later patristic figures.[126] These diverse approaches to Ignatius indicate new methodologies and theological interest in the study of early Christian leadership, even with first and second consensus scholarship continuing to predominate.

**Studies Suggesting Ministerial Unity**

Especially relevant to my project are several recent studies that have articulated unifying themes in the pastoral theology of the Apostolic Fathers. A recent dissertation has sought to demonstrate patterns of shared leadership in the Apostolic Fathers and come to the conclusion that the Apostolic Fathers share five distinct principles for leadership, including the communal nature of leadership.[127] In an article-length treatment, Kenneth Berding has argued for a shared understanding of spiritual gifts in the Apostolic Fathers.[128] Michael J. Svigel has argued that the Apostolic Fathers are a

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[125] This is shown primarily in studies approaching Ignatius's theology generally with chapter length treatments of his theology of the church and pastoral leadership. See Gregory Vall, *Learning Christ: Ignatius of Antioch and the Mystery of Redemption* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2013), 301-58. Vall also explicitly embraces a theological and exegetical approach to Ignatius's epistles (1-27). See, most recently, Jonathan Lookadoo, who devotes chap. 6 of his work to the connection between Christology and Ignatius's vision for the church and pastoral leadership. Jonathan Lookadoo, *The Christology of Ignatius of Antioch* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023). For an article length recent treatment of Ignatius's theology of the ministry, see Karen Piepenbrink, "Zur Perzeption des kirchlichen Amtes durch einen, 'Märtyerbischof," in *Die Briefe des Ignatios von Antiochia: Motive, Strategien, Kontexte*, ed. Thomas Johann Bauer and Peter von Möllendorff, Millennium-Studien 72 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

[126] Odd Magne Bakke, "The Episcopal Ministry and the Unity of the Church from the Apostolic Fathers to Cyprian," in *The Formation of the Early Church*, trans. Brian McNeil, ed. Jostein Adna (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 379-408. Bakke argues that Ignatius's theology of the episcopate is concerned chiefly with representation and analogy to heavenly realities (383-84).

[127] Zachariah Lee Vester, "Patterns of Shared Leadership in the Apostolic Fathers" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 245-47. The other four principles Vester cites are that leadership is costly, accountable, mundane, and focused on unity.

[128] Berding writes that even though gifts for ministry were likely to be associated with office, the Apostolic Fathers "possessed no separate theology of spiritual gifts as special abilities; rather, when the AFs thought of the items we normally call 'gifts,' they thought of them primarily within the category of ministry assignments that are graciously given by God for the building up of his church." Kenneth Berding, "'Gifts' and Ministries in the Apostolic Fathers," *Westminster Theological Journal* 78, no. 1 (April 2016): 136-37.

consistent historical witness to a gradual passing of the prophets between AD 70 and AD 150.[129] While different in scope and subject matter, each of these studies stands out for approaching early Christian literature open to the possibility of unity rather than assuming diversity and discontinuity.

**Relevant Scholarship on Individual Apostolic Fathers**

Studies on individual texts in the Apostolic Fathers published in the last ten years indicate a growing diversity of approaches to early Christian leadership. Shawn J. Wilhite's commentary on the Didache (2019) features sections on the Didache's theology of leadership; he both connects the Didache's vision to New Testament conceptions of leadership and describes a leader's sacramental communication of the Lord's presence.[130] L. L. Welborn's work on 1 Clement (2017) approaches the situation of 1 Clement with several historical and sociological reconstructions, including intergenerational conflict in the ancient world and a particular leadership structure in Corinth.[131] Two scholarly compilation volumes on the Apostolic Fathers comment on early Christian leadership in most chapter-length introductions to each work; one of them contains a standalone chapter surveying church and leadership structures in the corpus as a whole which largely avoids making claims about theological unity.[132]

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[129] Michael Svigel, "The Passing of the Prophets in the Apostolic Fathers," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 176, no. 704 (October 2019): 459-75. Svigel argues, "Prophesying flourished during the peak of the apostolic era (ca. 50-70), settled among ordained church leaders between 70 and 120, and waned with the passing of prophetic leaders (ca. 100-150)" (459).

[130] Shawn J. Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 79, 139.

[131] L. L. Welborn, *The Young against the Old: Generational Conflict in First Clement* (Lanham, MD: Fortress, 2018).

[132] The two introductory volumes are Wilhem Pratscher, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction*, trans Elizabeth G. Wolf (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2010); Michael F. Bird and Scott D. Harrower, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2023). The standalone article is David Downs, "Church, Church Ministry, and Church Order," in Bird and Harrower, *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, 156-74.

**Other Relevant Studies**

Several other studies represent both continuity and discontinuity with the consensuses. A third edition of James D. G. Dunn's work on early New Testament offices essentially puts forward the first consensus in a modern scholarly context.[133] Aleksander Gomola's recent linguistic analysis of early Christian portrayals of pastoral ministry describes the pastoral theology of several relevant passages from the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers, representing a distinct, text-centered methodology.[134] A co-authored volume about concepts of authority in Jewish and early Christian literature is a focused theological approach to these document's views of leadership that also presupposes several assumptions of the consensuses.[135] Svigel's previously mentioned article pushes strongly back against modern tendency to ignore postapostolic witness to apostolic church models; his approach, intentionally or not, bears great similarity to the Reformation approach to postapostolic literature.[136] The somewhat divergent methodologies represented in recent commentaries and these two studies indicate that fresh approaches to the Apostolic Fathers' vision for ministry are becoming more common.

## Conclusion

This review has shown that the primary approaches to apostolic and postapostolic literature regarding pastoral leadership, often intertwined in an individual

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[133] James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM, 2006), 113-34.

[134] Aleksander Gomola approaches these texts through a metaphorical analysis he calls "conceptual blending," the use of metaphors to convey relationships and realities about leaders and those they lead in the early church. See Aleksander Gomola, *Conceptual Blending in Early Christian Discourse: A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis of Pastoral Metaphors in Patristic Literature* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018). For examples of this analysis on a relevant text, see pp. 75, 89-91.

[135] Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Types of Authority in Formative Christianity and Judaism* (London: Routledge, 1999). For their theological approach, see pp. 1-2. For their agreement with aspects of the consensus, see pp. 38, 56-57, 118.

[136] Michael J. Svigel, "Can an Ecclesiology Be Biblical and Not Apostolic?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 176, no. 701 (2019): 62-80.

scholar's reading, fall into three categories. The first approach I have called "confessionalism," describing the tendency of many scholars to ground present ecclesiological positions in postapostolic literature. While rightly seeing the Apostolic Fathers as faithful to apostolic Christianity, this approach has produced enough mutually exclusive and self-justifying readings of these texts to make the enterprise seem futile. The second dominant approach, "the first consensus," has argued that the Apostolic Fathers bear witness to the institutionalization of a more flexible and charismatic apostolic church. The third approach, the recently ascendant "second consensus," looks behind the texts of the Apostolic Fathers to social and cultural realties that become the ultimate shapers of early Christian leadership. Recent research on early Christian leadership appropriates or responds to the first and second consensuses, though Giles's monograph is a reminder of the temptation to read one's ecclesiology into ancient sources. Recent years have also seen more theological and text-centered approaches to ministry in the Apostolic Fathers. This project, both theological and text-centered, will argue for extensive unity in early Christianity about pastoral leadership.

CHAPTER 3

SOUNDINGS FOR THE VISION IN
THE NEW TESTAMENT

As the summary of research showed, many scholars treat the New Testament—
or select New Testament texts deemed apostolic and earliest—as their starting point,
seeking to discern historical development and changes through the first and second
centuries. My approach to the New Testament's portrayal of pastoral ministry in this
chapter will be different in several respects. The purpose of this dissertation is to
demonstrate theological continuity in the first and second centuries about pastoral
leadership around four shared theological judgments about pastoral virtue, authority,
work, and suffering. I will not, however, be arguing for a comprehensive and complete
continuity in every aspect of pastoral theology in this time period. So, in approaching the
New Testament, my main purpose is not to give a comprehensive picture of what New
Testament teaches about ministry, examine every text that relates to pastoral ministry, or
attempt to discern the most primitive forms of Christian organization. Studies with a
variety of aims and methodologies have already attempted this.[1]

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[1] Aside from previously mentioned works, focused and relatively recent treatments on this
subject include Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns for Pastoral Leadership*
(Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2008); Bernard P. Robinson, "Patterns of Ministry in the New Testament
Church," *New Blackfriars* 83, no. 972 (February 2002): 73-85; Brian J. Capper, "Order and Ministry in the
Social Pattern of the New Testament Church," in *Order & Ministry*, ed. Christine Hall and Robert
Hannaford (London: Gracewing: 1996): 61-104. Tidball approaches most New Testament books separately as
prescriptive for present day ministry in different ministry contexts, Robinson analyzes them largely within the
consensus about disorganization and development, and Capper's is a fairly standard sociological treatment
of New Testament ministry patterns. Pauline pastoral theology specifically has also been explored, see
Andrew D. Clarke, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*, Library of New Testament Studies 362
(London: T & T Clark, 2008); Timothy B. Savage, *Power through Weakness: Paul's Understanding of the
Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 86 (Cambridge:
Cambridge University, 1995). Clarke's analysis, while situating early church leadership in a household
reading of early Christianity, argues for significant structure and authority of pastoral leaders and argues

The goal and methods of this chapter will be more modest. I will show that the vision for ministry I have outlined in the introduction and will demonstrate in the Apostolic Fathers has clear soundings in the New Testament. Particularly, I will show that key passages regarding pastoral ministry in the New Testament make four distinct theological judgments: (1) virtue is essential for all who will be pastoral leaders and is articulated as public blamelessness with humility, relational virtues, and a right relationship to money highlighted, (2) pastoral leaders had spiritual authority in their congregations, often connected to God's authority and with exhortations to submit to leaders, (3) pastoral work consisted of preaching, teaching, and overseeing God's people for their sanctification, and (4) faithful pastoral leaders would suffer in their ministries. The key texts I will examine are Acts 20:17-38, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Peter 5:1-5, Hebrews 13:7, and Hebrews 13:17. Additionally, I will also make a synthetic analysis of the Pastoral Epistles, given the significant amount of relevant material in these books. Before moving to analysis of these texts, I will address three methodological issues particularly related to pastoral theology in the New Testament: Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, household readings of New Testament leadership, and the exemplary nature of apostolic figures' ministries.

## Methodological Considerations

### Pauline Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles

An important issue in New Testament studies of pastoral leadership is Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. As I have mentioned, many studies assume that because the Pastoral Epistles bear witness to organized ministry structures, they must be second century and not authentically Pauline.[2] Ernst Käsemann went as far as to "assert

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that their work was primarily teaching and spiritual oversight. Savage's analysis, while limited to 2 Corinthians, explores the ways suffering was essential to Paul's vision for ministry.

[2] For a detailed summary of the typical way this argument is made, see Benjamin L. Merkle, "The Pattern of Leadership in Acts & Paul's Letters to Churches," in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical*

without hesitation that the Pauline community had no presbytery during the Apostle's lifetime" on the assumption that Paul did not write the Pastoral Epistles.[3] Other scholars are ambivalent about Pauline authorship of the Pastorals in tracing development of ministry structures, not seeing the issue as essential for understandings of early Christian ministry.[4] Kevin Giles, committed to Pauline authorship of the Pastorals but agreeing with the narrative of institutionalization of ministry structures over time, argues for this development within Paul's own thought as revealed in his letters, casting it largely as unfortunate.[5]

My starting point for analysis will be Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles and a basic unity of his thought expressed in his corpus regarding the nature of pastoral ministry.[6] Aside from being an entailment of the inerrancy of Scripture, there are good arguments for Pauline authorship of the Pastorals and a unity of Paul's thought about offices and pastoral ministry. As many have mentioned, arguments against Pauline authorship of the Pastorals are often circular and driven by a presuppositional commitment to the institutional offices being postapostolic developments.[7] The argument against

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*Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 67. The most prominent classic on ministry in the early church that articulates this position is Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. J. A. Baker (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1969). He places the Pastoral Epistles in the second century as witnesses to the institutionalization of the church.

[3] Ernst Käseman, "Ministry and Community in the New Testament," in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 86.

[4] Jochen Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche: Presbyter und Episkopen in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2011), 148.

[5] Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry among the First Christians*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017). See p. 7-8 for his presuppositional commitment to institutionalization happening over time. The structure of Giles's chapters also reflects this commitment, as he moves his analysis from "early Paul" to "late Paul," see pp. 57-63 for an example.

[6] For a defense of Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles and engagement with all the major objections against Pauline authorship, see George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 21-54.

[7] James Tunstead Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 71. Burtchaell offers a sustained criticism of ideology driving scholarship on early ministry and dating of the Pastorals.

Pauline authorship is often as simple as noticing that the Pastorals bear witness to institutionalized offices, asserting that these offices are second-century developments, and concluding that Paul therefore could not have written them.[8] While this is not the only argument leveled against Pauline authorship, its presence demonstrates that ideology is a major factor in determining authorship of the Pastorals.[9] Another consideration is the presence of institutionalized offices even in those letters deemed early and authentically Pauline by almost all scholars. Benjamin L. Merkle has demonstrated that these epistles bear the marks of institutionalized offices witnessed to in the Pastorals.[10] Merkle avers that "in each of the churches to which Paul writes, he mentions designated leaders who are gifted and appointed to help shepherd the church under the authority of Jesus Christ."[11] Even though the earlier Pauline letters do not use the technical language of office

> this omission, however, is not proof that the concept of office, or more broadly, organized ministry, does not exist . . . it is clear that [Paul] endorsed and established organized ministries in the churches and even sometimes mentions official titles. That is, in every one of the churches to which he writes, Paul affirms organized ministries.[12]

Merkle demonstrates that a *concept* of office rather than technical terminology of office exists across the Pauline corpus, implying another weakness of denying Pauline authorship of the Pastorals because of the presence of institutionalized offices. Stated in a variety of ways, offices and organized ministry appear throughout Paul's epistles. These considerations taken together show that affirmation of Pauline authorship of the Pastorals is both more textually and historically plausible than its denial.

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[8] For an example, see A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 4.

[9] See n6 for other arguments against Pauline authorship.

[10] Merkle, "Pattern of Leadership," 60.

[11] Merkle, "Pattern of Leadership," 60.

[12] Merkle, "Pattern of Leadership," 70.

**Household Readings of New Testament
Ministry Structures**

Another important issue for New Testament pastoral theology is the recently

ascendant household readings of early Christian leadership structures, a vein of the

second consensus described in the previous chapter. Drawing on what is now the

consensus that early Christians met in homes, many scholars argue that the leadership

structures present in the Greco-Roman household were determinatively influential on the

development of Christian office.[13] The argument typically goes in one of two directions:

either (1) leadership structures were already present in Greco-Roman households, so

early Christian congregations filled in the relatively vague and unstructured leadership

left by the apostles with leadership models already present in the household,[14] or (2) the

household setting made certain kinds of leadership impossible and thus shaped early

Christian leadership in certain directions.[15] Additionally, many argue that early leaders of

congregations had to be able to host the church in their homes, meaning they would

necessarily be wealthier and that relationships between leaders and congregations could

be described as patron-client relationships.[16] This reading is both present in general

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[13] For the household as determinative or influential on early Christian leadership, see Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 117, 226; Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 31, 48-49.

[14] Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 226, 298.

[15] Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 3-4.

[16] Alistair Stewart-Sykes avers, "The entire structure of domestic Christianity implies that those who acted as hosts were perceived as patrons. To achieve a position of status within a Greco-Roman city required significant wealth." Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Original Bishops: Office and Order in First Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014).

works and also colors scholars' readings of individual passages.[17] Scholars who make household readings often assert their claims as possible rather than certain.[18]

I will avoid this approach and instead focus on the theological vision for leadership stated in the text themselves. While household readings may provide insight into the settings of early Christian gatherings, little explicit evidence exists that all New Testament churches met in houses and none suggests that household patterns were determinative for leadership structures.[19] In fact, some scholars seem to explicitly reject New Testament teaching on leadership requirements and imply that leadership structures ran contrary to values of Christian ethical and moral teaching.[20] For example, Gerd Theissen suggests that those who led the Corinthian congregation must have been the very rich, wealthy, and wise that Paul said were very few among them and that God did not tend to choose.[21] With the persistent refrain in the New Testament and early Christian literature against the misuse of and desire for wealth, it strains the evidence to surmise that *all* early Christian leaders were wealthy and of higher social classes.

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[17] Often key leadership passages in the New Testament are read according to sociological lenses in major commentaries. For example, see Charles A. Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1900), 195. See also Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1983), 134.

[18] See Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 297; Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 72-73. Giles suggests that the reason little is stated explicitly in the New Testament about the household setting is because the apostles take it to be "axiomatic," which is typical of the kind of argument from silence this reading of early church structure makes. Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 4,

[19] Acts 19:9 even positively describes Paul teaching and preaching in "the hall of Tyrannus," an early example of Christian teaching occurring outside of the household context.

[20] Wannamaker's commentary on the Thessalonian letters goes as far as to dismiss a comment on the theological nature behind the exhortation to submit to ministry leaders in 1 Thess 5 and says it "bears little correlation with the actual situation prevailing in the Pauline churches . . . The few who were wise, powerful, and well-born were those who exercised real influence in the community." Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 195.

[21] Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992), 96.

## Apostles, Titus, and Timothy as Exemplary
## for Pastoral Leaders

In demonstrating pastoral virtue, authority, work, and suffering from the New Testament, I will draw not only from passages that speak explicitly of elders and overseers but also from passages where Paul describes his own ministry or gives Timothy and Titus ministry counsel and exhortation.[22] A long tradition in the history of the church exists for seeing the ministries of the apostles as exemplary for pastoral leaders and for seeing Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus as applicable for pastoral leaders, and I will follow that approach here.[23] Recent scholars have pointed out that while the ministries of the apostles and their delegates are not directly equivalent to that of elders and overseers, the counsel given to them about ministry was intended to be applicable to other pastoral leaders in their context.[24] Moreover, evidence exists in the New Testament itself of continuity between the work of the apostles and elders: (1) in 1 Peter 5:1 Peter describes himself as a "fellow elder," (2) Acts 20:31-35 explicitly commends the example of Paul's apostolic ministry for the elders, and (3) elders appear to share the leadership of the church with the apostles in Acts 15:6, 15:22, and 16:4.[25] These considerations together provide a warrant for discerning the pastoral theology of the New Testament from a

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[22] A major work specific to 1 and 2 Timothy that takes this approach is Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall, *Called to Lead: Paul's Letters to Timothy for A New Day* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). Robinson and Wall also use the term "pastoral leaders" throughout the work.

[23] This approach is particularly pronounced in historical treatments of pastoral ministry and is present in most modern pastoral literature. For historical works that take Paul or Peter's ministry as a pattern, see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations* 2.52-56, John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood* 2.1-2, and Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry: With an Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency* (New York: R. Carter, 1859). In modern works, both commentaries on individual books and general treatments of ministry do this as well. From commentaries, see Charles Wannamaker, who says 1 Thess 2:1-12 "provides a role model for leaders in the congregation. This model . . . is no less relevant for Christian ministry today than it was in Paul's day." Charles Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 91.

[24] Thomas R. Schreiner, "Overseeing and Serving the Church in the Pastoral and General Epistles," in Merkle and Schreiner, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 90.

[25] George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed., ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 389. See also Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 693.

variety of relevant texts, including texts most directly about the apostles or their delegates.

In summary, my approach will be to exposit key New Testament passages in their context and show their theological judgments about pastoral leadership. In accord with historic and present pastoral theology I will choose both texts that directly speak of elders and overseers and those that show Paul's ministerial example or exhortations to figures like Timothy. In doing this, I will avoid reconstructions of early pastoral leadership that deny early institutional offices or assume that cultural household structures determinatively influenced early Christian leadership.

### Soundings for Pastoral Virtue, Authority, Work, and Suffering in the New Testament

In working with the passages below, I will give salient background considerations for each text, quote key sections, and summarize others. My analysis of each passage will not be comprehensive but will be sufficient to demonstrate the themes of pastoral virtue, authority, work, and suffering in relevant texts. Working through texts individually, I will show that each passage insists that the leaders of God's people be virtuous, with multiple exemplary figures (Acts 20:17-38 and 1 Thess 2:1-12) and direct exhortations to pastoral virtue given (1 Pet 5:2-5 and 2 Tim 2:24-25). Moreover, nearly all of these texts emphasize particular virtues—humility, gentleness, and a right relationship to money. Pastoral authority is affirmed in most of these passages, with frequent admonitions to obey pastoral leaders and exhortations to leaders to exercise loving authority (1 Thess 5:12, Heb 13:17, 1 Pet 5:4, 1 Tim 4:11, and Titus 2:15). The authority of leaders is also connected to God's authority in diverse ways (Acts 20:20, Eph 4:11, Titus 1:7, and 1 Pet 5:1-5). Regarding pastoral work, every text will state or imply that preaching and teaching are essential, with several texts also commending general spiritual oversight (1 Pet 5:1-5 and Acts 20:28). Finally, the New Testament, especially the Pastoral Epistles, persistently pictures pastoral leaders laboring in a context of

conflict and suffering, particularly because of false teachers and disciples (Acts 20:19; 1 Thess 2:1-12; 1Tim 1:3-4; Tim 1:8; 1 Tim 1:19-20; 2 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 3:11; 2 Tim 4:14-15; and Titus 1:9-10-13). As I will now show, the four themes of pastoral virtue, authority, work, and suffering appear with enough frequency and insistence to describe them as central to the New Testament's vision for ministry.

**Acts 20:18-38**

Acts 20:18-38 is Paul's hortatory farewell speech to the Ephesian elders and contains significant autobiographical elements.[26] Discerning a specific structure for the speech is difficult, with one scholar calling it "a tapestry, where the major themes are like threads interwoven with each other."[27] These major themes revolve around the nature of faithful ministry.[28] Paul's exhortations to the elders, description of their role in the church, warning of coming conflicts, and the use of Paul's example give significant theological judgments about pastoral virtue, authority, work, and suffering.

Paul begins and ends his speech (20:18-21, 35) by reminding the Ephesian elders of his ministry in Ephesus, intending for his example to be a model for their leadership.[29] While some argue that Paul is defending his ministry here, it is better to

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[26] F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 1988), 389. For an extended exposition of the Miletus address, see Jacques Dupont, *Le Discours de Milet: Testament pastoral de Saint Paul (Actes 20, 18-36)*, Lectio divina 32 (Paris: Cerf, 1962).

[27] Steve Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle: The Portrait of Paul in the Miletus Speech and 1 Thessalonians*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 108 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000), 71, 200.

[28] Walton gives the following as themes: faithful leadership, suffering, attitude towards wealth and work, and the death of Christ. Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, 84-93.

[29] John B. Polhill, *Acts*, New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 423. Polhill places the speech in the context of farewell discourse, noting that there is "an appeal to the personal example of the speaker" and "exhortations to desired behaviors on the part of the hearers." He also notices significant literary parallels between this passage and the pastoral epistles. For the exemplary features of this passage, see also William J. Larkin, Jr., *Acts*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 293.

view him "presenting [his ministry] as an example for the Ephesian leaders to emulate."[30] The features of Paul's exemplary ministry in the beginning of his speech include: (1) virtue, as he served the Lord "with all humility and with tears" (20:19),[31] (2) suffering, with "trials" attending his ministry (20:19), and (3) preaching, as he declared, taught, and testified to the gospel in spite of the risks of doing so (20:20-21). Several scholars notice that this is the only instance in the New Testament that explicitly recounts Paul's suffering in Ephesus.[32] Paul apparently highlights his past sufferings at the beginning of the speech in order to prepare the elders for their coming conflicts (20:29-30). The end of the address, however, focuses on particular features of Paul's virtuous ministry, namely, his right relationship to money and willingness to make financial sacrifices for his ministry and the poor, following the teaching of Christ (20:33-35).[33]

Paul's charge to the elders in the center of his speech gives the clearest description of their role and task:

> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears (Acts 20:28-31).

As he does in 1 Timothy 4:16, Paul exhorts the elders to watch themselves, which in this context indicates an attentive oversight to their own virtue and orthodoxy—these leaders must care for their own godliness and orthodoxy before they care for God's people. With the extended attention given to Paul's attitude towards wealth, this seems to be a key

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[30] Polhill, *Acts*, 425.

[31] Polhill, *Acts*, 424.

[32] Polhill, *Acts*, 424. See also Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 389.

[33] Polhill, *Acts*, 429. See also, Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 743.

issue these leaders must "pay attention" to in themselves.[34] Paul's virtuous example also indicates that a part of these leader's virtue is their humility and compassion for God's people. Paul admonished God's people "with tears;" the elders must remember his compassionate example as they care for the church with alertness.

Aside from virtue, Paul also charges the elders to pastoral work and reminds them of the authority God has given them for this work. Three key words show that oversight for the spiritual health of God's people is essential to this work. First, the elders are commanded to πρόσεχετε, or give a vigilant attention to, the church.[35] Second, the title ἐπισκόπους itself points toward their role of guarding and caring for the church. Finally, Paul declares to elders that the Holy Spirit himself appointed them to ποιμαίνειν ("shepherd") the church. Shepherding imagery throughout the New Testament indicates authoritative, nurturing care; here it connects the authority of these leaders to Christ, the Chief Shepherd.[36] Moreover, if the Holy Spirit himself has made these elders ἐπισκόποι, it follows that their authority to carry out their oversight of the flock is rooted in God himself.[37] Just as the church has been purchased by God's own blood, the elders have been chosen and commissioned to care for it by the Holy Spirit himself.

Paul's speech strongly implies that teaching and preaching is an essential component of the elders' shepherding work. First, Paul's exemplary ministry is filled

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[34] Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, 89-91.

[35] L&N gives the following gloss for προσέχετε: "To be in a continuous state of readiness to learn of any future danger, need, or error, and to respond appropriately." L&N, 27.59.

[36] For shepherding imagery as rooting a leader's authority in God's, see Aleksander Gomola, *Conceptual Blending in Early Christian Discourse: A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis of Pastoral Metaphors in Patristic Literature* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 75, 89-91. For shepherding imagery as controlling this section, see Polhil, *Acts*, 427-28. For Shepherding imagery related to pastoral leadership in the Gospels, its Old Testament connections, and implications for pastoral authority, see Andreas Köstenberger, "Shepherds and Shepherding in the Gospels," in Merkle and Schreiner, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 37-53. Köstenberger specifically argues that leaders "are responsible to carry on the activities of the chief shepherd" (53).

[37] Commentators have reflected much on how exactly this appointment came about, whether by Paul's laying on of hands or by appointment in the congregation, but I wish to show that the textual vision in this passage is that their role and thus authority is rooted in God himself. For discussion, see Bock, *Acts*, 741; Polhil, *Acts*, 426; Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 392.

with public teaching and preaching. The elders are called to remember that Paul continually "ἀναγγεῖλαι" (20:20 and 20:27), "διδάξαι" (20:20), "διαμαρτυρόμενος" (20:21), and "νουθετῶν" (20:31) both them and the rest of God's people. If Paul's ministry was an example to the elders, then their ministry would be one of teaching, declaring, proclaiming, and admonishing God's people.[38] Moreover, Paul's primary warning to the elders was against those who would "λαλοῦντες" twisted things and draw disciples after them. If the elders were to protect God's people from these wicked teachers, they must be able to teach sound doctrine in response to them.

Paul's speech essentially promises the elders that they would suffer in ministry because of false teachers.[39] The elders are pictured as shepherds battling "fierce wolves"—the image conveys conflict, difficulty, and the threat of harm.[40] Even more troubling to the elders would have been the prediction that some of these wolves will come from the within their own ranks, probably implying the personal pain of betrayal. Additionally, the ministerial example that Paul holds up for the elders to remember describes "a suffering that is almost inevitable for this one who faithfully proclaims the Christian gospel."[41] So, while Paul does not command these elders to suffer well as would command Timothy in the Pastorals, his description of ministry indicates that faithful leaders would suffer in it.

While more could be said about this passage's pastoral theology, four features

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[38] Tidball lists seven responsibilities of leaders from Paul's speech given by his example, four of which center around public and private teaching and preaching. See Tidball, *Ministry by the Book*, 104.

[39] Bruce comments that the prospects for the Ephesian church were "not wholly promising." Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 392. See also Bock, *Acts*, 741.

[40] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 847. Situating the wolf imagery in biblical and first-century context, Schnabel argues that these false teachers are described as "dangerous people—people whose behavior is bad, treacherous, impious . . . . The metaphor of the wolves shows that 'the error is not a minor evil but represents a mortal threat to the community which has to be averted'" (847). Schnabel is quoting Günther Bornkamm, "λύκος," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 4:310.

[41] Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, 87.

stand out.[42] First, Paul's example and exhortation to the elders insists that pastoral leaders be first and foremost certain kinds of people: ones whose virtue demonstrates itself in humble service to God's people and a right relationship to money. Second, pastoral leaders must oversee God's people—their work consists in laboring for the spiritual protection of their congregations, which happens especially in their teaching of orthodox doctrine. For this labor, pastoral leaders have an authority rooted in God himself, though this authority is validated by their lives and orthodoxy. Finally, in their care for God's people, pastoral leaders will encounter conflict with those who would harm the flock, and by implication, suffer for their ministry as Paul did.

**Ephesians 4:11-14**

Ephesians 4:11-14, while more limited in scope than Acts 20:17-38, still describes pastoral work as teaching and preaching, directs it toward the sanctification of God's people, and implies that the authority of pastoral leaders is rooted in the will of God. Particulars of this passage are matters of debate, especially how to group the five offices and whether this passage attributes the "work of the ministry" to the five listed ministers or to the congregation.[43] However one interprets these particulars, the themes of pastoral authority and work still emerge, with implications of pastoral virtue and suffering. Paul describes these ministers as gifts of the risen Christ: "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for

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[42] In an analysis with several parallels to mine, Tidball gives five functions of leaders in Acts generally: teaching truth, pioneering mission, resolving conflict, protecting integrity, and enduring suffering. See Tidball, *Ministry by the Book*, 99-103.

[43] For a summary of the issues involved in both of these debates see Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 272-80. Thielman helpfully notes that the view that this passage is officer-oriented—that the five offices listed are the ones attributed with the "work of the ministry" of building up the saints—is the historic and ancient reading, going as far back as Chrysostom. The reading that sees the officers as "equipping the saints for the work of the ministry" is more recent, but has scholars as early as the late 1800s suggesting it as well. Thielman takes the modern view. For a recent defense of the view that this passage's best and most historic interpretation is the officer oriented one, see Michael Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 231-35.

the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph 4:1-14).

Most clear in this passage is that pastoral work involves teaching and preaching and teaching for the sanctification of the church. Thielman, though he rejects the view that this passage is officer oriented, says that the five offices listed are all "equipped with mainly verbal gifts" and that they, by virtue of their verbal gifts, are especially instrumental in building up the church.[44] Michael Horton goes as far as to say that "the gifts are people . . . more specifically, the ministers of the Word. . . . The officers he mentions are associated with the proclamation of the Word, since it is through this gift that the Spirit makes us cosharers."[45] The remaining context of the passage, with its focus on oral instruction and the variety of images it uses to describe the growth of God's people into maturity, confirms this interpretation.[46] While precise relationships between the offices are not entirely clear, it is clear that pastoral leaders teach and preach the Word to build up God's people.

These leaders also have a particular relationship to Christ, with their roles and authority rooted in Christ himself. Lincoln comments that these ministers are "seen as the royal largesse which Christ distributes from his position of cosmic lordship . . . in the writer's vision Christ's giving of ministers of the to build up the whole body into his fulness is interwoven with the goal of his pervading the cosmos with his presence and rule."[47] The logic of this passage in the context of the epistle's message according to

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[44] Thielman, *Ephesians*, 279-80.

[45] Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, 237.

[46] Merkle says these officers are given "for the maturity and unity of the church." See Benjamin L. Merkle, *Ephesians*, B & H Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 127.

[47] Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 248.

Lincoln is as follows: God gives Christ as head of the church, the church becomes Christ's instrument for carrying out his purposes in the world, and Christ gives ministers as gifts to enable them toward that purpose.[48] In other words, ministers particularly are an instrument for Christ's exercise of authority in his plan for the cosmos and are intended to be a gratefully received gift by God's people.[49] Though Ephesians 4:11 does not explicitly attribute authority to pastoral leaders, their spiritual authority is an implication of their special relationship to Christ.

While neither pastoral virtue and suffering are explicitly described in Ephesians 4:11-14, several aspects of this text make them plausible implications. First of all, in the moral vision of Ephesians, it is arguable that an unvirtuous minister would be unthinkable—as elsewhere in the New Testament, those who are to lead God's people into a maturity that consists in large part of virtuous living must be virtuous themselves. That this passage about ministers is immediately followed with extended moral exhortations is further evidence for this (Eph 4:17-32). Regarding pastoral suffering, verse 14 stipulates that the maturity of God's people will in part consist of no longer being "tossed to and fro by the waves and varied about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful speech." This indicates that false teachers were a danger to the church, a picture very similar to the one in Acts 20.[50] Moreover, if Paul's example is taken into consideration, he describes himself as suffering for their glory (Eph 3:13), another indication that suffering may attend pastoral faithfulness.

Ephesians 4:11-14 accords largely with the picture of pastoral ministry given in Acts 20:17-38. With less emphasis on the virtue and suffering of ministers, their work of teaching and preaching for the spiritual health and protection of the church is clearly stated. Moreover, their God-rooted authority is strongly implied in their connection to the reigning

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[48] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 248.

[49] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 248.

[50] Thielman, *Ephesians*, 283.

and ascended Christ. The vision for ministry in 1 Thessalonians will further both the general and particulars of the New Testament's picture of pastoral leadership seen so far.

**First Thessalonians**

One of the earliest New Testament letters, 1 Thessalonians has two passages especially relevant to pastoral ministry, 2:1-12 and 5:12.[51] Exposition of 2:1-12 will work from the premise that Paul's description of his genuine ministry is emblematic of genuine to pastoral ministry even though this is not explicitly stated as it is in Acts 20:25.[52] That Paul's self-description is exemplary for pastoral leaders is strengthened by literary parallels between Paul's description of his own ministry and that of pastoral leaders in 1 Thessalonians 5:12.[53] Wannamaker concludes that the description of Paul's ministry is meant to "provide the audience with examples of moral behavior" and that it "provides a role model for leaders in the congregation."[54] The exhortations in 5:12 have been shown to speak of the congregation's responsibility toward office holders in the church of Thessalonica, though technical vocabulary is not present.[55] With these two passages taken together, clear soundings towards pastoral virtue, authority, work, and suffering

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[51] For dating the epistle based on the information in it, see Gordon Fee, *The First and Second Letter to the Thessalonians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 3-5. Dating, however, is related to a variety of debates about the order of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, for a minority position on the priority of 2 Thessalonians, see Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 37-45.

[52] However, significant attention has been given to the parallels between Paul's description of his ministry and the Miletus speech of Acts 20. Walton concludes, "The thought of the two texts, and often its verbal expression, runs remarkably parallel." He further writes that the pastoral thought in these two passages demonstrate that Luke and Paul "*did* inhabit similar thought worlds." Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, 185.

[53] Paul uses the terms "labor" in 2:9 (κόπον) and in 5:12 (κοπιῶντας). There are also conceptual parallels between Paul's work of exhortation in 2:12 (παρακαλοῦντες and παραμυθούμενοι) and the work of pastoral leaders in 5:12 (νουθετοῦντας).

[54] Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 91.

[55] Merkle, "Pattern of Leadership," 74; Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (1991; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 165; Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 200.

appear.

Paul describes his and his companions' ministry to the Thessalonians and highlights the genuineness of their conduct and preaching in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12.[56] Especially prominent in this narrative are the pure motivations of Paul and his companions:

> But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Phillipi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive . . . . We never came with flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. . . . We were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. (1 Thess 2:3, 5, 7-8)

Paul begins his description of his genuine ministry by asserting how he and his companions were willing to boldly preach Christ after having already suffered previously and while presently suffering in conflict at Thessalonica.[57] Particularly prominent in this defense is Paul's description of the pure motivations of the apostolic workers, especially their right relationship to money and that they came seeking neither illegitimate nor legitimate monetary compensation (cf. 1 Thess 2:6).[58] Moreover, while bold in their proclamation, the apostolic workers were gentle towards the Thessalonians, willing to sacrifice themselves and having deep affection for them, like a nursing mother.[59]

The parenting imagery, assertions of holy conduct, and description of apostolic work continues in the next part of the passage: "You are witnesses, and God also, how

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[56] Fee, *The First and Second Letter to the Thessalonians*, 51-54. Some scholars nuance this and say Paul was defending the authenticity of his ministry against detractors. See Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), III. A., Perlego. But see also Wannamaker, who argues that the main purpose of this section is parenetic. Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 90-91.

[57] Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, III.A.1.a; Fee, *The First and Second Letter to the Thessalonians*, 51-54, Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 92-93.

[58] Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, III. A. However, Wanamaker takes 1 Thess 2:6 to refer to authoritatively demanding honor (as opposed to financial renumeration) from the Thessalonians. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians,* 96-97.

[59] Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 101-3.

holy and righteous and blameless our conduct was toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God" (2 Thess 2:10-12). If the previous passage highlighted the pure motivations, gentle actions, and suffering accompanying genuine ministry, this passage highlights the public virtue, clear authority, and preaching work of genuine ministry. Paul and his companions were like fathers—a clearly authoritative figure in the context of the first century.[60] Moreover, they παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς καὶ παραμυθούμενοι καὶ μαρτυρόμενοι the Thessalonians, terms which indicate both oral instruction and authority (1 Thess 2:12).[61] As the culminative point of this whole passage, Paul asserts that their actions were publicly blameless: "How holy and righteous and blameless our conduct was toward you believers."[62] Wannamaker avers that this phrase was intended to argue that "neither God nor the Thessalonians could reproach their conduct."[63] A publicly demonstrated, clear-to-all virtue was at the heart of the apostolic ministry.

The established local ministry is also described in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, with an emphasis on the work and authority of local leaders. At the beginning of a series of closing communal exhortations, Paul asks the Thessalonians to "respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very

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[60] Weima says that the father image "depicted him as possessing ultimate authority over all members of the household" and also indicated his instructional and nurturing role. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 3.A. See also Wannamaker, *Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 106.

[61] See L&N, 25.150 for παρακαλέω and the oral connotations associated with it and BDAG, 765 for its authoritative connotations, with its definition "to urge strongly." BDAG also gives the gloss "to urge something as a matter of great importance, *affirm, insist, implore*" for μαρτύρομαι. BDAG, 619.

[62] Weima says that "the piling up of three adverbs, all emphatically in the first part of the clause, serves to emphasize the irreproachable character of Paul's conduct to 'you believers.'" Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 3.A. [2.10].

[63] Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 105.

highly in love because of their work" (1 Thess 5:12).[64] Obedience to these leaders is required in the command to "respect" or "honor" them, especially considering that these leaders are admonishing the congregation and said to be "over you in the Lord."[65] At the same time, the command to honor them is directly tied to their sacrificial labor in the congregation—their authority is connected to their virtuous and difficult pastoral work. These leaders are those who "κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν;" κοπιάω indicates a tiredness or weariness resulting from hard and intense labor (1 Thess 5:12).[66] The pastoral labor they undertake consists of a general spiritual oversight and an oral, verbal admonition in the gathered congregation.[67] Their labor, oversight, and verbal instruction are taken together as descriptive of the pastoral task.[68] After commanding respect for these leaders, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to "esteem them very highly in love because of their work," to appreciate pastoral labors as for their good and to particularly esteem those who engage in these labors.[69] One commenter suggests that this passage highlights an aspect of the ethos of the early church: "In the NT church honor is not given to people because of any qualities that they may possess due to birth or social status or natural gifts, but only on the basis of the spiritual task to which they are called."[70] In other words, this verse sought

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[64] Fee describes this section of the letter as a series of "summary exhortations." Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, III.A.

[65] L&N renders the view of ειδέναι in this context as "to acknowledge the high status of a person or event—'to honor, to show honor to, to respect.'" L&N 87.12. Wannamaker, while denying that this passage refers to office bearers in the church, says, "The request that certain people be recognized in the community probably implies . . . obedience." Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 194.

[66] BDAG gives the following renderings for κοπιάω: "Become weary, tired," and "to exert oneself physically, mentally, or spiritually, *work hard, toil, strive, struggle.*" BDAG, 558.

[67] Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 386. Weima also argues that the leaders "laboring" among the Thessalonians is also a reference to preaching and teaching work, relating it to Paul's expression in 1 Tim 5:17 (384).

[68] Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 384.

[69] Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 194.

[70] I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, New Century Bible Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 148.

to cultivate a particular esteem for virtuous pastoral work in the Thessalonian community. This indicates that pastoral authority in this congregation had the practical application of esteem for pastoral leaders.

In summary, Paul's picture of authentic ministry in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 weaves together pastoral virtue, authority, suffering, and the pastoral work of teaching. The apostolic workers were publicly blameless and gentle among their people but also taught and urged the Thessalonians with authority. The context of their ministry, while full of love for their people, was also one of suffering and conflict. The picture of pastoral leaders in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 particularly highlights pastoral authority, but explicitly connects it to their sacrificial labor and the loving esteem due to them. Seeing these elements of 1 Thessalonians, Walton argues that this epistle's vision for ministry parallels other pastoral passages in the New Testament. This vision asserts that pastoral leaderships is primarily about

> Christlikeness, about doing and teaching what Jesus taught and did (ἐν κυρίῳ [Ἰησοὺ] 4.1; 5.12; the teaching of Jesus 4.16f ), a model that is to be passed on to the next generation of believers (1.6; 4.1). Servanthood, which humbly places the needs of others higher than one's own (δι᾽ ὑμᾶς, 1.5; cf. 2.2, 5f, 7, 9-12; 3.5, 10) is central to this conception—particularly support of the weak (5.14). This leadership is a costly form of service (2.9; 5.6, 12), and will inevitably involve suffering, both in the past (2.2; 3.3f ) and the future (3.3f; 4.1f; 5.2). But Paul, who has experienced such pain, can call others to walk the same path of costly, watchful service of God and his people (5.6, 12). A further focus of this ministry is faithful teaching and testimony concerning the Lord Jesus, a faithfulness of which the readers are well aware ('you know' is said frequently, especially 1.5; 2.10, 11f )—and a faithfulness which is not afraid to `admonish' at times (5.12, 14).[71]

While some of Walton's terminology, method and purpose of analysis differs from mine, he largely argues for the same central themes my analysis has brought out: pastoral virtue, work, and suffering, with connotations of pastoral authority. Moreover, he connects this vision to other parts of the New Testament, giving a limited testimony to points of unity.

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[71] Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, 184.

**The Pastoral Epistles**

The most pastorally significant portion of the New Testament, the Pastoral Epistles, also bear witness to these four themes.[72] Because of the breadth of relevant material in the Pastoral Epistles and the scope of this chapter, I will treat them systematically rather than going passage by passage. I will first show that pastoral virtue in the Pastorals is (1) antecedent and essential to ministry, (2) described as a general blamelessness, and (3) often centered on relational virtues and a right relationship to money. Second, I will demonstrate that authority is attributed to pastoral leaders, especially in Paul's expectations for Titus and Timothy to exercise authority and in his description of the overseer as a steward. Third, I will show the unmistakable evidence that preaching and teaching is essential to pastoral work in the Pastorals. Finally, in ways parallel to but more explicit than Acts 20:17-38 or 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, I will show how the context of faithful ministry includes conflict and suffering for pastoral leaders.

**Virtue antecedent and essential to ministry.** The Pastoral Epistles indicate that virtue is essential for ministry in a variety of ways. First, the two primary passages that list qualifications for pastoral leaders in the church, 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, are focused on the character and godliness of potential leaders.[73] Young avers that the qualifications lists are "far more concerned with moral qualities than functions;"[74] Schreiner goes as far as to say that "what stands out in the list is the emphasis on

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[72] Some research has drawn specific connections between the themes I will articulate. See Hanna Roose, who shows that the vision for ministry in the pastoral epistles connects a pastoral leader's teaching with their authority in the community and their virtuous service to the community. Hanna Roose, "Dienen und Herrschen: Zur Charakterisierung des Lehrens in den Pastoralbriefen," *New Testament Studies* 49, no. 3 (2003): 440-46.

[73] Two major commentaries on the Pastoral Epistles agree that personal qualities for potential leaders are the main concern of these passages, see William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: T. Nelson, 2000), 289; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 55-156. There has also been a significant amount of scholarship arguing that these lists of qualifications for leadership are borrowed from larger Hellenistic culture. For a summary of literature, see J. K. Goodrich, "Overseers as Stewards and the Qualifications for Leadership in the Pastoral Epistles," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 104, no. 1 (2013): 77-85.

[74] Young, "Theology of the Pastoral Epistles," 98.

character qualities instead of skills. The fundamental requirement for elders is that they lead a godly life."[75] Most pointedly, Robinson describes 1 Timothy 3:1-7 as a "resume of virtue."[76] While some of the particular virtues emphasized will be described below, any straightforward reading of these passages reveals virtue as a, if not the, primary requirement for pastoral leaders.

Moreover, exhortations to Timothy and Titus bear witness to the importance of pastoral virtue. Timothy must train himself for godliness and keep a close watch on himself so that he might save both himself and his hearers (1 Tim 4:7, 12, 16).[77] Here, Timothy's virtuous life appears to be instrumental for his ministerial labors actually resulting in his hearers' salvation.[78] Robinson and Wall say this passage describes "the ultimate value of a holy life" for pastoral leadership.[79] Timothy must also to purify himself from youthful passions and pursue cardinal Christian virtues that he might be a vessel for honorable use, one "useful to the master of the house" (2 Tim 2:20-22).[80] Titus likewise must show himself an example of good works and demonstrate integrity in his teaching ministry (Titus 2:7).[81] The vision of these texts makes virtue absolutely essential for pastoral leadership.

The Pastorals also caution against hasty ordination so that a leader's character

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[75] Schreiner, "Overseeing and Serving the Church," 95.

[76] Robinson and Wall, *Called to Lead*, 82.

[77] Schreiner argues from 4:12 that Timothy must be virtuous in order to fulfill his office. Schreiner, "Overseeing and Serving the Church," 91.

[78] Knight cites the majority opinion on 4:16 that Timothy is legitimately an agent of the salvation of others through his perseverance in virtuous living and orthodox teaching. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 210-12.

[79] Robinson and Wall, *Called to Lead*, 101.

[80] Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy & Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: B & H, 1992), 219. Lea and Griffin describe this exhortation as applying to all the listeners, also making the connection between virtue and usefulness to the Lord.

[81] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 311-12. Knight argues that Titus here is both held up as an example to the younger men and that this exhortation to him is particularly related to his role in ministry. See also Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy & Titus*, 304.

may be proven *before* he is ordained to leadership in the church.[82] In 1 Timothy 5:12, Paul warns Timothy not to "be hasty in the laying on of hands," a reference to ordaining new (or perhaps repentant) elders.[83] Since Paul goes on to describe how some people's sins are publicly evident and others come later, the logic of delayed ordination is related to proven virtue required of leaders in the church.[84] They must prove they are neither type of sinner and that they will hold the ministerial offices virtuously before they receive the laying on of hands.[85] This admonition about ordination shows that virtue was so important it was to be proven and tested before someone was placed in a position of ordained and official leadership.

**Virtue as general blamelessness.** Paul also specifies the kinds of virtue necessary for pastoral leaders, highlighting a general public blamelessness, particular relational virtues, and a right relationship to money.[86] Mounce's treatment of the leadership qualifications lists (1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9) is a helpful starting place for seeing a general public blamelessness as one of the primary qualities required of leaders. Mounce argues that the lists of qualifications for leaders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are remarkably similar, containing both word-for-word equivalence and also conceptual parallels.[87] These similarities have an "overall concern . . . that church leaders be above

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[82] Lea and Griffin write that this passage "warned Timothy of the danger of making hasty appointments to Christian offices. One need not call the practice here ordination, but it has all appearances of referring to an approval for ministry." Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy & Titus*, 157-58.

[83] So Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 316-17.

[84] Lea and Griffin, *1, 2, Timothy & Titus*, 158.

[85] Various scholars also note that the "not being hasty" also refers to not hastily *rejecting* potential elders for office because their virtue may be slow in coming but eventually be made publicly known. See Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy & Titus*, 159; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 241-42.

[86] Here I will highlight these two categories of virtues because they are the ones most prominent in the Apostolic Fathers. Arguments could be made that fortitude and courage were also requisite pastoral virtues in the Pastoral Epistles. Arguably, courage and endurance are required *because* of the context of ministry, while public blamelessness and relational virtues are inherent in ministry itself.

[87] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 292.

reproach in their daily lives."[88] The idea of being "above reproach" is a publicly recognized godliness and blamelessness—indeed, the word ἀνεπίλημπτον is the controlling requirement of the ἐπίσκοπος in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and is fleshed out in the subsequent particular requirements.[89] This word refers to a general blamelessness.[90] Mounce defines this as a good overall reputation to help with the church's public reputation—in other words, a leader must exhibit a publicly noticeable godliness.[91] Young similarly argues that an elder's blamelessness means that "his conduct is to bear public scrutiny and emerge unscathed."[92] Schreiner, extending this idea, reasons that elders must have this public blamelessness because they represent the character of God and Christ to the church and world.[93] Whether one agrees or not with the representative conception of ministerial office, general and public blamelessness is the overarching demand of the qualifications lists in the Pastoral Epistles.

**Particular virtues.** Aside from general blamelessness, leaders were also required to be humble, gentle, and to have a right relationship to money.[94] One who would be an overseer must be "not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of

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[88] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 292.

[89] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 155.

[90] BDAG, 77, glosses this word as "irreproachable."

[91] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 169. Mounce sees this passage as primarily focused on ordaining leaders that will counteract the poor effect the immoral false teachers have had on the church's public reputation.

[92] Young, *Theology of the Pastoral Epistles*, 99.

[93] Schreiner, "Overseeing and Leading the Church," 98. See also Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 291; Daniel Akin and R. Scott Pace, *Pastoral Theology: Theological Foundations for Who a Pastor is and What He Does* (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 25.

[94] There is debate in the literature about why particular virtues come up in the requirements list. Some situate them generally in first-century culture, other scholars situate them in the household context. Robinson and Wall contend, "These lists, then, are not arbitrary or generic but reflect the particular concerns framed by the composition itself." Robinson and Wall, *Called to Lead*, 86. In other words, they are particularly aimed to describe those would be competent pastoral leaders. For a view of these qualities as situated in Greek culture, see also Young, *Theology of the Pastoral Epistles*, 99-100.

money" (1 Tim 3:3). Knight says that this verse possesses, as opposed to lists of leadership qualities in the ancient world, the "distinctly Christian element of gentleness expressed by a cluster of terms."[95] It also requires potential leaders to not be lovers of money—apparently this was such an important quality that a potential leader's affections were to be examined.[96] Humility is present later in the qualifications list by way of contrast. The reason potential leaders must not be recent converts is so that they do not "become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim 3:6). The word rendered "puffed up with conceit" is τυφωθεὶς, which communicates an intense pride with connotations of spiritual blindness.[97] The list of qualities in Titus communicates similar requirements, primarily by eliminating their opposites. An overseer, "as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain" (Titus 1:7). The exclusion of arrogant, quick-tempered, and violent individuals requires that prospective overseers be humble and gentle.[98] Additionally, they must not be "greedy for gain," again requiring a right relationship to money of potential leaders and implying an examination of an individual's affectional relationship to money. Knight notes that this requirement is present in both qualifications lists and 1 Peter 5:2, which will be examined below.[99]

Paul's instructions to Timothy regarding his own ministry affirm the particular pastoral requirement of gentleness. This requirement surprisingly comes to the fore in a passage about dealing with false teachers. After encouraging Timothy to avoid ignorant controversies, Paul admonishes him that "the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but

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[95] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 151.

[96] Schreiner, "Overseeing and Serving the Church," 99.

[97] BDAG, 1021.

[98] For the connections between the qualities forbidding and leadership in the church, see Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy & Titus*, 283-84.

[99] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 292.

kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness" (2 Tim 2:24-25). The alternative of quarreling will be that Timothy is ἤπιον, "gentle" and kind, even towards his opponents. Knight argues that this command to gentleness implies that even in the midst of conflict with evildoers, Timothy "is to be gentle as all church leaders are to be gentle."[100] Gentleness is essential to all ministry, especially ministry in conflict. Paul also calls Timothy to pursue πραϋπηθίαν as a cardinal trait of his life, alongside faith, love, steadfastness, righteousness, and godliness (1 Tim 6:11). This word is variously translated "humility" or "gentleness" and is associated with practical humility towards others demonstrated in behavior.[101]

In summary, virtue is a major theme of the Pastoral epistles and utterly essential to its vision for ministry. Frances M. Young is correct when he connects the role of church leaders and the necessity of their virtue in the Pastoral Epistles: "Theologically, the perspective of these letters appears to be that God's saving message has been entrusted to certain persons . . . the behavior of these persons is of inestimable importance to the validity of the gospel."[102] Because of the significance of church leadership in the vision of the Pastorals, the quality of a leader's character is of the highest importance.

**Authority: Obedience to pastoral leaders required.** Going hand in hand with the virtue of ministers is their authority. In several passages, Timothy and Titus are commanded to exercise authority as they show their virtue. Timothy is charged to "παράγγελλε" ("command", or "charge") other believers three times in 1 Timothy, a word that clearly indicates authority.[103] Immediately after one of these exhortations he is

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[100] Mounce argues that this command to gentleness implies that even in the midst of conflict and evildoing of opponents, Timothy "is to be gentle as all church leaders are to be gentle." Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 535.

[101] L&N, 88.59.

[102] Young, *Theology of the Pastoral Epistles*, 99.

[103] 1 Tim 1:3, 4:11, 6:17. BDAG notes that παράγγαλλω indicates an announcement of things that must be done by persons in authority, BDAG, 760.

told not to allow anyone in the congregation to "despise" him; instead, he is to prove himself an example to all believers (1 Tim 4:12).[104] The connection between authority and virtue is again on display in parenetic commands to Titus, who is likewise to "exhort and rebuke with all authority," "let no one disregard" him, and "to insist" on the apostolic commands for believers' lifestyles (Titus 2:15, 3:8).[105] Moreover, he is to appoint elders who know sound doctrine so that they can rebuke and silence false teachers—activities that indicate the expectation of obedience to pastoral leaders and their role of exercising godly authority for the congregation's good.

**Authority: The overseer as God's steward.** The overseer-as-steward image in Titus 1:7 connects the authority of pastoral leaders to God's authority.[106] The overseer is θεοῦ οἰκονόμον, one who administers what belongs to God and in a sense represents God's interests.[107] BDAG describes an οἰκονομον as "one who is entrusted with management in connection with transcendent matters" and relates this passage to the word's use in Paul's statements about the apostles as stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1).[108] Knight interprets the word's use in Titus 1:7 as follows:

> An οἰκονόμος, "steward," is one chosen by his employer to manage his business or his household (cf. Lk. 12:42). The elder/overseer is a person chosen by God to be a manager and entrusted with the church as God's household (cf. 1 Tim. 3:5-6, 15).

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[104] Mounce both notes this connection and situates it in the context of false teachers strongly opposing Timothy. He goes as far as to say that Paul was seeking to transfer apostolic authority to Timothy in this epistle and that this passage is a part of that transfer. Mounce, *The Pastoral* Epistles, 257-58.

[105] Knight notes that the phrase here is usually used of God's authority. Titus thus is to exercise his ministry "with God's authority." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 329.

[106] See Goodrich for a reading of the steward metaphor in light of both Hellenistic understandings of the ideal steward and of Paul's imagery of the church as "the household of God." Goodrich, "Overseers as Stewards," 85-97. Goodrich, reading the Pastorals from a very different standpoint, comes to similar conclusions as this project about the nature and requirements of the Pastoral Epistle's vision for leadership, see 96-97 especially.

[107] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 291.

[108] BDAG, 698.

Therefore, his life must show that he truly is God's steward by displaying God's transforming grace.[109]

The overseer as θεοῦ οἰκονόμον implies that he represents the interests and authority of the one who chose him—in this case, the Lord himself.[110] Young also avers that, as God's steward, the overseer is "one who is vested with God's authority to administer the church as God's household. . . . As a good steward, he stands for the head of the household . . . any authority he has is a delegated authority."[111] Young goes on to connect this representative authority to the kind expressed by Ignatius.[112] As in Acts 20 and Ephesians 4, the authority of pastoral leaders is connected to God's authority. The household imagery of steward also implies that this authority should be used in caring and nurturing ways for the good of God's people, indicating that pastoral leaders should exercise a loving oversight in their congregations.[113]

**Authority: Concrete applications.** I have shown above in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 that the New Testament sometimes applies pastoral authority in concrete ways.[114] The Pastoral Epistles concretely apply the authority of pastoral leaders by encouraging the community to remunerate leaders, exhibit trust toward them, and to publicly discipline leaders who commit significant sins. Regarding remuneration, 1 Timothy 5:17 commands that the elders "who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in teaching and preaching." The following quotations about not muzzling the ox and the laborer deserving his wages indicate that this "double honor"

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[109] Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 291.

[110] Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 158.

[111] Young, *Theology of the Pastoral Epistles*, 103.

[112] Young, *Theology of the Pastoral Epistles*, 103.

[113] Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 159.

[114] This is a major feature of pastoral theology in the Apostolic Fathers and will be examined in chap. 4 of this dissertation.

has financial support in view.[115] The "honor involves money. The elders who were . . . doing a good job were not only worthy of the people's respect but should be paid for their work."[116] The fact that their financial remuneration is connected both to them "ruling well" and the honor due to them implies that their compensation is a concrete implication of faithful pastoral authority and work.[117] Paul elsewhere mentions the right of ministers of the gospel to be financially supported by congregations for whom they labor, though he himself did not take up this right (1 Cor 9:3-15, 1 Thess 2:6).

Aside from remuneration, the Pastoral Epistles apply pastoral authority by insisting on both trust for leaders and discipline for sinning leaders. In 1 Timothy 5:19 Paul commands Timothy: "Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, that the rest may stand in fear." First, leaders are to be regarded with a posture of trust: charges made against them by a single person are not to be admitted.[118] At the same time, leaders who sin seriously are held to a greater measure of accountability—they are to be rebuked before the entire congregation if they have committed a serious sin.[119] These commands tethered together show that pastoral authority has concrete applications, in this case, an increased trust and accountability for leaders.

**Pastoral work: Teaching and preaching.** The Pastoral Epistles unmistakably

[115] Roose connects this passage to 2 Tim 2:12, saying that in addition to remuneration in the present, faithful leaders will be entitled to a share of the eschatological rule. Roose, "Dienen und Herrschen," 444. She suggests this is a further indication of the authoritative nature of a pastoral leader's teaching.

[116] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 306.

[117] Lea and Griffin also connect, honor, authority, and monetary compensation. Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy & Titus*, 155.

[118] Knight and Lea and Griffin relate this to the fact that leaders are in positions where they are naturally subject to criticism. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 235; Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy & Titus*, 156.

[119] Schreiner, "Overseeing and Serving the Church," 102.

describe pastoral leaders as teachers and preachers.[120] First, both sets of qualifications for elders make the ability to teach and preach essential for leaders. According to 1 Timothy 3:2, elders must be διδακτικόν, which connotes a general fitness and skillfulness in teaching.[121] Listing fitness for teaching as a prerequisite for eldership implies that teaching is a chief pastoral duty. The requirements for leadership in Titus 1:9 are more explicit and descriptive of teaching work, saying that a potential overseer must "hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." The potential overseer's grasp of the word taught is essential because his work will be to give instruction in that word and rebuke those who contradict it.[122] Secondly, in the previously cited exhortation about supporting pastoral leaders, the "elders who rule well" are those "who labor in teaching and preaching" (1 Tim 5:17). Mounce goes as far as to translate this verse as "let the elders who have been serving well be considered worthy of double honor, *namely*, those who are laboring hard at preaching and teaching."[123] This identifies the ideal elder as the one who preaches and teaches.[124]

Additionally, as pastoral leaders Titus and Timothy are instructed numerous times to teach, preach, and contradict false teaching. Paul begins his pastoral exhortations to Timothy with the urge to "charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine" (1 Tim 1:3). Though this particular verse does not command Timothy to teach, it demonstrates his involvement in overseeing the doctrine of the church. The witness to the teaching ministry in the rest of the 1-2 Timothy is significant: 1 Timothy 4:11-16, 5:7,

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[120] Campenhausen argues that the Pastorals describe the bishop as "above all the ordained preacher of the apostolic office." Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 120.

[121] L&N, 33.233; BDAG, 120.

[122] Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy & Titus*, 285-86.

[123] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 303, emphasis added. Knight comes to the same conclusion, but not as insistently as Mounce. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 232.

[124] For a defense of this rendering of the passage, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 306-10.

6:17, 2 Timothy 2:2, 2:14-15, 2:24, and 4:1-5 explicitly exhort teaching duties, while 1 Timothy 6:14, 6:20, 2 Timothy 1:6-8, and 1:13-14 imply them. Titus is commanded to rebuke (1:13 and 2:15), teach (2:1 and 2:7-8), declare and exhort (2:15), and remind his hearers of biblical teaching (3:1). Individual analysis of these texts would yield further nuances about the teaching ministry as described in the Pastorals; here it suffices to show that the vision for ministry in them has teaching and preaching as an essential work of pastoral leaders.[125]

**Suffering: The theology of the Pastorals.** The Pastoral Epistles also envision pastoral suffering and conflict in both its theology of ministry and in the context of the letters.[126] A. T. Hanson has described the theology of suffering in the Pastorals to be centered on Paul's example of faithful suffering for the gospel and that this kind of suffering would be experienced especially by those who are entrusted with the gospel as pastoral leaders.[127] Paul's imprisonment and impending martyrdom for the gospel thus serves as the paradigm for faithful pastoral leadership; once again, Paul's example is held up for other pastoral leaders to emulate. Hanson's observation is especially relevant given that Paul commands Timothy to συνκακοπάθησον, or "share in suffering," in his ministry (2 Tim 1:8). This word is variously glossed as "to assume ones share of suffering" or "to suffer together with someone."[128] This pictures Paul as the faithfully suffering gospel

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[125] Robinson and Wall describe holy living and faithful teaching as the "essential tasks of ministry" in 1 Tim 4. See Robinson and Wall, *Called to Lead*, 114.

[126] Contra Predrag Dragutinovicœ, who argues that the pseudonymous author of the pastorals invented this context in order to exclude his opponents from the community. Predrag Dragutinovicœ, "Ταῦτα πάσχω (2Tim 1,12): wer verfolgt wen in den Pastoralbriefen?," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 92, no. 3 (2016): 469-70. Gordon D. Fee, on the other hand, argues that the entire purpose of 1 Timothy was to deal with the threat of false teachers, connecting this to Paul's farewell address in Acts 20. See Gordon D. Fee, "Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles, with Further Reflection on the Hermeneutics of Ad Hoc Documents," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28, no. 2 (June 1985): 141-46.

[127] A. T. Hanson, "The Theology of Suffering in the Pastoral Epistles and Ignatius of Antioch," in *Studia Patristica XVII*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982), 2:694-93. Hanson adds to this that suffering is expected for all Christians twice in the Pastorals and once connected to Jesus Christ.

[128] L&N, 24.84; BDAG, 951.

minister, calling Timothy to embrace suffering as he follows Paul's example.[129] Moreover, Timothy is to suffer "as a good solider of Christ Jesus." This military imagery is followed by proverbial statements that picture the faithful pastor as a soldier, farmer, and athlete—each image with connotations of difficulty, labor, and suffering.[130] Ignatius, in a parallel fashion, would also describe pastoral suffering with athletic imagery.[131]

This theology of suffering is probably why a variety of predictive and proverbial statements depict suffering as a regular feature of faithful ministry. In 1 Timothy 4:1-3 Paul declares, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith," going on to describe apostates, the false teachers that lead them astray, and the problems they will cause in the church. The language, especially the invocation of the Spirit's speech, envisions ongoing conflict and suffering as the context of pastoral ministry in the "later times."[132] In a parallel passage, 2 Timothy 3:1-9, Paul similarly connects these difficult people to ministering "in the last days," indicating that this would be the context to faithful ministry in the days between Jesus's resurrection and return.[133] Near the conclusion of 2 Timothy, Paul even predicts a time when people will turn away from true preaching, and applies this to Timothy by saying he should "always be sober minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2

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[129] See also 2 Tim 3:10-11, where Paul contrasts those who have shipwrecked their faith with Timothy, who has followed not only his teaching but his sufferings.

[130] Robinson and Wall exegete these proverbs as primarily focused on the hard work required of ministers and rigorous life required for faithfulness. Robinson and Wall, *Called to Lead*, 190-99. They still, however, recognize that the proverbs are intended to communicate difficulty and suffering.

[131] See chap. 7.

[132] Knight highlights the divine source of this revelation about apostasy in the reference to the Holy Spirit in this passage and connects it to the teaching of Jesus in Matt 24:10-11 and Mark 13:22. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 187-88.

[133] Robinson and Wall also connect 1 Tim 4:1-3 to the last days and suggest that this echoes Jesus's teaching on the rise of false prophets in those days. Robinson and Wall, *Called to Lead*, 106.

Tim 4:3-5). Suffering and Timothy's ministry will go hand in hand in the future.[134]

**Difficulty and conflict: The context of the Pastorals.** Aside from the theology of suffering present in the Pastoral Epistles, each text's historical context indicates significant conflict and difficulties in the church. From direct references in the Pastorals, Tidball describes the following difficulties and conflicts pastoral leaders must deal with: persecutors, those who leave the faith, those who forsake their leaders in need, those who are deceived by false teachers, and those succumb to the love of money.[135] Notably, most of these difficulties come from within the church, a very specific parallel to the picture of pastoral suffering in the Apostolic Fathers.[136] Moreover, all three epistles begin suggesting conflict with false teachers or personal suffering of the recipient (1 Tim 1:3-4, 2 Tim 1:8, Titus 1:9-10).[137] Paul also describes particular opponents Titus and Timothy must deal with and be wary of (1 Tim 1:19-20, 2 Tim 4:14-15, Titus 1:10-13). If anything is clear from the Pastoral Epistles, it is that faithful pastoral leadership is attended with many difficulties.

**Summary.** While the amount of relevant material in the Pastoral Epistles has prevented an in-depth exposition of every text, the above analysis shows four features of pastoral theology in them that accord with the rest of the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers. The character of pastoral leaders was of paramount importance and essential to the very nature of their ministry. These leaders were also given authority, with their

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[134] Lea and Griffin notice this connection between faithful gospel ministry and suffering in this verse: "The reminder that Paul gave was that Timothy was to . . . endure all necessary afflictions in spreading the gospel." Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, 246. See also Roose, who argues that the Pastoral Epistles regularly articulate that faithful teaching brings about suffering for pastoral leaders. Roose, "Deinen und Herrschen," 441.

[135] Tidball, *Ministry by the Book*, 147-48.

[136] See chap. 7.

[137] Mounce describes the opening section of 1 Timothy (1:3-7) as "the Ephesian problem," describing the historical situation as urgent and serious. Mounce, *the Pastoral Epistles*, 13-15.

offices related to the authority of God. They were to teach and preach, with implications of their general oversight over the congregation. Finally, they were to do all of this in a context largely colored by conflict and suffering.

**First Peter 5:1-5**

**Authority.** Outside of the Pastoral Epistles, 1 Peter 5:1-5 is one of the clearest passages about pastoral leadership in the New Testament. At the conclusion of a letter full of encouragements for suffering Christians,[138] Peter gives this charge to the elders:

> So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Pet 5:2-4)

These leaders' authority, task, and character will be treated in turn, in the order they appear in the passage. The command for leaders to "shepherd" the flock of God implies both their authority and work; it is essential to understanding Peter's vision for ministry in this passage. Bennett notices that in the various metaphors used of leaders and followers in the Bible

> the shepherd image is one of the few that is applied exclusively to leaders and not to members of the community as a whole. . . . A term like shepherds reminds us that even on the human level, some are responsible to lead while others follow, some have authority while others are called to respond to that authority. Christ is not the only shepherd; he has appointed human shepherds to assist him. The shepherd image conveys ideas of tenderness, nurture, and devotion; but it also implies discipline (the rod and the staff), the setting of limits (protection against wolves), and the right to establish direction (leading to pasture).[139]

While Bennett also notices that shepherding imagery reminds leaders that the flock is

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[138] See Karen H. Jobes for the centrality of suffering and endurance to the message of 1 Peter. See Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 1-5. This suffering is often described in terms of being despised and mistreated by the culture at large. Tidball describes Peter's vision for ministry as "ministry in a despised church." See Tidball, *Ministry by the Book*, 185.

[139] David W. Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry: Biblical Images for Leaders and Followers* (1993; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 129-30.

Christ's, not theirs,[140] the description of the pastoral task as shepherding in the larger context of the Scriptures indicates authority. The fact that Christ is called the "Chief Shepherd" at the end of this passage makes this even more clear than in previously cited texts.[141] Drawing on this conceptual arrangement, Karen H. Jobes summarizes 1 Peter 5:1-5 as "Christ Shepherds His Flock through the Elders."[142] The earlier reference to God as the "Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" in 1 Peter 2:25 further connects the elders' authority to God's authority. Peter applies pastoral authority immediately after his exhortation to the elders. 1 Peter 5:5 connects humility and a right relationship with God to submission to church leaders: "You who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility towards one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to humble.'" While this connection between submission to leaders and essential Christian virtues is not as fleshed out as it is in the Apostolic Fathers, the connection between submission to leaders and humility is unmistakable.[143] Those who proudly reject church leadership (and church leaders who arrogantly domineer over the flock!) will find themselves opposed by God.

**Work: Loving oversight.** Shepherding imagery in 1 Peter 5:1-5 also describes pastoral work. First of all, the imagery evokes both New Testament and Old Testament models, with connotations of loving care and leadership aimed toward the spiritual good

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[140] Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry*, 129.

[141] For the use of shepherding imagery as indicative of pastoral authority and work in both the New Testament and patristic literature, see Gomola, *Conceptual Blending in Early Christian Discourse*, 75-95.

[142] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 298.

[143] See chap. 5 for analysis of the connections between submission to pastoral leaders and essential Christian virtues. Jobes notes the mutuality of this command with its specific connection to submission to church leadership: "Arrogance, whether by domineering *presbyteroi* or by contemptuous *neoteroi,* evokes God's opposition." Jobes, *1 Peter*, 309.

of God's people.[144] Secondly, while duties are not concretely articulated, it "is probably assumed that the functions of feeding, leading, nurturing, protecting, and so forth would be evident from the observation of actual shepherds."[145] Moreover, the connection of shepherding imagery to the teaching office elsewhere in the New Testament implies that teaching is the "feeding" work of shepherds.[146] While some duties are not specified, Peter does specify that shepherding is at least "exercising oversight," meaning that elders are responsible for a general spiritual care for their congregations.[147] Additionally, within the larger framework of 1 Peter which emphasizes following Christ's example, these shepherds will be helping their people follow the Chief Shepherd in discipleship, giving direction their spiritual lives.[148]

**Particular virtues required.** In their pastoral care, the elders are charged to demonstrate humility, gentleness, and a right relationship to money in their leadership. The must lead their people "not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2-3). Like the list of character requirements in Titus 1, Peter articulates gentleness and a right relationship to money by way of eliminating those who would "domineer" over the flock or minister for "shameful gain." This exhortation is followed with congregational call to "clothe

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[144] For Old Testament connotations, see Schreiner, "Overseeing and Leading the Church," 113. See also, Gomola, *Conceptual Blending in Early Christian Discourse*, 92. Gomola argues that the shepherding metaphor in this passage not only indicates authority but the tender care which leaders ought to give to God's people.

[145] Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry*, 129.

[146] Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry*, 129. For shepherding as indicating teaching, see also Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 747; John MacArthur, "What Is a Pastor to Be and to Do?," in *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry: Shaping Contemporary Ministry with Biblical Mandates*, ed. John MacArthur (Dallas: Nelson, 1995), 28-29.

[147] J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 283. Michaels does not specify oversight over particular spiritual needs, but implies it.

[148] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 305. Jobes connects the shepherding imagery to the call of every Christian to follow Christ, the chief shepherd. The elder's work of shepherding, therefore, is to help Christians follow Christ like sheep follow a shepherd.

yourselves, all of you, with humility towards one another" (1 Pet 5:5). While this trait is not made a special requirement of pastoral leaders, the context clearly indicates that they are in view as well as the congregation.[149] Once again, a significant New Testament passage about pastoral ministry specifies relational virtues and a right relationship to money as essential to leadership.

**Suffering.** Peter does not command pastoral leaders to suffer in the way that Paul does, but that leaders will suffer appears to be an implication of this passage. The exhortation to the elders is connected to the previous section by the connecting word σὺν.[150] In the previous section Peter has said that judgment must begin in the house of God. According to one commentator, this indicates that 1 Peter 5:1-5 is "joining the specific instructions for elders to the thought that in God's house they are judged first. Therefore, the elders especially should not draw back from shepherding the people . . . even though by doing so they may make themselves a larger target of persecution."[151] Within the passage, both the connection between the elders to Christ and the offer of eschatological reward for faithful leadership affirm this interpretation, because these are regular features of Peter's exhortations to suffer well in other parts of the epistle.[152] With the evidence for early persecution effecting leaders particularly, it seems very plausible that Peter's exhortation to the elders is in part necessitated by the realty that faithful shepherding will result in their suffering.[153]

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[149] See n129.

[150] Jobes recognizes that this particular word is disputed in the manuscript evidence but argues it is likely to be original. Jobes, *1 Peter*, 299.

[151] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 299.

[152] For the imitation of Christ as a key ethical theme of 1 Peter and its connection to present suffering leading to vindication, see Michaels, *1 Peter*, lxxiii-lxxiv. For the connection to Peter's own example of suffering for his witness to Christ as indicating suffering as the context of this exhortation, see also Jobes, *1 Peter*, 302.

[153] Acts 12:2, 2 Tim 4:14.

**Hebrews 13:7 and 13:17**

  **Hebrews 13:7: Preaching and virtuous example.** Two soundings about pastoral ministry in Hebrews 13 will finish my analysis; these two texts describe pastoral virtue, work, and authority. Hebrews 13:7 first highlights teaching and preaching as essential pastoral tasks by commending deceased leaders as those who "spoke to you the word of God" (Heb 13:7). Remarkably, speaking the word of God is the only descriptor of these commendable leaders' work in this passage.[154] Allen argues that this designation "indicates the primacy of the preaching/teaching ministry of the leaders in the local church."[155] While teaching and preaching is certainly highlighted in this description of these former leaders, one must note that the audience is called to imitate their faith and consider "the outcome of their way of life." Whether "outcome" refers to their martyrdom or the general result of godly living, this phrase highlights the godly example of these former leaders.[156] Like the elders in 1 Peter 5 and Timothy in the Pastoral Epistles, these leaders' virtuous lives were key to their ministry, for they led their people into godliness in part by their godly example.[157]

  **Hebrews 13:17: Authority and work.** The picture of ministry in Hebrews 13:17 is similar to 1 Thessalonians 5:12, with informal language used for leaders and a focus on the loving work and authority these leaders. Hebrews 13:17 commands obedience to virtuous, laboring pastoral leaders: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over you souls, as those who will have to give an account."

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[154] William Lane goes as far as to say that these leaders were leaders whose "authority derived exclusively from the word they proclaimed and whose precedence was enhanced by preaching alone." William Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 526. While perhaps taking this phrase too far, Lane rightly emphasizes the distinctiveness of this description of these former leaders.

[155] David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, New American Commentary, vol. 35 (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 612.

[156] Allen, *Hebrews*, 612.

[157] There are also remarkable conceptual parallels between this passage and 1 Tim 4:16, where Timothy is told that watching his life and teaching will result in his hearer's salvation, see above.

With a clear expectation that pastoral leaders be obeyed, this passage also emphasizes that these leaders keep watch over the congregation's souls for their good and are accountable to God for their people, connecting their virtuous work to their authority.[158] Lane comments that this phrase "offers a commendation of the leaders as men with divinely given pastoral authority and responsibility. God has entrusted to their care the other members of the community."[159] As in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, insistence on obedience is paired with the virtuous, loving work of leaders.[160] With another similarity to 1 Thessalonians 5:12, Hebrews 13:17 goes on to concretely apply pastoral authority: "Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage for you." This command exhorts the congregation to have regard for their pastoral leaders' experience and to seek to give them joy in their work of oversight.[161] Moreover, it implies reward—likely either divine blessing or community stability—if they will enable their leaders to labor with joy.[162] The implication that groaning leaders would be "no advantage to you" is that joyful leaders would be an advantage and blessing to the congregation: this implies that when pastoral authority is respected, the community is blessed. A particular blessing in view was the sanctification of the congregation: their *souls* are being watched over.[163] Hebrews 13:7 and 13:17, while more compact than most

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[158] Lane argues that this phrase indicates leaders should be trusted and respected because they "recognize their place within a structure of accountability to God." Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 556.

[159] Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 555.

[160] See Timothy M. Willis, who argues extensively that the elders in view here were bearers of *persuasive* authority (their godly lives and doctrine as swaying their people) rather than official authority. Timothy M. Willis, "'Obey Your Leaders': Hebrews 13 and Leadership in the Church," *Restoration Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1994): 319-26. While Willis's argumentation is flawed, especially in that his entire argument rests on a particular rendering of πειθώ, he rightly sees the clear connection between the authority of these leaders with their exemplary lives and teaching. For exegetical considerations that make Willis's argument as a whole unlikely, see Allen, *Hebrews*, 624.

[161] Or joy in giving an account for their people, see the discussion in Allen, *Hebrews*, 625.

[162] Lane argues that the community's stability is in view in the "advantage to you" clause. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 556.

[163] Allen, *Hebrews*, 625.

passages exposited above, still give a picture of pastoral leaders who must be virtuous, labor (in preaching especially) for the sanctification of God's people, and whose authority was real and concretely applied.

## Summary and Conclusion

My analysis in this chapter has not been comprehensive but selective. Instead of seeking to show everything the New Testament teaches regarding pastoral leadership, I have sought to show four particular and prominent theological judgments about pastoral leadership because, as will argue in the rest of this project, these four theological judgments continue in the postapostolic age. The final section of this chapter will synthesize the teachings found in these various texts about pastoral leadership and point them toward the Apostolic Fathers' vision, the subject of the coming chapters.

First, every text cited asserted that that the leaders of God's people must first and foremost be godly examples of Christian maturity. The Pastoral Epistles emphasize that this godliness had to be proven and public before a leader could be ordained and particularizes this godliness through lists of qualities potential leaders must possess. Other passages, whether pointing audiences to the character of their present or past leaders, also insist on righteous and blameless lives for those who would lead (Acts 20:17-38; 1 Thess 2:1-12; and Heb 13:7). The apostolic era also emphasized particular virtues. The necessity for humility, gentleness, and a right relationship to money attends almost every depiction of ministerial virtue in the New Testament—whether depicted in Paul's example (Acts 20:33-35 and 1 Thess 2:1-12), lists of character qualifications for leaders (1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9), or direct exhortation (1 Pet 5:2-5 and 2 Tim 2:24-25).

Pastoral authority was closely related to pastoral virtue, with a leader's authority being directly connected their virtuous pastoral labors twice in the New Testament (1 Thess 5:12 and Heb 13:17). The New Testament typically expresses pastoral authority with the admonition that pastoral leaders be obeyed and respected (1

Thess 5:12; Heb 13:17; and 1 Pet 5:4) and with Paul's charges to Timothy and Titus to exercise their authority for the congregation's good. Moreover, the authority of pastoral leaders is connected to God's authority in diverse ways (Acts 20:20; Eph 4:11; Titus 1:7; and 1 Pet 5:1-5), and applied to congregational life concretely (1 Tim 5:17; 1 Tim 5:19; and 1 Thess 5:12).

The vision for pastoral work in the New Testament centers around preaching/teaching and a loving oversight for the congregation's spiritual good. Most prominent in the New Testament is the insistence on preaching or teaching, with every text analyzed stating or implying this as an essential pastoral work. Less prominent but still persistent is the related idea of spiritual oversight and "paying careful attention to the flock." These two essential pastoral tasks were related: pastoral leaders must pay attention to the lives and doctrine of their people, preaching and teaching to them particularly for their maturity and sanctification.

According to the vision of the texts above, pastoral leaders would labor in a context of conflict and suffering, especially having to bear the difficulties of dealing with false teachers and disciples. Suffering constantly accompanies Paul's example of faithful ministry (Acts 20:19; 1 Thess 2:1-12; 2 Tim 1:12; and 2 Tim 3:11); he also commanded his lieutenants to suffer well, warned them against false teachers, and predicted suffering as a feature of ministry in the last days (1 Tim 1:3-4; 1:8; 1:19-20; 2 Tim 1:8; 4:14-15; Titus 1:9-10; 1:13, and 3:10-12). Outside of the Paul's letters and Miletus speech, 1 Peter 5:1-5 implies that suffering would attend faithful ministry.

Overall, this chapter has shown a variously articulated but clear set of theological judgments about pastoral identity, work, and context. The remainder of this project will engage each theological judgment surveyed here—pastoral virtue, authority, work, and suffering—in the Apostolic Fathers. The first of these judgments, the necessity of pastoral virtue, is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

"YOUR BLAMELESS FACE": PASTORAL VIRTUE
IN THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Chapter 3 was a relatively broad survey that demonstrated four theological judgements about pastoral leadership in the apostolic age, represented by key texts in the New Testament. One of these theological judgments, perhaps the most prevalent, was that virtue was essential for pastoral ministry. This virtue was articulated as general—a blamelessness that was unspecified but publicly noticeable. With this general blamelessness was a special insistence on relational virtues and a right relationship to money. Virtue was so important that Paul even argued it was instrumental to effective ministry—a means by which pastoral leaders effect the salvation of their people. This chapter will explore the theme of pastoral virtue in the Apostolic Fathers, arguing that these postapostolic documents likewise asserted that virtue was essential and fundamental to ministerial identity.

I will begin with how "virtue" is used in this chapter and note the relative lack of scholarship on ministerial virtue in the Apostolic Fathers. Then Ignatius's epistle to Polycarp, other Ignatian Epistles, 1 Clement, Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians, the Didache, Shepherd of Hermas, and Martyrdom of Polycarp will be examined in turn. Each work insists upon and describes pastoral virtue in distinct ways, but I will show how they make the same theological judgments. A concluding section will bring the texts' particular visions for pastoral virtue together, noting distinctive elements but demonstrating remarkable theological cohesion. The conclusion will also suggest ways the Apostolic Fathers further the New Testament's vision for pastoral virtue.

## Virtue in This Chapter and the Apostolic Fathers

While virtue's nature and use in patristic Christianity has been well studied, the Apostolic Fathers are usually not a part of the conversation.[1] My use of "virtue" will be generic but will draw on its picture of settled characteristics that are fundamental to a person's character. Jay Wood describes virtues as "acquired habits of excellent functioning" and Christian virtues particularly as those traits which let someone achieve the distinctive *telos* of "Christlikeness and eternal friendship with God."[2] Grounding this idea in the Scriptures, Romanus Cessario argues the New Testament itself "presents virtue as an interior principle of the moral life which directs the individual's relationship with God and with neighbor. As such, Christian virtue remains a stable reality, something which firmly establishes in the believer the capacity to accomplish those deeds which are worthy of the Kingdom of God."[3] While is not my purpose to demonstrate that this concept of virtue is precisely present in the Apostolic Fathers, it illuminates the postapostolic assertion that leaders be particular kinds of people, not just behave in particular kinds of ways. So, while virtue will largely serve as a placeholder term in this project for mature and exemplary Christian godliness, it will also illuminate the postapostolic period's focus on virtuous *identity*, not merely behavior, as essential for ministry.

## Ministerial Virtue in Scholarship on the Apostolic Fathers

Despite renewed interest in ministerial virtue today[4] and the significant literature contesting pastoral authority and work in Apostolic Fathers, there is no

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[1] But see Paul M. Blowers, *Moral Formation and the Virtuous Life,* Ad Fontes: Early Christian Sources (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2019). Blowers's work is an anthology of early Christian texts about moral formation, and the Apostolic Fathers are regularly included. For an overview of how virtue has been historically conceived in the church, See W. Jay Wood, "Christian Theories of Virtue," in *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue*, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University, 2018), 281-302.

[2] Wood, "Christian Theories of Virtue," 282.

[3] Romanus Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2009), 1.

[4] See Paul Goodliff, *Shaped for Service: Ministerial Formation and Virtue Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 4-6, 12-13. Goodliff seeks to retrieve Aristotelian virtue ethics for ministerial training today.

systematic treatment of ministerial virtue in postapostolic Christianity. Many works on individual books of the Apostolic Fathers comment on the conceptions of ministerial virtue in them and broader works mention the characteristics necessary for ministers in key passages. However, no work has yet related the teachings of the Apostolic Fathers on ministerial virtue together, nor suggested development or continuity between the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers on this subject.[5]

A potential reason for this relative lack of interest in an otherwise debated field is a consensus that ministerial virtue was required of all who would pastor. Though some scholars are skeptical of portrayals of pastoral leaders as virtuous in particular cases,[6] many affirm this in individual treatment of them. Another reason pastoral virtue has not been studied is because it has not appeared to be as relevant to the ecclesiastical debates that long governed research on the Apostolic Fathers. Recently, some have argued that a lack of attention to virtue in pastoral ministry in the broader conversations about ecclesiastical structures have been harmful to the way ministry is practiced today.[7] This points towards the particular relevance of pastoral virtue in the Apostolic Fathers to today's ministry context.

## Pastoral Virtue in Ignatius, Polycarp *To the Philippians* 1 Clement, the Didache, and the Shepherd of Hermas

Beginning with Ignatius, I will work through relevant passages in the Apostolic Fathers and show unified theological judgments about pastoral virtue in them.

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[5] For example, while Kevin Giles's recent work examines a variety of different aspects of ministerial development from the New Testament to apostolic fathers, there is no chapter on the requirement or nature of ministerial virtue. Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry among the First Christians*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017).

[6] For an example of this reading of Ignatius, see Karen, Piepenbrink, "Zur Perzeption des kirchlichen Amtes durch einen, 'Märtyerbischof,'" in *Die Briefe des Ignatios von Antiochia: Motive, Strategien, Kontexte*, ed. Thomas Johann Bauer and Peter von Möllendorff, Millennium-Studien 72 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 141-42. Piepenbrink argues that Ignatius had such a high view of ministerial authority that he averred ministers should be received regardless of their character qualifications.

[7] Joe E. Trull and Robert R. Creech, *Ethics for Christian Ministry: Moral Formation for Twenty-First Century Leaders* (Ada, MI: Baker, 2017), xi.

Below I will show the following: first, Ignatius's theology of heavenly representation, his letter to Polycarp, and relevant passages in his other epistles reveal his consistent appraisal of church leaders as eminently godly and that he consistently highlights a nexus of particular relational virtues. Second, the central passage of 1 Clem. connects the virtue of the deposed presbyters to the injustice of their deposition, implying that pastoral virtue reveals genuine ministry. The author of 1 Clem. also highlights the humility and gentleness of the deposed presbyters, again insistent on relational virtues. Third, Pol. *Phil*. both commands general and relational virtue for elders and, in Polycarp's lamentation over Valens, directly connects virtue to effective pastoral work. Finally, Herm. and Did., with less explicit material about pastoral virtue, still insist on it. Herm. communicates its picture of ministerial virtue through visions of ideal leaders and rebukes to unvirtuous ones, with a particular focus on the relational virtues of these leaders. The brief description in Did. of the characteristics required of bishops and its advice on discerning true from false prophets likewise requires both general and particular virtues for pastoral leaders. A concluding section will bring the teachings of these individual documents together into what I will argue are shared theological judgments about virtue for pastoral leaders in the postapostolic age.

**Heavenly Representation and
Virtue in Ignatius**

Outside of his early articulation of the threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons,[8] the most distinctive feature of Ignatius's pastoral theology was that pastoral leaders represent heavenly realities to the church, most often God the Father, Christ, and occasionally the apostles.[9] While this theological conception of pastoral

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[8] Allen Brent, "Ignatius of Antioch and the Threefold Ecclesiastical Order," *Journal of Religious History* 17, no. 1 (1992): 18-19; Patrick Burke, "The Monarchial Episcopate," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 7, no. 3 (1970): 518-19; William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 17.

[9] Scholars from various perspectives recognize the representative function of Christian leaders in Ignatius's epistles. See Jochen Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche: Presbyter und Episkopen*

leaders is distinctive to Ignatius in the postapostolic period, it resulted in the judgment that pastoral leaders were "peculiarly" called to Christlikeness.[10] Because ministers represented heavenly realties to the church, they must have exemplary and outstanding character, reflecting the godliness of heaven. Multiple descriptions Ignatius gave of pastoral leaders were effusive in praise of their virtue and his descriptions of false teachers likewise depicted them as ungodly. As I will now show, virtue attended and was revelatory of genuine pastoral leadership.

**Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp**

Ignatius's epistle to Polycarp exhibits both Polycarp's virtuous characterization and many exhortations to virtuous pastoral labors to Polycarp, the bishop of the Smyrnaean church.[11] The epistle highlights pastoral virtue in ways parallel to the rest of the Ignatian corpus and Apostolic Fathers with a distinctive emphasis on the need for Polycarp's endurance and steadfastness, with significant conceptual parallels to the Pastoral Epistles.[12] The need for endurance will be noted here as an aspect of requisite ministerial virtue but more thoroughly examined in the chapter 7. Below, the focus will be on how Polycarp is described as presently excelling in godliness but is also charged towards more of it in his pastoral labors.

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*in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2011), 256; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch,* 112-14; Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy*, T & T Clark Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2009); 150; Kenneth J. Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna: A New Translation and Theological Commentary*, Early Christian Fathers Series 1 (Zanesville, OH: CHResources, 2009), chap. 4, para. 5; Hermut Lohr, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch," in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Wilhelm Pratscher (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2010), 106-7.

[10] George Hunston Williams, "The Ministry of the Ante-Nicene Church (c.125-325)," in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, ed. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (New York: Harper, 1956), para. 11, https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-2-the-ministry-of-the-ante-nicene-church-c-125-325-by-george-h-williams/.  Williams is speaking specifically of the bishop in this instance.

[11] Some scholars doubt that Polycarp was actually the bishop or considered himself the bishop of the Smyrnaean church, see Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 41. However, Williams says while Polycarp does not mention the bishop in his letter "nevertheless his own effectual position must have been very much like that of Ignatius." Williams, "The Ministry of the Ante-Nicene Church (c.125-325)," para. 12.

[12] See especially the persistent exhortations to endurance in 2 Tim.

Ignatius greets Polycarp by "acknowledging your mind in God, which is established upon an immovable rock, I praise effusively, because I was judged worthy of [seeing] your blameless face."[13] The main idea of this greeting is Ignatius's praise to God that he was allowed to enjoy Polycarp's eminently godly company. Polycarp's godliness is described first as his "mind in God," most likely, his fixed purpose and intent on obeying God's will.[14] Polycarp's eminent virtue is described as immovable and steadfast using imagery that pictures him fixed on God Himself.[15] Ignatius also praises Polycarp's "blameless face," using a word indicating morally upright behavior that is often translated as "without fault."[16] From the outset, Ignatius casts Polycarp as steadfast in godliness.

Even with this high esteem for Polycarp, Ignatius proceeds to exhort him towards a variety of ministerial virtues in the body of the letter, often pairing these with Polycarp's pastoral work. Ignatius urges him to "in the grace in which you are clothed, press on in your race and exhort all people so that they may be saved."[17] The phrase "press on in your race" is from Holmes's translation and communicates the sense of the verb προσθεῖναι, which is to add to something already present.[18] Polycarp's ministry here is pictured as a race he has already begun, one in which he must exercise the virtue of

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[13] "Ἀποδεχόμενός σου τὴν ἐν Θεῷ γνώμην, ἡδρασμένην ὡς ἐπὶ πέτραν ἀκίνητον, ὑπερδοξάζω, καταξιωθεὶς τοῦ προσώπου σου τοῦ ἀμώμου, οὗ ὀναίμην ἐν Θεῷ." Ign. *Pol*. 1.1. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own, and the Greek text will appear in the footnotes. Greek texts are taken from Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

[14] Schoedel renders this "your godly purpose." Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 258. BDAG renders this use "mind fixed in God." BDAG, 202.

[15] Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary* (1965; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 4:129.

[16] BDAG, 56. See the word's use in 1 Pet 1:9, Eph 1:4, and Phil 2:15.

[17] " σε ἐν χάριτι, ᾗ ἐνδέδυσαι, προσθεῖναι τῷ δρόμῳ σου καὶ πάντας παρακαλεῖν ἵνα σῴζωνται." Ign. *Pol*. 1.2.

[18] See BDAG, 885.

endurance to finish.[19] Additionally, exhortations about Polycarp's pastoral work go hand in hand with exhortations about his character, with this first call to endurance paired with the essential pastoral work of preaching. In Ign. *Pol.* 1-2, further exhortations about the work of ministry come interspersed with a variety of virtue related exhortations. Polycarp is to give himself to diligence and watchfulness, bear with others and their spiritual ills, endure all in love, devote himself to prayer, love both the good and troublesome, and to be shrewd, innocent, and sober.[20] As later reflections on the nature of pastoral leadership in the Christian tradition would highlight, Ignatius conceives of the ministry as requiring a diverse set of godly character traits.[21]

As it is commonly insisted on for pastoral leaders in the Apostolic Fathers, gentleness is especially important to Polycarp's ministry. In reference to Ign. *Pol.* 2.1, Jochen Wagner goes as far as to say that gentleness is *the* essential pastoral virtue in Ignatius's pastoral theology.[22] Ignatius charges Polycarp to bring the troublesome disciples into submission "in gentleness," using the same word as Paul in one of his exhortations to Timothy.[23] Additionally, some translators take the dative construction of

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[19] On this particular exhortation being about Polycarp's endurance, Schoedel says, "Ignatius must be thinking of the progress that Polycarp is making on the track of life, it is unlikely that he is calling for an increase in speed. For in his athletic imagery Ignatius concentrates . . . [on] endurance, not speed." Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 259. The image also conveys difficulty and opposition, see David W. Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry: Biblical Images for Leaders and Followers* (1993; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 142-43. The theme of difficulty and opposition will be explored in chap. 7.

[20] Ign. *Pol.* 1-2. This is a good place to note the remarkable similarities between the nature of Ignatius's pastoral exhortations and the imagery he uses with both Pauline pastoral theology and gospel traditions. While some have doubted exact intertextual correspondence, Ignatius's knowledge of Pauline and gospel pastoral theology, or at least his knowledge of a shared tradition of exhortations and images, is near unmistakable from a close reading of Ign. *Pol.* 1-2. See chap. 7 for extended engagement with Ignatius's knowledge of the Pastoral Epistles.

[21] For an extended reflection on the diverse characteristics required of pastoral leaders from later in the Christian tradition, see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 2.13-18, 44-49. Nazianzus also uses the image of healing as a metaphor for pastoral work like Ignatius, see Ign. *Pol* 2.1.

[22] Wagner says that for the bishop "die stärkste Eigenschaft sollte jedoch 'Sanftmut' sein." Wagner, *Die Anfäng des Amtes in der Kirche*, 264.

[23] "ἐν πραΰτητι" Ign. *Pol.* 2.1. See 1 Tim 6:11 for the word's usage in the Pastorals.

this phrase as a dative of means, implying that Polycarp is to bring the troublesome into submission by his gentle dealings.[24] If correct, this grammatical construction communicates a similar principle as the Pastorals: a pastor's virtue is a means by which his ministry is accomplished. Medical metaphors for ministry also emphasize Polycarp's gentle and wise dealings with his people. According to Ignatius, Polycarp is "for this reason flesh and spirit, that you may treat gently what appears before you."[25] Polycarp's human composition is intended to enable his gentle pastoral dealings with his people. However one understands Ignatius's logic in connecting Polycarp's composition and gentleness, he could not be more insistent about pastoral gentleness—Polycarp's own human existence is meant to make him a gentle pastor. The flesh and spirit image is used of Christ in Ign. *Eph.* 7.2, where he is called the great physician who was flesh and spirit. There may be a connection in Ignatius's thought between the gentle healing ministry of Christ and the gentle healing ministry of pastoral leaders. At the very least, these exhortations to gentleness taken with the other relational commands demonstrate that Ignatius's vision for ministry centered on relationally virtuous pastoral leaders.

While more could be said about Ign. *Pol.*'s vision for ministry, and while some have emphasized the extensive authority Polycarp wielded in his congregation, what is clear is that Ignatius expected him carry out his work with the utmost virtue.[26] He particularly emphasizes that Polycarp's difficult work of caring for ill disciples must be done with gentleness, patience, endurance, and love. Significantly, the kind of person

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[24] Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 130.

[25] "διὰ τοῦτο σαρκικὸς εἶ καὶ πνευματικός, ἵνα τὰ φαινόμενά σου εἰς πρόσωπον κολακεύῃς." Ign. *Pol.* 2.2b. "Treat gently" is the majority translation of κολακεύῃς for this passage. BDAG glosses it as "entice, deal graciously with." BDAG, 555. Schoedel renders it "that you may humor things visible to your eyes," but still notes that this verse has "the same combination of fixity of purpose and gentleness" in regard to Polycarp's pastoral "craft." Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 262-63.

[26] The vision for authority in Ign. *Pol*. and the views of scholars on this issue will be exposited in chap. 5. For now, Schoedel's estimation that instructions to Polycarp envision a "complete subordination or individual interests to the group and the suppression or elimination of dissent." Schoedel is sufficient to show how many scholars overemphasize the vision for authority in this epistle and underemphasize the virtue and wisdom of pastoral leaders who exercise that authority. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 259.

Polycarp already is (blameless) comes right alongside the person he must be in his ministry (patient, kind to all, enduring, etc.). While direct pastoral exhortations are not present in the rest of Ignatius's epistles, they espouse the same vision for blamelessness and relational virtues for leaders.

**Ignatius's Congregational Epistles**

Because of the breadth of material, Ignatius's congregational epistles will be examined as a whole. I will show that in these epistles Ignatius (1) praised all true pastoral leaders as generally and eminently godly, (2) highlighted particular, often relational virtues of pastoral leaders, and (3) argued that one can identify false teachers by their lack of virtue. All three of these features affirm Ignatius's vision for virtue as essential to and revelatory of true pastoral leadership.

**Praise for general godliness.** Ignatius's praise for the virtue of pastoral leaders is a prominent occurrence in his epistles, though some view this praise skeptically.[27] But according to Ignatius himself, in part because they represented heavenly realities, pastoral leaders must have prominent, general, and public godliness.[28] One of his favorite pictures of ministerial virtue is the idea that pastoral leaders are "worthy": worthy of their name (ἀξιονόμαστον ὑμῶν πρεσβυτέριον), worthy of God (either τοῦ Θεοῦ ἄξιον or ἀξιοθέου), worthy of honor (ἀξιοπρεπεστάτου), and even worthily woven together in unity (ἀξιοπλόκου).[29] Particularly revealing is Ignatius's use of ἀξιονόμαστον in Ign. *Eph.* 4.1, a word he coined. This phrase pictures the presbyters of the Ephesian church as worthy of the name of their office, implying that their office

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[27] See below under "Praise for Silence."

[28] For Ignatius's vision for ministry as representing heavenly realties, see n14. For the connection between the representative role of pastoral leaders and their virtue, see Alvyn Pettersen, "The Laity—Bishop's Pawn? Ignatius of Antioch on the Obedient Christian," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44, no. 1 (1991): 44-46.

[29] Ign. *Eph.* 4.1 (two instances), Ign. *Magn.* 2:1-2 (two instances), Ign. *Smyrn.* 12.2, and Ign. *Magn.* 13.1.

requires worthy people. Ignatius also uses a variety of other terms and colorful imagery to praise the virtue of pastoral leaders.[30] For example, of the Philippian bishop, Ignatius writes, "therefore my soul blesses his mind that is in God (recognizing that it is virtuous and complete), how he is unmoved and not given to anger, in everything living in the kindness of God."[31] Similar to his picture of Polycarp, this bishop's mind, or purpose, is "in God" and he is "unmoved." Moreover, by calling the bishop "virtuous and complete," Ignatius highlights his exceptional progress in holiness.[32] Mikael Isacson notes how the grammatical structure of this passage "underlines how extraordinary" this particular bishop's gentleness is.[33] With another parallel, this bishop is "living in kindness," exhibiting one of the virtues in the relational nexus I will show throughout this chapter. Once again, a steadfast and loving godliness is praised; one gets the idea that Ignatius could not imagine someone of mediocre character occupying an office in the church. Imagery also conveyed Ignatius's high regard for pastoral leaders. In praising both the bishop and presbyters of Magnesia, Ignatius describes them as "your bishop who is worthy of honor and that worthily woven spiritual crown of your presbyters and the godly deacons."[34] The virtue of these leaders is beautiful and on display in the congregation's gatherings, with the elders and deacons particularly described as a "crown," at the very least indicating their great value.

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[30] Aside from the passages below, see also Ign. *Phld*. 11.1 and Ign. *Magn*. 2.1-2.

[31] "διὸ μακαρίζει μου ἡ ψυχὴ τὴν εἰς Θεὸν αὐτοῦ γνώμην, ἐπιγνοὺς ἐνάρετον καὶ τέλειον οὖσαν, τὸ ἀκίνητον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ἀόργητον [αὐτοῦ] ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιεικείᾳ Θεοῦ ζῶντος." Ign. *Phld*. 1.2.

[32] BDAG renders ἐνάρετον as "pertaining to be exceptional in character or performance, *first-rate, high-class, exceptional, virtuous*." BDAG, 331. Τέλειος is a word regularly referring to well-rounded spiritual maturity in Christian literature (see Heb 5:14; Phil 3:15; Col 1:28; Eph 4:13).

[33] Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004), 127.

[34] " μετὰ τοῦ ἀξιοπρεπεστάτου ἐπισκόπου ὑμῶν καὶ ἀξιοπλόκου πνευματικοῦ στεφάνου τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν κατὰ Θεὸν διακόνων." Ign. *Magn*. 13:1.

**Praise for silence.** While commentators have given less attention to Ignatius's general praise for pastoral leaders, they have debated his praise for two bishops' silence in Ign. *Eph.* 6.1 and Ign. *Phld.* 1.1.[35] In spite of the various proposals about these passages' praise of silence, the texts explicitly connect silence to these leaders' virtue. Most clearly, Ignatius's praise of the silent bishop in Ign. *Phld.* 1.1 connects the bishop's silence to his relational virtue: "I am amazed by his forbearance: he accomplishes more by being silent than those who speak."[36] The use of a colon in my translation brings out that these two statements are appositive, which is the right rendering because of Ignatius's logic and the use of parallel relative pronouns referring to the bishop before each phrase. This bishop's silence thus portrays his "forbearance," a word used to communicate a nexus of relational virtues in early Christian literature.[37] Secondly, the bishop's silence in Ign. *Eph* 6.1 should be read in light of the later description of silence as virtue in Ign. *Eph*. While Ign. *Eph.* 6.1 connects the bishop's silence to his authority as representing God, a later passage in Ign. *Eph.* connects silence to genuineness and Christlikeness:

> It is better to be silent and be real than to talk and not be real. It is good to teach, if one does what one says. Now there is one teacher, who spoke and it happened; indeed, even the things that he has done in silence are worthy of the Father. The one who truly possesses the word of Jesus is also able to hear his silence, so that he may be perfect, so that he may act through what he says and be known through his silence.[38]

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[35] For praise of the bishops' silence as connected to gnostic understandings of God, see Henry Chadwick, "The Silence of Bishops in Ignatius," *Harvard Theological Review* 43, no. 2 (1950): 169-72. For praise of bishops' silence as bolstering bishops incompetent to teach, see Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch,* 56. For praise of bishops' silence connected to Ignatius's charismatic tendencies or mystery religions, see Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 31, 72, and 93. For silence as bringing a generally praised Hellenistic trait into Christian discourse, see Harry O' Maier, "The Politics of the Silent Bishop: Silence and Persuasion in Ignatius of Antioch," *Journal of Theological Studies* 55, no. 2 (2004): 506-15. James Carleton Paget connects the bishop's silence to humility, while Petterson connects it to the bishop's representation of Christ. James Carleton Paget, "The Vision of the Church in the Apostolic Fathers," in *Vision for the Church: Studies in Early Christian Ecclesiology*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Michael B. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 197; Petterson, "The Laity—Bishop's Pawn?" 46.

[36] "οὗ καταπέπληγμαι τὴν ἐπιείκειαν, ὃς σιγῶν πλείονα δύναται τῶν λαλούντων." Ign. *Phld.* 1.1.

[37] L&N describe ἐπιείκειαν as indicating gentleness, graciousness, and forbearance, citing Acts 24:4, 2 Cor 10:1, and Titus 3:2. L&N, 88.62.

[38] Ign. *Eph.* 16:1-2, Holmes's translation. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 197.

Despite the complexities of this moral exhortation, several features in it connect silence to virtuous living. First, silence is connected to genuineness, to being "real" (εἶναι, lit. "to be"); additionally, a description of a good teacher doing what he teaches immediately follows the recommendation of silence.[39] With Ignatius's view of teaching as essential pastoral work, this exhortation is at least particularly applicable to them and focused on virtuous deeds, with silence functioning as a picture of these deeds.[40] Secondly, a description of Christ the true teacher follows the exhortation to silence. Christ did what he taught and especially did works "in silence" that were worthy of the Father—silence pictures Christ's righteous obedience. Once again, righteous living as validating a true teacher is the main idea of silence. Finally, the last sentence seems to bring these threads together, asserting that those who hear Christ's silence—that is, who truly see his example of worthy deeds done in silence—may "be perfect," also doing what he says and being known by his "silence," that is, a righteous life. These three features of Ign. *Eph*. 16.1-2 show that "silence" is an Ignatian image for Christian virtue, representing a righteous life in contrast to empty talking. This image should inform interpretations of the silent bishop, especially how it highlights these bishops as genuine, obedient, and godly individuals.

**Praise for particular virtues.** In addition to general praise of pastoral leaders, Ignatius highlighted particular relational virtues especially emblematic of genuine ministry. Humility was essential for leadership: "Let no one be puffed up by a high position, for faith and love is everything."[41] While not referring to pastoral leaders by the titles ἐπίσκοπος or πρεσβύτερος, this exhortation almost certainly points to them,

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[39] That silence is connected to genuineness is further bolstered by the fact that Ignatius has just alluded to gospel material and said "the tree is known by its fruit; thus those who profess to be Christ's will be recognized by their actions." Ign. *Eph* 13.2.

[40] See chap. 6 for my argument that Ignatius viewed teaching and preaching as an essential aspect of pastoral work.

[41] "τόπος μηδένα φυσιούτω· τὸ γὰρ ὅλον ἐστὶν πίστις καὶ ἀγάπη." Ign. *Smyrn.* 6.1

especially with Ignatius's use of τόπος and the condemnation of false teachers immediately after.[42] In Ign. *Magn.* 6.1 Ignatius says that the bishop and presbyters occupy the τόπος of God and the apostles; Ign. *Trall.* 3.1 contains a similar use of the word.[43] When he uses τόπος to speak of people in high positions, those people are leaders in the church. Thus, this exhortation at the very least excludes prideful leaders and implies that humility is an essential virtue for leaders, like the cardinal virtues of faith and love.[44] As I have shown in other passages above, bishops particularly are praised for their love, gentleness, forbearance, and lack of anger.[45] Each of these virtues is relational, within a nexus of "soft" virtues that require leaders to deal well with others. Especially important is the trait of gentleness, which is the bishop's power and the main manner in which he deals with others.[46]

**False ministry revealed by lack of virtue.** Another way Ignatius's epistles imply virtue as essential for ministry is Ignatius's arguments that false teachers are revealed by their lack of virtue. In warning the Smyrnaeans about the Docetists,[47] Ignatius writes, "Now consider those who hold heretical opinions of the grace of Jesus Christ that came to us, how opposed they are to the mind of God. They have no concern

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[42] "ἐπίσκοπον ὄντα τύπον τοῦ πατρός." Ign. *Trall.* 3.1.

[43] "προκαθημένου τοῦ ἐπισκόπου εἰς τόπον Θεοῦ καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων εἰς τόπον συνεδρίου τῶν ἀποστόλων." Ign. *Magn.* 6.1.

[44] James Carleton Paget, "The Vision of the Church in the Apostolic Fathers," in *Vision for the Church: Studies in Early Christian Ecclesiology*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Michael B. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 197.

[45] Ign. *Phld.* 1.1, 1.2, Ign. *Eph.* 1.3, 6.1, Ign. *Trall.* 3.2.

[46] Ign. *Trall.* 3.1, Ign. *Phld.* 1.2.

[47] Scholars debate on whether there were one, two, or three distinct groups of heretics, but they are all in agreement that these heretics had docetic tendencies. Einar Mollard, "The Heretics Combatted by Ignatius of Antioch," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5, no. 1 (1952): 1-6. For chapter length treatments on the number and nature of Ignatius's opponents, see Charles Thomas Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, Studies in Biblical Literature 12 (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 174-97; Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 29 (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1992) 150-194. Schoedel identifies this particular group of heretics as Docetists. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 233-37.

for love: none for the widow, none for the orphaned, none for the oppressed, none for the imprisoned or released, none for the hungry or thirsty."[48] While the praiseworthy bishops mentioned above have "minds" or "purposes" firmly rooted in God, these teachers oppose the mind of God. However, the greatest revealer of their falsehood is their lack of love, manifested in their lack of concern for the poor and needy. If their doctrine was not enough to convince the Smyrnaeans of these teachers' falsehood, their lives demonstrate it clearly. If lack of virtue reveals false pastoral leadership, it follows that virtue reveals genuine pastoral leadership.[49]

**Summary**. The evidence above shows that for Ignatius, virtue was essential to pastoral identity and even revelatory of genuine pastoral leadership. This virtue included a general "praiseworthiness"—parallel to the New Testament requirement that leaders be "blameless" and carefully watch their lives. Additionally, Ignatius also highlighted a set of relational virtues seen in apostolic literature: settled dispositions of humility, gentleness, forbearance, and restraint from anger. While the theological conception of heavenly representation and the effusive praise for various leaders is distinctive to Ignatius, both the requirements of general and particular virtue are shared with the New Testament and rest of the Apostolic Fathers. Next, I will show 1 Clem.'s parallel theological judgments about general blamelessness and relational virtue for pastoral leaders.

## First Clement

**Virtue in 1 Clement 44.** The introduction has already noted that the purpose of 1 Clem. was to rebuke the Corinthian church for allowing their rightful leaders to be

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[48] " Καταμάθετε δὲ τοὺς ἑτεροδοξοῦντας εἰς τὴν χάριν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐλθοῦσαν, πῶς ἐναντίοι εἰσὶν τῇ γνώμῃ τοῦ Θεοῦ. περὶ ἀγάπης οὐ μέλει αὐτοῖς, οὐ περὶ χήρας, οὐ περὶ ὀρφανοῦ, οὐ περὶ θλιβομένου, οὐ περὶ δεδεμένου [ἢ λελυμένου], οὐ περὶ πεινῶντος ἢ διψῶντος." Ign. *Smyrn.* 6.2.

[49] Ignatius also connects false teachers to wickedness in two other passages, Ign. *Eph*. 7.1 and Ign. *Trall.* 6.2.

deposed and to advocate for these leaders' restoration.[50] What I will show below is that

these leaders' eminent virtue was central to Clement's argument for their restoration.[51]

The arguments made, from apostolic succession to Old Testament patterns, are all

marshaled to this central point in the middle of the epistle:[52]

> These, therefore, appointed by [the apostles], or later, by other eminent men, with the approval of the whole church, and ministering blamelessly to the whole flock of Christ humbly, quietly, unselfishly—this being born witness to many times by all— these we do not consider to be justly cast off from their ministry. For it will be no small sin to us, if we cast off from the bishop's office those who have offered the gifts blamelessly and in holiness. . . . For we see that you have removed, in spite of their living well, certain people from their blameless ministry which was held in honor.[53]

Here Clement repeatedly emphasizes the deposed presbyters' virtue as their legitimacy

for church office.[54] While some have argued that Clement asserts such a high view of

pastoral authority as to rule out *any* removal of ordained leaders, in fact "what is most

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[50] For this as the central thrust of 1 Clem., see Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 34; Stuart G. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 33; Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Types of Authority in Formative Christianity and Judaism* (London: Routledge, 1999), 105; Clayton N. Jefford, *Reading the Apostolic Fathers: A Student's Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 110.

[51] As noted in the introduction, authorship of 1 Clem. is debated. I will refer to the author as Clement.

[52] For this as the central passage that finally directly states the point of the letter, see Janelle Peters, "Rahab, Esther, and Judith as Models for Church Leadership in 1 Clement," *Journal of Early Christian History* 5, no. 2 (2015): 94-110.

[53] "Τοὺς οὖν κατασταθέντας ὑπ' ἐκείνων ἢ μεταξὺ ὑφ' ἑτέρων ἐλλογίμων ἀνδρῶν συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης, καὶ λειτουργήσαντας ἀμέμπτως τῷ ποιμνίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ ταπεινοφροσύνης, ἡσύχως, καὶ ἀβαναύσως, μεμαρτυρημένους τε πολλοῖς χρόνοις ὑπὸ πάντων, τούτους οὐ δικαίως νομίζομεν ἀποβάλλεσθαι τῆς λειτουργίας. ⁴ ἁμαρτία γὰρ οὐ μικρὰ ἡμῖν ἔσται, ἐὰν τοὺς ἀμέμπτως καὶ ὁσίως προσενεγκόντας τὰ δῶρα τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς ἀποβάλωμεν. . . . ὁρῶμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐνίους ὑμεῖς μετηγάγετε καλῶς πολιτευομένους ἐκ τῆς ἀμέμπτως αὐτοῖς τετιμημένης λειτουργίας." 1 Clem. 44.3-4, 6.

[54] This feature of this passage is regularly understated in literature on 1 Clem. 44 because of many scholars focus on apostolic succession. For example, Grant says that the presbyters derived their office from succession from the apostles and that they shouldn't be deposed if they serve "in a suitable fashion," Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 74. Bart D. Ehrman likewise emphasizes succession but says that the author was "quick to add" that these presbyters had served well. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Loeb Classical Library 24 (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2003), 1:28. Rudolf Knopf's commentary does not even mention the virtue of these presbyters as important to Clement's argument. See Rudolf Knopf, *A Commentary on the Didache and 1 Clement*, ed. Jacob N. Cerone, trans. Jacob N. Cerone, Classic Studies on the Apostolic Fathers 2 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2023), Perlego.

striking in *1 Clement* 44 is the lengths to which Clement goes to insist that there was no 'legitimate reason' for deposing the presbyters, since (as he states 3 times) their conduct in office was blameless (ἀμέμπτως, 44.3, 4, 6)."[55] As Barbara Ellen Bowe points out, the publicly approved, blameless ministry of these men is communicated by the triple usage of ἀμέμπτως. This is the same word Ignatius uses of Polycarp and has a similar root as a key word in the character requirements for leaders in the Pastorals. Moreover, these leaders were *appointed* by virtuous, discerning individuals like the apostles or other "eminent" men. Even the source of these presbyters' appointment—an important consideration for Clement—is virtuous. Both the source and manner of these leaders' ministry to the flock were rooted in virtue. Additionally, they were appointed by the consent of the whole church and "for a long time have been well spoken of by all."[56] Theirs was a public virtue that the entire congregation could see and actively spoke of— once again, the kind of public blamelessness that the Pastoral Epistles and Ignatius envision as necessary for leadership.[57] Clement goes on to say that these unjustly removed presbyters have "offered the gifts blamelessly and in holiness"—likely a reference to their roles in leading Eucharistic meals—that they have been deposed "in spite of their living well" and that they had a "blameless ministry which was held in honor."[58] Each of these phrases emphasizes the obvious public regard for these leaders and their impeccable behavior. Their godly conduct was vital to their public service to God's people.[59] With all

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[55] Barbara Ellen Bowe, *A Church in Crisis: Ecclesiology and Paraenesis in Clement of Rome*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 23 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 150.

[56] For the legitimacy of this public approval as necessary for office, see Annie Jaubert, *Epître aux Corinthiens*, Sources Chrétiennes 167 (1971; repr., Paris: Cerf, 2000), 85. See also Bowe, *A Church in Crisis*, 149-50.

[57] See especially Titus 1:1-6, see also 1 Tim 3:2.

[58] 1 Clem. 44.6.

[59] Maurice Jourjon specifically argues that what is highlighted in the leader's offering the gifts blamelessly is not a ritualistic or sacerdotal notion of purity, but the purity of a godly and exemplary life: "Les presbyters de Corinthe sont saints et sans reporche no dans la manière rituelle de presenter les dons mais dans leur manière de vivre la presentation des dons." Maurice Jourjon, "Remarques sur le vocabulaire

of this, one notices how the author's call to restore these leaders is constantly attended by their virtue and thus the rightness of them holding the ministerial office. By the way Clement emphasizes the virtue of these leaders, one could easily surmise he would approve of the deposition of sinful presbyters—but to depose those who embody Christlikeness is a grave sin.

**Particular virtues.** While general terms such as "blameless" and "good conduct" are used to describe these leaders' lives, Clement also highlights the same nexus of relational virtues that Ignatius and the New Testament emphasize. According to Clement, the deposed presbyters had ministered "humbly, quietly, and unselfishly." Bowe notes the centrality of humility for Clement's parenesis to the church of Rome, arguing that it is "the cardinal virtue" for Clement and should "characterize all true ministers within Christ's flock."[60] Moreover, these leaders are said to have ministered "quietly," conveying the idea that they were effective by being peaceful and not contentious.[61] Without linguistic parallels, this renders a similar judgment as Ignatius's commendation of the silent bishop—these leaders effectively ministered in the church by quiet godly example rather than contentious talking. Finally, these presbyters ministered "unselfishly"—their ministry demonstrated their overarching concern for the flock. These relational virtues especially stand out when one notices the absence of traits like boldness, zeal, or courage—instead, a gentle, peaceful, and self-sacrificial disposition is the particular piety that revealed genuine pastoral ministry.[62]

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sacerdotal dans la Ia Clementis," in *Épektasis: mélanges patristiques offerts au cardinal Jean Daniélou*, ed. Jacques Fontaine and Charles Kannengiesser (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 109.

[60] Bowe, *A Church in Crisis*, 118, 115.

[61] BDAG glosses ἡσύχως, which I have translated "quietly," as, "to carry out responsibility without commotion." BDAG, 441.

[62] For the importance of a self-sacrificial disposition and its connection to public service for the good of all in Clement's description of ministers, see Bowe, *A Church in Crisis*, 87.

**Other soundings.** Clement describes pastoral virtue less directly in several other passages. First, in 1 Clem. 3, the Corinthians are rebuked for the fact that there was rebellion in the congregation, perpetrated by "those without honor against the honored, those of no repute against the highly reputed, the foolish against the wise, and the young against the old."[63] The phrase rendered "the old" is πρεσβύτερους, which in this context could refer to age since it is paired with "the young." However, in the overall context of the epistle's purpose and the passage's description of the rebellion this use of πρεσβύτερους almost surely denotes the leaders of the Corinthian congregation, even if rhetorically emphasizing their age.[64] With that being said, these pastoral leaders are also described as "the honored," the "highly reputed" and the "wise." Again, what stands out is not that the Corinthians deposed leaders who were appointed to an ecclesiastical office, but that they deposed *virtuous* leaders from this office. A second instance of pastoral virtue in 1 Clem. occurs immediately after 44.1-6. On the heels of the previously cited rebuke for deposing godly leaders, the author said that if the Corinthians would read the Scriptures, they would not find that "the righteous were ever cast off by holy men."[65] Clement went on to cite the prevalent pattern of the godly persecuted by the ungodly in the Scriptures. In context, the deposed leaders in view here who are "the righteous" and the rebellious Corinthians as the ones who are wicked and unholy. Even if this is a rhetorical device, the rhetoric focuses on the virtue of the deposed presbyters.

**Summary.** In a different epistolary context, 1 Clem. affirms the vision for pastoral virtue in the Ignatian corpus and New Testament. Pastoral leaders must be generally blameless and godly, their virtue validates their office. Like Ignatius, Clement

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[63] 1 Clem. 3.3, this is Holmes's translation.

[64] L. L. Welborn suggests that both meanings are likely because for Clement, the categories of "older man" and "presbyter" overlap. L. L. Welborn, *The Young against the Old: Generational Conflict in First Clement* (Lanham, MD: Fortress, 2018), 179.

[65] " δικαίους ἀποβεβλημένους ἀπὸ ὁσίων ἀνδρῶν." 1 Clem. 45.3.

did not go into great detail about what this general virtue was, only that it would be so apparent that the entire congregation could see and affirm it by watching their leaders' lives. What was specific were the relational virtues these leaders exhibited, such as humility, quietness, and unselfishness. Polycarp's letter to the Philippians, with clear parallels to the Pastorals, will make the same theological judgments in a compressed fashion.

## Pastoral Virtue in Polycarp's Letter
## to the Philippians

While the nature of pastoral leadership is not as central to Pol. *Phil.* as it is to Ignatius and 1 Clem., Pol. *Phil* 6.1 and 11.1-2 show that virtue was essential to pastoral identity in Polycarp's theology.[66] Pol. *Phil.* 6.1's description of the requirements of presbyters makes virtue the central qualifying characteristic for leadership and highlights particular relational virtues. Secondly, Polycarp's mourning over the fallen presbyter Valens in 11.1-2 demonstrates the necessity of virtue for ministry by way of contrast, with Valens's fall revealing his disregard of the pastoral office. Though expressed in a compressed fashion, Pol. *Phil.* is thus another postapostolic witness to both a general public blamelessness and a nexus of relational virtues as necessary for pastoral leaders.

**General virtue essential for ministry in 6.1.** After praising the Philippians, letting them know he will write to them about "righteousness," describing that righteousness in practical applications, giving qualifications for deacons, and relating specific moral instruction to young men and women,[67] Polycarp writes,

> And now the presbyters must be tenderhearted, merciful to all, turning back those who have gone astray, caring for the weak, not neglecting the widow or orphan or poor, but always seeking what is good in the sight of God and men, refraining from all anger, favoritism, unrighteous judgement, being far away from all love of

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[66] For the occasion and unity of Polycarp's epistle, see Boudewijn Dehandschutter, "The Epistle of Polycarp," in Pratscher, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 120-28.

[67] Pol. *Phil.* 3.1, 4.1-5.3.

money, not quickly believing against someone, not severe in judgment, knowing that we are all debtors in respect to sin.[68]

Many describe the parallels between this passage and the qualifications for overseers in the Pastorals, noting that while Polycarp was likely familiar with the Pastorals, there was little direct borrowing from them.[69] However one sorts out the intertextuality between these works, Polycarp makes the same theological judgements about leaders in the church, with extensive focus on the moral qualifications for pastoral leaders and a relative lack of emphasis on pastoral giftedness or calling. Indeed, the virtues to be embraced by elders and the vices to be avoided appear to be absolutely essential to the presbyters' work of shepherding the church, especially those who have gone astray.[70] Moreover, while lacking specific terminology that expresses a general godliness that previously cited authors use, Polycarp insists that presbyters must be "always seeking what is good in the sight of God and man." Polycarp's emphasis on God's sight stresses these leaders' accountability to God, but he also emphasizes the sight of man—in other words, these leaders must display godly and blameless lives before their people, and arguably, the

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[68] "Καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι δὲ εὔσπλαγχνοι, εἰς πάντας ἐλεήμονες, ἐπιστρέφοντες τὰ ἀποπεπλανημένα, ἐπισκεπτόμενοι πάντας ἀσθενεῖς, μὴ ἀμελοῦντες χήρας ἢ ὀρφανοῦ ἢ πένητος, ἀλλὰ προνοοῦντες ἀεὶ τοῦ καλοῦ ἐνώπιον Θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων, ἀπεχόμενοι πάσης ὀργῆς, προσωποληψίας, κρίσεως ἀδίκου, μακρὰν ὄντες πάσης φιλαργυρίας, μὴ ταχέως πιστεύοντες κατά τινος, μὴ ἀπότομοι ἐν κρίσει, εἰδότες ὅτι πάντες ὀφειλέται ἐσμὲν ἁμαρτίας." Pol. *Phil.* 6.1.

[69] Dehandschutter, "The Epistle of Polycarp," 124-26. L. W. Barnard argues that the nature of Polycarp's use of the New Testament indicates a shared tradition from the apostles:

> A large body of catechetical material, in oral and written forms, circulated in the early Church and was used by teachers, catechists, and writers as "pegs" on which to hang their own theological interpretations. It is not therefore to be supposed that a Christian writer is always quoting verbatim from an earlier document when similarity of subject matter occurs. It seems possible that a few of the "quotations" from the New Testament in Chs. i-xii of Polycarp's Epistle may in fact come out of a wider background of catechesis. (L. W. Barnard, *Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and Their Background* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1966], 197-98)

Taking a more direct view, Michael Holmes argues that Polycarp very likely knew of and quoted the Pastorals, if not in Poly *Phil.* 6.1. See Michael Holmes, "Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament," in *The New Testament and Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1 *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett, (Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 216.

[70] Paul Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, Oxford Apostolic Fathers 2 (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), 123-24.

watching world. While not as emphatic, this expresses the same theological judgment as the previously analyzed works—that pastoral leaders must display a general, publicly affirmed virtue.

**Particular virtues in 6.1.** The specific virtues necessary for these pastoral leaders also fall clearly into the nexus of the relational virtues in other texts. The two main adjectival descriptions of presbyters in 6.1a are "tenderhearted" and "merciful" which connote both kind feelings and merciful dealings with others.[71] Polycarp also highlights relational virtues by way of contrast in way similar to the Pastorals: presbyters must shun anger and a variety of unjust or severe dealings with others. Moreover, if one connects the focus on presbyters in 6.1 with the admonishment about forgiving in light of one's own sins in 6.2, humility appears to be specifically highlighted as well.[72] This connection seems likely given that Polycarp envisions elders as having a significant role in dealing with the troubled and straying members of the congregation; they will especially need the kind of humility that leads to consistent forgiveness for sinning members. The focus on these relational virtues has led Peter Oakes to argue that "Polycarp's main contention about Christian leadership seems to be that a Christian leader should be gentle."[73] Oakes also asserts that Polycarp himself is an example of that pastoral gentleness in the way he wrote his epistle.[74] With this emphasis on gentle relational dealings, Polycarp adds that leaders must shun the love of money, a pastoral virtue

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[71] BDAG glosses εὔσπλαγχνοια as "pertaining to have tender feelings for someone." Its particular rendering for the word in Pol 6.1 is "good hearted," BDAG, 413. L&N glosses ἐλεήμων as "to show mercy," citing the tangible uses in Heb 8:12 and Matt 5:7. This appears to be a better rendering than BDAG's more feeling-centered gloss "being concerned about people in their need." See L&N, 88.77; BDAG, 316.

[72] For the connection between 6.1 and 6.2, see Robert Ray Noll, *Christian Ministerial Priesthood: A Search for Its Beginnings in the Primary Documents of the Apostolic Fathers* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars, 1993), 148-49.

[73] Peter Oakes, "Leadership and Suffering in the Letters of Polycarp and Paul to the Philippians," in Gregory and Tuckett, *Trajectories through the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers*, 2:362.

[74] Oakes, "Leadership and Suffering," 362.

emphasized elsewhere in early Christian literature and one particularly important in Pol. *Phil*. 11, the last passage of Pol. *Phil*. I will examine.

**The fall of Valens and pastoral virtue.** Polycarp displays his pastoral gentleness and insistence that leaders do not love money in his grief over Valens.[75] Even though Polycarp arguably exercises restraint by regarding Valens as strayed brother,[76] his description of Valens's fall sharply connects virtue to genuine ministry:

> I am deeply grieved for Valens, who once was a presbyter among you, because he so fails to understand the office that was entrusted to him. I warn you, therefore: avoid love of money and be pure and truthful. Avoid every kind of evil. But how can someone who is unable to exercise self-control in these matters preach self-control to anyone else?[77]

That Valens's fall was a moral one[78] can be shown by the following: (1) admonitions to self-control precede and follow Polycarp's grief over Valens,[79] and (2) Polycarp warns the people to avoid the love of money and to "be pure and truthful" as if Valens was the example of the destructiveness of the love of money and impurity.[80] Polycarp argues that Valens's moral fall was a failure to understand the office of presbyter or an outright disregard of it.[81] However one renders this Latin portion of Pol. *Phil*. 11.1—"*quod sic*

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[75] Oakes, "Leadership and Suffering," 362.

[76] Pol. *Phil*. 11.4.

[77] Pol. *Phil*. 11.1-2. This is Holmes's translation of the Latin portion of Pol. *Phil*. 11. The original Greek of this portion is lost, see Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers,* 277.

[78] Some commentators have taken Valens' fall as a lapse into heresy, but the overriding moral concern of the letter and the dearth of evidence that Valens had heretical theology make this interpretation unlikely. See Harry O. Maier, "Purity and Danger in Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians: The Sin of Valens in Social Perspective." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1993): 230-36.

[79] Pol. *Phil*. 10.3.

[80] Pol. *Phil*. 11.3-11.

[81] Pol. *Phil.*, 11.1. Holmes renders this passage "so fails to understand the office that was entrusted to him." Hartog, with a stronger rendering, translates this passage, "I am exceedingly grieved for Valens, who at one time was made an elder among you, that he should so disregard the position that was given him." Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 91. Hartog's translation first implies that Valens was no true elder (he "was made" an elder rather than "he was" an elder), and implies that his fall was a blatant flouting of the elder's office rather than a failure to understand it.

*ignoret is locum qui datus est ei*"—here Polycarp explicitly identifies Valens's moral failing as a fundamental break from the pastoral office. Doing so indicates that virtue was essential to pastoral leadership.

The rhetorical question at the end of Pol. *Phil*. 11.2 demonstrates virtue's practical necessity for pastoral leadership, with a striking parallelism to 1 Timothy 3:5 ("if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?"). Some scholars have argued either for direct literary dependence and/or conceptual agreement between Polycarp's rhetorical question and 1 Timothy 3:5 because of the use of a rhetorical question and the pastoral logic underlying it.[82] Whatever the texts' exact relationship, Polycarp insists that one cannot minister to others if one does not possess virtue and that pastoral leaders must possess the virtues they preach. This is such a strong conviction of Polycarp's that it is articulated as self-evident. Pastoral leaders who preach the virtue essential to the Christian life must themselves embody it.

**Summary.** Polycarp's vision for pastoral virtue makes the same theological judgments as Ignatius, Clement, and the New Testament. Two features of Pol. *Phil*. particularly accord with this vision: first, general virtue for pastoral leaders is essential and is described as publicly noticeable. Second, the virtues required of leaders are especially relational in focus, with humility and gentle dealings with others once again specified. Polycarp adds a distinctive element to the Apostolic Fathers' vision for pastoral virtue by articulating its practical necessity along the lines of the Pastoral Epistles—one cannot preach virtue truly unless one possesses it. With its own distinctions, the Didache will also affirm the general and particular virtues required of pastoral leaders.

**Pastoral Virtue in The Didache**

Scholars agree that the Didache addresses a variety of issues in a transitional

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[82] See William R. Schoedel, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. Robert M. Grant (1967; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 5:32; Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 142.

period in Christian leadership, where congregations were ministered to by both travelling prophets and resident bishops and deacons.[83]  Whatever the particular circumstances underlying the work, the Didache insists upon virtue for both of these kinds of pastoral leaders. Extended instructions on identifying false from true prophets focus on the prophet's character, especially their responses to the congregation's hospitality. Additionally, a command to appoint worthy leaders in the congregation expresses the same theological judgment that the rest of apostolic and postapostolic literature does about a public, general blamelessness for appointed leaders.

**Virtue for itinerant leaders.** A variety of debated issues surround chapters 11-15, the key section for the Didache's pastoral theology.[84] In the midst of these uncertainties, a clear vision for pastoral virtue emerges, especially that virtue revealed genuine ministry. First, an apostle or prophet who came to the congregation is to be welcomed as if he was the Lord.[85] But if he tried to stay for three days, called for a meal and ate of it himself, or asked for money upon his departure, he should be judged a false prophet.[86] This indicates a situation where travelling ministers needed the hospitality of congregations to continue their work, but this hospitality would often have to be offered without a congregation's personal knowledge of the minister—a situation prone to

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[83] Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 336; Joel C. Elowsky, "The Ministry in the Early Church," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2012): 297, 460-62; Jonathan A. Draper "The Apostolic Fathers: The Didache," *Expository Times* 117, no. 5 (2006): 177; Michael Kruger, *Christianity at the Crossroads: How the Second Century Shaped the Future of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018), 77-78; Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 168.

[84] First is the evidence of modification of the Didache over time, especially in this section, see Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 336. A second issue is the difficulty parsing out the differences between the "apostles" and "prophets" in this text. See Jonathan Draper, "Apostles, Evangelists and Teachers: Stability of Movement of Functionaries in Matthew, James and the Didache," in *Matthew, James, and the Didache*, ed. Jurgen K Sandberg, Hubertus Waltherus, and Maria van de Sandt (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 156-62.

[85] Did. 11.4.

[86] Did. 11.5, 6, 9. See Shawn J. Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 85.

abuse.[87] Significantly, it was the prophet or apostle's virtuous actions, particularly his unwillingness to take advantage of a congregation's hospitality, that verified him as a true pastoral leader.[88] While emphasizing virtue as revelatory, these tests also highlighted the particular virtue of a right relationship to money, seen in the New Testament and Pol. *Phil*. Moreover, even though congregations were forbidden from evaluating a prophet's words,[89] the Didachist provides a way to evaluate their genuineness: "Now not everyone who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet, but only if he has the Lord's way of life. Therefore, from their way of life you will recognize the false prophet and the prophet."[90] While stated in a way more in concord with Gospel traditions, the Didache makes the same judgment as other Apostolic Fathers that virtue was not just important for pastoral leaders, it was revelatory of genuine pastoral leaders. As Wilhite avers, "The ethics and conduct of the prophet validate whether or not they are a true prophet . . . ethics and virtue determine the validity of one's instruction."[91] While many may "speak in the Spirit"—a phrase that indicates speaking or teaching the congregation with spiritual authority—doing that sort of genuine prophetic function was not what validated pastoral leadership. It was the virtuous conduct of the prophet that revealed genuine pastoral leadership.

**Virtue for residential leaders.** Residential leaders also needed to exhibit virtue. While the Didachist's community maintained obvious differences between the

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[87] Draper, "Apostles, Evangelists and Teachers," 156.

[88] Andre de Halleux, "Ministers in the Didache," in *The Didache in Modern Research*, ed. Jonathan A. Draper, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 37 (Leiden: Brill) 1996.

[89] Wagner argues that speech cannot be tested because it was viewed as God speaking through the prophet. Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 279. Thus, the prophet's life was the test of his trueness or falseness.

[90] "οὐ πᾶς δὲ ὁ λαλῶν ἐν πνεύματι προφήτης ἐστίν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐὰν ἔχῃ τοὺς τρόπους Κυρίου. Ἀπὸ οὖν τῶν τρόπων γνωσθήσεται ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης καὶ ὁ προφήτης." Did. 11.8.

[91] Wilhite, *The Didache*, 201-2.

itinerant and residential leaders, the author explicitly says they share the same ministry.

One thing they must share is virtue of a similar kind.[92] Francis A. Sullivan argues that in

the Didache "the virtues of the men . . . chosen by the community are like those that

distinguish genuine prophets" because these men will share in the prophet's ministry.[93] The

Didachist encourages Christian congregations to "choose for yourselves bishops and

deacons worthy of the Lord, men gentle and not covetous and true and tested, for they also

minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers."[94] These residential leaders

must be "worthy" of the Lord, one of Ignatius's favorite words for pastoral virtue.[95] They

must show their worthiness through particular virtues—relational gentleness, a right

relationship with money, being shown publicly "true and tested"—all theological

judgments parallel to the rest of the Apostolic Fathers' vision for pastoral virtue.[96] These

phrases not only render similar theological judgments to the New Testament, they have

significant linguistic connections to New Testament terminology for pastoral virtue.[97]

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[92] Halleux goes as far as to argue that there is a parity between the itinerant and residential leaders in the Didache based on the fact that the virtues requisite for them are the same. Halleux, "Ministers in the Didache," 313-14.

[93] Francis A. Sullivan, *Apostles to Bishops: The Development of Episcopacy in the Early Church* (Pine Beach, NJ: Newman, 2001), 90.

[94] "Χειροτονήσατε οὖν ἑαυτοῖς ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους ἀξίους τοῦ Κυρίου, ἄνδρας πραεῖς καὶ ἀφιλαργύρους καὶ ἀληθεῖς καὶ δεδοκιμασμένους, ὑμῖν γὰρ λειτουργοῦσι καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν λειτουργίαν τῶν προφητῶν καὶ διδασκάλων." Did. 15.1.

[95] For evidence that Ignatius may have known of the Didache, see Clayton N. Jefford, "Did Ignatius of Antioch Know the Didache?," in *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Texts, History, and Transmission*, Supplements to Novum Testamentus 77 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 349-51.

[96] Aaron Milavec goes as far as to suggest a "common tradition" between the Didache and various New Testament texts concerning the pastoral requirement of gentleness, a right relationship to money, and to being tested. Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope & Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C.E.* (New York: Newman, 2003), 588-89. Regarding the lexical ranges of the particular words translated here: BDAG glosses πραεῖς as "pertaining to not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance, gentle, humble, considerate, meek." BDAG, 861. L&N 25.109 straightforwardly renders ἀφιλαργύρους as not loving or being greedy for money; δεδοκιμασθμένους is a participle of δοκιμάζω, a word commonly used in the NT to describe something proven by testing. BDAG, 255.

[97] Wilhite notes a variety of conceptual and linguistic parallels between these virtues and other documents, both in the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers. Wilhite, *The Didache*, 84. In brief, several

**Summary.** Even with the Didache's distinct ministerial context, this brief analysis has shown its unity with other early Christian writings in its insistence on general pastoral virtue and particular pastoral virtues. The author did not see the need to specify what exactly general virtue consisted of, using instead the term "worthy," with a particular lexical correspondence to Ignatius. However, gentleness and a right relationship with money were specified as necessary for all pastoral leaders, in accord with other postapostolic writings. The Shepherd of Hermas, the only other Apostolic Father besides the Didache to give extended reflection to testing prophets, will also insist on general virtue and particular virtues for all pastoral leaders.

**The Shepherd of Hermas**

The Shepherd of Hermas articulates its vision for ministerial virtue primarily through visions of different kinds of pastoral leaders and rebukes towards unvirtuous leaders. This accords with the approach of Herm. in its theological vision and moral exhortations, where it "gives us a double vision, always maintaining the tension between the divine and the mundane, the cosmic and pedestrian, the pure and the tarnished."[98] In other words, Herm. places the church in its present imperfections side-by-side with the ideal church revealed in visions in order to articulate how Christians and their leaders should live in the present world.[99] While its genre is distinct from other postapostolic

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particular soundings stand out: Πραεῖς is used to speak of Christ in Matt 11:29 and to describe virtue in 1 Pet 3:4; ἀφιλαργύρους is one of the requirements for elders in 1 Tim 3:3; δοκιμάζω is used to describe the testing of potential deacons before ordination in 1 Tim 3:10. Another connection to New Testament pastoral thought is noted by Halleux. He argues that theological judgments and ideas of Did. 11.7-10 indicate that "The Didachist knew the saying that the tree is judged by its fruit (cf. Mt. 7:15-16)." Halleux, "Ministers in the Didache," 308.

[98] Edith McEwan Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas*, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 17 (London, T & T Clark, 1995), 146.

[99] Carolyn Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 36. Agreeing with this general framework for Hermas and calling it "real and surreal ecclesiology," Michael J. Svigel and Caroline P. Buie more specifically argue that "the main parenetic purpose of the *Shepherd of Hermas* is living a life of repentance in light of the coming parousia." Michael J.

texts, the work makes the same judgement about the necessity and nature of pastoral virtue. Additionally, while this work is the only document that contains a rebuke to unvirtuous ministers, the issues addressed in the rebuke further confirm that Herm. shares rest of the Apostolic Fathers' judgments about pastoral virtue.

**Pastoral virtue in the tower vision.** Visions of virtuous ministers emphasize the necessity of general virtue and particular relational virtues. Herm. 10.4-6 presents a tower being built by young men on the waters out of "bright square stones," which were shaped perfectly for building the tower: "For they had fit, they agreed at the joints with the other stones."[100] The tower is a vision of the church being built up; the text later identifies different kinds of stones as different kinds of believers and those who have fallen away or are compromised in their faith. Pastoral leaders were said to be the following kind of stones:

> Thus the square and white stones which agree at their joints, these are the apostles and overseers and teachers and servants who lived according to the reverence of God and who oversaw and taught and served the elect of God purely and reverently . . . and they always agreed with one another and had peace among themselves and heard one another. Because of this their joints agree in the building of the tower.[101]

The stones that were square and white were the foundation of the tower, seeming to echo Ephesians 2:20 and portraying the ideals of Christian virtue.[102] Additionally, similar to

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Svigel and Caroline P. Buie, *The Shepherd of Hermas: A New Translation and Commentary*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary 4 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023), 51.

[100] "ἡρμοσμένοι γὰρ ἦσαν καὶ συνεφώνουν τῇ ἁρμογῇ μετὰ τῶν ἑτέρων λίθων." Herm. 10.4, 10.6. I have translated "συνεφώνουν" woodenly as "agreed with" rather than "adapted" or "fit" because of its use in 13.1 to speak of pastoral leaders "agreeing with" one another.

[101] "οἱ μὲν οὖν λίθοι οἱ τετράγωνοι καὶ λευκοὶ καὶ συμφωνοῦντες ταῖς ἁρμογαῖς αὐτῶν, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διδάσκαλοι καὶ διάκονοι οἱ πορευθέντες κατὰ τὴν σεμνότητα τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἐπισκοπήσαντες καὶ διδάξαντες καὶ διακονήσαντες ἁγνῶς καὶ σεμνῶς τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς τοῦ Θεοῦ, οἱ μὲν κεκοιμημένοι . . . καὶ πάντοτε ἑαυτοῖς συμφωνήσαντες καὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς εἰρήνην ἔσχαν καὶ ἀλλήλων ἤκουον· διὰ τοῦτο ἐν τῇ οἰκοδομῇ τοῦ πύργου συμφωνοῦσιν αἱ ἁρμογαὶ αὐτῶν." Herm. 13.1.

[102] Svigel and Buie, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 112-13. Svigel and Buie do not argue exactly what I have argued here, but they argue that the vision of the tower was meant to portray to readers different kinds of sins and levels of righteousness. It seems to follow that the foundational and most fitting stones represent the height of Christian virtue.

Did. 15.1, there appears to be a basic unity within the distinctions of these various offices: whatever their distinctive work, they all minister to the elect of God. I have intentionally translated ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διδάσκαλοι καὶ διάκονοι as "overseers and teachers and servants" because of the parallelism with the verbs that describe their righteous ministry towards God's people: ἐπισκοπήσαντες καὶ διδάξαντες καὶ διακονήσαντες. The main point is that these pastoral leaders fulfilled their particular roles in a blameless, eminently holy way. In addition to their ministries, the virtue of these leaders united them: they walked according to the "reverence of God" and they ministered "purely and reverently." These words point to the same general pastoral blamelessness found in previously analyzed texts. Σεμνῶς, rendered "reverence" by Holmes, has connotations of "honorably, worthily, in a manner above reproach."[103] Σεμνότητα similarly gives the idea of "behavior which is befitting, implying a measure of dignity leading to respect," being intensified by being modified by θεοῦ.[104] Both of these phrases denote a general worthiness of life and public honor, paralleling the "worthy" leaders in the Did. and Ignatius, the "blameless" ones in 1 Clem., and the "honorable" ones in Pol. *Phil*. Additionally, while these leaders' humble and gentle dispositions towards their congregations are not highlighted as they are in other works of the Apostolic Fathers, their peace-loving, agreeing dispositions towards one another are central to this vision: the reason they make a solid foundation for the tower is because of their unity. As Osiek says, their particular virtue is a "group harmony;" their relational virtue is why they fit together so seamlessly.[105] Thus the general blamelessness and relational virtue highlighted in other works of the Apostolic Fathers is central to pastoral leadership in Herm., with the distinction that these relational virtues were displayed primarily in humble and gentle dealings between leaders.

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[103] Daniel B. Wallace, ed., *A Reader's Lexicon of the Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 155.

[104] L&N, 88.46.

[105] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 71.

**Virtuous leaders in other visions**. Two more visions in Herm. parallel and confirm this picture of pastoral virtue. The eighth and tenth mountains in Herm. 78.8-9 are respectively described as "full of springs, and every offspring of the Lord's creation drank from the springs of that mountain" and as having "great trees, and it was all shady, and under the shelter sheep laid down resting and eating."[106] In Herm. 102 the vision concerning the eighth mountain is explained as follows: the mountain was "apostles and teachers who preached to the whole world and taught reverently and purely the word of the Lord, and not one ever stole for evil lust, but always walked in righteousness and truth."[107] Several lexical and conceptual parallels exist between this passage and 13.1.[108] The tenth mountain is later described as "bishops and hospitable people, who gladly into their own homes always received the servants of God without hypocrisy. And the bishops were always sheltering those who had need and the widows by their ministry, and always conducted themselves purely."[109] Several facets of these visions display Herm.'s vision for pastoral leaders: first, virtuous leaders were described as beautiful in the Lord's sight and as helpful for God's people by their virtue. Their pure and blameless ministries—the apostles' and teachers' right handling of God's Word and the bishops' hospitality and care for the needy—are described as lush, beautiful, fruitful, and sheltering mountains. Their virtue was necessary to give shelter to God's sheep and to give life to the world. Like other exemplary postapostolic pastoral leaders, these figures were publicly

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[106] "πηγῶν πλήρες ἦν, καὶ πᾶν γένος τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Κυρίου ἐποτίζοντο ἐκ τῶν πηγῶν τοῦ ὄρους ἐκείνου" and "δένδρα μέγιστα, καὶ ὅλον κατάσκιον ἦν, καὶ ὑπὸ τὴν σκέπην πρόβατα κατέκειντο ἀναπαυόμενα καὶ μαρυκώμενα." Herm. 78.8-9.

[107] "ἀπόστολοι καὶ διδάσκαλοι οἱ κηρύξαντες εἰς ὅλον τὸν κόσμον καὶ οἱ διδάξαντες σεμνῶς καὶ ἁγνῶς τὸν λόγον τοῦ Κυρίου, καὶ μηδὲν ὅλως νοσφισάμενοι εἰς ἐπιθυμίαν πονηράν, ἀλλὰ πάντοτε ἐν δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἀληθείᾳ πορευθέντες." Herm. 102.2.

[108] The phrases "walked" and "reverently and purely" are directly equivalent to those found in 13.1.

[109] "ἐπίσκοποι καὶ φιλόξενοι, οἵτινες ἡδέως εἰς τοὺς οἴκους ἑαυτῶν πάντοτε ὑπεδέξαντο τοὺς δούλους τοῦ Θεοῦ ἄτερ ὑποκρίσεως· οἱ δὲ ἐπίσκοποι πάντοτε τοὺς ὑστερημένους καὶ τὰς χήρας τῇ διακονίᾳ ἑαυτῶν ἀδιαλείπτως ἐσκέπασαν καὶ ἁγνῶς ἀνεστράφησαν πάντοτε." Herm. 104.2.

blameless and honorable, they avoided the love and misuse of money, and they compassionately cared for the least of their people.

**Rebuke for unvirtuous leaders.** Herm. does not just articulate a positive vision for ministerial virtue, it also rebukes unvirtuous leaders, both directly and through one of its visions. Herm. 17.7-10 contains the only ministerial rebuke in the Apostolic Fathers, one very sharp in tone:

> Now thus I say to you who lead the church and who sit in the first seats: do not be like the sorcerers. While the sorcerers bear their potions in bottles, you [bear] your potion and poison in the heart. You are hardened and do not want to cleanse your hearts and mix your wisdom in your own clean heart, that you may have mercy from the great King. Therefore take heed, children, lest your divisions deprive you of your lives. How do you want to instruct the elect of the Lord, when you yourselves have no instruction? Therefore instruct one another and have peace amongst yourselves.[110]

This complex rebuke has relational sin, division, and wicked heart postures in view.[111] Osiek argues that "the perennial problem raised here is that of the discipline and ongoing 'formation' (παιδεία) of church leaders, in the double sense of their own attention to living virtuously and the process of calling them to correction."[112] Put another way, this rebuke assumes that leaders must live virtuously as a part of their leadership and intends to help them to do so. Osiek also connects the sorcery metaphor to the fact that these leaders have a "magic concoction" within themselves: some righteousness and ministerial

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[110] "νῦν οὖν ὑμῖν λέγω τοῖς προηγουμένοις τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τοῖς πρωτοκαθεδρίταις· μὴ γίνεσθε ὅμοιοι τοῖς φαρμακοῖς. οἱ φαρμακοὶ μὲν οὖν τὰ φάρμακα ἑαυτῶν εἰς τὰς πυξίδας βαστάζουσιν, ὑμεῖς δὲ τὸ φάρμακον ὑμῶν καὶ τὸν ἰὸν εἰς τὴν καρδίαν. ἐνεσκιρωμένοι ἐστὲ καὶ οὐ θέλετε καθαρίσαι τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ συγκεράσαι ὑμῶν τὴν φρόνησιν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἐν καθαρᾷ καρδίᾳ, ἵνα σχῆτε ἔλεος παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως τοῦ μεγάλου. βλέπετε οὖν, τέκνα, μήποτε αὗται αἱ διχοστασίαι ὑμῶν ἀποστερήσουσιν τὴν ζωὴν ὑμῶν. **10** πῶς ὑμεῖς παιδεύειν θέλετε τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς Κυρίου, αὐτοὶ μὴ ἔχοντες παιδείαν; παιδεύετε οὖν ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰρηνεύετε ἐν αὐτοῖς." Herm. 17.7-10.

[111] The particular sins of these leaders are not universally agreed on. Svigel and Buie connect this passage to the immediately preceding one and argue that love of wealth, gluttony, and a failure to deal with these sins in the community is the main issue behind this rebuke. Svigel and Buie, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 126-27. This interpretation has merit, but with the larger vision of ministers living in unity and peace in Hermas' vision I believe my interpretation is more likely.

[112] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 81-82.

gifting with hardheartedness and a lack of peace among themselves.[113] This implies that conflicts and division among leaders, likely related to personal agendas and ambitions, were the situation behind this rebuke. Burtchaell goes as far as to say that this passage and others in Herm. "express contempt for ambitious church-men who hanker after high office. Those who contend for the first seats are fools."[114] Whether or not this particular issue is behind Herm. 17.7-10, the rebuke calls these leaders to the ideal of relational humility and peacefulness in Herm. 13.1. Finally, like Pol. *Phil*. and the Pastorals, Herm. employs a rhetorical question to expose the folly and contradiction inherent to an unvirtuous pastoral leader: how someone dare to instruct God's people while not living in their own instruction?[115] While this is the only direct rebuke of pastoral leaders in the Apostolic Fathers, the rebuke renders the theological judgments expressed in other postapostolic works.

**Visions of unvirtuous leaders.** Herm. 96.2-3 and 103.1-2 also address unvirtuous leaders by way of visions. Unveiling the meaning of the second and ninth mountains from 78.5 and 78.9, which were bare and inhospitable, Herm. 96.2 identifies the bare second mountain as "hypocrites and teachers of evil . . . not having the fruit of righteousness"[116] and the ninth mountain which was desolate with destructive beasts as "deacons who ministered badly and plundered the living of widows and orphans and profited themselves from the ministry which they received to minister."[117] The bad deacons, as wicked foils to the righteous leaders who faithfully carried out their

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[113] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 81-82.

[114] James Tunstead Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 296.

[115] Pol. *Phil.* 11.2; 1 Tim 3:5.

[116] "ὑποκριταὶ καὶ διδάσκαλοι πονηρίας . . . μὴ ἔχοντες καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης." Herm. 96.2. My translation is identical to Holmes's.

[117] "διάκονοί εἰσι κακῶς διακονήσαντες καὶ διαρπάσαντες χηρῶν καὶ ὀρφανῶν τὴν ζωὴν, καὶ ἑαυτοῖς περιποιησάμενοι ἐκ τῆς διακονίας ἧς ἔλαβον διακονῆσαι." Herm. 103.2.

appointed ministries in Herm. 13, instead profited themselves on the ministry entrusted to them, destroying those they were intended to serve. Their love for money is evidently the cause for their wicked ministry practice; once again, a right relationship with money is insisted upon for pastoral leaders, even if by way of contrast. Moreover, "the teachers of evil" are those who do not have "the fruit of righteousness"—in other words, they lacked the essential virtue necessary for teachers. Both of these groups of leaders fail in their ministry, destroying instead of blessing others because of their lack of virtue.

**True and false prophets.** Finally, like Did., Herm. gives instructions for discerning true from false prophets which focus on the prophet's character. Hermas asks how one could discern a true from false prophet, he is advised that one should "from his life prove the man who has the divine spirit."[118] As in the other Apostolic Fathers, a pastoral leader's virtue revealed the authenticity of their office. Recognizing the parallel judgments found in other works, Osiek comments that this test "places this discussion firmly in the early Christian tradition of discernment of prophecy—from the prophet's way of life."[119] Moreso, the speaker goes on to say, "First of all, the one who has the divine spirit from above is gentle and quiet and humble and stays away from all the evil and vain desires of this age, and regards himself lacking compared to other men."[120] Foremost in discerning a true prophet was their loving, gentle, and humble disposition toward others, one of the main theological judgments about pastoral virtue espoused elsewhere.[121] Moreover, the lexical parallels to other apostolic and postapostolic documents are remarkable, with identical or nearly identical words describing virtuous

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[118] "ἀπὸ τῆς ζωῆς δοκίμαζε τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν ἔχοντα τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ θεῖον." Herm. 43.8.

[119] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 143-44. Osiek specifically connects this passage to Did. 11, Matt 7:15-23, and 1 John 1:4-3.

[120] "πρῶτον μὲν ὁ ἔχων τὸ πνεῦμα [τὸ θεῖον] τὸ ἄνωθεν πραΰς ἐστι καὶ ἡσύχιος καὶ ταπεινόφρων καὶ ἀπεχόμενος ἀπὸ πάσης πονηρίας καὶ ἐπιθυμίας ματαίας τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἐνδεέστερον ποιεῖ πάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων." Herm. 43.8.

[121] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 144.

pastoral leaders occurring in 1 Clement, Ignatius, and the Didache.[122] Additionally, a

false prophet, among other things, could be known by his arrogance, self-exaltation, love

of luxury, and prophesying for money.[123] Like in the Didache and Ignatius, a lack of

virtue—especially a lack of humility or self-control about money—reveals a false

ministry. After these descriptions, to further emphasize these points, the speaker once

again emphasizes that it is a prophet's *life* that must be tested.[124] One's life would reveal

one's true holding of pastoral leadership.

      **Summary.** In its distinct literary form, Herm. communicates the absolutely

essential nature of virtue for all who would lead the church. Virtuous ministers, having

relational traits that lead to unity, appear as the foundation of the ideal church. With a

different tone, both the rebuke to unvirtuous leaders and the tests for true prophets reveal

similar convictions about pastoral leadership: virtue reveals genuine pastoral leaders, and

these leaders must particularly excel in relational virtues that display humility and love to

others. These theological judgements, and often the lexical constructions that convey

them, match the rest of the Apostolic Fathers.

## Summary and Conclusion

      With many distinctions between the occasions and communities represented by

the Apostolic Fathers, analysis shows a remarkably shared conviction that manifest,

publicly recognized, and consistent virtue is inherent to pastoral leadership. Unvirtuous

pastoral leaders were either unthinkable (such as in Ignatius and 1 Clem.) or explicitly

called false leaders (as in Pol. *Phil*., Did., and Herm.). Additional agreement exists on the

nature of pastoral virtue. Each text makes a theological judgement that a general and

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[122] 1 Clem. 44:3 describes leaders as "ταπεινοφροσύνης, ἡσύχως" compared to Herm. 43.8
"ἡσύχιος καὶ ταπεινόφρων." Did. uses "πραεῖς" to describe bishops, compared to Herm. 43.8 "πραΰς;" Ign.
*Pol*. 2.1 commands Polycarp to minister to the troublesome "εν πραυτητι."

[123] Herm. 43.12.

[124] Herm. 43.16.

publicly recognized godliness is the central ministerial virtue, though this "worthiness" or "blamelessness" is not spelled out by individual authors. Moreover, relational virtues—humility, gentleness, and other virtues expressed in loving dispositions towards—are regularly highlighted, often using similar or identical words. Finally, three out of the five texts (Pol. *Phil.*, Did., and Herm.) emphasized that pastoral virtue included a right relationship to money. All of the above accords with the evidence examined in the New Testament about pastoral virtue. This evidence strongly indicates a shared pastoral theology concerning pastoral virtue in the apostolic and postapostolic period.

CHAPTER 5

"AS THOUGH HE WAS THE LORD": PASTORAL
AUTHORITY IN THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

The last chapter dealt with the relatively unexamined theme of pastoral virtue in the Apostolic Fathers. In contrast, this chapter will cover pastoral authority, the most contested issue in these documents. Pastoral authority in the Apostolic Fathers is such a crowded field that an entire book has been written summarizing scholarship on a specific aspect of pastoral authority in 1 Clem. alone.[1] While the literature is vast, the questions asked about pastoral authority in the Apostolic Fathers are usually narrowly related to the development of authoritative ministry structures. In other words, scholars are usually explaining how the later hierarchy of the church came to be or engaging in debates on the validity of episcopacy based on the historical witness of these documents, often coming to confessionally constrained answers. This chapter will ask a different question: what is the Apostolic Fathers' theological vision for the authority of pastoral leaders in their congregations? In answering this question, I will demonstrate a positive and shared view of authority in the Apostolic Fathers, especially along the following four theological judgments already shown in the New Testament: (1) pastoral authority is tethered to pastoral virtue, (2) obedience to pastoral leaders is required, (3) pastoral authority is related to God's authority, and (4) pastoral authority entails practical implications.[2]

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[1] John Fullenbach, *Ecclesiastical Office and the Primacy of Rome: An Evaluation of Recent Theological Discussion of First Clement*, Studies in Christian Antiquity 20 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1980). Fullenbach's work largely summarizes German scholarship on the issue of apostolic succession and the primacy of Rome in 1 Clement.

[2] Some scholars deny that the elders were an office and instead argue, based on sociological reconstructions of late Judaism and Greco-Roman culture, that "the elders" were originally only the most prominent, older members of the community. See R. A. Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 246.

**Scholarship on Pastoral Authority**
**in the Apostolic Fathers**

In describing religious historiography, John Acton argued that "if there is any presumption it is . . . against holders of power, increasing as power increases. . . . Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. . . . There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it."[3] Such a negative view of authority colors much scholarship on the rise and nature of spiritual authority in earliest Christianity, especially the kind of authority articulated in the Apostolic Fathers. Scholars often appear to feel the need to explain the kind of authority depicted in the Apostolic Fathers as either a departure from earliest Christianity, indicating tension and competition between different office holders, or in light of sociological views of early Christian churches as households. These frameworks have largely been summarized and engaged with in chapter 2, I will note here the particular way spiritual authority been approached in these veins of scholarship.

Within the first consensus approach that argues for significant development and diversity in early Christianity, a strong vision for authority in the Apostolic Fathers is affirmed but viewed as a departure from earliest Christianity.[4] With the presumption of non-Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, these scholars tend to argue that the Pastorals and Apostolic Fathers together represent an institutionalization of what used to a be a more free and charismatic Christianity without official authoritative leaders.[5] As the most explicit and early witness to episcopal authority, Ignatius has been subjected to

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[3] John Acton, "Acton-Creighton Correspondence," 1887, Online Library of Liberty, accessed January 24, 2024, https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/2254/Acton_PowerCorrupts1524_EBk_v6.0.pdf.

[4] See chap. 2, "The First Consensus."

[5] There are variations on this scheme, particularly from scholars who feel compelled to affirm Pauline authorship of the Pastorals because of ecclesiological commitments. For example, Kevin Giles distinguishes between the "early" Paul (1 Thess; 1 and 2 Cor; Rom), the "Middle Paulines" (Eph; Col) "the Later Paulines" (the Pastorals), and argues for an institutionalization and constraining of freedom within Paul's own theology over time. This idea of development in Paul's thought appears to be a tacit denial of unity in his theology of ministry. Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry among the First Christians*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 51.

claim that he was an innovator or even neurotic.[6] This stream of scholarship makes *structural spiritual authority* the driving factor behind the study of this subject, often straining the evidence to explain how it developed so quickly.

A nuanced narrative within the first consensus argues for diversity and competing visions for pastoral authority within the Apostolic Fathers themselves. Ignatius, 1 Clement, and the Didache are sometimes pitted against each other as representing competing visions for ministerial authority, either the πρεσβύτερος against the ἐπίσκοπος or the institutional offices versus charismatic.[7] James Tunstead Burtchaell represents many scholars when he argues that early Christian communities were "divided by the pull of competing charisms."[8] More generally, an attitude persists that puts conflict between ministerial offices behind instructions regarding ministerial offices.[9] Some assume that any time the Apostolic Fathers assert pastoral authority their communities are having conflict about pastoral authority, with the result that not even individual communities in early Christianity had a shared view of pastoral authority.[10] Like other historical reconstructions, these assertions read behind the texts and are not verifiable. While there may or may not have been broad conflict over pastoral authority in

[6] Specifically, Burnett Hillman Streeter suggests that Ignatius had an "unconscious egoism" and a "mind unstrung" because of his views on episcopacy. Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Primitive Church: Studied with Special Reference to the Origin of Christian Ministry* (London: Macmillan, 1929), 163. I noted in the introduction that Ignatius's assertions about the episcopacy have driven doubts about the authenticity of his letters.

[7] For example, Campbell notes that Ignatius and Clement argue for *opposite* visions of spiritual authority, with 1 Clement arguing for the authority of the elders over someone who has claimed the episcopate for himself and Ignatius arguing for the authority of the bishop over the elders. Campbell, *The Elders*, 213-18.

[8] James Tunstead Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 304.

[9] Allen Brent's reading of early Christian disunity regarding leadership is particularly pronounced. He posits different solutions from Matthew, Petrine Christianity, and the Didache, with Ignatius's monarchial episcopate being a final solution to deal with the disunity and impasse about leadership. See Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy*, T & T Clark Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 27-28.

[10] Christine Trevett, "Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity: A Third Error Combatted by Ignatius?," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34, no. 1 (1983): 1-18.

postapostolic Christianity, I will show below that the Apostolic Fathers articulate a positive, rather than merely reactive, vision for spiritual authority.

A final major way pastoral authority is viewed in these documents is through sociological and cultural lenses. Significant to this stream of scholarship is the assumption that the house church was the nearly exclusive form of Christian gathering.[11] From this presupposition, social and household dynamics are made determinative for the nature of Christian leadership and pastoral authority. Wealthy patrons—the only ones who could own homes large enough to host these gatherings—are assumed to be the pastoral leaders written about, with the result their spiritual authority is mostly a result of socioeconomic dynamics and the Greco-Roman conception of the *paterfamilias*.[12] Not only do scholars admit that this has little textual evidence, it also goes against explicit evidence a bit later in the second century.[13] This is not to say that sociological and cultural analysis have no value in understanding leadership and authority dynamics in early Christianity; however, this kind of analysis has, without good reason, supplanted exegesis of texts and theology in its accounts of early Christian leadership.

Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner's *Types of Authority in Formative Judaism and Christianity* approaches authority in early Christianity in a distinct way. Chilton and Neusner affirm many of the above conclusions, particularly the tensions between offices

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[11] Giles lists this as one of his presuppositions, citing virtually universal agreement. Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 3. This is not the case, however, and Christian organization in the first century is a complex matter. See James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 78.

[12] Most prominently, this is the perspective of Harry O'Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1991); Alistair Sewart-Sykes, *The Original Bishops: Office and Order in the First Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014); Paul Bradshaw, *Rites of Ordination: Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2013).

[13] Tertullian says, "The tried men of our elders preside over us, obtaining that honor not by purchase, but by established character." Tertullian of Carthage, *The Apology* 39. This appears to clearly distinguish office holders from wealth holders.

and the "shocking" development of episcopacy evidenced in Ignatius.[14] However, they posit that early Christians "undertook to frame in concrete and immediate terms the theory of the holy community . . . God in Christ embodied the authority that defined . . . the Body of Christ."[15] Thus, the issue of spiritual authority "contains within itself the dynamics, the inner workings of the imaginative life of Christianity."[16] Early Christians envisioned themselves as the unique community under the authority of God; descriptions of spiritual authority were thus primarily applications of God's authority over his distinct community. Therefore, assertions of spiritual authority in the church "translate a theory of God's presence in the social order into a concrete doctrine of everyday authority."[17] In other words, early Christian articulations of pastoral authority were primarily theological in nature—they were the doctrines of God's authority over his people applied in concrete ways.

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**Authority in the Apostolic Fathers Approached
Theologically and Textually**

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While disagreeing with Chilton and Neusner in many points, their claim that early Christians conceived of practical spiritual authority as an extension of God's authority serves as a helpful starting place for my analysis. In other words, I will approach early Christian conceptions of spiritual authority as if they are more theologically than socially determined, and I will be more concerned with how spiritual authority in local contexts was articulated rather than how its structures developed. What I will show below is that, from a theological perspective, the Apostolic Fathers share a unified vision for pastoral authority along four themes: (1) pastoral authority is tethered to pastoral virtue,

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[14] Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Types of Authority in Formative Christianity and Judaism* (London: Routledge, 1999), 38, 56-57, 118.

[15] Chilton and Neusner, *Types of Authority*, 1.

[16] Chilton and Neusner, *Types of Authority*, 1.

[17] Chilton and Neusner, *Types of Authority*, 2.

(2) submission to pastoral leaders is required, (3) pastoral authority is related to God's authority, and finally, (4) pastoral authority has concrete implications in the life of the church. As I have shown in chapter 3, each of these judgments about pastoral authority are present in the New Testament. Not only are each of these judgments made in the Apostolic Fathers, some of them are made using the same images that New Testament authors employed. This strongly suggests that these authors carried forward and preserved the New Testament's vision for pastoral authority, even given developments in ministerial structures in this period.

**Pastoral Authority in Ignatius**

Pastoral authority is one, if not the, key theme in the Ignatian correspondence, arguably appearing in all of his epistles.[18] Like many of the other authors of the Apostolic Fathers, Ignatius propounds pastoral authority theologically; he "thinks about church office in theological terms," rather than grounding it in tradition.[19] However, in distinction from other authors, Ignatius conceives of pastoral authority metaphysically, grounding it in the mystical reality of the representative role of pastoral leaders, who represent both their churches to others and represent God, Christ and the apostles to their churches.[20] Within this distinct conception of office, Ignatius makes four essential theological judgements about pastoral authority shared with both apostolic and postapostolic literature: it is tethered to virtue, it is related to God's authority, it

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[18] Odd Magne Bakke, "The Episcopal Ministry and the Unity of the Church from the Apostolic Fathers to Cyprian," in *The Formation of the Early Church*, trans. Brian McNeil, ed. Jostein Adna (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 384. It is debatable if pastoral authority appears in Ignatius's epistle to the Romans, see my analysis of Ign. *Rom*. 9.1 later in this section.

[19] Bakke, "The Episcopal Ministry," 381.

[20] Alvyn Pettersen, "The Laity—Bishop's Pawn? Ignatius of Antioch on the Obedient Christian," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44, no. 1 (1991):44; Bakke, "The Episcopal Ministry," 383; Karen Piepenbrink, "Zur Perzeption des kirchlichen Amtes durch einen 'Märtyerbischof,'" in *Die Briefe des Ignatios von Antiochia: Motive, Strategien, Kontexte*, ed. Thomas Johann Bauer and Peter von Möllendorff, Millennium-Studien 72 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018,) 137; Jochen Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche: Presbyter und Episkopen in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2011), 256.

necessitates obedience to pastoral leaders, and it has practical implications. I will show this by briefly examining Ignatius's view of his own authority and then tracing his assertions about pastoral authority in Ign. *Pol.* and the rest of his corpus.

**Ignatius's authority.** How Ignatius conceives of his own spiritual authority is complex.[21] First, Ignatius understood himself as a bishop to also possess charismatic authority, even using that charismatic authority to ground the authority of institutional leaders.[22] Most significantly, however, Ignatius says he does not have the authority to command like the apostles Peter and Paul.[23] Rather, his authority in part is rooted in his imitation of Christ, especially in martyrdom, to the degree that he "incorporated the imitation of Christ within the definition of episcopal authority."[24] Ignatius saw his impending martyrdom as his personal discipleship and imitation of Christ and Paul; this imitation is arguably one of the main foundations of his authority to write to the churches.[25] Thus, his own obedience to Christ was the ground for his spiritual authority. Though he insisted on obedience to office-holders in the church, his own sense of authority did not rest in his possession of ecclesiastical office, but rather his virtuous obedience.

Ignatius's conception of authority in the Christian life colored his articulations

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[21] Peter Meinhold argues for three distinct elements of Ignatius's self-understanding, each of which color his sense of authority: Ignatius is a bishop, a pneumatic, and a martyr. See Peter Meinhold, "Episkope-Pneumatiker-Märtyrer: Zur Deutung des Selbstaussagen des Ignatius von Antiochien," in *Studien zu Ignatius von Antiochien*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz 97 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979), 1-18.

[22] Robert Stoops, "If I Suffer . . . Epistolary Authority in Ignatius of Antioch," *Harvard Theological Review* 80, no. 2 (1987): 164. Some argue that Ignatius's view of authority was purely charismatic, such as Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 263. See below for the passage in Ign. *Phld.* where Ignatius undergirds episcopal authority with his own assertion of charismatic authority.

[23] Ign. *Rom.* 4.3, Ign. *Trall.* 3.3. See Chilton and Neusner, *Types of Authority*, 120.

[24] Chilton and Neusner, *Types of Authority*, 121. Chilton and Neusner also argue that Ignatius knew of 1 Peter and developed its picture of the imitation of Christ in suffering. I agree with their analysis.

[25] Stoops, "If I Suffer," 170-78.

of pastoral authority. The Christian life according to Ignatius consists, in part, of submission to God's authority: "A Christian does not have authority over himself but devotes himself to God."[26] Having authority over one's own life opposes whole-hearted devotion to God; for Ignatius, to be a Christian was to renounce all claims of authority over oneself. This view of authority cuts both ways in his vision for pastoral authority: believers are to submit to pastoral leaders as extensions of God's authority, but those leaders must themselves recognize that they are under God's authority. Both of these facets of Ignatius's view of spiritual authority are present his epistle to Polycarp.

**Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp**

Ignatius's epistle to Polycarp articulates a clear vision for pastoral authority with practical applications and insists that pastors are under God's authority. First, Ignatius's greeting to Polycarp strongly implies that his authority is tethered to his obedience to God, especially since it is followed by the variety of commands for him to exercise his authority virtuously. Secondly, Ignatius's exhortations for Polycarp to exercise his authority indicate that pastoral authority had a variety of practical entailments in the life of a local congregation.

**Pastoral authority tethered to pastoral virtue.** Ignatius's greeting to Polycarp intentionally reminds him that he is under God's authority. Polycarp is "bishop of the church of the Smyrnaeans, or rather, the one being bishopped by God and Jesus Christ."[27] Likely drawing from biblical images of God as ἐπισκόπος and the more general meaning of the word as one who oversees, this greeting reminds Polycarp that his position of authority in the church is one under God's authority.[28] In the same way that

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[26] "χριστιανὸς ἑαυτοῦ ἐξουσίαν οὐκ ἔχει ἀλλὰ Θεῷ σχολάζει." Ign. *Pol.* 7.3.

[27] "ἐπισκόπῳ ἐκκλησίας Σμυρναίων, μᾶλλον ἐπισκοπημένῳ ὑπὸ Θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ." Ign. *Pol.* Sal.

[28] For an example of the biblical images, see 1 Pet 2:25.

Ignatius calls congregations to follow the bishop, Polycarp the bishop must follow the Father and Jesus Christ into a life of virtue for his ministry to be valid. While some have suggested that this indicates that Polycarp's authority rests on his "special guidance" by God or that Ignatius is indirectly insisting on Polycarp's authority, Ignatius's explicit insistence on obedience to the bishop elsewhere makes it much more plausible that this phrase places Polycarp under God's authority.[29] Moreover, Polycarp's practical authority over the congregation is related to his obedience to God: "Let nothing be done without your consent, nor do anything yourself without God's consent, as indeed you do not."[30] Once again, Ignatius connects Polycarp's overseeing authority to his obedience to God. A final aspect of Ign. *Pol.* that tethers pastoral authority to virtue is the fact that Polycarp is to exercise his authority primarily through sacrificial and virtuous care for his varying congregants. With pastoral virtue and suffering examined elsewhere, it will suffice here to note the various ways Ignatius insists that Polycarp's authoritative ministry be carried out virtuously: Polycarp must bear with all people as God bears with him, have constant care for his people's needs, bring troublesome disciples into submission with gentleness, bear with the diseases of all, be shrewd as a snake yet innocent as a dove, and be firm as an anvil struck in battling false teachers.[31] These various exhortations will be examined further in a subsequent chapter, but even a brief glance shows that Polycarp's authority will not be a despotic one, but one exercised in love and with significant personal sacrifice. Scholars have drawn similar conclusions about pastoral leaders' authority being

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[29] William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 257. Kevin Clarke interprets this phrase as undergirding Polycarp's authority, arguing that it "puts the theological emphasis upon the activity of God as true spiritual *Bishop* shepherding his flock through Polycarp. For, if God the Father himself is the bishop of Polycarp, then, *a fortiori*, the flock must follow Polycarp in trust." Kevin A. Clarke, "'Being Bishoped by' God: The Theology of the Episcopacy According to St. Ignatius of Antioch," *Nova et Cetera* 14, no. 1 (2016): 232. Clarke's view may be an implication of this verse, but in the context of Ignatius's epistles at large, which exhorts obedience to the bishop, the emphasis here is on the need for Polycarp's obedience to God.

[30] Ign. *Pol.* 4.1.

[31] Ign. *Pol.* 1.2, 1.3, 2.1-2.

tethered to their virtue outside of Ign. *Pol.*, but having shown it in this epistle, I will not

explore this sub-theme in the rest of the Ignatian corpus.[32]

**Implications of pastoral authority.** Though clearly tethered to his obedience

and virtue, Polycarp has a real authority with practical implications. Ignatius tells

Polycarp to command obedience, let nothing be done without his consent, and to ensure

that the troublesome disciples are brought into submission.[33] His primary work is to bring

Christians *into submission*, presumably submission not just to Polycarp but to Christ, as

shown by the advice that follows: "Not every wound is healed by the same plaster."[34]

Polycarp is to bring disciples into submission which will heal them; his authority is

exercised for their right state before God. Submission to God, submission to Polycarp,

and spiritual well-being are intimately connected in these commands. A parallel

sentiment permeates Ignatius's admonition for Polycarp to have direct oversight over

those who would marry in his church: they must "with the consent of the bishop make a

union, that the marriage be according to the Lord and not according to lust."[35] Polycarp's

authority to approve marriages is not arbitrary, nor merely a matter of office or "social

control," it ensures that marriages are entered into wisely and not because of disordered

sexual passions.[36] Pastoral authority thus primarily concerns itself with the

congregation's obedience to the Lord. Finally, the section of Ign. *Pol.* that addresses the

Smyrnaean congregation connects the congregation's respect for the bishop with their

[32] See Alvyn Peterson, "The Laity—Bishop's Pawn?" 46-47.

[33] Ign. *Pol.* 4.1, 5.1.

[34] "οὐ πᾶν τραῦμα τῇ αὐτῇ ἐμπλάστρῳ θεραπεύεται." Ign. *Pol.* 2.1.

[35] "μετὰ γνώμης τοῦ ἐπισκόπου τὴν ἕνωσιν ποιεῖσθαι, ἵνα ὁ γάμος ᾖ κατὰ Κύριον καὶ μὴ κατ᾽ ἐπιθυμίαν." Ign. *Pol.* 5.2.

[36] Contra Schoedel, who argues that the mere approval of the bishop makes the marriage godly and thus gives the bishop a significant method of social control. He ignores the "lustful passions" phrase entirely in his analysis of this passage and neglects that a command to "let all things be for the honor of God" immediately follows the exhortations regarding proper marriages. See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 273.

status before God: "Pay attention to the bishop, in order that God may pay attention to you."[37] As I will show, such a connection between respect for pastoral leaders and a right relationship to God is made in Ignatius's congregational epistles and many of the other Apostolic Fathers.

## Pastoral Authority in Ignatius's Congregational Epistles

Ignatius's congregational epistles are the most insistent witness in the Apostolic Fathers for a congregations' responsibility to obey pastoral leaders, especially, though not exclusively, the bishop.[38] Because of his insistence on the threefold ministry, many describe Ignatius's views as novel or originating with himself, though recent commentators have given convincing arguments that his views reflected the structures of the churches to which he wrote.[39] However, analysis will show that, while Ignatius was the most insistent, his basic theological judgments about pastoral authority accord with the rest of apostolic and postapostolic literature.

**Obedience to pastoral leaders required.** Wide agreement exists that Ignatius's epistles insist on obedience to pastoral leaders.[40] Commenting on Ign. *Smyrn.* 8-9, Alyvn Peterson goes as far as to say that "the obedience demanded seems to be unqualified . . . no stronger form of demand for obedience could be made of a Christian

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[37] Ign. *Pol*. 6.1.

[38] Giles says that there is a "constant refrain in the epistles of Ignatius is the demand for obedience to the bishop." Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 65.

[39] For a summary of the main positions that seek to explain Ignatius's assumption of the threefold ministry structure in light of the lack of confirming evidence from his time period, see Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 71-74. See also Christine Trevett, "The Much-Maligned Ignatius," *Expository Times* 93, no. 10 (1982): 299-302. For an argument that Ignatius's views of episcopacy were at least partly representative of the structures of the churches he wrote to, see Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004), 212-13.

[40] Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 65; Peterson, "The Laity—Bishop's Pawn?," 45.

than that his obedience should be modelled upon Jesus' adherence to the Father's will."[41] Aside from that particularly strong admonition to obedience, Ignatius exhorts congregations to submit to the bishop using terms like "be subject," "acknowledge," "be at one with," and "follow" the bishop.[42] However, it is not only the bishop who is to be submitted to, but also the presbyters and, in one instance, the deacons.[43] Moreover, while the presbyters are told to encourage the bishop, they are not exhorted be subject to him.[44] This shows that Ignatius's understanding of pastoral authority is not located exclusively in the bishop and may support the conclusion that the bishop functioned as the presiding elder in postapostolic congregations.[45] Ignatius also commands the Magnesians to "submit to the bishop and to one another."[46] Possibly drawing from a Pauline understanding of mutual love and submission in the body of Christ, Ignatius here pictures a congregation's submission to pastoral authority not as forced submission to despotic leadership but as an extension of the command of love.[47]

One prominent insistence on obedience to pastoral leaders occurs in Ign. *Phld.*

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[41] Peterson, "The Laity—Bishop's Pawn?," 45.

[42] Ign. *Trall.* 2.2, 13.2; Ign. *Magn.* 13.2; Ign. *Smyrn.* 8.1-2, 9.1; Ign. *Phld*. Sal., 2.1, 3.2.

[43] Ign. *Magn.* 7.1; Ign. *Trall*. 2.1-2.

[44] Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 32-34; see Ign. *Smyrn.* 8.1.

[45] Michael J. Svigel, "Can an Ecclesiology Be Biblical and Not Apostolic?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 176, no. 701 (2019): 76-77. See also Paul Rorem, "Mission and Ministry in the Early Church: Bishop, Presbyters and Deacons, but . . ." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 17, no. 1 (February 1990): 17-18. Rorem's view is similar to Svigel's, but he argues that the presidency of the bishop was a postapostolic development and describes it as "analogous" to the modern model of a senior pastor with associate staff.

[46] "ὑποτάγητε τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ καὶ ἀλλήλοις." Ign. *Magn.* 13.2.

[47] See Gregory Vall, *Learning Christ: Ignatius of Antioch and the Mystery of Redemption* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2013), 354. A parallel text in the Pauline corpus that articulates mutual submission coinciding with specific submission would be Eph 5:21-22. While lexical parallels between Eph 5:21 and Ign. *Magn* 13.2 are not generally recognized, there is a significant consensus that Ignatius was aware of Paul's letter to the Ephesians and used some of his language and imagery. See Paul Foster, "The Text of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Scott D. Harrower (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2023) 111-12. There is also a lexical argument for parallelism between these two texts, with Ign. *Magn.* 13.2 reading "ὑποτάγητε τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ καὶ ἀλλήλοις" and Eph 5:21 reading "ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις."

7.1-2, where Ignatius undergirds the authority of the bishop and presbyters with his own charismatic authority. Recalling his visit to the Philadelphian congregation, Ignatius writes,

> I called out when I was in your midst, I was speaking in a loud voice, God's voice: "Pay attention to the bishop and the presbyters and the deacons." Now there were those suspicious of me saying this as knowing ahead of time that division caused by some people. But my witness, in whom I am chained, [bears witness that] I did not know this by human flesh. Rather, the Spirit was preaching, saying this: "Do nothing without the bishop. Guard your flesh as the temple of God. Love unity. Flee divisions. Become imitators of Jesus Christ, just as he also is of his Father."[48]

Clear charismatic undertones permeate Ignatius recollection: he spoke with "God's voice" in the congregation, the divisions in the congregation were divinely revealed to him, and the "Spirit" was preaching through him. Yet his charismatic speech concerns respect and obedience to the bishops and presbyters of the congregation. One implication of this passage is that in Ignatius's view, charismatic and institutional authority are not opposed to each other. More significantly, this charismatic appeal asserts that God himself affirms the authority of pastoral leaders and gives Jesus Christ's example as a pattern for submission to the bishop. Ideas relating the bishop's authority to God's permeate the Ignatian corpus.

**Pastoral authority related to divine authority.** Undergirding Ignatius's calls to submit to the bishop and presbyters is his previously mentioned vision for leaders representing God and Christ. Mikael Isacson argues that Ignatius's main rhetorical strategy to encourage congregations to obey their pastoral leaders was associating them with God and Christ.[49] This association variously but consistently appears in Ignatius's description of pastoral leaders. In the opening of his letter to the Philadelphians, Ignatius

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[48] "ἐκραύγασα μεταξὺ ὤν, ἐλάλουν μεγάλη φωνῇ, Θεοῦ φωνῇ· Τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ προσέχετε καὶ τῷ πρεσβυτερίῳ καὶ διακόνοις. οἱ δ' ὑποπτεύσαντές με ὡς προειδότα τὸν μερισμόν τινων λέγειν ταῦτα. μάρτυς δέ μοι ἐν ᾧ δέδεμαι, ὅτι ἀπὸ σαρκὸς ἀνθρωπίνης οὐκ ἔγνων. τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ἐκήρυσσεν, λέγον τάδε· Χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπισκόπου μηδὲν ποιεῖτε· τὴν σάρκα ὑμῶν ὡς ναὸν Θεοῦ τηρεῖτε· τὴν ἕνωσιν ἀγαπᾶτε· τοὺς μερισμοὺς φεύγετε· μιμηταὶ γίνεσθε Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸς τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ." Ign. *Phld.* 7.1-2.

[49] Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 209. Isacson says that Ignatius's two other strategies were praise for the bishop and examples of those who were rightly submitting to him (210-11).

describes the bishop, presbyters and deacons as those "who have been validated by the mind of Jesus Christ, whom he, according to his own will, supported by establishing them by his Holy Spirit."[50] Ignatius argues that Christ himself has established the leaders of the church by the Holy Spirit's power. Various terms in this phrase indicate the public and divine validation of these leaders; indeed, Christ himself is "supporting" them.[51] Moreover, using language reminiscent of Paul's calling to ministry in Galatians 1:1,[52] Ignatius says that the bishop of the Philadelphians obtained his ministry "not by himself nor from man . . . nor according to conceit, but in the love of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."[53] While a significant amount of evidence suggests that the Philadelphians elected their own leaders like most postapostolic communities, Ignatius still insists that the source of this leader's ministry was directly from God himself.[54] Gregory Vall observes that this text contains "not a purely charismatic view of leadership, to be sure, but it does look for evidence of the Spirit's guidance of the church in the spiritual and moral qualities of men who have been appointed to ecclesiastical office."[55] In other words, even through the human process of election and ordination to office, God himself chooses the leaders of congregations and their authority is thus rooted in him.

In addition to rooting their authority in God, Ignatius also portrayed pastoral

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[50] "ἀποδεδειγμένοις ἐν γνώμῃ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, οὓς κατὰ τὸ ἴδιον θέλημα ἐστήριξεν ἐν βεβαιωσύνῃ τῷ ἁγίῳ αὐτοῦ πνεύματι." Ign. *Phld.* Sal.

[51] "ἀποδεδειγμένοις" means "to cause something to be known as genuine," being used of Christ in Peter's sermon in Acts 2:22, L&N 28.50. Both "ἐστήριξεν" and "βεβαιωσύνῃ" indicate the idea of establishing, confirming, or strengthening one's position. See Daniel B. Wallace, *A Reader's Lexicon of the Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 91.

[52] Francis A. Sullivan, *Apostles to Bishops: The Development of Episcopacy in the Early Church* (Pine Beach, NJ: Newman, 2001), 115.

[53] "οὐκ ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ οὐδὲ δι᾽ ἀνθρώπων . . . οὐδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν ἀγάπῃ Θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ." Ign. *Phld*. 1.1.

[54] Sullivan notes that Ignatius does not mention the human process by which leaders were elected but that it is almost certainly behind the articulations in Ign. *Phld.* 1.1. Sullivan, *Apostles to Bishops*, 115.

[55] Vall, *Learning Christ*, 352.

leaders as representing God and Christ,[56] with some scholars going as far as to say that "Ignatius' ideal episcopate was the vicarious representation of God in Christ."[57] To the Ephesians, Ignatius remarks, "clearly, it is necessary to look upon the bishop as the Lord himself," a statement parallel to Did. 4.1.[58] Why such a strong statement about how one views the bishop? He is to be seen so highly because he represents the Lord's interests and authority to the congregation: "For everyone whom the master of the house sends to manage his house, thus we must receive him: just as the one who sent him."[59] Because the bishop has been sent by God to oversee the church, the church must receive the bishop as the Lord himself. The bishop's connection to Christ is so close in this text that "the *missio episcopi* not only runs parallel to the *missio Filii* but, in a sense, extends the latter into the life of the local church. Under a figure, Ignatius even describes the sending of the bishop in 'economic' terms. The divine 'householder' (οἰκοδεσπότης) sends the bishop 'to dispense the goods of the house on his behalf.'"[60] Vall's comments shed light on the particular representative role Ignatius allots to the bishop and presbyters.[61] They are neither liturgical representations of God nor despotic authorities but stewards of God's household, responsible to God, representing his concerns and authority, and ministering the divine "goods" to God's people.

Ignatius also conveys pastoral authority by connecting it to God's authority in Ign. *Rom.* 9.1. Likely drawing on biblical imagery, Ignatius describes his church as "the church in Syria, which instead of me has God for its bishop. Jesus Christ alone will

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[56] Piepenbrink, "Zur Perzeption des kirchlichen," 137-38.

[57] Chilton and Neusner, *Types of Authority*, 120.

[58] Ign. *Eph.* 6.1. See below for analysis of Did. 4.1.

[59] "πάντα γὰρ ὃν πέμπει ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης εἰς ἰδίαν οἰκονομίαν, οὕτως δεῖ ἡμᾶς αὐτὸν δέχεσθαι, ὡς αὐτὸν τὸν πέμψαντα." Ign. *Eph.* 6.1.

[60] Vall, *Learning Christ*, 339-40.

[61] Though Ignatius would also use the idea of managers of God's household for the entire congregation, see Ign. *Pol.* 6.1.

bishop it, and your love."[62] This remarkable and multifaceted statement uses "conceptual blending" to convey that through pastoral leaders, "Jesus himself . . . shepherded the flock."[63] In saying that God would shepherd the church in his absence, Ignatius "implies that in ordinary circumstances it is the bishop, as the shepherd of his community, that represents God and/or Christ."[64] Like the previous image of a household manager, the shepherding imagery connects the bishop's representative authority with a particular focus on his care for the church in God's stead.[65] Ignatius also says that Jesus Christ *and* the love of Roman church will "bishop" the Syrian congregation, giving an interesting glance into how postapostolic churches may have related to one another.

**Implications of pastoral authority.** There are a variety of practical implications for pastoral authority in Ignatius's congregational epistles.[66] First, because pastoral leaders represent God's authority, submitting to them is a key aspect of Christian virtue. Those who are subject to the bishops and presbyters "are sanctified in every respect" and living "according to Christ Jesus."[67] Even salvific undertones accompany submission to the bishop and presbyters: Ignatius states that one who acts apart from the bishop "serves the devil" and goes as far as to say that "as many as are of God and of Christ Jesus, they are with the bishop."[68] Those who despise or deceive pastoral leaders

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[62] Ign. *Rom.* 9.1. The New Testament regularly refers to pastoral leaders as shepherds, see 1 Pet 5, John 10, Acts, etc.

[63] Aleksander Gomola, *Conceptual Blending in Early Christian Discourse: A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis of Pastoral Metaphors in Patristic Literature* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 75.

[64] Gomola, *Conceptual Blending*, 75.

[65] Vall, *Learning Christ*, 345.

[66] Richard P. C. Hanson notes that Ignatius gave the bishop doctrinal, liturgical, and disciplinary authority, all practical implications of pastoral authority. Richard P. C. Hanson, *Studies in Christian Antiquity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), 122.

[67] "κατὰ πάντα ἦτε ἡγιασμένοι," Ign. *Eph.* 2.2; "κατὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν." Ign. *Trall.* 2.1.

[68] "τῷ διαβόλῳ λατρεύει;" Ign. *Smyrn.* 9.1; "ὅσοι γὰρ Θεοῦ εἰσιν καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, οὗτοι μετὰ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου εἰσίν." Ign. *Phld.* 3.2. See Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 263.

do so to God himself.[69] Apart from this prevalent theme, another distinctive application of pastoral authority for Ignatius is that congregations must officially gather only under the bishop's approval.[70] The bishop's spiritual authority was practical in that he determined when and how the congregation would gather.

**Summary.** Scholars have long affirmed the presence of a strong view of pastoral authority in Ignatius's epistles. Aside from his broadly recognized insistence of obedience to pastoral leaders, Ignatius also tethered a pastoral leader's authority to his virtue, related his authority to God's authority, and applied pastoral authority in several practical ways. The rest of this chapter will show that these theological judgments are present in the rest of the Apostolic Fathers, with Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians being the first compressed but clear witness examined.

### Pastoral Authority in Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians.

While Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians has only one clear statement about pastoral authority, this statement makes several of the theological judgements regarding pastoral authority present in Ignatius, the New Testament, and the rest of the Apostolic Fathers. Polycarp writes in response to the Philippians' question about "righteousness" and also in light of the situation regarding the failed presbyter Valens.[71] After prohibiting a variety of evil behaviors, Polycarp says, "Therefore it is necessary to keep away from all of these things, submitting to the presbyters and deacons as to God and Christ Jesus."[72] This text makes several theological judgments about pastoral authority. First, believers are called to submit to the authority of pastoral leaders. Secondly, this passage

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[69] Ign. *Magn*. 3.2.

[70] Ign. *Magn.* 7.1; Ign. *Smyrn* 8.2.

[71] Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 274-75.

[72] "διὸ δέον ἀπέχεσθαι ἀπὸ πάντων τούτων, ὑποτασσομένους τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις καὶ διακόνοις ὡς Θεῷ καὶ Χριστῷ." Pol. *Phil*. 5.3.

associates Christian virtue with obedience to pastoral leaders, applying pastoral authority in a way similar to Ignatius. Wicked deeds are placed directly in contrast with obedience to pastoral leaders.[73] While this verse implies that pastoral leaders would be instructing the congregation and so submission to them would lead to repentance from wicked deeds, Polycarp also presents submission to pastoral leaders as the alternative to living in wickedness. Third, obedience to pastoral leaders is to be rendered "as to God and Christ Jesus," explicitly grounding a pastoral leader's authority in God's authority. Hartog argues that "such language parallels Ignatius' exhortations . . . although Ignatius, unlike Polycarp, highlighted the separate role of 'the bishop.'"[74] Even if Polycarp envisioned a different ministry structure than Ignatius's threefold ministry, their judgement that pastoral leaders' authority was grounded in God's authority is nearly identical.[75] A final observation is admittedly an implication: immediately following this command to submission is a catalogue of the virtues requisite of presbyters. This implies that a congregation must only follow presbyters who exhibit these characteristics, thus tethering their authority to their virtue.[76] So, while Polycarp only mentions pastoral authority directly one time, he makes three clear theological judgments about pastoral authority that are present in rest of the Apostolic Fathers, likely implying the fourth.[77] 1 Clem., the next

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[73] Hartog also notices this contrast between living wickedly and submitting to leaders, though admittedly it is not as clear as it is in Ignatius's conception. Paul Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, Oxford Apostolic Fathers 2 (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), 122.

[74] Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 122.

[75] For considerations about the difference between Polycarp and Ignatius's vision for ministry structures, see Peter Oakes, "Leadership and Suffering in the Letters of Polycarp and Paul to the Philippians," in *The New Testament and Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 2, *Trajectories through the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 360-61.

[76] Pol. *Phil*. 6.1.

[77] For another potential sounding for pastoral authority in Pol. *Phil*, see also Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 123. Hartog argues that the presbyters' call to bring back those who have gone astray reflects biblical shepherding imagery for pastoral leaders, who reflect "the ultimate Shepherd."

text to be exposited, makes the same judgements.

## Pastoral Authority in 1 Clement

Though 1 Clem.'s grounding of pastoral authority in apostolic succession is the most distinct and most commented upon aspect of its pastoral theology, it still shares the four key theological judgments about pastoral authority with the rest of early Christian literature. The author of the epistle tethers pastoral authority to pastoral virtue, insists on obedience to pastoral leaders, relates pastoral authority to God's authority, and makes concrete applications of pastoral authority.

**Pastoral authority tethered to pastoral virtue.** With a previous chapter examining virtue in Clement's pastoral theology, it suffices to note here that 1 Clem. 44 explicitly connects the deposed presbyters' virtue to their rightful authority.[78] Barbara Ellen Bowe's previously cited statement connects the virtue of 1 Clem.'s presbyters to their authority: "What is most striking in *1 Clement 44* is the lengths to which Clement goes to insist that there was no "legitimate reason" for deposing the presbyters . . . . The logical implication seems to be that if the office bearers to *not* fulfill their office faithfully, they may be removed."[79] While Clement works in a variety of ways to establish the spiritual authority of these leaders, he directly connects their rightful authority to their virtue. Their authority is not inviolable or indicative of a "clerical a priori," but rather tethered to their character and faithful service.[80]

**Obedience to pastoral leaders required.** That being said, 1 Clem. repeatedly

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[78] See chap. 4.

[79] Barbara Ellen Bowe, *A Church in Crisis: Ecclesiology and Paraenesis in Clement of Rome*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 23 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 150.

[80] Beyshalg, *1 Clemens* 40-44, 18, quoted in Bowe, *A Church in Crisis*, 50. James Carleton Paget says that Clement "certainly allows for the possibility that bad presbyters might exist (44.3, 4, 6) and that their dismissal in particular contexts might be justified." James Carleton Paget, "The Vision of the Church in the Apostolic Fathers," in *Vision for the Church: Studies in Early Christian Ecclesiology*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Michael B. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 198.

insists that the Corinthians submit to their rightful pastoral leaders. In a culminating exhortation, Clement demands this directly, saying that the congregation must "bow the neck, and conforming to the pattern of obedience, to join to those who are the leaders of our souls."[81] "Joining" to their leaders means coming back under their authority, especially with Clement's use of the idiom "to bow the neck" and with the "pattern of obedience" of previous exemplary figures given as a model for the congregation's return to their leaders.[82] These "leaders of our souls" are the "presbyters," as shown in a previous exhortation: "To the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us, let us return. Let us respect our leaders, let us honor the presbyters."[83] First, this exhortation places "leaders" and "presbyters" appositive to one another, implying that they are equivalent: respecting leaders is clarified by the command to honor the presbyters. Going further, Clement equates respecting the Lord Jesus to obeying one's pastoral leaders— obedience to one's leaders demonstrates one's respect of Christ.[84] Finally, this exhortation shows that what is due to the elders is not the right to despotic control over the congregation, but the right to have the congregation's honor and respect.[85] Beyond these two direct exhortations, numerous indirect exhortations to submit to pastoral authority permeate the epistle, especially considering that its aim is to convince the

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[81] "ὑποθεῖναι τὸν τράχηλον καὶ τὸν τῆς ὑπακοῆς τόπον ἀναπληρώσαντας προσκλιθῆναι τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἀρχηγοῖς τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν." 1 Clem. 63.1-2. For this as a culminating exhortation after a summary of the contents of the letter, see Robert M. Grant and Holt H. Graham, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. Robert M. Grant (1965; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1965), 2:98.

[82] My translation of "τῆς ὑπακοῆς τόπον" seeks to pick up on the previously cited examples as a "pattern of obedience" given in the Scriptures that the Corinthians are now called to imitate by submitting to their pastoral leaders.

[83] "τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν [Χριστόν], οὗ τὸ αἷμα ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη, ἐντραπῶμεν· τοὺς προηγουμένους ἡμῶν αἰδεσθῶμεν, τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους ἡμῶν τιμήσωμεν." 1 Clem. 21.6.

[84] This passage is also arguably a culminating exhortation. Grant and Graham say, "The way in which to obey God is now set forth in a recapitulation of earlier passages," with Christ and the ruler-presbyters directly next to each other. See Grant and Graham, *Apostolic Fathers,* 2:46.

[85] This parallels New Testament conceptions of pastoral authority that were explored in chap. 3, see my analysis of 1 Thess 5:12.

Corinthian congregation to restore and submit to its deposed presbyters.[86]

Clement also asserts pastoral authority by describing the congregation's rebellion as a spiritual catastrophe: "[It is] disgraceful, beloved, and exceedingly shameful and unworthy of your way of life in Christ, to hear that the sure and ancient church of the Corinthians, because of one or two persons, has rebelled against its presbyters."[87] The intensity of language emphasizes that rebelling against rightful spiritual authority is disastrous for this church's spiritual health. The next verse even accuses them of bringing "blasphemies" upon the name of the Lord and bringing "danger" to themselves; stronger language is hardly imaginable.[88] Grant avers that the "danger" in 1 Clem. 44.7 is "the danger of damnation."[89] According to Clement, the Corinthians' salvation was at stake because of their rebellion against rightful spiritual authority. 1 Clem. 44.6-7 is one of several instances of strong language being used to describe the spiritual disaster of the Corinthian's rebellion. Barbara Ellen Bowe describes much of Clement's language as the "rhetoric of στάσις," with frequent intense depictions of the evil and consequences of revolt.[90] She demonstrates the that a "rhetorical intensity" persists throughout 1 Clem. that depicts the rebellion against the presbyters as the height of spiritual evil.[91] While stating the matter more intensely, Clement's characterization of the Corinthian revolt makes the same theological judgment as Ignatius about the

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[86] 1 Clem. 7.2, 9.1, 13.1, 16.1. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 34; Stuart G. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 33; Chilton and Neusner, *Types of Authority*, 105; Clayton N. Jefford, *Reading the Apostolic Fathers: A Student's Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 110.

[87] "αἰσχρά, ἀγαπητοί, καὶ λίαν αἰσχρὰ καὶ ἀνάξια τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ἀγωγῆς, ἀκούεσθαι τὴν βεβαιοτάτην καὶ ἀρχαίαν Κορινθίων ἐκκλησίαν δι' ἓν ἢ δύο πρόσωπα στασιάζειν πρὸς τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους." 1 Clem. 47.6.

[88] "βλασφημίας" and "κίνδυνον." 1 Clem. 47.7.

[89] Grant and Graham, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2:79.

[90] Bowe, *A Church in Crisis*, 26-28. See also L. L. Welborn, *The Young against the Old: Generational Conflict in First Clement* (Lanham, MD: Fortress, 2018), 131. Welborn situates Clement's use of στάτις in the context of first-century rhetoric and calls it a "potent and terrifying term."

[91] Bowe, *A Church in Crisis*, 26-31.

connection between submission to pastoral authority and one's spiritual health.

**Pastoral authority related to God's authority.** Like Ignatius, 1 Clem. divinely grounds the authority of pastoral leaders. However, instead of associating pastoral leaders directly with God, Christ, and the apostles, Clement connects their authority to God's via historical appointment. He argues for the appointment of pastoral leaders by Christ through apostles and former bishops, using Old Testament offices as parallels to the divine foundation of pastoral leadership in the church.[92] Discussions regarding spiritual authority in 1 Clem., especially the key passage 42-44, have been particularly burdened with arguments about apostolic succession and the historical development of the ecclesiastical office.[93] These key passages, however, do not have to be taken as prescribing a universal future model for ministry. Eric George Jay argues that

> it has to be said that Clement is not attempting to state a precise doctrine of structure of ministry. His point is that when presbyters have been appointed as the apostles laid down (however that may be conceived), it is wrong to depose them if their ministry has been conscientious and effective. His purpose is to plead for the stability of the presbyteral system in Corinth.[94]

While ecclesiastical interests have motivated investigations on the future implications of Clement's assertion of apostolic succession, Jay correctly sees that the main concern of these passages is the *present* authority of the deposed elders.[95] In the midst of other interpretive issues, the following passage clearly grounds the authority of present pastoral leaders in God himself:

> The apostles preached the gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ was sent from the Father. Thus Christ [is] from God, and the apostles [are] from Christ. Thus everything came to be in an orderly way from the will of God. Having thus

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[92] Kenneth Berding, "'Gifts' and Ministries in the Apostolic Fathers," *Westminster Theological Journal* 78, no. 1 (April 2016): 150-51.

[93] Bowe comments, "It is also apparent, especially from Fuellenbach's study, that denominational interests (whether Catholic or Protestant) have often prejudiced investigations of *1 Clement*." Bowe, *A Church in Crisis*, 4n14.

[94] Eric George Jay, "From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters: Christian Ministry in the Second Century; a Survey," *Second Century* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 135.

[95] This argument is also made in Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 240.

received their orders . . . they went forth . . . . Preaching in the towns and cities, they appointed their first fruits, testing them in the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons for those who would become believers.[96]

According to Clement, all spiritual authority of present leaders in the church is rooted in God himself and grounded historically through appointment. His argument goes as follows: Christ came from God, the apostles came from Christ, and the bishops and deacons came from the apostles.[97] Thus, present leaders in the church come from God himself. Grant states Clement's idea plainly: the "present ministers derive their office by succession from the apostles and, indeed, from God."[98] Helpfully focusing on the theology of the ministry in 1 Clem., Kenneth Berding points out that in the vision of the text "ministry roles are *given* by God; the people in those ministries are *appointed* to those ministries; the assignments are described as something that they *have*, and people in such ministry roles are *gifts* from God to his people."[99] Though historically rooted in appointment by appropriate leaders, the officers of the church have their authority ultimately from God himself, who gives ministers through appointment for the church's blessing.

After citing Moses's ministry as an Old Testament version of this pattern, Clement continues grounding the authority of the deposed presbyters by appointment:

And our apostles knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that strife would come about the office of bishop. Therefore, because of this, having received complete foreknowledge, they appointed the previously mentioned leaders and meanwhile laid down a rule so that, when they fell asleep, other tested men would succeed their ministry. These, therefore, appointed by them, or later, by other eminent men, with the approval of the whole church, and ministering blamelessly to the whole flock of

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[96] "Οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἡμῖν εὐηγγελίσθησαν ἀπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐξεπέμφθη. ὁ Χριστὸς οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ· ἐγένοντο οὖν ἀμφότερα εὐτάκτως ἐκ θελήματος Θεοῦ. παραγγελίας οὖν λαβόντες . . . ἐξῆλθον . . . . κατὰ χώρας οὖν καὶ πόλεις κηρύσσοντες καθίστανον τὰς ἀπαρχὰς αὐτῶν, δοκιμάσαντες τῷ πνεύματι, εἰς ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους τῶν μελλόντων πιστεύειν." 1 Clem. 42:1-4.

[97] Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 240.

[98] Grant and Graham, *Apostolic Fathers*, 2:73.

[99] Berding, "'Gifts' and Ministries," 151.

Christ humbly, quietly, unselfishly—this being born witness to many times by all—these we do not consider to be justly cast off from their ministry.[100]

One can see why this passage is tempting for those who want to ground the doctrine of apostolic succession historically and defend present-day episcopal structures. But once again, Clement's main concern is to argue that the deposed leaders of the Corinthian congregation had genuine authority derived from God, evidenced by their virtuous ministry and rightful appointment. Moreover, their appointment likely entailed a lifelong holding of office: "Only death or delinquency would end their tenures."[101] This, of course, has significant implications for the spiritual authority of these leaders: when God appoints leaders through succession, their authority is such that they hold the office for life if they hold it virtuously. Clement would also argue that this pattern was grounded in the Old Testament Scripture in several ways, with particular focus on the Old Testament priesthood and Moses himself.[102] These things considered, 1 Clem. grounds pastoral authority in God's authority, making the same judgement as the New Testament and rest of the Apostolic Fathers.

**Implications of pastoral authority.** Clement also applies pastoral authority in distinct ways. First, like Ignatius and Polycarp, Clement associates submission to pastoral authority with foundational Christian virtue, especially the quality of humility. With the rebellion against the presbyters in the background, Clement tells the Corinthians multiple times that they can either be humble and submit to their presbyters or walk in

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[100] "Καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἡμῶν ἔγνωσαν διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅτι ἔρις ἔσται ἐπὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς. Διὰ ταύτην οὖν τὴν αἰτίαν πρόγνωσιν εἰληφότες τελείαν κατέστησαν τοὺς προειρημένους καὶ μεταξὺ ἐπιμονὴν δεδώκασιν ὅπως, ἐὰν κοιμηθῶσιν, διαδέξωνται ἕτεροι δεδοκιμασμένοι ἄνδρες τὴν λειτουργίαν αὐτῶν. Τοὺς οὖν κατασταθέντας ὑπ' ἐκείνων ἢ μεταξὺ ὑφ' ἑτέρων ἐλλογίμων ἀνδρῶν συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης, καὶ λειτουργήσαντας ἀμέμπτως τῷ ποιμνίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ ταπεινοφροσύνης, ἡσύχως, καὶ ἀβαναύσως, μεμαρτυρημένους τε πολλοῖς χρόνοις ὑπὸ πάντων, τούτους οὐ δικαίως νομίζομεν ἀποβάλλεσθαι τῆς λειτουργίας." 1 Clem. 44.1-3.

[101] Svigel, "Can an Ecclesiology be Biblical and Not Apostolic?," 69.

[102] Annie Jaubert, *Epître aux Corinthiens*, Sources Chrétiennes 167 (1971; repr., Paris: Cerf, 2000), 80-83. Jaubert argues that the Levitical priesthood was a chief influence on Clement's picture of the Christian ministry. See 1 Clem 42.5-43.6 for a primary passage that grounds the Christian ministry in Old Testament patterns. See also Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 92-94.

arrogance—there is no other alternative. In 14.1, Clement plainly says, "Let us be obedient to God rather than follow those in arrogance."[103] The "arrogant" are those who have rebelled against the presbyters. The only options for the Corinthians are to follow the arrogant in disobedience or to humbly submit to God by submitting to rightful pastoral leaders.[104] Similar exhortations to embrace the humility of submission versus the evil of arrogance pepper the surrounding passages.[105] Bowe suggests that Clement focuses on and develops his concept of humility through the major sections of the book and aims it directly at the rebellious, who are characterized as arrogant.[106] Thus, while articulated differently, Clement put forward a similar implication of pastoral authority as Ignatius and Polycarp—submission to pastoral authority is essential to Christian virtue and indicative of one's spiritual health.

Clement distinctively applies pastoral authority to those who led the rebellion against the presbyters. The rebellious are told that in light of their sin they must be willing to do anything required of them in repentance, even to leave the congregation: "Who then among you [is] noble, who [is] tenderhearted, who [is] fully assured of love? Let him say, 'If because of me [there is] revolt and strife and division, I depart, I go wherever you will, I do whatever the multitude commands, only let the flock of Christ have peace with its appointed presbyters.'"[107] Clement goes on to promise "great fame in Christ" to any who show such willingness, showing that this is an exhortation to

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[103] 1 Clem. 14.1. See also 1 Clem. 21.6, where fearing Jesus Christ is equated to respecting leaders.

[104] Welborn argues, "Obedience for Clement is not conformity to an ethical norm, but subjection to the authority of the established presbyters." Welborn, *The Young against the Old*, 141. While Welborn's statement goes too far, he rightly notices that "obedience" in 1 Clem. is usually related to obedience to rightful leaders.

[105] See 1 Clem. 13.1 and 16.1.

[106] Bowe, *A Church in Crisis*, 115-21.

[107] "Τίς οὖν ἐν ὑμῖν γενναῖος, τίς εὔσπλαγχνος, τίς πεπληροφορημένος ἀγάπης; εἰπάτω· Εἰ δι᾽ ἐμὲ στάσις καὶ ἔρις καὶ σχίσματα, ἐκχωρῶ, ἄπειμι οὗ ἐὰν βούλησθε, καὶ ποιῶ τὰ προστασσόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ πλήθους· μόνον τὸ ποίμνιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰρηνευέτω μετὰ τῶν καθεσταμένων πρεσβυτέρων." 1 Clem. 54.1-3.

complete submission in repentance rather than a pronouncement of excommunication.[108]

Chiefly in focus is an *absolute* willingness to do whatever is required to demonstrate true

repentance, as shown in a later exhortation: "You therefore, who made the foundation of

the revolt, must submit to the presbyters and be disciplined into repentance, bending the

knees of your heart. Learn submission, putting away boasting and arrogance and the

stubbornness of your tongue."[109] Once again connecting virtue to submission to pastoral

leaders, this command suggests that the general duty to respect and honor pastoral leaders

takes on a more tangible, concrete submission in cases of rebellion or gross sin. Those

who committed the grave sin of rebellion must be willing to be exiled or to take whatever

discipline the presbyters give to them.[110] Francis A. Sullivan argues that this passage

"indicates not only that the presbyters have authority in the community, but also that they

exercised a key role in dealing with the guilty and leading them to repentance."[111] An

implication of the presbyters' work in dealing with the guilty was that with the

particularly guilty, the presbyters had a particular authority—one to command special

acts of repentance.

    While 1 Clem.'s particular vision for apostolic succession will likely remain a

matter of debate, the work insists on the authority of pastoral leaders, making parallel

theological judgments to apostolic and postapostolic works. Like the other texts from this

period, 1 Clem. insists on obedience to pastoral leaders, connects a pastor's authority to

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[108] 1 Clem. 54.3. But Clement also promises here that "every place will welcome that person," indicating the real possibility of removal from the congregation.

[109] "Ὑμεῖς οὖν, οἱ τὴν καταβολὴν τῆς στάσεως ποιήσαντες, ὑποτάγητε τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις καὶ παιδεύθητε εἰς μετάνοιαν, κάμψαντες τὰ γόνατα τῆς καρδίας ὑμῶν. μάθετε ὑποτάσσεσθαι, ἀποθέμενοι τὴν ἀλαζόνα καὶ ὑπερήφανον τῆς γλώσσης ὑμῶν αὐθάδειαν." 1 Clem 57.1-2.

[110] Welborn argues, "The imperatives . . . place the dissidents in a passive position: they must be submissive and undergo discipline. . . . The renewed summons of the next sentences (57:2a) strengthens the demand for submission, by stipulating that what is required is not a single act, but a constant disposition." Welborn, *The Young against the Old*, 156.

[111] Sullivan, *Apostles to Bishops*, 99.

God's authority, tethers his authority to his virtue, and applies pastoral authority in particular ways. The Didache, in a more complex ministerial context, does likewise.

## Pastoral Authority in the Didache

Even with significant distinctions between charismatic and institutional pastoral leaders in its community, the Didache still insists upon the authority of both of these kinds of leaders. Regarding pastoral authority, both institutional and charismatic leaders have their authority tethered to virtue and rooted in God; moreover, obedience to these leaders is expected. Additionally, charismatic leaders appear to have pastoral authority applied to them in distinct ways, as I will show below.

**Authority tethered to virtue**. Did. tethers the authority of all pastoral leaders to their virtue. While a prophet's words are not to be questioned and they are enabled to pray in the assembly whenever and however they wish, their lives are to be carefully judged.[112] Especially prominent is the author's concern that prophets display a right relationship to money and neither ask for money nor abuse the community's hospitality— if they do so, they are not true prophets.[113] While there is a clear prohibition against judging a prophet's words, the fact that the Didache calls an unvirtuous prophet a *false* prophets suggests that communities should disregard the prophetic utterances of unvirtuous prophets.[114] The bishops and deacons also had their authority tethered to publicly displayed virtue. These leaders who "minister the ministry" of the prophets and teachers, are to be "worthy of the Lord" and "approved" men, elected with the consent of

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[112] Did. 10.7. See David Edward Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 209.

[113] Did. 11.3-12. See chap. 4 on pastoral virtue for further analysis.

[114] Some scholars, however, argue that there is a separation between the words and life of a prophet. Aune argues, "The insistence that prophets exhibit appropriate behavior is strangely divorced in the Didache from the prophetic utterances which they make." Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 209.

the community.[115] In a manner similar to the Pastoral Epistles, publicly recognized virtue must *precede* election—thus basing the authority of these offices on the virtue of the office holders. Even with differences between them, the leaders in the community of the Didache share not only the same ministry but also have the authority of their ministry rooted in virtue.

**Obedience to pastoral leaders required.** Did. does not insist on obedience to pastoral leaders as explicitly as 1 Clem. and Ignatius. However, in addition to direct commands to obedience, I have shown that apostolic and postapostolic literature also insists on a respect, honor, and regard for pastoral leaders that parallels concrete obedience and submission. The Didache does so as well in at least two passages. In Did. 4.1 the community is charged to honor their teachers: "My child, the one who speaks to you the word of God, remember [him] night and day, and honor him as the Lord."[116] Shawn J. Wilhite points out that the phrase "remember night and day" parallels Hebrews 13:7, a New Testament passage that also encourages a high view of pastoral leaders.[117] Moreover, not only is the preacher to be honored, he is to honored "as though he were the Lord," clearly implying obedience to him; the Didache's robust moral instruction is "the

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[115] Did. 15.1-2. Aaron Milavec argues that the exhortation to appoint leaders could be paraphrased as "keep up your good work at appointing worthy officers for yourself." In other words, both these expectations and congregational involvement in electing leaders were already normative practices. Aaron Milavec, *The Didache*: *Faith, Hope & Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C.E.* (New York: Newman, 2003), 583.

[116] "Τέκνον μου, τοῦ λαλοῦντός σοι τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ μνησθήσῃ νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας, τιμήσεις δὲ αὐτὸν ὡς Κύριον." Did. 4.1. But for a view of this verse as indicating informal mentorship instead of referring to pastoral leaders, see Milavec, *The Didache*, 147. This is largely a result of his reading of the community as largely informal and unstructured. His is the minority position, see Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, ed. Harold Attrige, trans. Linda Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 104.

[117] Shawn J. Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 79. Wilhite does not argue exactly what I argue here but puts Heb 13:7 as a cross-reference to Did. 4.1.

teaching of the Lord" and insists on obedience throughout.[118] Moreover, after encouraging the congregation to appoint bishops and deacons, the Didachist admonishes, "Thus you must not disregard them, for they are your honored ones, with the prophets and teachers."[119] While some scholars argue that this command reveals a communal disregard for residential leaders and a preference for the charismatics,[120] it is probably better to see this as an inverse of the command to "welcome" leaders elsewhere in the Didache.[121]  Whatever the situation behind this command, it exhorts respect and implies obedience to these leaders. Furthering this admonition, the Didachist calls residential leaders the congregation's "honored ones," harkening back to Did. 4.1's command to honor those who preach the Word.[122] While less direct than commands to obedience in Ignatius and Clement, the Didache particularly reflects New Testament patterns of insisting on pastoral authority through commanding respect and deference.

**Pastoral authority related to God's authority.** One of the main reasons pastoral leaders are to be honored and respected is because they represent God's presence to the community. As noted above, the community is to honor the one who preaches "as the Lord," with several other commands to welcome travelling leaders "as the Lord."[123] Wilhite argues that the reason the Didachist insists on this is because faithful pastoral leaders mediate God's presence through their faithful teaching.[124] Wilhite's contention

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[118] Wilhite has a significant discussion of the term κύριος and the phrase "welcome him as the Lord" in the Didache. He argues that the phrase can be generic for God but also in some places denote the Incarnate Jesus. He argues that the phrase "welcome as the Lord" should be taken to mean "welcome as the Incarnate Jesus." Wilhite, *The Didache*, 65.

[119] "μὴ οὖν ὑπερίδητε αὐτούς, αὐτοὶ γὰρ εἰσιν οἱ τετιμημένοι ὑμῶν μετὰ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ διδασκάλων." Did. 15.2.

[120] Milavec, *The Didache*, 586-89; Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 202.

[121] Wilhite, *The Didache*, 213.

[122] Did. 15.2 uses τετιμημένοι and Did. 4.1 uses τιμήσεις.

[123] Did. 4.1, 11.2, 11.4.

[124] Wilhite, *The Didache*, 79.

appears to be correct given the Didachist's reasoning: the reason the one who preaches the word is to be remembered and honored as the Lord is because "wherever the Lord's rule is spoken, there the Lord is."[125] Kurt Niederwimmer remarks that the unusual use of κυριότης in this passage "probably refers to the characteristic of *Jesus* as κύριος. Thus the *Didache* text means that the place from which the proclamation about the κυριότης of Jesus goes forth is at the same time the place of his presence."[126] The application of this principle is clear: since faithful preaching of the Lord's nature mediates the presence of the Lord to the hearer "the teacher himself should be honored as if the *Kyrios* himself were standing before you."[127] This is probably the reason that prophets, teachers, and bishops are to be honored throughout Did.—because they share in the ministry of faithfully communicating the Lord's nature and presence.[128] While the notion of the leader as communicating the Lord's presence is distinctive to Did., it shares remarkable parallels to Ignatius's association of pastoral leaders with God and Christ. With the rest of the corpus, both authors affirm the judgment that a leader's authority is connected to God's authority.

**Implications of pastoral authority**. One implication of pastoral authority for charismatic leaders has already been mentioned in passing—that the words of prophets are not to be questioned. These leaders seemed to have pastoral authority applied to them in other ways as well. The congregation is not to judge the prophets, even when they do seemingly strange things, and they are to allow the prophets to engage in leading worship and praying publicly however they please.[129] Milavec comments that "an entire range of

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[125] Did. 4.1.

[126] Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 105.

[127] Niederwimmer, 105.

[128] See chap. 6 for my argument that bishops were teachers in the community of the Didache.

[129] Did. 10.7, 11.11-12.

evocative and/or disturbing prophetic gestures were anticipated and were not to be judged or imitated" and that Did. "effectively granted great liberty" to the prophets to do these things.[130] One reason Did. gives is God's pattern of having the Old Testament prophets do strange and evocative things.[131] This indicates that as long as long as a charismatic leader was proven and virtuous, an implication of his authority was his freedom to lead worship and embody his prophecies in strange ways.[132]

**Summary.** Even within its distinct ministerial structures, Did. renders the same theological judgments about pastoral authority as the other works examined: Pastoral authority is tethered to leader's virtue and rooted in God himself. This authority resulted in the expectation of obedience to pastoral leaders and in concrete applications.

## Pastoral Authority in the Shepherd of Hermas

The Shepherd of Hermas's vision for pastoral authority is admittedly less clear than other postapostolic writings. I will argue that pastoral authority is generally affirmed in Herm. rather than showing that its particular theological judgments about pastoral authority accord precisely with the above works. In doing so, I will examine Hermas's authority as a pastoral leader, the work's general affirmations of pastoral authority, and the picture of pastoral leaders as shepherds.

**Hermas's authority.** Hermas is commanded to declare the Lord's mighty acts to all people courageously;[133] he appears to be a pastoral leader of some kind, especially in

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[130] Milavec, *The Didache*, 466.

[131] Did. 11.11.

[132] Aune calls the prophet's prayer during the liturgy "idiosyncratic" and suggests that prophets were therefore "curiously irrelevant" for the life of the community. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 209. In contrast, I am arguing that the prophet's freedom to pray however he wishes is an implication of his authority, not his irrelevance.

[133] Herm. 114.1.

his preaching ministry.[134] Stewart-Sykes has even suggested that Herm. is a record of Hermas's own preaching.[135] These all seem to point to Hermas's authority in the community. Osiek avers, "Hermas' authority in the community rests on his possession of a written text of revelation which is to disseminate and himself proclaim with the presbyters."[136] While having a significant implied authority, Hermas is also under the authority of others, and regularly rebuked and instructed by various figures who represent God's authority, such as the Woman and the Shepherd.[137] So, while stated less explicitly, Hermas appears to be similar to Polycarp in Ign. *Pol*., a pastoral leader of significant authority who is under God's authority. Moreover, Hermas's virtue is a constant concern of the work. While not explicitly tying Hermas's authority to his virtue as other works do, these considerations point towards a similar picture of virtuous, accountable authority for pastoral leaders.

**Pastoral authority affirmed.** While Hermas's own authority is less clear, other pictures of pastoral authority in the work are clear enough for Dan Batovici to say, "The presbyters are present and they are presiding."[138] This affirmation of pastoral authority occurs primarily through authoritative descriptions of leaders. In Herm. 8.3, Hermas is instructed to read the vision to the city, along with "the presbyters who preside over the church."[139] The "presbyters" here likely refers to a college of elders that

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[134] Because of its particular relevance to pastoral suffering in Hermas, I will argue more extensively that Hermas was a pastoral leader in chap. 7. See Steve Young, "Being a Man: The Pursuit of Manliness in The Shepherd of Hermas," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 241-46; Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 260; Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching: In Search of the Origins of the Christian Homily*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 106-7.

[135] Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 108.

[136] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 14.

[137] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 16.

[138] Dan Batovici, "*The Shepherd of Hermas* as Early Christian Apocalypse," in Bird and Harrower, *Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, 302.

[139] "τῶν πρεσβυτέρων τῶν προϊσταμένων τῆς ἐκκλησίας." Herm. 8.3.

governed in the pattern of early Roman congregations.[140] These presbyters "preside over the church;" my translation follows Holmes in rendering προϊσταμένων as "preside over,"[141] with τῆς ἐκκλησίας as an idiomatic genitive construction that indicates subordination.[142] In other words, these leaders are "over the church;" they have a significant authority in Hermas's community. In a later passage those "who lead the church and occupy the first seats" are rebuked for their divisions, apparently for their desire for preeminence over one another.[143] While these leaders are rebuked, they are also pictured as the community's authorities. They are described as "προηγουμένοις," a word that appears in 1 Clem. 21.6 with clear connotations of spiritual authority.[144] Moreover, these leaders "occupy the first seats;" while this may be a sarcastic term for leaders who seek preeminence, it at least indicates "those in positions of leadership and authority."[145] These pictures of pastoral leaders in Hermas show that, even when rebuked, pastoral leaders had authority in the congregations they served.

**Pastoral leaders as shepherds.** The authority of pastoral leaders can also be inferred in Herm. from the fact that they are called shepherds in 108.4-6.[146] Near the

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[140] David Hellholm, "The Shepherd of Hermas," in *The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction*, ed. Wilhelm Pratscher, trans. Elizabeth G. Wolfe (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2010), 231.

[141] G. W. H. Lampe and Henry George Liddell, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 1151. Lampe specifically cites this passage as a particular use of the word in reference to church leadership, rendering it to "be leader, superior, be in command." See also Wallace, who offers the meaning "to rule, direct, be at the head of." Wallace, *Reader's Lexicon*, 152.

[142] For this genitive construction, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament: With Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 103-4.

[143] "τοῖς προηγουμένοις τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τοῖς πρωτοκαθεδρίταις." Herm. 17.7. See Hellholm, "The Shepherd of Hermas," 231.

[144] "τους προηγουμενους ἡμων." 1 Clem 21.6.

[145] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 81. See also Lampe and Wallace's renderings of προτοκαθερία, Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 1200; Wallace, *Reader's Lexicon*, 159.

[146] Contra Gomola, who argues that pastoral leaders "are not depicted as shepherds" in Hermas. Gomola, *Conceptual Blending*, 94. He appears to be unaware of or ignores Herm. 108, which goes unmentioned.

close of the work, it appears that church leaders "who have received this seal" are called to heal divisions "so that the Lord of the flocks may rejoice in them."[147] The "Lord" here is best taken as God, and he will rejoice over the flocks—the church—if he finds the sheep "safe and none of them are scattered. But if any of them are found scattered, woe to the shepherds. But if the shepherds themselves are found scattered, what will they say to the Lord of the flock?"[148] The clear biblical allusion to Ezekiel 34:1-10 and Jeremiah 23:1-4 indicate that pastoral leaders are in view in this passage.[149] Osiek comments, "The associations of shepherding with church leaders are early and unmistakable and the connection is implicitly made in 27.1-2."[150] A variety of early Christian descriptions of pastoral leaders as shepherds affirm pastoral authority as a key aspect of the metaphor.[151] This vision thus connects these leaders' authority to their responsibility and accountability to God, the Lord of the flock. The Shepherd himself, an authority figure throughout the work, closes this admonition by saying, "And I too, am a shepherd, and most certainly have to give an account for you."[152] The connections are clear: pastoral leaders, as shepherds of God's flock, have both authority and responsibility in their ministry.

**Other soundings.** There are other soundings for pastoral authority in the Shepherd of Hermas. For example, there appears to be an expectation that presbyters be honored and respected. When the lady instructs Hermas to sit down, he asks that the

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[147] Herm. 108.4. This and the following translations from Herm. 108 are from Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 675.

[148] Herm. 108.4-6.

[149] The combination of the concepts of "woe," "shepherds," and the "scattering" of the sheep make a strong case for allusion to these biblical passages.

[150] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 255.

[151] See nn63-64 above.

[152] Herm. 108.5.

presbyters might sit down first.[153] Sitting down is likely a position of honor; Hermas's desire for the elders to sit down is arguably a desire to give them first honor and respect.[154] Additionally, a command to "reverence the elders" is given as an application of self-control; while it is unclear whether the phrase refers specifically to older men or office holders, it indicates that these figures had spiritual authority.[155] Finally, in a way parallel to the Didache, Herm. 43.9-10 describes the true prophet as communicating God's words to the people. He is filled with the divine Spirit and "speaks to the multitude just as the Lord wills;" this picture strongly implies the authority of the righteous prophet's speech.[156] These factors taken together indicate that while Herm. does not give as clear of a vision as other works, it still witnesses to the apostolic and postapostolic vision for pastoral authority.

### Summary and Conclusion

While other documents in the collection of the Apostolic Fathers do not speak clearly about pastoral authority, this chapter has shown that when postapostolic works articulate pastoral authority, they do so with shared theological judgments. Even with distinct reasonings, conceptual frameworks, and ministry structures underlying their judgments about pastoral authority, the Apostolic Fathers share a commitment to four fundamental theological judgments about pastoral authority.

The first judgment these documents make is an explicit connection between pastoral authority and pastoral virtue. Ignatius pictures the bishop being bishopped by

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[153] Herm. 9.8. There is significant debate on whether the πρεσβύτεροι mentioned in this passage are church officials or a more general reference to the elder/honored members of the congregation. Osiek argues against these figures being church leaders but notes that most of the other literature argues for this phrase indicating church leadership. Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 62-63.

[154] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 62-63.

[155] "πρεσβύτας σέβεσθαι." Herm. 38.10. See Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon,* 1131.

[156] "αλεῖ εἰς τὸ πλῆθος, καθὼς ὁ Κύριος βούλεται," Herm. 43.9-10. This is Holmes's translation, see Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers,* 543.

God and only leading insofar as he is following God. Polycarp, who knew of and praised Ignatius's letters, commanded obedience to presbyters and then immediately insisted on their virtue.[157] Clement's insistence that the Corinthian elders had been wrongly deposed is directly connected to their virtuous ministries. The Didache, even with the freedom and authority it grants to prophets, demands strict moral tests for them and makes virtue a prerequisite for the community's institutional leaders. While pastoral authority is described more obliquely in Hermas, it is described right alongside rebukes towards the lack of virtue in these leaders. The proximity of descriptions of pastoral authority to prescriptions of pastoral virtue provide significant evidence for a postapostolic vision for pastoral authority being tethered to pastoral virtue.

A second theological judgment that permeates these documents is an insistence that pastoral leaders be obeyed, respected, and honored. As I have shown, the submission due to pastoral leaders is not a despotic right to control congregations but a posture of respect, honor, and deference to them. Ignatius, Polycarp, and Clement each command obedience and honor to leaders directly; the Didache commands honor and regard for leaders implying obedience; the Shepherd of Hermas describes leaders as those authoritatively presiding over congregations. With various situations behind these writings, the insistence on obedience to leaders is a striking indicator of a unified postapostolic vision for pastoral authority, one that coheres with the New Testament's vision.

The manner in which pastoral leaders should be submitted to—"as the Lord"—reveals a shared judgment about God as the foundation for pastoral authority. Ignatius, Polycarp, and the Didache explicitly argue that pastoral leaders should be seen and obeyed "as the Lord," with varying ways of relating a pastoral leader's authority to God and Christ's authority. Polycarp describes this tersely, Ignatius pictures pastoral leaders

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[157] See Pol. *Phil.* 13.2 and William R. Schoedel, "Polycarp's Witness to Ignatius of Antioch," *Vigiliae Christianae* 41, no. 1 (March 1987): 1-10.

as directly appointed and representative of God, and the Didache argues that leaders teaching faithfully communicate and represent the presence of the Lord. Even though 1 Clement focuses on the historical appointment of leaders as validating their authority, it still grounds their historical appointment to God himself, who sent Christ and the apostles. Once in the Shepherd of Hermas, pastoral leaders are pictured as shepherds, which at least affirms their authority and possibly pictures them as representing God, the chief shepherd.[158] While the specific way a leader's authority was related to God's authority differed, the authors share the judgment that a pastoral leader's authority was rooted in God's authority.

Ignatius, 1 Clement, and the Didache also describe particular, practical implications of pastoral authority. Ignatius and Clement connect one's spiritual health and even salvation to one's obedience to pastoral leaders. Gathering under the authority of the bishop and his oversight over practical matters in the congregation's life was of particular importance to Ignatius. Clement emphasizes that for those caught in a grievous sin such as rebellion, pastoral leaders were allowed to make specific and concrete demands for them to demonstrate their repentance. The Didache emphasizes the freedom itinerant pastoral leaders as an entailment of their authority. While different in particular application, pastoral authority was not nebulous for these writers but had practical consequences in the life of the church.

I will close this chapter by making two comments related to present scholarship on pastoral authority in the Apostolic Fathers. First, the theological nature of these conceptions for ministerial authority bears emphasizing, especially with the prevailing consensus that early Christian ministry was sociologically influenced. While O'Maier said that his sociological analysis did not intend to completely supplant the prevalence of theology and ideas for the development of leadership in the early church, the trajectory of

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[158] Gomola, while not specifically citing Herm 108 as representative of this, describes that one of the key metaphors of early patristic pastoral literature was "Shepherds as the Shepherd." Gomola, *Conceptual Blending*, 75-76.

his analysis has done just that.[159] The text themselves, however, make *theological* arguments for the authority of pastoral leaders. These theological articulations of ministerial authority seem to confirm that the offices of early Christianity developed primarily in a theological, rather than a sociological, context.

Secondly, the most heated debate surrounding the Apostolic Fathers has been the historicity and validity of episcopacy for the church today. Scholars who wish to ground elements of episcopacy in the Apostolic Fathers may have soundings from Ignatius and 1 Clement. They must, however, wrestle with the insistence of virtuous and humble ministry to the flock as much more clearly stated in these documents. It is inconceivable from these documents to argue for an unbroken apostolic succession of legitimate ordinations *irrespective* of the virtue and ministry of historical and present ecclesiastical officials. Arguments for a binding church structure from the Apostolic Fathers are admittedly abstractions and implications; arguments for the absolute necessity of virtuous ministers to the flock are evident and clear. In this regard the Apostolic Fathers are in accord with the Protestant Reformers who argued that unvirtuous church leaders, whatever claims to succession they might make, were not true ones.

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[159] O'Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry*, 41.

CHAPTER 6

"DO JUSTICE TO YOUR OFFICE": PASTORAL
WORK IN THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Two previous chapters have argued for theological unity in the Apostolic

Fathers about postapostolic pastoral identity: who pastoral leaders needed to be, and how

they were conceived of in postapostolic literature. So far, I have shown that virtue and

authority were inherent to postapostolic pastoral identity and tethered to one another in

ways commensurate with apostolic pastoral theology. However, at least two additional

questions remain: Do the Apostolic Fathers have a shared vision for what pastoral leaders

*did*, and does this vision for pastoral work agree in substance with the New Testament's?

After surveying common views about pastoral work in the Apostolic Fathers, this chapter

will argue that they articulate a shared vision for the purpose and nature of pastoral work

which carries forward the apostolic vision for pastoral work. In the vision of these texts,

pastoral leaders labor for the sanctification of God's people. They do so through teaching

and preaching, a general spiritual oversight, and care for the needy in their congregations.

**Scholarship on Pastoral Work in the Apostolic Fathers**

Scholars typically view pastoral work in the Apostolic Fathers according to

their particular reconstructions of early Christianity. Below I will outline the most

prominent approaches and how they conceive of pastoral work, citing representative

figures. While some of this will restate the approaches outlined in the introductory

chapters, I will focus on how these approaches conceive of pastoral work in postapostolic

Christianity.

Essential to one's understanding of pastoral work in the Apostolic Fathers is

how one conceives of the institutional offices in early Christianity, especially the

relationship between the terms πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος. J. B. Lightfoot argued that in earliest Christianity the terms were functionally synonymous, indicating one kind of leader named with different terms, a position with many historic and present advocates.[1] With this understanding, πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος, as synonymous offices, have general pastoral oversight and teaching responsibilities.[2] As time went on, first evident in the epistles of Ignatius of Antioch, the ἐπίσκοπος becomes a "chief among equals," a leader among the πρεσβύτεροι, taking the lead role in spiritual oversight over congregations.[3] James Tunstead Burtchaell's *From Synagogue to Church*, while situating early Christian leadership within the synagogue, agrees with this basic outline, arguing for the early equivalence of the offices and the bishop as the "elder par excellence" who grew to more and more importance through the second century.[4] This narrative has been nuanced by proponents and extensively challenged.[5] Significant for my analysis, those who understand the offices in earliest Christianity this way assign general pastoral duties, especially spiritual oversight and preaching, to pastoral leaders.

Many who see the house church model or cultural patterns of leadership as

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[1] For examples of the historical consensus, see J. B. Lightfoot, *Philippians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 111; Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 13 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966), 40-47; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1963), 13. For a modern representative of this general view see Benjamin L. Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church*, Studies in Biblical Literature 57 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 157-60.

[2] J. B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 21.

[3] Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, 20-25. See also Eric George Jay, "From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters: Christian Ministry in the Second Century; a Survey," *Second Century* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 161-62.

[4] James Tunstead Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 297, 310-12. Like Allen Brent, Burtchaell argues for the basic parity of elders and bishops even in Ignatius's epistles. See Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy*, T & T Clark Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 308-9.

[5] For a nuanced version of this view, see Jay, "From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters," 137-38. Jay attributes preaching and evangelism to the presbyters and oversight and liturgical leadership to the bishop, particularly evidenced in the epistles of Ignatius.

most significant for the development of the offices (the second consensus) have argued for varying degrees of difference between the πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος in earliest Christianity.[6] As I showed in chapter 2, household readings of early Christianity have argued that because early Christian congregations were house churches, the leaders of these congregations needed to be those Christians who were wealthy enough to own large homes and act as host/patron.[7] The ἐπίσκοπος was first and foremost the wealthy patron and leader of a single house church; while all ἐπίσκοπος would be considered a part of the communal πρεσβύτεροι, not all πρεσβύτεροι would be ἐπίσκοπος.[8] Alistair Stewart-Sykes is the most prominent recent advocate of this approach, though he argues more strongly for a distinction between πρεσβύτεροι and επίσκοποι than previous scholars and argues that the earliest bishops only had economic functions in their congregations.[9] In a different conception, R. A. Campbell, drawing from Rudolph Sohm, argues that the earliest πρεβύτεροι were "those who bear a title of honour, not of office, a title that is imprecise, collective and representative, and rooted in the ancient family or household."[10]

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[6] However, see Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 105, 268-80. While Gehring's study is the most comprehensive argument for the household context of early Christianity, he does not place as much weight on the early distinction between ἐπίσκοπος and πρεβύτερος, suggesting that this was a relatively late development.

[7] Harry O'Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1991), 4.

[8] O'Maier, *Social Setting of the Ministry*, 63-64.

[9] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Original Bishops: Office and Order in the First Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 6, 187. Stewart-Sykes describes all of the arguments for the equivalency of πρεσβύτεροι and επίσκοποι to be a "scholarly fictions." He elaborates on his particular theory:

> The apparent synonymy may be explained by suggesting that the scattered Christian communities of the first centuries might have operated some form of loose federation by which individual Christian officers from different communities in a city or area might meet together to deal with issues of common concern, and that the references to presbyters in the two instances that are fundamental to the consensus are references to gatherings of these leaders. However they may have been designated in their individual communities, I suggest that they were known as presbyters in their common gathering . . . presbyteroi would be a collective term that might well include episkopoi. (15-16)

[10] R. A. Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 244-45.

These πρεσβύτεροι did lead, however, primarily in celebrating the Eucharist in their household churches.[11] In Campbell's narrative the growing need for institutionalized leadership, congregations eventually adopted an ἐπίσκοπος, a singular leader, leading to a loss of honor for the individual πρεσβύτεροι who led house churches. The conflict between these figures is Campbell's key background consideration in reading 1 Clem. and the Ignatian corpus, though he admits it is a tentative reconstruction.[12] Regarding pastoral work in the Apostolic Fathers, the second consensus approach tends to do two things. First, some deny any functional unity about the work of pastoral leaders, instead separating different works to different kinds of leaders. Secondly, it can view the πρεσβύτεροι particularly as honored older individuals who led the community, but did not necessarily preach or preside in particular congregations. So, this approach often downplays pastoral work for some leaders or divides pastoral work between particular kinds of leaders.

With a different kind of division between leaders, Hans van Campenhausen argued for significant diversity in the postapostolic age concerning pastoral work along geographic lines:

> The documents of the sub-apostolic age . . . fall naturally into three definite groups, from three different provinces of the empire; and each of the three groups displays a different concept of ecclesiastical office . . . . In Rome the bishop is primarily the supreme cultic official of the congregation, in Syria he is its spiritual example and sacral focus, in Asia Minor he is above all the ordained preacher of the apostolic teaching. These are the three main possible evaluations of church offices; and in later Church history we hardly ever again find them in isolation and in such pure form as we do in Clement, in Ignatius, and in the Pastoral Epistles.[13]

Not only does Campenhausen divide these "isolated" and "pure" conceptions of office based on location, he states that they are witnessed to by the Apostolic Fathers. Moreover, instead of focusing on distinctions between ἐπίσκοποι and πρεσβύτεροι, he

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[11] Campbell, *The Elders*, 210-21.

[12] Campbell, *The Elders*, 213-19, 245.

[13] Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. J. A. Baker (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1969), 120.

argued that whatever terms were used the fundamental conceptions of spiritual leadership were different in different areas.[14] Some pastoral leaders were preachers, in other regions they were the "supreme cultic officials," in a final they were spiritual examples. He furthermore goes on to note with surprise the uniform development of the office across geographic areas in spite of these fundamental differences in pastoral practice in the subapostolic age.[15] Though he did not admit this, it appears that the uniform development of offices in later periods undermines his regional approach.

Another determining factor regarding pastoral work is how one perceives the relationship between "institutional" leaders (ἐπίσκοπος, πρεσβύτερος and διάκονος) and the "charismatic" leaders (προφήτης, ἀπόστολος and διδάσκαλος), especially regarding teaching and preaching. Most often, scholars who argue for development and discontinuity in early Christianity (the first consensus) make sharp distinctions between the work of these leaders. After the discovery of the Didache, Adolf von Harnack famously articulated a twofold structure in early Christianity, with itinerant charismatic leaders ministering alongside local, congregationally elected institutional leaders with primarily administrative responsibilities.[16] Over time, the institutional leaders took over prophetic roles and eventually the bishop took prominence over the elders. Rudolph Sohm strongly objected to Harnack's theory, arguing for a purely charismatic structure in earliest Christianity which eventually gave way to the threefold institutionalized ministry.[17] Significant to these debates was the question of teaching and preaching. In Harnack and Sohm's narratives, the earliest Christians had only prophetic teachers; bishops and elders taking on teaching roles was a novel development to which the

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[14] Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 120.

[15] Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 120.

[16] Adolf von Harnack, *Die Lehre der zwölf Apostel, nebst Untersuchungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Kirchenverfassung und des Kirchenrecht* (Leipzig: Hinrichs: 1884), 88-150.

[17] Rudolph Sohm, *Wesen und Ursprung des Katholizmus* (Leipzig, 1910).

Apostolic Fathers partly bear witness. One of the most recent and thorough examinations of early Christian preaching along these lines is Alistair Stewart-Sykes's *From Prophecy to Preaching*, where he argues that "the prophetic message, the original form of communication, is replaced or supplemented with the scriptural message."[18] Stewart-Sykes notes that by the time of the Apostolic Fathers there was evidence of preaching activity from bishops and presbyters, but that this was a result of the "synagogalization and scholasticization" of the church.[19] Helpfully for my analysis below, Stewart-Sykes describes a homily or sermon as "oral communication of the word of God in the Christian assembly."[20] I will argue below that both this and the more informal, person-to-person communication of scriptural truth were key pastoral responsibilities. However, his approach falls in general lines with the rest of the first consensus, which argues that while preaching was a work of institutionalized offices in postapostolic Christianity, this was a novel development.[21]

## Pastoral Work in the Apostolic Fathers: A Theological Vision

So, while most approaches to pastoral work tend to divide different works between differently conceived offices, I will argue that the Apostolic Fathers share a vision for pastoral work for all pastoral leaders. However leaders are described, they are to labor for the sanctification of God's people. These leaders do so chiefly through teaching and preaching, also presiding over Christian gatherings in a variety of capacities. If there is distinction about pastoral work between different offices, it is in the Didache, where charismatic and institutional leaders appear to have different particular works

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[18] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching: In Search of the Origins of the Christian Homily*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2001, 90.

[19] Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 90.

[20] Steward-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 90.

[21] For evidence of preaching and teaching as pastoral work in the apostolic period, see chap. 3.

ascribed to them, though distinctions between these leaders are mitigated by Did. 15.1's assertion that they share the same ministry. Questions about Did. aside, there is a clear vision for pastoral work in the Apostolic Fathers that shares specific theological judgments. As in previous chapters, analysis will begin with Ign. *Pol.*, move through the Ignatian corpus and examine 1 Clem., Did., and Herm. in turn. Additionally, 2 Clement, the Martyrdom of Polycarp, and the Epistle of Barnabas contain relevant passages that will also briefly be examined. The collective vision of these texts, while possibly showing some development in role of pastoral leaders in Christian gatherings, paints the same picture of pastoral work as the New Testament, especially of the pastor as one who preached and gave general oversight for the sanctification of God's people.

**Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp**

The bulk of Ignatius's epistle to Polycarp describes pastoral work and exhorts Polycarp towards it.[22] It thus "sheds a good deal of light on the ministry of a bishop as Ignatius understood it."[23] Ignatius's vision for pastoral work in this letter is best summarized by his statement in 1.2: "Do justice to your office with all care for both spiritual and physical matters."[24] Three elements of this exhortation reveal Ignatius's vision for pastoral work. First, this work must be excellent to fulfill high office of bishop. Similar Paul's encouragements to Timothy, Polycarp must "do justice" to his office. While some have argued that this phrase means that Polycarp is under fire and must "defend" his office, this interpretation lacks both lexical and historical warrant.[25] Instead,

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[22] William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 259.

[23] Francis A. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of Episcopacy in the Early Church* (Pine Beach, NJ: Newman, 2001), 120.

[24] "ἐκδίκει σου τὸν τόπον ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιμελείᾳ σαρκικῇ τε καὶ πνευματικῇ." Ign. *Pol*. 1.2.

[25] Schoedel takes this view, see Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 259. No other instances of translating "ἐκδικέω" as "defend" appear in early Christian literature, see BDAG 300-301 and L&N 38.8, 39.33, and 56.35. Moreover, the Smyrnaean church seems to have a good relationship with its bishop. For example, compare Ign. *Smyrn.* Sal. with Ign. *Phld*. Sal. Apart from assuming disunity in Polycarp's church

it is best to see this phrase as exhorting Polycarp to labor worthily to fulfill his high office, or as Vall has put it, "prove that you are the right man for the job!"[26] He is do so "with all care"—a dative of means that communicates the intense and difficult labor which will be how Polycarp fulfills his office.[27] Finally, Polycarp must give his constant care to "both spiritual and physical matters." The bishop's sphere for labor was not limited merely to "spiritual matters" such as right teaching but also "physical matters" like the church's planned gatherings and care for the poor. Below, I show that Ignatius fleshes out his command for Polycarp to "do justice to your office" with four theological judgments shared with the rest of the Apostolic Fathers: (1) the purpose of pastoral work is the sanctification of the church, and that work consists of (2) general spiritual oversight, (3) teaching/preaching, and (4) oversight of to care for the needy.

**Sanctification and preaching.** Sanctification and preaching will be taken together because Ignatius places them together twice in Ign. *Pol*. The "race" of Polycarp's ministry must be run with the following charge: "Exhort all people, so that they may be saved."[28] The command to "exhort" clearly has verbal teaching or preaching in view, with the word being used to describe the teaching work of pastoral leaders in 2 Timothy 4:2 and Titus 1:9. While evangelism could be an aspect of this exhortation, it is most likely a charge to exhort all the people in Polycarp's congregation unto salvation,

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in the prevalent narrative of conflict and discord in early Christianity, there appears to be no warrant for Ignatius telling Polycarp he needed to defend his office.

[26] Gregory Vall, *Learning Christ: Ignatius of Antioch and the Mystery of Redemption* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2013), 346. Citing this passage, BDAG glosses "ἐκδικέω" as "to carry out one's responsibilities in a worthy manner" (300-301). See also G. W. H. Lampe and Henry George Liddell, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 426. For a parallel encouragement in the Pastoral Epistles, see 2 Tim 4:5, and 1 Tim 4:6-16.

[27] Campbell, *The Elders*, 219.

[28] "πάντας παρακαλεῖν ἵνα σῴζωνται." Ign. *Pol*. 1.2. This is Holmes's translation, see Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 263.

once again parallel to Paul's exhortations to Timothy.[29] Additionally, in one of the more famous passages of this epistle, Ignatius exhorts Polycarp to "flee wicked practices, rather, preach a sermon about them."[30] Polycarp himself must flee from wicked practices for his own spiritual safety; he also must publicly preach against them, apparently for his hearers' sanctification. Aside from Stewart-Sykes, the "virtually unanimous opinion of commentators" takes the phrase "ὁμιλίαν ποιοῦ" to indicate public preaching in the gathered congregation.[31] Both of these passages thus command preaching for a pastoral leader, directly connecting it to the sanctification of God's people.

**General teaching and preaching.** Outside of two passages that connect preaching with sanctification, Ignatius also commands general teaching and preaching. Polycarp is to "προσλάλει" the married women of the congregation and "παράγγελλε" the men concerning the Lord's will for their marriages.[32] Each of these words connotes oral speech that applies truth to hearers' lives.[33] Similarly to Ephesians 5:25-29, the husbands and wives are to be given concrete and yet distinct exhortations for marriage; Ignatius also relates their posture and behavior toward their spouses with their love for the Lord.[34] More generally, Polycarp is to λάλει to the people individually, according to God's

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[29] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 206. See 1 Tim 4:16.

[30] "Τὰς κακοτεχνίας φεῦγε, μᾶλλον δὲ περὶ τούτων ὁμιλίαν ποιοῦ." Ign. *Pol*. 5.1. Rendering ποιοῦ as "preach" in this context is warranted because of the word's generic use for carrying out an activity, see L&N, 42.7.

[31] Stewart-Sykes notes the virtually unanimous opinion against his own. Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 20. He cites, among others, Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 271; Pierre Thomas Camelot, *Ignace d'Antioche, Polycarpe de Smyrne: letteres, martyre de Polcarpe* (Paris, Cerf, 1951), 175; J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (London: Macmillan, 1889), 2:347. Kevin Giles also affirms this reading. Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry among the First Christians,* 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017) 192. Stewart-Sykes argues that there is a conversational element present in this phrase, and that public preaching in the gathered congregation is not yet in view.

[32] Ign. *Pol*. 5.1.

[33] See L&N 33.71, Acts 13:43; L&N 33.327, Mark 8:6, and 1 Tim 1:3.

[34] Schoedel also notes the connection to Eph 5:25 and 29. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 272. See n58 below for Stewart-Sykes seeing the same word used of Onesimus as indicating public preaching activity.

example.[35] As the bishop who represents God to the congregation, Polycarp is to imitate God's individual care for every member of the congregation by engaging in personal, edifying speech to each of them.[36]

**General sanctification.** Outside of sanctification's particular connection to preaching, Ignatius describes it as the purpose of pastoral work, especially through the use of imagery. Polycarp is encouraged that "the age requires you as pilots need wind and as the storm-tossed a harbor, in order to attain to God."[37] "Attaining God," the goal of the Christian life as articulated by Ignatius, is why "the times," or "the age," needs Polycarp.[38] In other words, Polycarp is to be an instrument for others reaching God in his milieu. In doing so he will be like wind which rescues ships stuck in a calm and like a safe harbor from a storm's danger. This pictures Polycarp's ministry consisting of pressing his congregation on and comforting them in affliction, all for their edification.[39]

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[35] Ign. *Pol.* 1.3.

[36] Robert M. Grant notes that the same phrase "ὁμοήθειαν Θεοῦ" is used in Ign. *Magn.* 6.3, where Ignatius exhorts the Magnesian congregation to respect one another after God's example. Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary* (1965; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 4:130.

[37] "ὁ καιρὸς ἀπαιτεῖ σε, ὡς κυβερνῆται ἀνέμους καὶ ὡς χειμαζόμενος λιμένα, εἰς τὸ Θεοῦ ἐπιτυχεῖν." Ign. *Pol.* 2.3.

[38] Ignatius particularly uses "Θεοῦ ἐπιτύχω" to describe his impending martyrdom as the culmination of the Christian life in imitation of Christ and receiving the reward promised, see Ign. *Eph.* 12.1, Ign. *Magn.* 14.1, Ign. *Trall.* 13.3, and in multiple passages in Ign. *Rom.* Carl B. Smith argues that this phrase indicates that Ignatius "hopes to attain to a state of perfection" through his sufferings. Carl B. Smith, "Ministry, Martyrdom, and Other Mysteries: Pauline Influence on Ignatius of Antioch," in *Paul and the Second Century*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Joseph R. Dodson, Library of New Testament Studies 412 (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 53.

[39] The translation of the phrase "ὁ καιρὸς ἀπαιτεῖ σε . . . εἰς τὸ Θεοῦ ἐπιτυχεῖν" is debated in the literature. Grant and Schoedel render it as the occasion requiring Polycarp himself to attain to God, "the occasion requires you to attain to God." Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 4:131; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 264. William Varner renders it "the age is in need of you, if it is to reach God." William Varner, *The Apostolic Fathers*: *An Introduction and Translation* (London: T & T Clark, 2023), 162. Holmes gives a similar translation: "The time needs you . . . in order to reach God." Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 265. Varner and Holmes's translations appear superior here, with a straightforward rendering of καιρὸς as "the times" and ἀπαιτεῖ as "needs," and as best accounting for Ignatius's imagery. Grant even notes that his rendering of Ignatius's nautical imagery goes against Ignatius's actual usage, but he assumes Ignatius is mixing metaphors. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 4:131. Moreover, "reaching God" in Ignatius's use is

**General oversight.** Ign. *Pol.* also articulates a vision for pastoral leaders giving general oversight to the congregation. Ignatius exhorts Polycarp to "let nothing be without your consent," likely referring to Ignatius's concern expressed elsewhere that gatherings of the church be under the bishop's oversight and approval.[40] Indeed, immediately after this exhortation Polycarp is told to ensure the church gathers more regularly.[41] More than giving corporate oversight, Ignatius exhorts Polycarp to personal oversight. Polycarp must take particular attention to the "pestilential" or "troublesome" disciples, ensuring that they too reach submission and righteousness.[42] In his labor to bring them into submission, Polycarp is to heal spiritual wounds, indicating that the "submission" in view is a submission to God and not just to the authority of church leaders.[43] As I have examined above, Ignatius's instructions regarding married Christians indicate that Polycarp is to exercise general spiritual oversight over his people, with particular applications given according to their social state. The fact that his instructions about pastoring married people in the congregation are sandwiched by instructions regarding the oversight of the celibate and slaves further confirm the pastor's practical oversight: no matter a Christian's social or marital status, he or she is to be under the pastor's personal and instructive care.[44]

**Care for the needy.** Stewart-Sykes has rightly pointed out that "concern for

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usually associated with final salvation, and in this context, particularly with previous verses being centered on Polycarp's ministerial efforts, appear to best be viewed as Ignatius saying that the times need Polycarp's ministry in order to attain salvation.

[40] "μηδὲν ἄνευ γνώμης σου γινέσθω," Ign. *Pol*. 4.1.

[41] Ign. *Pol*. 4.2.

[42] "τοὺς λοιμοτέρους," Ign. *Pol.* 2.1.

[43] Contra Schoedel, who argues that this command is about social control and not obedience to God. From Ign. *Pol*. 2.1 he says that "the control over the community is to be total." Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 262.

[44] Ign. *Pol*. 4.3, 5.2.

the poor is fundamental to Ignatius's vision of episcopacy."[45] Ign. *Pol.* 4.1 articulates this concern clearly: "Do not allow the widows to be neglected. After the Lord, you be their guardian."[46] In the same way that the bishop is to represent God in other ways in the life of a congregation, Polycarp is to represent God's care through his caring attention to the widows of the congregation. Indeed, especially in his compassionate care for the poor, the bishop's ministry "is *one* of the ways in which the Lord's love and providence becomes tangibly present in the lives of Christians."[47] The fact that pastoral leaders represent God and Christ does not only support their authority in Ignatius's vision, but also requires them to demonstrate God's providence through their care for the needy.

**Ignatius's Congregational Epistles**

Aside from the explicit requirement that pastoral leaders care for the poor, the vision for pastoral work in Ign. *Pol.* appears point for point in Ignatius's other letters. Scholars generally agree that Ignatius envisions pastoral leaders having oversight and liturgical leadership for the sanctification of their congregations.[48] However, significant disagreements persist on whether or not Ignatius envisions teaching and preaching as essential pastoral work.[49] I will argue below that Ignatius's congregational epistles are

[45] Stewart-Sykes, *Original Bishops*, 211. It is important to note that while I agree with Stewart-Sykes on this point, he tends to limit the role of the bishop to *merely* economic oversight and care for the poor. On the care for the poor as a pastoral responsibility in Ignatius, see Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 121.

[46] "Χῆραι μὴ ἀμελείσθωσαν μετὰ τὸν Κύριον σὺ αὐτῶν φροντιστὴς ἔσο." Ign. *Pol*. 4.1. My translation is very similar to Holmes's. See Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 265.

[47] Vall, *Learning Christ*, 345-46.

[48] See, for example, James F. McCue, "Bishops, Presbyters, and Priests in Ignatius of Antioch" *Theological Studies* 28, no. 4 (December 1967): 828-34; Ray Robert Noll, *Christian Ministerial Priesthood: A Search for Its Beginnings in the Primary Documents of the Apostolic Fathers* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars, 1993), 104.

[49] For a recent argument that Ignatius does not envision teaching as an essential pastoral work, see Karen Piepenbrink, "Zur Perzeption des kirchlichen Amtes durch einen, 'Märtyerbischof,'" in *Die Briefe des Ignatios von Antiochia: Motive, Strategien, Kontexte*, ed. Thomas Johann Bauer and Peter von Möllendorff, Millennium-Studien 72 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 143-44.

less explicit about the nature of pastoral work but still show that pastoral leaders minister for the goal of sanctification, preach, practice general spiritual oversight, and preside at worship. Regarding preaching specifically, I will show that the close association of pastoral leaders with orthodox doctrine confirms that Ignatius viewed these leaders as teachers and preachers.

**Ministry for sanctification.** Several passages from Ignatius's congregational epistles describe the purpose of pastoral ministry as sanctification. In speaking of the bishop of the Philadelphian church, Ignatius says that this bishop obtained "his ministry which belongs to the community."[50] The bishop's "ministry" or "service" (διακονίαν) is directed towards and related properly to the community.[51] Though sanctification is not explicitly mentioned in this passage, Ignatius is directing the work of pastoral leaders towards the community's well-being. Further support for this reading is Ign. *Phld.* 1.1's resemblance to Pauline pastoral theology. Grant avers that this bishop "has a ministry . . . essentially analogous to that of the Apostle Paul, whose words Ignatius paraphrases in describing it."[52] While Ignatius's lexical use of Pauline passages here primarily describe *how* the bishop received his ministry, Paul repeatedly emphasized that his ministry was for the spiritual good of God's people, giving another reason to see the Philadelphian bishop's ministry as directed towards his congregation's spiritual good.[53]

Ignatius also connects pastoral ministry to sanctification by describing the Ephesian congregation's submission to pastoral authority as sanctifying: "You, joined together in one obedience, submitting to the bishop and council of presbyters, may be

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[50] "τὴν διακονίαν τὴν εἰς τὸ κοινὸν ἀνήκουσαν." Ign. *Phld.* 1.1.

[51] BDAG renders the verb ἀνήκουσαν in Ign. *Phld.* 1.1 as "a service to the church." This same verb is used in Ign. *Symrn.* 8.1 in a context that clearly indicates "things which belong to the church" or are related to the church.

[52] Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 4:99. Grant gives Gal 1:1 and Phil 2:3 as Pauline allusions here.

[53] See 2 Cor 4:15, Phil 1:25, and 1 Thess 2:19-20.

sanctified in all things."[54] Grammatically, this statement connects sanctification to submission to pastoral leaders: the main verbal phrase ἦτε ἡγιασμένοι is modified by the participial phrase ὑποτασσόμενοι τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ καὶ τῷ πρεσβυτερίῳ. The best way to understand the relationship between these phrases is that the means of the congregation's sanctification will be their obedience to pastoral leaders. Moreover, their sanctification is connected to the glory of Christ.[55] Though the authority of pastoral leaders is the most emphasized aspect of Ignatian pastoral theology, Ignatius himself emphasizes that this authority is for the sanctification of the church and the glory of Christ.

**General oversight.** While Ign. *Eph.* 2.2 describes the benefits of obedience, many more passages directly command obedience, as I described in a previous chapter. One implication of these commands is that general leadership and oversight was a central component of pastoral work in Ignatius's vision.[56] Again, while many assume that such commands to obey pastoral leaders were indicative of widespread resistance to leaders, Ignatius imposing a new ministry structure, or Ignatius relating his own experience of being deposed, a more straightforward way to read these commands is that the role of pastoral leaders was to *lead*. Ign. *Phld.* 2.1 portrays this dynamic using shepherding imagery. Instead of being persuaded by false teachers or succumbing to division, the church should "instead, where the shepherd is, there follow like sheep."[57] Of the various previously mentioned connotations of shepherding imagery, leadership is the chief duty. If the congregation is called to submit to and follow pastoral leaders, it follows that these figures were to actively lead the congregation.

[54] "ἐν μιᾷ ὑποταγῇ κατηρτισμένοι, ὑποτασσόμενοι τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ καὶ τῷ πρεσβυτερίῳ, κατὰ πάντα ἦτε ἡγιασμένοι." Ign. *Eph*. 2.2.

[55] Ign. *Eph.* 2.2 begins with an exhortation to glorify Christ.

[56] The passages are numerous in the Ignatian corpus. See, for example, Ign. *Phld.* 7.1-2; Ign. *Smyrn*. 8.1, 9.1; Ign. *Trall*. 2.1-2, 13.2; Ign. *Eph.* 2.2, 6.1, and 20.2.

[57] "ὅπου δὲ ὁ ποιμήν ἐστιν, ἐκεῖ ὡς πρόβατα ἀκολουθεῖτε." Ign. *Phld.* 2.1.

**Presiding at gatherings.** One particular way these men led was by presiding at church gatherings.[58] Aside from commands to "do nothing" without the bishop,[59] Ignatius particularly insists on the bishop's presence and approval of the ordinances and gatherings of the congregation:

> Let no one, apart from the bishop, do things which relate to the church. The only Eucharist [which is] to be considered reliable is under the bishop, or, whomever he entrusts it. Where the bishop appears, there let the assembly be, just as where Jesus Christ is, there [is] the catholic church. It is not permissible without the bishop either to baptize or hold a love feast. But whatever he approves, this also [is] acceptable to God, that everything you do may be steadfast and reliable.[60]

The things that "have to do with the church" must be approved by the bishop and include baptism, the Lord's Supper, and other gatherings of the church.[61] Ignatius's insistence on the bishop's involvement in the Eucharist and baptism is not because he is a liturgical or sacramental figure—he may in fact entrust presiding over Eucharist to someone else. Ignatius's concern is that the bishop is overseeing and approving all church gatherings. Not only must he approve of gatherings, but when he sets them, the congregation has a duty to attend in unity with him. While such statements have implications for Ignatius's view of pastoral authority, they also describe organizing and leading church gatherings as a key aspect of pastoral work. Once again, if congregations will follow the lead of their bishop in their gatherings, they will be steadfast and pleasing to God.

**Teaching and preaching.** While some scholars downplay the teaching role of

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[58] Hervé Legrand, "The Presidency of the Eucharist According to the Ancient Tradition," *Worship* 53, no. 5 (September 1979): 418-19. However, from Ign. *Phld*. 4.1, it is implied that presbyters were involved in presiding over the Eucharist as well.

[59] Ign. *Magn.* 7.1; Ign. *Phld.* 7.1.

[60] "μηδεὶς χωρὶς ἐπισκόπου τι πρασσέτω τῶν ἀνηκόντων εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. ἐκείνη βεβαία εὐχαριστία ἡγείσθω ἡ ὑπὸ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον οὖσα, ἢ ᾧ ἂν αὐτὸς ἐπιτρέψῃ. ὅπου ἂν φανῇ ὁ ἐπίσκοπος, ἐκεῖ τὸ πλῆθος ἔστω, ὥσπερ ὅπου ἂν ᾖ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, ἐκεῖ ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία. οὐκ ἐξόν ἐστιν χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπισκόπου οὔτε βαπτίζειν οὔτε ἀγάπην ποιεῖν ἀλλ' ὃ ἂν ἐκεῖνος δοκιμάσῃ, τοῦτο καὶ τῷ Θεῷ εὐάρεστον, ἵνα ἀσφαλὲς ᾖ καὶ βέβαιον πᾶν ὃ πράσσετε." Ign. *Smyrn.* 8.1-2.

[61] The other gatherings in view here are "whatever he approves." I have followed most translators in rendering "ἀγάπην ποιεῖν" in reference to the "love feast." See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 244.

pastoral leaders in the Ignatian corpus, Ignatius pictures pastoral leaders as teachers and preachers, especially by associating them with sound doctrine.[62] The previously cited command to follow the shepherd like sheep is immediately preceded by the command to "flee from division and evil teachings."[63] Not only will following pastoral leaders produce unity, it will ensure that believers hold to orthodox teaching. A closer association of pastoral leaders with orthodox teaching comes in the letter to the Trallians, when Ignatius exhorts them to "guard against" false and wicked teachers. They will do this if they embrace humility and are "inseparable from Jesus Christ and the bishop and the commandments of the apostles."[64] Once again, the bishop is placed in opposition to false teachers; this time he is also associated with the commandments of the apostles. Mikael Isacson says that Ign. *Trall.* 7.1 argues that "the means by which" the congregation can avoid the evil teachers is by "following the bishop."[65] Odd Magne Bakke goes further in his assessment, saying that the persistent association of the bishop with true teaching again "presupposes that it is the bishop who watches over right teaching."[66] In other words, while only Ign. *Pol.* directly commands preaching and teaching for pastoral

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[62] Two recent proponents of this view are Piepenbrink "Zur Perzeption des kirchlichen," 143-44 and Stewart-Sykes, *Original Bishops*, 6, 187.

[63] "φεύγετε τὸν μερισμὸν καὶ τὰς κακοδιδασκαλίας." Ign. *Phld.* 2.2.

[64] Ign. *Trall.* 7.1. The full passage is, "Φυλάττεσθε οὖν τοὺς τοιούτους. τοῦτο δὲ ἔσται ὑμῖν μὴ φυσιουμένοις καὶ οὖσιν ἀχωρίστοις [Θεοῦ] Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου καὶ τῶν διαταγμάτων τῶν ἀποστόλων."

[65] Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004), 116. Interestingly, Isacson takes Ign. *Phld.* 2.2, the passage I have analyzed immediately above, in opposite fashion. Concerning Ign. *Phld.* 2.2 he says, "Episcopacy is played down in favour of unity" (131). That Isacson could take two very similar phrases and interpret them in opposite ways appears to be a weakness of his approach of separating out the letters and analyzing them in terms of their individual rhetorical strategies.

[66] Odd Magne Bakke, "The Episcopal Ministry and the Unity of the Church," in *The Formation of the Early Church*, ed. Jostein Adna, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 183 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 386.

leaders, Ignatius constantly pairs them with orthodox teaching.[67] Taken with those direct exhortations, these passages attribute a teaching role, or at the very least a stewardship of orthodox doctrine, to pastoral leaders.

In addition to these passages, Stewart-Sykes cites a number of other hints toward preaching activity by pastoral leaders in Ignatius's epistles. First of all, Ignatius uses language that indicates that he views himself as preaching through his epistles, using the words προσομιλῆσαι and παρακαλεῖν to describe what he is doing in his letters.[68] Stewart-Sykes also argues that Ignatius's reference to the bishop Onesimus speaking (λαλοῦντος) in the assembly is "assured" evidence that "preaching . . . was established in the church of his period."[69] Given Stewart-Sykes's conservative approach to attributing preaching activity in the early church, and especially his reticence to view Ign. *Pol*. 5.1 as indicative of public preaching, these are remarkable inferences that further support the conclusion that Ignatius saw preaching and teaching as pastoral work.

Some have argued from two passages about the "silent" bishop that Ignatius wrote to support bishops who lacked preaching giftedness and were not esteemed as preachers in their congregations.[70] Schoedel argues that the silence of the bishop was "a matter of some embarrassment" and surmises this may have been that he did not have the capacity of preaching extemporaneously or refuting false teaching.[71] Ignatius thus

[67] Bakke's basic position is affirmed by McCue, "Bishops, Presbyters, and Priests" 830; Vall, *Learning Christ*, 347; Jochen Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche: Presbyter und Episkopen in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2011), 262. See also Jay, "From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters," 137-38, who, making more differentiation between offices than my analysis, attributes preaching and evangelism with the presbyters and oversight and liturgical leadership to the bishop.

[68] Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 18. The references are Ign. *Eph*. 9.2 and Ign. *Magn*. 14.1. He argues that because letters were read in public worship, preaching language in them is expected.

[69] Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 18-19. The reference is Ign. *Eph.* 6.2.

[70] The key passages are Ign. *Phld*. 1.1-2 and Ign. *Eph.* 3.2.

[71] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 56; Christine Trevett, "Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity: A Third Error Combatted by Ignatius?" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34, no. 1 (1983): 1-18; Peter

"makes a virtue of this weakness."[72] I will give an alternative interpretation below; however, even if Schoedel and others are correct in this skeptical view of these bishops, their understanding of the situation behind these statements still supports the conception of pastoral leaders as preachers in Ignatius's vision for ministry—they would not need support from Ignatius in light of their inability for oral communication if this was not an expectation of their role.

As I have shown above, a better way to understand Ignatius's praise of the silent bishop is within his larger vision of pastoral virtue and authority. Both of Ignatius's commendations of the silent bishop argue along these lines, leading one scholar argue that "the linking of God, the Silent, with the silent bishop, provides one more reason for holding the *episkopos* as the ultimate authority in the Christian community,"[73] and another to suggest that the bishop's silence was evidence of the humility requisite of the office.[74] Moreover, immediately after praising the bishop's silence, Ignatius went on to assure the congregation they would be safe from false teaching if they clung to him, strongly suggesting his ability to verbally refute false teaching.[75] I have already shown that the second passage about the bishop's silence is about his representation of the Lord: "And as much as one sees that the bishop is silent, the more one should fear him. For everyone whom the master of the house sends to manage his house, thus we must receive him: just as the one who sent him. Clearly, it is necessary to look upon the bishop as the

Meinhold, "Schweigende Bischöfe: Die Gegensätze in den Kleinasiatischen Gemeinden nach den Ignatianen," in *Festgabe Joseph Lortz*, ed. Erwin Iserloch and Peter Manns (Baden-Baden, Germany: Grimm, 1958), 2:486-72.

[72] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 56.

[73] Noll, *Christian Ministerial Priesthood*, 93.

[74] James Carleton Paget, "The Vision of the Church in the Apostolic Fathers," in *Vision for the Church: Studies in Early Christian Ecclesiology*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Michael B. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 197. Paget says that "Ignatius is keen to emphasize that office should not allow individuals to exalt themselves (Symnr.) and this, amongst other things, may lie somewhere in the background of his commendation of the silence of the bishops (Eph. 5.3-6.1)" (197).

[75] Ign. *Phld*. 2.1-2.

Lord himself."[76] The bishop's silence is explicitly connected to his representation of the Lord and nowhere suggests that he was an ungifted communicator.[77] The context of these remarks also go against the "silence as incompetence" interpretation: immediately before the bishop is praying with power among the congregation, and immediately after the bishop Onesimus is λαλοῦντος to the congregation.[78] These considerations together demonstrate that Ignatius's praise of the "silent bishop" does not indicate that these bishops were ungifted or incapable communicators.

**Summary.** While Ignatius's vision for pastoral work was more implicit in his congregational epistles than in Ign. *Pol.*, it still renders the same theological judgments: pastoral work it is focused on the sanctification of God's people and it consists largely of preaching, general spiritual oversight, and particular oversight of Christian gatherings. Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians, in its characteristically condensed fashion, also affirms the essentials of these judgments.

## Polycarp to the Philippians

With only two passages directly addressing pastoral work, Polycarp's letter to the Philippians affirms general oversight, care for the needy, and teaching—all aimed at the sanctification of God's people—as core aspects of pastoral work.

**Oversight, sanctification, and care for the needy.** Pol. *Phil.* 6.1's direct discussion of the work of presbyters describes pastoral work as consisting of general

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[76] Ign. *Eph.* 6.1.

[77] Silence is described as a quality of God particularly evident in the Incarnation in Ign. *Magn.* 8.2, and as a positive virtue for Christians in general in Ign. *Eph.* 15.1-2, where it is explicitly connected to imitation of Christ. This furthers supports the conclusion that what was in view in these remarks about the silent bishop was a positive picture of virtue and not Ignatius trying to make up for a bishop's lack of giftedness.

[78] Ign. *Eph.* 5.2-3 and Ign. *Eph.* 6.2. It is not certain that Ignatius is referring to Onesimus himself speaking, but it is likely.

oversight and care for the needy, aimed at the sanctification of God's people:[79] "Now the presbyters must be tenderhearted, merciful to all, turning back those who have gone astray, caring for the weak, not neglecting the widow or orphan or poor, but always seeking what is good in the sight of God and men."[80] The reason the presbyters must be compassionate and merciful is because their work in large part consists of "turning back those who have gone astray," in other words, exercising discipline and bringing members of the congregation who are in sin or rebellion back to obedience to the Lord.[81] This statement describes general pastoral oversight aimed at the holiness and obedience of God's people.[82] Moreover, though there are not any direct lexical parallels, Pol. *Phil*. 6 contains a striking similarity in its sentiment and description of pastoral work to Ign. *Pol.* 2.1. Commenting on the general connection between Pol. *Phil*. 6 and Ign. *Pol*., Francis A. Sullivan writes, "If one compares this description of the ministry of the Presbyters with the exhortation Ignatius addresses to Polycarp concerning his ministry one will see that here the presbyters have the same kind of responsibilities Ignatius attributed to Polycarp. Their ministry is clearly pastoral."[83] Ignatius and Polycarp both share a vision for essential aspects of pastoral work: general oversight for the spiritual good of God's people. This oversight also included care for the poor. In the same manner that presbyters are to turn back straying members, they are to care for the neediest members of the

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[79] Jay describes Polycarp as assuming that "the presbyters have both pastoral and disciplinary functions," using different terminology but affirming my conclusions generally. Jay, "From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters," 142.

[80] "Καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι δὲ εὔσπλαγχνοι, εἰς πάντας ἐλεήμονες, ἐπιστρέφοντες τὰ ἀποπεπλανημένα, ἐπισκεπτόμενοι πάντας ἀσθενεῖς, μὴ ἀμελοῦντες χήρας ἢ ὀρφανοῦ ἢ πένητος, ἀλλὰ προνοοῦντες ἀεὶ τοῦ καλοῦ ἐνώπιον Θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων." Pol. *Phil*. 6.1.

[81] Noll, *Christian Ministerial Priesthood*, 148-49.

[82] Paul Hartog suggests, following Lightfoot, that the neuter participle rendered "gone astray" would naturally bring the minds of readers to "sheep," thus assigning presbyters a shepherding task. Paul Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, Oxford Apostolic Fathers 2 (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), 123.

[83] Sullivan, *Apostles to Bishops*, 129.

congregation. Polycarp is distinct in mentioning the widow, orphan, poor, and sick all together as the members in particular need of care.[84]

**Teaching and preaching**. Polycarp makes teaching and preaching essential to pastoral work in two places, one clear and one plausible. The clear passage is Pol. *Phil.* 11.2. After describing his grief over the former presbyter Valens's fall, Polycarp asks a rhetorical question which assumes that presbyters preach: "How can someone who is unable to exercise self-control in these matters preach self-control to anyone else?"[85] The surrounding context indicates that Valens's lack of self-control regarding money is likely in view;[86] whatever specific behavior is in view, the rhetorical question implies that a part of a presbyters work is to *preach* self-control to others.[87] Sullivan affirms that the rhetorical "question . . . indicates that such 'preaching' was the duty of presbyters."[88] The less clear passage is Pol. *Phil*. 6.2-3, which follows Polycarp's prescription for the ministry of presbyters. Immediately after saying that elders particularly must refrain from harsh judgment about sin, he describes how one must forgive in order to be forgiven and gives a charge to serve the Lord with fear and reverence "just as he himself commanded and as the apostles who preached the gospel to us and the prophets who preached beforehand the coming of our Lord."[89] The key question regarding this exhortation is whether it addresses the whole congregation or the presbyters in particular; the context

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[84] However, the poor, orphaned, and "afflicted" are mentioned together in Ign. *Symrn.* 6.2 and Herm. 56.7, see William R. Schoedel, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary* (1967; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 5:21.

[85] Pol. *Phil*. 11.2. This is Holmes's translation of the Latin portion of Pol. *Phil*. 11.2.

[86] Pol. *Phil.* 11.1 and 11.2b both explicitly address the love of money and 11.3 praises the Philippians for *not* falling into these things, indicating that the sin of Valens is in view.

[87] Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 142. Hartog specifically says that the presbyters ought to "preach the necessity of virtue to others."

[88] Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 130.

[89] "καθὼς αὐτὸς ἐνετείλατο καὶ οἱ εὐαγγελισάμενοι ἡμᾶς ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται οἱ προκηρύξαντες τὴν ἔλευσιν τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν." Pol. *Phil.* 6.3.

indicates it has the presbyters particularly in mind.[90] If it is addressed to the presbyters, then Polycarp exhorts them to serve God like the apostles and prophets, both of whom are described as preachers. Former preachers serving as examples for present presbyters implies oral communication as a part of Polycarp's vision for pastoral work.[91]

      **Summary.** In a more compressed fashion than Ignatius, Polycarp pictures the presbyters overseeing the congregation, especially in bringing back strayed members and caring for needy members. He also affirms that pastoral leaders preach. Polycarp's accord with Ignatius is unsurprising given his explicit affirmation of Ignatius's epistles; the rest of this chapter will show that other postapostolic works also espouse this vision.

## Teaching in the Martyrdom of Polycarp

      The Martyrdom of Polycarp will only be examined in this chapter and in chapter 7. The historical reliability, second century date, and authenticity of Mart. Pol. have been debated, but there are good reasons to affirm the basic reliability and authenticity of the account.[92] In the account, Polycarp's status as a bishop is explicitly connected to his prowess as a teacher and as a leader of Christians in his region; he is portrayed as both a prophet/teacher and a bishop.[93] Strikingly on the lips of unbelievers, Polycarp is called "the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our

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[90] See Noll, *Christian Ministerial Priesthood*, 148-49.

[91] This is the same reason that Jay argues for presbyters having a preaching/evangelistic role in Ignatius's corpus: their association with the apostles. See Jay, "From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters," 138.

[92] See the extended discussion of scholarship on the reliability of Mart. Pol. by Paul A. Hartog, "Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians & Martyrdom of Polycarp*," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Scott D. Harrower (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2023), 237-41. See also Gerd Buschman, "The Martyrdom of Polycarp," in *The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction*, ed. Wilhelm Pratscher, trans. Elizabeth G. Wolfe (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2010), 138-40.

[93] Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 16, 90-91. See also Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 131-32.

gods, who teaches many not to sacrifice or worship."[94] Polycarp as a "father" or spiritual

leader is connected to his role as a preacher who teaches people to obey God by not

worshipping idols. He is pictured as a pastoral leader who teaches for the sanctification of

God's people. While Polycarp is held up as singularly righteous figure in this account, he

is also being held up as exemplary and can be seen as the model leader-teacher.[95]

A later remark by the narrator further connects Polycarp's role as a pastoral

leader with his teaching and prophetic gifting. Immediately after Polycarp's execution

and the miracle that attended it, the narrator describes him as one of the elect and as "the

amazing Polycarp, who in our time was an apostolic and prophetic teacher, bishop of

catholic church in Smyrna."[96] Once again, Polycarp's role as a pastoral leader ("the

bishop") is explicitly connected to his role as a teacher. Stewart-Sykes, because he sees

preaching by bishops a later development, remarks that this passage reflects the second

century conflation of the previously separated responsibilities of the bishop and

prophet.[97] While I disagree with his contention that Mart. Pol. conflates previously

separated responsibilities, his remarks affirm that Mart. Pol. ascribes teaching and

preaching as duties of pastoral leaders.

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[94] Mart. Pol. 12.2, Holmes's translation, see Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers,* 319. Whether "teacher of Asia" is in the original manuscript and if it should read "teacher of impiety" is debated in the literature, with Hartog taking "teacher of impiety." Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 304. However, as J. M. Lieu notes, what is most important is the pagan's unwitting witness to Polycarp's prowess and influence, see J. M. Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 59-70. What is clear in this context is that the unwitting pagan witness is to Polycarp *as a teacher*.

[95] For the account displaying Polycarp and his martyrdom as exemplary, see Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 244-45.

[96] "ὁ θαυμασιώτατος [Πολύκαρπος], ἐν τοῖς καθ' ἡμᾶς χρόνοις διδάσκαλος ἀποστολικὸς καὶ προφητικὸς γενόμενος, ἐπίσκοπος τῆς ἐν Σμύρνῃ καθολικης ἐκκλησίας." Mart. Pol. 16.2.

[97] Stewart Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 16.

**Pastoral Work in 1 Clement**

While its overarching concern is the restoration of deposed presbyters, 1 Clement still describes pastoral work. In its vision for pastoral leaders, pastoral work aims for sanctification and consists of general oversight and presiding at worship. The author also likely implies teaching and preaching as the work of pastoral leaders, as I will show below.

**Oversight and sanctification.** Clement describes pastoral work as service and leadership aimed for the sanctification of God's people. The key rebuke of the epistle twice describes the office of the unjustly deposed presbyters as λειτουργίας and their work once as λειτουργήσαντας.[98] This word indicates both public service in office and a general service toward God and others;[99] Clement appears to be implying both of the righteous deposed presbyters.[100] The term comes up in the Didache in reference to the pastoral work of bishops, deacons, and prophets.[101] Noll argues that this term "holds in Clement's New Testament context to its more general and original meaning of service to the community" which included but was not limited to liturgical leadership.[102] The righteous presbyters ministered "blamelessly to the flock of God," calling to mind biblical shepherding imagery used to describe leaders' accountability, tenderness, and their work of feeding and leading God's people.[103] These considerations indicate that Clement's use of λειτουργίας, while no doubt referring to office, also referred to the work of these presbyters in serving God's people by spiritually overseeing them for their

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[98] 1 Clem. 44.3, 6.

[99] For the term as used throughout 1 Clem. and aimed at service, see L. L. Welborn, *The Young against the Old: Generational Conflict in First Clement* (Lanham, MD: Fortress, 2018), 142.

[100] Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 795; BDAG, 590-91.

[101] Did. 15.1.

[102] Noll, *Christian Ministerial Priesthood*, 79.

[103] See John 10 and 1 Pet 5:1-5. See also the previously mentioned passage about shepherding imagery from David W. Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry: Biblical Images for Leaders and Followers* (1993; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 129-30.

sanctification.[104] Another instance that points towards this picture of pastoral work is 1 Clem. 63.1, where the Corinthian congregation is called to submit to the leaders "of our souls."[105] While Clement's rhetorical purposes in passages like this have been well noted, the phrase "of our souls" seems to serve no rhetorical purpose other than to call the Corinthians' minds to the fact that their leaders care for their spiritual health.

**Presiding at gatherings**. At least one instance in 1 Clem. points towards pastoral leaders presiding at congregational gatherings. In the previously mentioned 44.1-6, Clement said that it is a grave sin to "cast off from the bishop's office those who have offered the gifts blamelessly and in holiness."[106] In spite of reservations of some scholars,[107] the "gifts" described here almost certainly reference the Lord's Supper.[108] If so, Clement explicitly associates the ministry of pastoral leaders with presiding at the Lord's Supper, and perhaps by extension, other Christian gatherings. This passage is by no means as explicit as Ignatius's insistence on the bishop's oversight of gatherings, but still pictures pastoral leaders as overseeing the Lord's Supper.

**Teaching and preaching**. The highly debated 1 Clem. 42.1-44.2 strongly implies preaching as an essential element of pastoral work. As I have mentioned elsewhere, this passage has had immense amount of analysis and debate regarding the

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[104] Wagner summarizes pastoral work in Clement as serving and caring for God's flock and leading in worship. See Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche*, 235.

[105] "τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν," 1 Clem 63.1. While Welborn's analysis is intently focused on Clement's rhetoric, this phrase goes without comment. See Welborn, *The Young against the Old*, 131, 141, 159-60, 187, 225.

[106] "ἐὰν τοὺς ἀμέμπτως καὶ ὁσίως προσενεγκόντας τὰ δῶρα τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς ἀποβάλωμεν." 1 Clem. 44.4.

[107] See Noll, *Christian Ministerial Priesthood*, 80. Noll is very cautious to relate "προσενεγκόντας τὰ δῶρα" to the Lord's Supper, but notes that Ignatius of Antioch referred to it with parallel terminology only a decade later.

[108] Annie Jaubert, *Clement de Rome, Epître aux Corinthians*, Sources Chrétiennes 167 (1971; repr., Paris: Cerf, 2000), 173; Legrand, "Presidency of the Eucharist," 418; Jay, "From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters,"129.

issue of apostolic succession and its application to church structures today.[109] One underemphasized element of these debates is that Clement's picture of succession and appointment of leaders implies that the preaching work of the apostles was handed down to bishop-presbyters. After describing how the apostles went forth preaching and appointing bishops and deacons, Clement rhetorically asks, "Is it shocking that that those who in Christ were entrusted by God with such a work appointed those previously mentioned [leaders]?"[110] Clement highlights that the weightiness of the apostles' work— "preaching the gospel," mentioned in 42.3—was the reason they appointed leaders. Ostensibly, they appointed these leaders to carry on their preaching work. Noticing these elements of 43.1, Barbara Ellen Bowe goes as far as to say that "Clement argued that the office of ἐπίσκοπος is linked directly to the apostolic preaching mission."[111] John Knox is even more confident about this association's implications, saying that the Pastoral Epistles and 1 Clement "make abundantly clear [that] the elders . . . are responsible for teaching and for the conduct of worship and the Eucharist. 1 Clement presents them as successors of the apostles."[112] This interpretation is supported by the following passage, which grounds apostolic succession in Moses's example, who recorded the law and who was followed by the prophets who testified to this law.[113] In the example, Moses is compared to apostles and the prophets are compared to the appointed bishops. All of these figures are speaking figures, who teach and preach God's Word to God's people. Moreover, in the same way the prophets would apply and testify to Moses's law, the

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[109] See chap. 5.

[110] "Καὶ τί θαυμαστόν εἰ οἱ ἐν Χριστῷ πιστευθέντες παρὰ Θεοῦ ἔργον τοιοῦτο κατέστησαν τοὺς προειρημένους." 1 Clem. 43.1.

[111] Barbara Ellen Bowe, *A Church in Crisis: Ecclesiology and Paraenesis in Clement of Rome*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 23 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 150, see also 148.

[112] John Knox, "Ministry in the Primitive Church," in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, ed. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (New York: Harper, 1956), v, para. 7, https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-1-the-ministry-in-the-primative-church-by-john-knox/.

[113] Knox, "Ministry in the Primitive Church," v, para. 7.

successors to the apostles apply and testify to the gospel they preached.[114] Noticing this connection, Hanson argues that when Clement wanted to find an Old Testament grounding for the Christian ministry "he does not go to the priesthood of the Law but, characteristically of an early Christian writer, to the prophets."[115] Prophets were known primarily for their preaching ministries as opposed to the sacerdotal functions of priests. The association of pastoral leaders with both the apostolic preaching ministry and the Old Testament prophetic ministry strongly suggest preaching and teaching as pastoral work in Clement's pastoral theology.

**Summary.** Aside from connecting the language of the office of bishop to the presbyter's ministry, Jay's description of Clement's vision for pastoral work summarizes what I have outlined above: "His letter gives us no reason to suppose that either in Rome or in Corinth in the last decade of the first century the presbyters as a corporate body did not exercise $\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\kappa o\pi\eta$, the oversight of affairs of their churches in general, with responsibility for discipline, instruction and the administration of the sacraments."[116] Even with its dearth of systematic description of pastoral work, 1 Clem. still witnesses to the essential theological judgments made in the postapostolic period: for the sanctification of God's people, pastoral leaders taught, gave oversight, and led Christian gatherings.

### Preaching in 2 Clement

Another postapostolic text only addressed in this chapter, 2 Clement testifies to the pastoral work of preaching. Its authorship and date are debated, except for the

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[114] It is also likely that the following example of Aaron's staff budding associates pastoral leaders with teachers, with Aaron being the spokesman of Moses and the priesthood being associated with righteous teaching in the Old Testament.

[115] Richard P. C. Hanson, *Studies in Christian Antiquity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), 122.

[116] Jay, "From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters," 136.

consensus that it was not actually preached by Clement of Rome.[117] In spite of doubts about its authorship, 2 Clem. is widely regarded as one of the first extant Christian sermons, with Lightfoot's argument being convincing.[118] It pictures itself as being preached by an unnamed presbyter and explicitly attributes the work of public teaching to pastoral leaders.[119] In 17.3 the speaker exhorts the listeners to ensure they are not only remembering Christ during gathered worship, but continue to do so in their daily lives.[120] The way he describes the church's gathering pictures presbyters as preachers: "And not only now should we pay attention to and believe, while we are being admonished by the elders."[121] William Varner argues that this is a "self-description of the immediate context of the speaker and those who hear," implying that the speaker is himself a presbyter.[122] Interestingly, while labelling this phrase self-description, Varner himself is not convinced the speaker himself is a presbyter, only that he "may" be.[123] Either way, whether or not in direct reference to himself, this describes the congregation as being νουθετεῖσθαι by the elders, a word used several times in the New Testament in reference to public teaching by

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[117] William Varner, *Second Clement: An Introductory Commentary*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary 2 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020), introduction, par. 17, Hoopla.

[118] Andrew B. McGowen, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 77; Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 132-35; Pratscher, "The Second Epistle of Clement," in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 72, and Paul Parvis, "2 Clement and the Meaning of the Christian Homily," in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 34-35. Stewart-Sykes argues that public preaching is not in view here, but catechesis. Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 174-87. For a summary of Lightfoot's argument, see Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 175.

[119] Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 132; Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 171.

[120] 2 Clem. 17.3-4.

[121] "καὶ μὴ μόνον ἄρτι δοκῶμεν προσέχειν καὶ πιστεύειν ἐν τῷ νουθετεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς ὑπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, ἀλλὰ καὶ." 2 Clem. 17.3.

[122] Varner, *Second Clement*, chap. 6, para. 38. Though he argues that this expression indicates a self-description of the sermonic event, he suggests a lack of definitiveness on if the speaker is a presbyter or not.

[123] Varner, *Second Clement*, chap. 6, para. 38.

pastoral leaders.[124] Moreover, the next exhortation to come to the public gatherings more often and the implication that this will result in advancing in the commands of the Lord indicates that the elders' admonishment sanctified God's people.[125] While more could be said and has been said about the nature of early Christian preaching from 2 Clem., it suffices here to have shown that it explicitly attributes this work to pastoral leaders.

## Pastoral Work in The Didache

The Didache's vision for pastoral work includes both ordained and itinerant leaders; my analysis will take as its starting point the affirmation that these pastoral leaders share a similar ministry and thus similar pastoral work.[126] While the Didache attributes the works of sanctifying preaching to pastoral leaders and implies their presiding at worship, it does not directly ascribe general spiritual oversight to them.

**Preaching and sanctification.** Pastoral leaders are preachers in the Didache's description. In the "Two Ways" section of the Didache, the author commands, "My child, the one who speaks to you the word of God, remember [him] night and day, and honor him as the Lord."[127] While this clearly describes the work of preaching, some have argued that its concern is how to behave towards any Christian who "λαλοῦντός" God's

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[124] 1 Thess 5:12, Col 1:28, and Acts 20:31.

[125] McGowen argues, "The preacher's intention is linked . . . [with] repetitive moral urgings." McGowen, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 78.

[126] See chap. 1. The passage that argues that these leaders share a ministry is Did. 15.1. See also David Downs, "Church, Church Ministry, and Church Order," in Bird and Harrower, *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, 167-68. He specifically says, "The local community is instructed to appoint these leaders, so they are not itinerants, yet bishops and deacons also conduct the ministry of the prophets and teachers within the local community" (167-68).

[127] "Τέκνον μου, τοῦ λαλοῦντός σοι τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ μνησθήσῃ νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας, τιμήσεις δὲ αὐτὸν ὡς Κύριον." Did. 4.1. But for a view of this verse as indicating informal mentorship instead of referring to pastoral leaders, see Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope & Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C. E* (New York: Newman, 2003), 147. This is largely a result of his reading of the community as largely informal and unstructured. His is the minority position, see Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, ed. Harold Attrige, trans. Linda Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 104.

word, not pastoral leaders specifically.[128] Several considerations point towards seeing this passage as referring to pastoral leaders preaching. First, in the Didache, the root λαλέω is usually used of pastoral leaders outside of Did. 4.1.[129] Moreover, the following phrase indicates something more formal than person-to-person teaching: "Wherever the Lord's rule is spoken, there the Lord is."[130] As I noted in a previous chapter, Shawn J. Wilhite argues that this preaching of the Word sacramentally communicates the presence of God to the community, implying formal preaching done by a pastoral leader intended to edify its hearers.[131] Finally, significant linguistic parallels exist between this phrase and Hebrews 13:7, with the only major difference being that Hebrews 13:7 explicitly attributes preaching to leaders.[132] Whether there is direct literary dependence, a "dependence on a common early Christian tradition," or just conceptual parallels between these two texts, their shared language further supports the idea that pastoral leaders are the preachers in Did. 4.1.[133]

Descriptions of the teaching ministry of itinerant pastoral leaders add to the Didache's vision for preaching. It is widely agreed that itinerant pastoral leaders preached and taught in the Didache's community; indeed, much of Did. 10-13 is concerned about

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[128] As mentioned, Milavec argues that this passage is about informal mentorship in the community, but his is the minority position. Milavec, *The Didache*, 147. For the majority position, see Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 104.

[129] The other passages are 11.7 and 11.8, where itinerant leaders are described as those who λαλέω in the Spirit. Moreover, I have shown this word to indicate preaching work in the Ignatian corpus. For the exception in the Didache, see Did. 15.3.

[130] Did. 4.1.

[131] Shawn J. Wilhite, *The Didache*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 139.

[132] Wilhite, *The Didache*, 138. The Greek texts are "τοῦ λαλοῦντός σοι τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ μνησθήσῃ," Did. 4.1, and "Μνημονεύετε τῶν ἡγουμένων ὑμῶν, οἵτινες ἐλάλησαν ὑμῖν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ." Heb 13:7.

[133] Christopher M. Tuckett, "The *Didache* and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament," in *The New Testament and Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 91. Tuckett wrongly neglects Hebrews in his chapter on the Didache's use of the New Testament.

how to view these leaders and how to respond to their teaching.[134] One specific exhortation implies that the purpose of preaching is the sanctification of hearers. Did. 11.2 encourages listeners to welcome a teacher as the Lord if "his teaching adds righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord," that is, if it sanctifies those who hear.[135] If, as I have argued, resident leaders shared in the itinerant leaders' ministries, the Didache gives a robust vision for pastoral leaders as sanctifying preachers.

**Presiding at Christian gatherings.** Several passages imply that pastoral leaders presided at Christian gatherings, particularly the Lord's Supper. After instructions on how the Lord's Supper should be celebrated in 9.1-10.6, which in part specify particular forms of giving thanks, the Didachist abruptly says, "Now, permit the prophets to give thanks as much as they will."[136] This appears to describe a situation where congregations had a regular prayer leader who would lead celebration of the Lord's Supper but that prophets could interrupt with inspired, longer prayers.[137] Sullivan concludes that a prophet's right to give thanks however he wishes means that his role "included presiding at the Eucharist;" Giles concludes likewise.[138]

Another indication that pastoral leaders presided at the Lord's Supper and Christian gatherings is the fact that instructions for Christian gatherings immediately

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[134] Niederwimmer describes Did. 11.3-13.7 as focused on the "reception" of these travelling pastoral leaders. See Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 169.

[135] "εἰς δὲ τὸ προσθεῖναι δικαιοσύνην καὶ γνῶσιν Κυρίου." Did 11.2. Milavec argues that this phrase mainly indicates a teacher's faithfulness to the rest of the teachings in the Didache. Milavec, *The Didache,* 436.

[136] "τοῖς δὲ προφήταις ἐπιτρέπετε εὐχαριστεῖν ὅσα θέλουσιν." Did. 10.7.

[137] Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2004), 70-71. See also André de Halleux, "Ministers in the Didache," in *The Didache in Modern Research*, ed. Jonathan A Draper, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 37 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 303.

[138] Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 84; Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 167.

precede instructions for the election of bishops and deacons.[139] Did. 14.1-3 gives specific

instructions for gathering on the Lord's Day, including that believers break bread and

give thanks, likely references to the Lord's Supper. The Didachist then immediately

encourages the election of bishops and deacons, who share in the ministry of the prophets

and teachers.[140] This implies that bishops and deacons were necessary for and presided

over the Christian gatherings mentioned.[141]

      **Summary.** These things being considered, the Didache does not explicitly

affirm each aspect of the theological vision for pastoral work shown elsewhere.[142]

However, it implies their leadership of Christian gatherings and clearly ascribes the work

of preaching to pastoral leaders, associating their preaching with goal of pastoral labor,

the sanctification of God's people.

### Preaching in Epistle of Barnabas

      Like 2 Clem., the Epistle of Barnabas will only be featured in this chapter, and

I will argue that Barn. 19.9b attributes the work of preaching to pastoral leaders. It is

included here because of its close literary relationship to Did. 4.1.[143] Barn. 19.9b

commands: "You shall love as the apple of your eye all who speak to you the word of the

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[139] However, against this reading, some scholars deny that Did. 11-15 is a literary unity. Niederwimmer argues that Did. 14 is redactional. Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 194. De Halleux argues for its literary unity. De Halleux, "Ministers in the Didache," 300-302.

[140] Did. 15:1-2.

[141] So Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 90; Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 202. Milavec argues that neither prophets nor bishops but elders (not mentioned in the Didache) would preside over the Eucharist, see Milavec, *The Didache,* 79-80. Wilhite does not mention who would preside, instead taking the context as indicating that the community would elect these officials when they were corporately gathered, see Wilhite, *The Didache*, 212.

[142] Wagner, however, infers that the Didache does ascribe to pastoral leaders—specifically the bishops and deacons—leadership, financial administration, presiding in worship, and probably teaching. See Wagner, *Die Anfänge des Amtes in der Kirche,* 283.

[143] Wilhite argues for significant literary parallels between this passage and Did 4.1, including the following command to "remember," and its inclusion in a "two ways" section of the epistles. Wilhite, *The Didache*, 138-39.

Lord."[144] Jonathan Lookadoo draws the conclusion that those who speak the Word are leaders of the congregation, and like Wilhite, notices the thematic and linguistic parallels between this passage and Heb 13:7.[145] Interestingly, Lookadoo also highlights how this passage may portray these leaders in need of particular care from the congregation.[146] In any case, it appears that pastoral leaders are in view as those who speak the Word to the recipients of Barn., once again describing these leaders as preachers.

**Pastoral Work in the Shepherd of Hermas**

A variety of passages in the Shepherd of Hermas come together to give a basic, if characteristically less explicit, picture of pastoral work. Both visions of ideal pastoral leaders and failures by other leaders indicate that their work *should* sanctify the church. Additionally, Herm. witnesses to the preaching ministry of pastoral leaders, their oversight, and care for the poor in a limited but clear way.

**Sanctification.** Several aspects of Herm. point towards pastoral work as sanctifying. First, if one follows Steve Young and Stewart-Sykes in viewing Hermas's family (οἶκος) as his church and Hermas as a pastoral leader, then the Lady's rebukes to Hermas and his burden over the unhealthiness of his οἶκος imply that his responsibility in his church community was to labor for their spiritual health.[147] Moreover, he is commanded to proclaim the visions to his family words which are immediately directed towards the saints; Hermas is also told to pray for the Lord to heal not only his sins but

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[144] "ἀγαπήσεις ὡς κόρην τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ σου πάντα τὸν λαλοῦντά σοι τὸν λόγον Κυρίου." Barn. 19.9.

[145] Jonathan Lookadoo, *The Epistle of Barnabas: A Commentary*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary 3 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2022), 209.

[146] Lookadoo, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 209.

[147] Steve Young, "Being a Man: The Pursuit of Manliness in The Shepherd of Hermas," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 241-43; Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, 107.

the sins of his family and all the saints.[148] In some way, Hermas is involved leading his

community and he is charged to seek their spiritual healing and well-being. Apart from

Hermas himself as a pastoral leader, several of the visions point towards pastoral work

being directed toward sanctification. In the vision of the tower, which represents the

church, the white stones that fit together build up the tower and give it a stable

foundation.[149] The Lady who shows the tower vision to Hermas reveals these stones to be

"the apostles and overseers and teachers and servants who lived according to the

reverence of God and who oversaw and taught and served the elect of God purely and

reverently."[150] While this passage has varying translations from commentators, each

translation connects the pastoral offices with the work of pastoral leaders because of the

phrase's intentional verbal parallelism.[151] What makes these leaders who they are in this

vision is their faithful labor for God's people. Carolyn Osiek argues that this vision

displays "those in leadership positions in the Christian community who have served well

in their roles." [152] If their serving well is what provides a firm foundation for the tower

(the church), then it follows that pastoral leaders who serve well build up God's people

towards holiness and righteousness. Similar pictures of the sanctifying blessing of

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[148] Herm. 6.3-4 and 1.9. Here I am following Young, "Being a Man," 241-42.

[149] Aldo Tagliabue, "Learning from Allegorical Images in the Book of Visions of the Shepherd of Hermas," *Arethusa* 50, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 234. The passage is Herm. 10.4-6.

[150] "οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διδάσκαλοι καὶ διάκονοι οἱ πορευθέντες κατὰ τὴν σεμνότητα τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἐπισκοπήσαντες καὶ διδάξαντες καὶ διακονήσαντες ἁγνῶς καὶ σεμνῶς τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς τοῦ Θεοῦ." Herm. 13.1.

[151] The nouns that identify the leaders "ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διδάσκαλοι καὶ διάκονοι" are essentially verbalized into "ἐπισκοπήσαντες καὶ διδάξαντες καὶ διακονήσαντες." Holmes renders this phrase, "the apostles and bishops and teachers and deacons who . . . have ministered to the elect of God as bishops and teachers and deacons with purity and reverence." Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 479. Osiek translates it as "the apostles and overseers and teachers and deacons who . . . have governed and taught and served the elect of God in holiness and dignity." Carolyn Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 66. With a freer hand and connecting the clauses together, Varner renders it "the apostles and overseers and teachers and deacons who have walked according to the holiness of God by ministering with purity and sanctity the office of overseers and teachers and deacons to God's elect." Varner, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 37.

[152] Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 71.

pastoral work to God's people occur in later visions. The eighth and tenth mountains picture righteous pastoral leaders as springs of water that nourish creation and provide shade for God's sheep.[153] Previously, I argued that the interpretations of these visions in 102.2 highlight the virtue of pastoral leaders.[154] The visions themselves emphasize the life-giving and sheltering impact of these leaders' labors. In its presentation of the ideal church through its visions, Herm. presents ideal pastoral leaders as those whose labor sanctifies God's people. These leaders sanctify chiefly by their teaching, another element of pastoral work Herm. highlights.

**Teaching, preaching, and oversight**. Like other postapostolic literature, Herm. highlights the teaching and preaching of pastoral leaders, connecting it to spiritual oversight. Some have argued that the work of teaching appears limited to teachers and apostles in the visions and have concluded that the work of teaching was originally limited to these figures in Hermas's community.[155] However, in the previously examined rebuke to those "who lead the church," the Lady rhetorically asks, "How do you want to instruct the elect of the Lord, when you yourselves have no instruction?"[156] The key words in this passage are παιδεύειν and παιδείαν, which share the same root, indicating wordplay by the author.[157] Παιδεύω describes verbal instruction and a more general discipline given to help others; παιδεία denotes either the process of forming others for

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[153] Herm. 102.1-2 and 104.1-3.

[154] See chap. 4.

[155] Stewart-Sykes, *Original Bishops*, 68-69. Stewart-Sykes's explicit argument is that the ἐπίσκοπος was an economic officer, especially evident in Hermas, but it implies teaching responsibilities were given to other figures only. See also Allen Brent, who also takes this position about the ἐπίσκοπος in Herm., arguing that it was a development. Allen Brent, "The Ignatian Epistles and the Threefold Ecclesiastical Order," *Journal of Religious History* 17, no. 1 (1992): 26.

[156] "πῶς ὑμεῖς παιδεύειν θέλετε τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς Κυρίου, αὐτοὶ μὴ ἔχοντες παιδείαν." Herm. 17.10.

[157] Varner renders this phrase, "how do you expect to discipline the Lord's elect if you yourselves have no discipline?" Varner, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 40.

virtue or the state of being formed appropriately.[158] In the form of rebuke, what is clearly in view is that pastoral leaders *should be* forming others for virtue through verbal instruction and general oversight. Thus "part of their leadership role is to instruct God's elect . . . not merely to teach doctrine, but to train, to educate."[159] Osiek comments that the key issue in this passage is the virtue formation of those who should be forming others.[160] So, while much remains enigmatic about pastoral ministry in Hermas's community, leaders of that community were responsible for teaching and preaching.

**Care for the needy**. One passage in Herm. pictures caring for the needy as an aspect of pastoral work. Herm. 104.2 interprets a previous vision picturing sheep sheltered by trees as "bishops" who "were always sheltering those who had need and the widows by their ministry."[161] Previously, I have argued that this passage indicates hospitality and care for the needy as a pastoral virtue.[162] Here it also appears to be a part of pastoral work because the bishops sheltered these people τῇ διακονίᾳ ἑαυτῶν. This may blur the lines between pastoral work and pastoral virtue in Herm., but still, these leaders' roles appear connected to the work of caring for the needy.[163]

### Summary and Conclusion

In the midst of varied expressions and contexts, a coherent and unified vision for pastoral work emerges out of the Apostolic Fathers. Admittedly, aside from Ignatius,

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[158] BDAG, 748-49.

[159] Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 135-36. Sullivan goes on to surmise that the previously mentioned elders are the leaders in view here.

[160] Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 81-82.

[161] "οἱ δὲ ἐπίσκοποι πάντοτε τοὺς ὑστερημένους καὶ τὰς χήρας τῇ διακονίᾳ ἑαυτῶν ἀδιαλείπτως ἐσκέπασαν καὶ ἁγνῶς ἀνεστράφησαν πάντοτε." Herm. 104.2.

[162] See chap. 4.

[163] O'Maier says that this passage suggests that care for the widows was a "duty of the bishops." O'Maier, *Social Setting of the Ministry*, 63. O'Maier also takes this passage to indicate that the bishops were necessarily wealthy patrons of the church that had the financial capacity to host and to use their wealth to care for needy members of the congregation.

no author comes close to a systematic presentation of pastoral work. However, when postapostolic documents speak about pastoral work they make the following shared theological judgments, given in order of their prevalence: (1) the purpose of pastoral work the sanctification of God's people, (2) pastoral leaders teach and preach, (3) pastoral leaders give general oversight, (4) pastoral leaders preside at Christian gatherings, and (5) pastoral leaders oversee the care of needy members of the congregation.

The Apostolic Fathers insist most upon the fact that pastoral leaders should sanctify God's people and preach. Each postapostolic document with major passages relevant to postapostolic pastoral leadership (Ign., Poly. *Phil.* 1 Clem., Did., and Herm.) connects pastoral work to the spiritual good of God's people. Whether pastoral leaders are exhorted to this work (Ign. *Pol.,* Pol. *Phil.*, and Herm.), or presented as ideal figures (1 Clem., Did., and parts of Herm.), various expressions assume that pastoral leaders' ministries *ought* to sanctify those they lead. Regarding preaching, Ignatius, Herm., and Did. explicitly describe it as pastoral work while Pol. *Phil.* and 1 Clem. strongly imply it. Moreover, preaching as pastoral work brings in postapostolic documents without other major passages relevant to pastoral theology (Mart. Pol., Barn., and 2 Clem.), suggesting that this was the most prominent feature of pastoral work in this age. In most of the Apostolic Fathers, the sanctification of the church and the preaching of pastoral leaders were tethered together.

While less unanimous, the works of general oversight and presiding at Christian gatherings are both attested to and likely represent a shared understanding in the postapostolic age. Ignatius, 1 Clem., Herm., and Pol. *Phil.* present pastoral leaders generally overseeing and disciplining the congregation. Presiding at Christian gatherings is the least articulated theme, most insistent in Ignatius, strongly implied in Did., likely implied in 1 Clem., and not explicit in Herm. or Pol. *Phil.* Additionally, the nature of personal and corporate oversight is articulated differently in different contexts. For

example, while Ignatius's vision for oversight focuses more practically on bringing the church generally and troublesome disciples especially into submission, *Herm.* conceives of oversight as the positive formation of παδεία. Similarly, presiding at gatherings appears much more formalized in Ignatius than the Didache. While greater diversity exists in the application of pastoral oversight and leadership of gatherings, the evidence strongly suggests a shared pastoral theology undergirding these applications.

   Modern conceptions of pastoral ministry may be a bit startled by the Apostolic Fathers' vision for pastoral leaders caring for the needy. Here Ign. *Pol*., Pol. *Phil*., and Herm. bear witness. Some have taken this emphasis and argued that the earliest ἐπίσκοποι were originally merely economic overseers after Hellenistic patterns. However, Pol. *Phil.* explicitly attributes this care to the πρεσβύτεροι alongside spiritual oversight and Ign. *Pol.* explicitly commands care for the widow *and* preaching as pastoral work. This strongly suggests that care for the poor, at least in terms of oversight, was not regulated to a specific office in earliest Christianity but was a general pastoral duty. This may challenge the way pastoral work is described today; pastoral suffering, the subject of the next chapter, brings an even stronger challenge to modern conceptions of ministry.

CHAPTER 7

"AN ANVIL STRUCK": PASTORAL SUFFERING
IN THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Admittedly, the suffering of pastoral leaders is not as prominently emphasized in the Apostolic Fathers as their virtue, authority, or work. Pastoral suffering is also more explicit in the New Testament and the later Christian tradition.[1] However, even a cursory glance at the situations described in these documents shows significant and various sufferings experienced by pastoral leaders in this era: Ignatius and Polycarp were both martyred as pastoral leaders, 1 Clement describes righteous presbyters suffering rebellion in their congregations, and as I will show, Hermas's struggles with his "family" are likely struggles with rebellious members in the church he led. Additionally, similar to the New Testament, the Apostolic Fathers describe a ministry context riddled with false teachers and the difficulties these brought to the church and those who led the church.

While suffering in the Apostolic Fathers has been examined, especially related to martyrdom and persecution, the particular suffering of pastoral leaders gets very little attention.[2] For example, in a comparative study of the theology of suffering in the

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[1] For soundings about pastoral suffering in the New Testament, see chap. 2 of this diss. Significantly, many classic works on pastoral theology in the Christian tradition emphasize the peculiar ministerial difficulties and sufferings of pastoral leaders. For examples in the patristic period, see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations* 2.10-13, 21, 41-43 and John Chrysostom's *Six Books on the Priesthood* 3.8-11. The Reformation also articulated peculiar pastoral sufferings, especially in widely influential theology of John Calvin. See Leland Brown, "The Standard-Bearer: Pastoral Suffering in the Theology of John Calvin," *Themelios* 47, no. 2 (August 2022): 326-36.

[2] Major works on suffering and martyrdom that treat the Apostolic Fathers include W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965). A landmark study on the theology of martyrdom is Theofried Baumeister, *Die Anfänge der Theologie des Martyriums*, Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 45 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1980). The particular role of the Holy Spirit in early Christian martyrdom is examined by William Weinrich, *Spirit and Martyrdom: The Work of the Holy Spirit in Contexts of Persecution and Martyrdom in the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (Lanham, MD: University Press of

Pastoral Epistles and Ignatius, A. T. Hanson does not even mention the possibility of pastoral leaders particularly having a call to suffer or that their sufferings may be especially related to their leadership of God's people.[3] Likewise, the *Imitatio Christi* as partly explanatory of Ignatius's and the Martyrdom of Polycarp's view of martyrdom has been argued variously, but once again, the connection between these figures' roles as pastoral leaders and their various sufferings has yet to be explored.[4] Various commentaries and works on leadership in the early church also recognize difficult circumstances faced by pastoral leaders, but there is no theological connection made between suffering and pastoral ministry in these works.[5] In Ignatian scholarship, scholars have connected Ignatius's view of martyrdom to Paul's theology, but have not related Paul and Ignatius's shared conceptions of martyrdom to any shared conceptions of pastoral suffering.[6]

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America, 1981). For shorter and thematic treatments, see Everett Ferguson, *The Early Church at Work and Worship: Catechism, Baptism, Eschatology, and Martyrdom* (Eugene. OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 269-79; Paul A. Hartog, "Themes and Intertextualities in Pre-Nicene Exhortations to Martyrdom," in *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Martyrdom*, ed. Paul Middleton, Wiley Blackwell Companions to Religion (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2020).

[3] A. T. Hanson, "The Theology of Suffering in the Pastoral Epistles and Ignatius of Antioch," in *Studia Patristica XVII*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982), 2:694-92.

[4] See Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity*, Library of New Testament Studies 307 (London: T & T Clark 2006), 81-84. Middleton describes Polycarp's imitation of Christ but does not even mention his role as pastor or teacher, despite the texts' emphasis on it, except for quoting Mart. Pol. 12.2 without comment. However, Kenneth Morris has briefly connected Ignatius's role as a bishop in imitating Christ and being a disciple to his martyrdom. See Kenneth R. Morris, "'Pure Wheat of God' or Neurotic Deathwish? A Historical and Theological Analysis of Ignatius of Antioch's Zeal for Martyrdom," *Fides et Historia* 26, no. 3 (1994): 33. Michael A. G. Haykin argues that martyrdom for Ignatius is both imitation of Christ and renunciation of the world, see Michael A.G. Haykin, "'Come to the Father': Ignatius of Antioch and His Calling to Be a Martyr," *Themelios* 32, no. 3 (May 2007): 34-36.

[5] For example, both R. A. Campbell and William R. Schoedel have commented on the pastorally difficult circumstances behind Ignatius's letter to Polycarp, but have not drawn any theological conclusions about pastoral suffering from them. See R. A. Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 219; William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 259-65.

[6] Alexander N. Kirk, "Ignatius' Statements of Self-Sacrifice: Intimations of an Atoning Death or Expressions of Exemplary Suffering?," *Journal of Theological Studies* 64, no. 1 (April 2013): 66-88; Carl B. Smith, "Ministry, Martyrdom, and Other Mysteries: Pauline Influence on Ignatius of Antioch," in

This chapter's aim is twofold: first, to demonstrate a clear theological vision for pastoral suffering in Ignatius's epistle to Polycarp through analysis of its first four chapters, and second, to explore pastoral suffering in 1 Clement, Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians, the Didache, and the Shepherd of Hermas. I have argued throughout this project that Ign. *Pol.* has particular importance for discerning pastoral theology of the postapostolic era because it is the only focused postapostolic pastoral document; its relevance for discerning broader pastoral theology in this age is furthered by Polycarp's commendation of Ignatius's letters.[7] This especially relevant work espouses a clear vision for pastoral suffering. Though less explicitly articulated, I will also demonstrate the presence of pastoral suffering in other documents in the Apostolic Fathers, especially 1 Clem. A vision for pastoral suffering is shown in both Clement's assumption that church leaders would face dissension over their authority and in Clement's rich and complex use of Old Testament examples. The Didache implies that true pastoral leaders will be willing to suffer as exemplars of Christian piety and especially by embracing economic uncertainty; Pol. *Phil.* also implies that pastoral leaders will suffer as examples of Christian virtue. If Herm. does portray Hermas as a pastoral leader, then it shows him as a leader who suffers in his ministry. These features together demonstrate that the reality of pastoral suffering was a shared theological judgment of the Apostolic Fathers, carrying forward the vision of the New Testament.

### Pastoral Suffering in Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp

Broad agreement exists that difficulties and sufferings in ministry are a prominent theme in Ign. *Pol.*, though a variety of other emphases are also put forward.[8]

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*Paul and the Second Century*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Joseph R. Dodson, Library of New Testament Studies 412 (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 37-56.

[7] Pol. *Phil.* 13.2.

[8] See Francis A. Sullivan, *Apostles to Bishops: The Development of Episcopacy in the Early Church* (Pine Beach, NJ: Newman, 2001), 121. Schoedel interprets the first four chapters as primarily concerned with the difficulties in Polycarp's congregation. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 259-65.

While some scholars emphasize social control or criticism of Polycarp as prominent features of this epistle, R. A. Campbell avers that in Ign. *Pol.* "the accent is not so much on the power and authority of the bishop as on the cost of his leadership and hard work and difficulty it will involve."[9] In analysis of key passage from the first three chapters of Ign. *Pol*. I will show that not only is there an accent on the difficulty of ministry in this epistle, but a theological vision of the faithful pastor suffering for his people's spiritual good. Ignatius characterizes Polycarp's ministry with three controlling images: the pastor as bearing the spiritual ills of his people, suffering to heal troublesome disciples, and being steadfast while struck in conflicts with false teachers.

**Ign. *Pol*. 1: Bearing Difficulty and Disease**

The first chapter of Ign. *Pol*. exhorts Polycarp toward suffering twice by commanding him to "bear" the difficulties and spiritual ills of his people. First, Ignatius commands him to "bear all, just as the Lord also does you, endure all in love,"[10] implying that Polycarp's patience and endurance with his people should imitate God's endurance of him.[11] While several issues attend interpreting this phrase, it is best to see Ignatius arguing that God's patient and loving "suffering" of Polycarp's remaining sin is the model for Polycarp's patiently bearing with the sins of those to whom he ministered. The key word in this passage, βάσταζε, is variously translated: William Varner renders it "help others along;" Michael Holmes, Bart D. Ehrman, and William R. Schoedel render it "bear;" Robert M. Grant renders it "lift up all men."[12] BDAG gives three possible senses

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[9] R. A. Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 219.

[10] "πάντας βάσταζε, ὡς καί σε ὁ Κύριος· πάντων ἀνέχου ἐν ἀγάπῃ." Ign. Pol. 1.2.

[11] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 260.

[12] William Varner, *The Apostolic Fathers*: *An Introduction and Translation* (London: T & T Clark, 2023), 162; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Loeb Classical Library 24 (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2003), 1:311; Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker 2007), 263; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 259; Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*: *A New Translation and Commentary* (1965; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 4:130.

of βάσταζω, all "with the suggestion of a burden involved": (1) causing someone to go to a higher position, (2) sustaining a burden, with figurative senses of bearing anything burdensome or being able to bear up under trying circumstances, and (3) to physically carry something.[13] L&N has 10 total entries for βάσταζω, four of which are idiomatic (such as "bear a child"), two which have to do with physical carrying, two of which have to do with suffering and endurance, one involving receiving difficult teaching, and one involving supporting others based on its usage in a metaphor in Rom 11:18.[14]

**Βάσταζε in Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp 1.2.** Of the potential options, the best rendering is the one most often associated with βάσταζω: that of bearing a burden, with figurative sense of enduring difficulty and suffering. Varner's rendering of "help others along" along the lines of one of the L&N entries is unlikely because the word is nowhere else used of helping others physically or spiritually. Even in Romans 11:18 it is used of a root supporting a branch, with the word's connotations of bearing a burden clearly indicated. Grant's rendering is a figurative rendering of the first sense that BDAG lists, but this is also made unlikely with πάντων τὰς νόσους βάσταζε ("bear the diseases of all") appearing several phrases later. In fact, Grant translates βάσταζε in the second instance as "bear the diseases of all," even suggesting an allusion to Matthew 8:17, which has connotations of suffering and bearing difficulties in love for the good of others.[15] It is hard to justify translating the same word in significantly different ways when the word's occurrences are in close proximity and have parallel grammatical structures. Additionally, the parallel phrase πάντων ἀνέχου ἐν ἀγάπῃ, which comes immediately after, clearly expresses endurance of difficulties. The verb ἀνέχου has a narrower range of meaning centered around tolerance for others and patience in difficulties, being translated

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[13] BDAG, 171.

[14] L&N, 15.188, 15.201, 25.51, 24.83, 25.117, 31.55, 33.210, 35.32, 90.80, and 90.84.

[15] Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 4:130.

consistently in Ign. *Pol*. 1.2 with the idea of endurance and patience in difficulties.[16]
These considerations together show that Ignatius's first exhortation regarding difficulties
called upon Polycarp to "bear," or endure with patience, the difficulties and burdens of
the community, especially the sins of members against him. He was to do this after God's
example of bearing with his sins and weaknesses. As the community's pastoral leader and
representative of God, Polycarp is to represent God's patience with sinners, and as the
next passage will suggest, Christ's sufferings for them.

        **Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp 1.3: Bearing diseases.** The second exhortation
in Ign. *Pol*. 1 also uses βάσταζε and suggests that pastoral leaders bear the spiritual ills of
the community in a way parallel to Christ's sufferings for his people. Ignatius
communicates this through the use of an allusion to Matthew 8:17 and possibly an
allusion to 2 Timothy 2:5. In the midst of several staccato exhortations regarding pastoral
alertness, prayer, and speaking to God's people, Ignatius tells Polycarp to "bear the
diseases of all, as a perfect athlete."[17] Lexically, it is clear that Ignatius is commanding
Polycarp to bear diseases of some kind for "all," most likely, all of the people of his
church.[18] An allusion to Matthew 8:17 strongly suggests that these are spiritual ills borne
by the suffering pastoral leader in his imitation of Christ. Matthew 8:17, citing Isaiah
53:4 in reference to Christ, says that "he took our illnesses and bore our diseases," using
three identical words in the same order as Ign. *Pol*. 1.3, with different grammatical
forms.[19] While scholars debate whether this demonstrates Ignatius's literary dependence

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[16] See BDAG, 78; L&N 25.171.

[17] "πάντων τὰς νόσους βάσταζε, ὡς τέλειος ἀθλητής." Ign. *Pol*. 1.3.

[18] See BDAG, 679, for νόσος being used of physical or spiritual diseases exclusively. The use of πάντας as referring to "all people" is consistent throughout Ign. *Pol*. 1.

[19] "Αὐτὸς τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν ἔλαβεν καὶ τὰς νόσους ἐβάστασεν." Matt 8:17.

on Matthew 8:17,[20] even Paul Foster's conservative approach has shown that there is a cumulative case for Ignatius's knowledge of Matthew's Gospel or Matthean traditions.[21] With Ignatius's knowledge of Matthew being very likely, Ignatius's exhortation to Polycarp to bear the diseases of all points to him suffering his people's spiritual ills for his people's good, like Christ did. This does not mean that Ignatius views pastoral suffering as vicarious or paying for sins, but as an embodiment or fulfillment of Christ's sufferings in the present life of the church in a way parallel to Pauline thought on ministerial suffering.[22]

**Athletic imagery.** The fact that Polycarp is to bear the diseases of all "as a perfect athlete" further confirms that he is to suffer for his people's spiritual benefit. While Ignatius will later address the Smyrnaean congregation as God's managers, assistants, servants, and soldiers, the "athlete" is an image he only uses to describe the pastor.[23] Athletic imagery was very popular in early Christian writings, almost always

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[20] W. R. Inge, "Ignatius," in *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, by The Oxford Society for Historical Theology, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1905), 77-79. Inge offers Ign. *Pol*. 1.3 as a "type c" text, with possible but uncertain reference to a biblical text. Whether or not a scholar allows for or argues for literary dependence between Ignatius and Matthew is based on a variety of presuppositional factors and perspectives. See Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett, "Reflections on Method: What Constitutes the Use of the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers?," in *The New Testament and Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1 *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 161-82.

[21] Paul Foster, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament," in Gregory and Tuckett, *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, 1:179-81.

[22] Ignatius's understanding of suffering as related to Pauline thought has been argued for in several places. For the connection between Ignatius and Paul's thought on suffering particularly, see Kirk, "Ignatius' Statements of Self-Sacrifice," 66-88, esp. 70-71. For broader considerations on Paul's influence on Ignatius's understanding of imitation of Christ, see David M. Reis, "Following in Paul's Footsteps: *Mimēsis* and Power in Ignatius of Antioch," in *The New Testament and Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 2, *Trajectories through the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 287-307.

[23] See Ign. *Pol*. 6:1-2, the section addressing the whole congregation, for its use of the non-athletic images.

picturing difficulty and struggle of some kind.[24] David W. Bennett argues that athletic imagery usually communicated that "it is not going to be easy; there will be pain and suffering, even the shedding of blood and possibly the loss of life."[25] Polycarp will also be called to act like an ἀθλητής in Ign. *Pol*. 2.3 and 3.1; both of these uses have suffering in view. Furthermore, it is possible that Ignatius is drawing on Paul's exhortation to Timothy to suffer as an athlete from 2 Timothy 2:3-5. Ignatius's knowledge of and use of the Pastoral Epistles has been deemed highly likely by a recent study,[26] though his use of the athletic imagery from 2 Timothy 2:5 has not been cited as an example of this use.[27] However, with the strong probability Ignatius knew of the Pastoral Epistles, it is unlikely he would use the same image Paul used in the same context of pastoral exhortation without drawing upon Paul's use of athletic imagery to encourage faithful suffering.[28] All of these considerations confirm the claim that Ign. *Pol*. 1.3 exhorts Polycarp to bear the diseases of all primarily by suffering for his people in his ministry to them.[29]

**Summary.** The two exhortations from Ign. *Pol*. 1 to "bear all" and "bear the diseases of all" describe pastoral leadership in part as "a form of service in which the

[24] David W. Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry: Biblical Images for Leaders and Followers* (1993; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 141-44.

[25] Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry*, 144.

[26] Foster says that a "strong case" can be made. Foster, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch," 185.

[27] Interestingly, while Inge does not cite 2 Tim 2:5 and Ign. *Pol*. 1.3, 2.3, or 3.1, he argues for a possible allusion to 2 Tim 2:4 because the imagery of a soldier from 2 Tim 2:4 occurs in Ign. *Pol*. 6.2. It seems unlikely that Ignatius would use one image and not the other. Inge, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, 72. Schoedel also notes the parallel expressions of athlete and soldier in this passage and 2 Tim 2 and notes that in both passages the recipient is encouraged to seel greater understanding. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 260n8.

[28] On Paul's use of athletic imagery in 2 Tim 2:5 to exhort endurance in pastoral suffering and difficulty, George W. Knight says the athlete image gives the following principle: "For the Christian minister the point is that one of the laws of the Christian life is that God requires him to be willing to suffer hardship." George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 394.

[29] See the analysis of Ign. *Pol*. 2 and 3 below.

problems and concerns of the community are borne by its leader."[30] In fact, he can be seen as the figure who, in part, unites the community by bearing all of its ills.[31] Pastoral leaders must endure the difficulties of the sins of others and even bear their spiritual diseases in order to lovingly and effectively minister to them—this appears to be at the heart of Ignatius's theology of ministry.[32] Both motivating and clarifying what this entails for Polycarp is God's example of patience with sinners and Christ healing his people by suffering for them. The bishop who represents God to his congregation does so in part by patiently suffering the difficulties of his people's various sins.

### Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp 2: Suffering, Healing, and Salvation

Ign. *Pol.* 2 reveals why Polycarp must "bear the diseases of all" in his imitation of God and Christ: the pastor is a healer, especially to the troublesome disciples for whom he labors. Polycarp's suffering and his pastoral work are so intertwined in the exhortations of Ign. *Pol.* 2 that it will be quoted at length:

> If you love [only] good disciples, it is no grace to you: rather in gentleness bring the pestilential into submission. Every wound is not healed by the same plaster; stop paroxysms by wet compresses. Be as wise as a snake in everything, but always in innocence as a dove. For this reason you are fleshly and spiritual, that whatever appears before you, you may graciously deal with. But ask that the invisible things be revealed to you, that nothing may be lacking and that you may abound in every spiritual gift. The time needs you, as a helmsmen needs wind and the storm-tossed needs a harbor, in order to attain to God. Be sober, as God's athlete; the prize: immortality and eternal life, concerning which you believe.[33]

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[30] James Carleton Paget, "A Vision for the Church in the Apostolic Fathers," in *A Vision for the Church: Studies in Early Christian Ecclesiology*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Michael B. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 197.

[31] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 25.

[32] See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 259.

[33] "Καλοὺς μαθητὰς ἐὰν φιλῇς, χάρις σοι οὐκ ἔστιν μᾶλλον τοὺς λοιμοτέρους ἐν πραΰτητι ὑπότασσε. οὐ πᾶν τραῦμα τῇ αὐτῇ ἐμπλάστρῳ θεραπεύεται· τοὺς παροξυσμοὺς ἐμβροχαῖς παῦε. φρόνιμος γίνου ὡς ὁ ὄφις ἐν πᾶσιν καὶ ἀκέραιος εἰς ἀεὶ ὡς ἡ περιστερά. διὰ τοῦτο σαρκικὸς εἶ καὶ πνευματικός, ἵνα τὰ φαινόμενά σου εἰς πρόσωπον κολακεύῃς· τὰ δὲ ἀόρατα αἴτει ἵνα σοι φανερωθῇ, ἵνα μηδενὸς λείπῃ καὶ παντὸς χαρίσματος περισσεύῃς. ὁ καιρὸς ἀπαιτεῖ σε, ὡς κυβερνῆται ἀνέμους καὶ ὡς χειμαζόμενος λιμένα, εἰς τὸ Θεοῦ ἐπιτυχεῖν. νῆφε, ὡς Θεοῦ ἀθλητής· τὸ θέμα ἀφθαρσία καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος, περὶ ἧς καὶ σὺ πέπεισαι." Ign. *Pol.* 2.1-3a.

While it is no "grace to you" for Polycarp merely to love the good, obedient disciples, he is to particularly focus on bringing the "pestilential" or "troublesome" into submission by his gentleness.[34] In other words, Polycarp's peculiar pastoral duty is to deal with the difficult and heal them, suffering by nature of the work. Most translators take the phrase χάρις σοι οὐκ ἔστιν as related to Luke 6:32 or a tradition behind it, and translating it as "it is no credit to you" or similarly.[35] However, the case for this translation is quite weak. First of all, it is unlikely that the Lukan tradition is the background to this phrase and there is no significant literary correspondence; Paul Foster calls the case for Ignatius's knowledge of or use of Luke "extremely poor" and even Igne, with his less conservative approach, does not even mention Ign. *Pol*. 2.1 as a possible allusion to a New Testament text.[36] Moreover, every other use of χάρις and its cognates in the Ignatian corpus refers to the favor of God to his people or particular gifts of grace for ministry—in every other usage it has the sense of something being given, not a credit due to someone.[37] So it is best to render the phrase "if you love [only] good disciples, it is no grace to you;" indicating that Ignatius would cast doubt on Polycarp's fitness for ministry, perhaps even his salvation, if he were not willing to suffer in loving the difficult disciples in his congregation. Moreover, this sense accords better with Ignatius's other exhortations to Polycarp for faithfulness in ministry. Ignatius later tells Polycarp that he must bear all things so that God will bear with him and that he must endure in order to attain

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[34] "Troublesome" is Holmes's translation, see Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 265. My rendering of "pestilential" is partly influenced by Schoedel, who pointed out that the language of disease and healing runs throughout the passage. See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 262.

[35] Holmes, Ehrman, Schoedel, and Varner translate the phrase this way. For the basis of this translation being suggested by the Lukan tradition, see Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 262.

[36] Foster, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch" 181; Inge, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, 76-80.

[37] Three other uses of χάρις refer to the grace of God to his people: Ign. *Smyrn.* 12.1 and 12.2; Ign. *Pol*. 8.2. Two cognates of χάρις referring to the grace of God to his people are found in Ign. *Eph* 1.3 and 17.2. Ignatius uses χαρίσησθε in the sense of "giving" in Ign. *Rom*. 6.2, and χαρίσματι in the sense of spiritual gifts in Ign. *Symrn.* Sal and Ign. *Pol*. 2.2.

salvation.[38] Translating χάρις σοι οὐκ ἔστιν in this way shows that Ignatius is not making a passing remark in Ign. *Pol*. 2.1 about how it is no great feat to love easy disciples; instead, he is placing a willingness to deal with the most troublesome—and endure the suffering involved in that—at the heart of faithful pastoral ministry.

**Healing and suffering.** In this role, Polycarp would heal and suffer. The proverbial second half of Ign. *Pol*. 2.1 advises Polycarp on how to wisely "heal" sick disciples and exhorts him to "stop paroxysms by wet compresses."[39] This expression vividly describes Polycarp's role as a gentle healer to difficult disciples. Παροξυσμοὺς usually denoted a sharp argument expressing intense emotions[40] but also was used in medical literature to describe the fits the accompanied fevers or sicknesses.[41] The uses appear to be combined here—the sharp conflict difficult disciples might have with their pastor are their diseases which are to be gently healed by Polycarp, who should respond to them like doctor would apply a compress to a feverish patient. In other words, he is to be gentle to those who resist and even lash out against his leadership, seeking to win them over to repentance and wisely restore them.[42]

**Difficult circumstances.** Polycarp will be in difficult circumstances in this work, as Ignatius's counsel and imagery at the end of Ign. *Pol.* 2 show. He exhorts Polycarp to "be as wise as a snake in everything, but always in innocence as a dove."[43] In the closest Ignatius comes to directly quoting the Gospel of Matthew, he exhorts Polycarp

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[38] Ign. *Pol*. 3.1 and 2.3.

[39] Schoedel exposits the various ways Ignatius draws upon Greco-Roman medical proverbs in these phrases. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 262-63.

[40] L&N 33.451 and the use of the word in Acts 15:39.

[41] See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 262-63.

[42] See 2 Tim 2:24.

[43] "φρόνιμος γίνου ὡς ὁ ὄφις ἐν πᾶσιν καὶ ἀκέραιος εἰς ἀεὶ ὡς ἡ περιστερά." Ign. *Pol*. 2.2.

to blend cautious wisdom with innocence in his dealings with others.[44] Significantly, the reasoning behind this proverbial advice in Ignatius's source material, now Matthew 10:16, is a context of persecution, where Jesus's disciples will be "like sheep among wolves, *therefore* be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matt 10:16). Shrewdness and innocence are both necessary because Polycarp, like Jesus's disciples, will be in difficult situations as he ministers.

After further encouraging Polycarp to wisdom in his healing treatment of others, Ignatius uses nautical imagery to again communicate that Polycarp would have difficult circumstances: "The time needs you, as a helmsman needs wind and the storm-tossed needs a harbor, in order to attain to God. Be sober, as God's athlete."[45] The "time"—or situation of Polycarp's age—needs him in order to attain salvation.[46] In other words, his efforts will be part of the means by which others are saved. However, the use of nautical imagery, especially given its wider usage in Greek literature at this time, indicates that the time of Polycarp's ministry will be tempestuous.[47] Indeed, he must "face dreadful calms and dangerous storms,"[48] and himself be the wind that helps his people out of those calms, the harbor that shelters his people in their storms, and in all of this, a chief means of their salvation through trial. However, it is not only the salvation of

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[44] Inge gives a B level of correspondence between Ign. *Pol*. 2.2 and Matt 10:16, which indicates a high degree of probability, but not absolute certainty because of lack of citation. Inge, *New Testament and Apostolic Fathers*, 77. With his typically conservative approach, Foster recognizes the strength of correspondence but does not argue for direct dependence on Matthew, since there are textual complexities that he says may make Ignatius dependent on a shared tradition Matthew used. Foster, "The Letters of Ignatius of Antioch," 178. Foster specifically says that Ign. *Pol*. 2.2 is "an example of an apparent extended and close verbal similarity between Ignatius and a saying which among the synoptic Gospels only occurs in Matthew."

[45] "ὁ καιρὸς ἀπαιτεῖ σε, ὡς κυβερνῆται ἀνέμους καὶ ὡς χειμαζόμενος λιμένα, εἰς τὸ Θεοῦ ἐπιτυχεῖν. νῆφε, ὡς Θεοῦ ἀθλητής." Ign. *Pol.* 2.3.

[46] I have argued for this rendering of the phrase above in chap. 5 of this diss.

[47] See Schoedel's comments about the Greco-Roman uses of nautical imagery in *Ignatius of Antioch*, 264.

[48] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 264.

others in view; Polycarp's own salvation will be attained through his patient endurance of pastoral suffering. He is to be "as God's athlete," which like its other usages in Ign. *Pol.* 1.3 and 3.1, likely draws on the use of athletic imagery in the Pastoral Epistles to indicate suffering. This endurance in suffering will result in Polycarp attaining the prize, which is "eternal life." As he will in Ign. *Pol.* 3, Ignatius sets Polycarp's salvation at the end of the road of his endurance of pastoral sufferings, he must "be prepared to think of himself as something of a martyr in his own congregation . . . the path to salvation for Polycarp, as for Ignatius, lies through suffering."[49] Next, Ignatius would bring to mind particular sufferings Polycarp would face in dealing with false teachers.

### Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp 3: Struck and Bruised in Ministry

The identity of these false teachers and Ignatius's polemics against them has been studied and debated, without a clear consensus on their specific teachings.[50] What is clear is that Polycarp would suffer especially in his conflict with these false teachers. After exhorting Polycarp to not be baffled by those who appear trustworthy but teach false doctrine, he commands him to "stand firm, just as an anvil struck. Great is the athlete who is beaten and conquers. But especially we, for God's sake, must endure all things, so that he also might endure us."[51] Two related images describe the way Polycarp will suffer: first, an anvil struck by a hammer, and second, an athlete battered but

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[49] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 264-65.

[50] For a summary of research on this debate, see Christine Trevett, "Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity: A Third Error Combatted by Ignatius?," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34, no. 1 (1983): 14. Jerry L. Sumney proposes in similar fashion to Trevett three kinds of opponents: Docetists, Judaizers, and those who resist the authority of the bishop. He distinguishes his position from Trevett's by saying that those opposed to the authority of the bishop were not an organized group. Jerry L. Sumney, "'Those Who Ignorantly Deny Him': The Opponents of Ignatius of Antioch," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1, no. 4 (1993): 345-65. For a view that espouses one group of opponents that taught a blended Docetic-Judaizing error, see Einar Mollard, "The Heretics Combatted by Ignatius of Antioch," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5, no. 1 (1952): 1-6.

[51] "στῆθι ἑδραῖος, ὡς ἄκμων τυπτόμενος. μεγάλου ἐστὶν ἀθλητοῦ [τὸ] δέρεσθαι καὶ νικᾶν." Ign. *Pol.* 3.1.

conquering. Each image portrays Polycarp as being unmoved in his doctrine or ministry while being repeatedly and, perhaps savagely, attacked. The verb τυπτόμενος and image of an anvil struck with a hammer seems to be more focused on the severity of the blows while δέρεσθαι and the athletic imagery seem more focused on the frequency and duration of the suffering.[52] The anvil image conveys Polycarp as unmoved in his faithfulness while savagely and painfully struck; the athletic imagery pictures him continuing on in a fight or a race and eventually conquering in spite of repeated blows. With different nuances, both images convey that Polycarp's faithful stand against false teachers will be painful, requiring his endurance for victory.

**Endurance necessary.** Ignatius next insists that endurance in pastoral sufferings is a special requirement of pastoral leaders. Elsewhere Ignatius commends endurance for all Christians, such as when he tells the Smyrnaeans that "through enduring all things for his sake, you will reach him."[53] But to Polycarp, immediately after describing him as an athlete beaten but victorious, he says, "But *especially* we, for God's sake, must endure all things, so that he also might endure us."[54] Several factors demonstrate that this passage insists on the peculiar sufferings necessary for pastoral leaders and how they must endure them. First, Ign. *Pol.* 3 is the only place in Ign. *Pol.* where the pronoun ἡμᾶς occurs or where Ignatius uses any form of "we" or "us" and it occurs five times in Ign. *Pol.* 3.1-2. Throughout the rest of the letter, Ignatius is either speaking of himself, speaking of Polycarp, exhorting him, or addressing the Smyrnaeans. But here, when speaking of sufferings in conflict with false teachers, Ignatius uses the second person plural, communicating that there is something peculiar to he and Polycarp's role as bishops over their congregations—their suffering and need to look to

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[52] BDAG's entry for τύπτω is "to inflict a blow, strike, beat, wound." BDAG, 1020. L&N's entry for δέρω is "to beat or strike repeatedly." L&N, 19.2.

[53] "δι' ὃν παντα ὑπομενοντες αὐτοῦ τευξεσθε." Ign. *Smyrn.* 9.2.

[54] "μάλιστα δε ἕνεκεν Θεοῦ παντα ὑπομενειν ἡμᾶς δεῖ, ἵνα και αὐτος ἡμᾶς ὑπομεινη." Ign. *Pol.* 3.1.

the suffering and endurance of Christ. Furthering this interpretation of this phrase is the fact that as he does in Ign. *Pol.* 1, Ignatius grounds Polycarp's endurance of all things in God's endurance of him.

Secondly, the superlative adverb μάλιστα is likely applied to the "we" of pastoral leaders in this passage, further highlighting the necessary and particular sufferings of pastoral leaders. Μάλιστα, a superlative of the adverb μάλα, has a range of meaning: "To an unusual degree, most of all, above all, especially, particularly."[55] In a very similar translation as mine, Holmes renders this sentence with an accent on pastoral leaders, applying μάλιστα to Ignatius and Polycarp: "But *especially we* must, for God's sake, patiently endure all things."[56] Other translators pair μάλιστα with the prepositional phrase "ἕνεκεν Θεοῦ," such as in Ehrman's translation: "But we must endure everything especially for God's sake."[57] It appears that the rationality for Ehrman's translation and those similar to it is the proximity of the words and the relative distance between μάλιστα and ἡμᾶς in this phrase. However, the most common use of μάλιστα is to separate out one group of people from the rest, and its usage with prepositional phrases like "ἕνεκεν Θεοῦ" is rare.[58] In fact, there does not appear to be a single use of μάλιστα modifying a prepositional phrase in the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers. However, μάλιστα is used to separate out and emphasize a particular group of people in Mart. Pol. 13.1, Herm. 1.8, Herm. 72.5, and Herm. 88.7.[59] It is used similarity in most of its appearances in the New Testament: Galatians 6:10, Philippians 4:22, 2 Peter 2:10, 1 Timothy 4:10, 1 Timothy

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[55] BDAG, 613.

[56] Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 265.

[57] Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1:313. Grant and Schoedel also translate the phrase along these lines, see Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers,* 4:131 and Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 266.

[58] The other two instances of μάλιστα in the Ignatian corpus are Ign. *Eph.* 20.2 and Ign. *Phld.* Sal, both of which introduce a conditional ἐὰν clause.

[59] It is also used for emphasis in 1 Clem. 13.1, Epistle to Diognetus 1.2, and Herm. 2.4. It is used once with the conditional ἐὰν in Herm. 44.2.

5:8, 1 Timothy 5:17, and Titus 1:10.[60] With this consistent use of *μάλιστα* and the surrounding context in Ign. *Pol.* 3, it seems best to render the phrase in a manner similar to Holmes: Ignatius emphasizes that *especially* he and Polycarp, as pastoral leaders, must "patiently bear all things."

**Christ's example of suffering.** To help Polycarp with this endurance, Ignatius next points him to Christ's example of suffering. After briefly exhorting Polycarp's diligence and understanding of the times, Ignatius tells him to "wait for the one beyond time, the eternal, the invisible, who for us became visible; the intangible, unsuffering, who for us suffered, who for us in every way endured."[61] This eschatological encouragement sets Polycarp's motivation for endurance on the return of Christ while highlighting Christ's own endurance.[62] While it would certainly have been encouraging that Christ was "ὑπὲρ καιρὸν," perhaps rendered "above this season" or as Schoedel translates, "above every vicissitude," Ignatius particularly highlights that the Christ who was "the unsuffering," or "unable to suffer," was the one who "suffered for our sake."[63] Christ's love in becoming incarnate and suffering for the salvation of his people becomes the model for Polycarp's endurance of suffering in ministry to God's people, a model that accords greatly with Pauline theological judgments about suffering in pastoral ministry.[64] If there was any doubt of this connection, Ignatius next specifically says that Christ

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[60] For a detailed exposition of the use of *μάλιστα* in the Pastoral Epistles in concert with my analysis here, see Hong Bom Kim, "The Interpretation of Μάλιστα in 1 Timothy 5:17," *Novum Testamentum* 46, no. 4 (2004): 360-68. See also Vern Sheridan Polythress, "The Meaning of Μάλιστα in 2 Timothy 4:13 and Related Verses," *Journal of Theological Studies* 53, no. 2 (October 2002): 523-32.

[61] "τὸν ὑπὲρ καιρὸν προσδόκα, τὸν ἄχρονον, τὸν ἀόρατον, τὸν δι᾽ ἡμᾶς ὁρατόν, τὸν ἀψηλάφητον, τὸν ἀπαθῆ, τὸν δι᾽ ἡμᾶς παθητόν, τὸν κατὰ πάντα τρόπον δι᾽ ἡμᾶς ὑπομείναντα." Ign. *Pol.* 3.2.

[62] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 266-76. Grant goes as far as to say that Ignatius "obviously has the coming of Jesus Christ in mind" in this passage. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 4:132. Three parallel passages in the Pastoral Epistles give similar eschatological encouragement and highlight God's character, see 1 Tim 6:13-16, 2 Tim 2:8-13, and 2 Tim 4:1-5.

[63] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 266.

[64] See Col 1:24-25.

"endured" in every way for our sake, using the same word for Christ's endurance that he used in his exhortation of Polycarp to endure in Ign. *Pol.* 3.1. As Schoedel concludes, "the Christological attributes are meant not only to underscore the reality of the incarnation and the passion (in opposition to docetism) but also to motivate the suffering of the bishop."[65] While Christ is an example for all Christians to suffer well in early Christian literature, in Ignatius's vision for ministry he is particularly an example to the pastoral leader, who must suffer for the sake of his people's spiritual well-being.

## Pastoral Suffering in Other Ignatian Epistles

While Ign. *Pol.* itself demonstrates pastoral suffering as a prominent part of Ignatian pastoral theology, a few scholars have also shown this theme in Ignatius's congregational epistles. For example, while many have recognized that the bishop is the representation of God in the church,[66] James Carleton Paget has argued that phrases like "the bishop sitting in the τόπον of God" points to pastoral suffering:[67] "When Ignatius calls for bishops to live according to the pattern or 'typos' of God . . . this is a pattern marked by suffering and service."[68] In other words, while many have observed that the bishop's representative role often emphasizes his authority, Paget points out that with Ignatius's vision for God in Christ becoming incarnate to suffer for his people, that a bishop must serve and suffer to truly represent God to his people.[69]

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[65] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 267.

[66] See my examination of this aspect of Ignatian pastoral theology in chap. 4 of this diss.

[67] Ign. *Magn.* 6.1.

[68] Paget, "A Vision for the Church," 197.

[69] This Christological interpretation of the bishop's representing God is affirmed by Alvyn Peterson, who argues, "For while the bishop is indeed the 'type' of God, God, of whom he is to be a 'type', is known 'through Jesus Christ his Son, who is his Word, coming forth from silence.' The bishop's authority is therefore known and realised in Christ. . . . Such a Christological model for episcopal authority then colours the exercising of this authority." Alvyn Peterson, "The Laity—Bishop's Pawn? Ignatius of Antioch on the Obedient Christian," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44, no. 1 (1991): 46.

**Summary.** This evidence taken together shows that at least one author of the Apostolic Fathers articulated a vision for pastoral suffering. According to Ignatius, whether or not Christians were persecuted by the surrounding society, pastors would suffer by the very nature of their roles of loving difficult disciples and protecting the church from false teachers. Through nautical, athletic, and metalworking imagery Ignatius pictures pastoral ministry as turbulent and difficult, where pastors must endure many blows, like Christ, to faithfully love their people. While less explicit and communicated differently, 1 Clement also pictures pastoral leaders suffering in ministry.

## Pastoral Suffering in 1 Clement

With the vast literature on ministry and its development in 1 Clem., there is almost no work on nature of ministerial suffering in the letter outside of the recognition that Clement viewed the presbyters as unjustly deposed. However, three elements of 1 Clem. portray pastoral suffering. First, a phrase in 44.5 assumes pastoral suffering as the norm by describing dead presbyters alone as free from the fear of rebellion and deposition. Secondly, through the use of Old Testament examples and principles, 1 Clem. describes the deposition of Corinth's presbyters as the fulfillment of Old Testament patterns of the righteous being persecuted by the wicked. In doing so, Clement envisions the jealous and wicked rising up against duly appointed leaders as the norm—while urging repentance for this sin. Finally, Old Testament examples again illustrate pastoral suffering at the end of the letter; surprisingly, these examples are used to exhort the rebels at Corinth to be true leaders by willingly suffering for the good of the church.

### Pastoral Suffering Assumed in 1 Clement 44.5

At the end of a key section of the letter, Clement says that the presbyters who have already died at mature and fruitful ages were blessed because they "no longer need

to fear lest someone remove them from their established position."[70] Implied here is that the normal course of ministry involved the possibility of rebellion from wicked members of the congregation and suffering from being deposed by them. Holmes and Varner rightly translate οὐ γὰρ εὐλαβοῦνται with a temporal emphasis—with Holmes's translation being "for they need no longer fear."[71] While Grant and Ehrman's translations are more literal and neutral, not including the temporal element, their translations beg the question of the use of γὰρ to connect the clauses.[72] Clement's logic is that former, deceased presbyters are blessed *because* they do not need to fear or be concerned that someone may remove them from their offices. By implication living presbyters do have cause to fear this, and only through faithful death would pastoral leaders pass beyond the possibility of rebellion and unjust deposition. This verse reveals a broader assumption shown elsewhere in 1 Clem.'s portrayal of the rebellion at Corinth—that wicked rebellion against godly leaders was, though lamentable, the norm in the story of Scripture. This strongly suggests a vision for pastoral leaders particularly suffering in their leadership.

**Pastoral Suffering as Fulfillment**
**of Old Testament Patterns**

Beyond the implications of 44.5, 1 Clem. envisions pastoral suffering on a broader level through its use of Old Testament examples. Many of these examples portray wicked rebellion against godly leadership as the pattern of biblical history and the norm for life in a sinful world. Clement's use of the Old Testament has been studied at length with various conclusions, but with agreement that the author at least uses Old

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[70] "οὐ γὰρ εὐλαβοῦνται μή τις αὐτοὺς μεταστήσῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱδρυμένου αὐτοῖς τόπου." 1 Clem. 44.5.

[71] Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 105.

[72] Grant translates the larger passage: "Blessed indeed are the presbyters who have already passed on, who had a fruitful and perfect departure, for they need not be concerned lest someone remove them from the place established for them." Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 74. Ehrman's translation is "how fortunate are the presbyters who passed on before, who enjoyed a fruitful and perfect departure from this life. For they have no fear that someone will remove them from the place established for them." Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1:115.

Testament stories as parenetic examples to exhort the Corinthian congregation to repentance.[73] While Donald Alfred Hagner's major study characterizes 1 Clem.'s use of the Old Testament as mainly a "source-book for Christian behavior,"[74] more recent scholars have challenged this approach and argued that Clement engages in theological interpretation of the Old Testament.[75] Horatio E. Lona has helpfully suggested that Clement uses the Old Testament examples to explain the causes of the present distress in the Corinthian congregation and provide the solution to the crisis.[76] Recent scholars have highlighted the usage of the Old Testament as focusing on leaders and the evil done to them, but have not drawn conclusions about Clement's pastoral theology from those examples.[77] Largely following Lona's approach, I will show that 1 Clem. envisions pastoral suffering in the Christian church as the present fulfillment of Old Testament patterns of rebellion against leadership.

**Old Testament patterns in opening chapters.** The Old Testament stories about the wicked persecuting the righteous in 1 Clem.'s opening chapters have the rebellion against Corinth's presbyters in view, implying that rebellion against leadership is the norm in a fallen world. Clement notes the great blessing upon the Corinthians in

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[73] This emphasis has been seen since the first major study on 1 Clement's use of the Old Testament, William Wrede's *Studies in 1 Clement*, first published in 1891. See William Wrede, *Studies on First Clement*, ed. Jacob N. Cerone, trans. Jacob N. Cerone (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2023). See also Horacio E. Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief: Übersetzt und Erklärt*, Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern, vol. 2 (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 47-48.

[74] Donald Alfred Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 125.

[75] See, for example, Daniel Broaddus, who argues that Clement's Christology goes beyond mere parenesis. Daniel Broaddus, "Repentance for the Corinthian Community: 1 Clement's Presentation of Christ in the Old Testament," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (January 2022): 57-71.

[76] Regarding the Old Testament's usefulness to the author of 1 Clement, Lona says, "Hinaus enthält sie die notwendige Belehrung, um Ursachen und Folgen des Konflikts in Korinth ans Licht zu bringen, und hilft sogar dabei, dessen Lösung herbeizuführen." Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 47-48.

[77] See Cilliers Breytenbach, "The Historical Example in 1 Clement," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 18, no. 1 (2014): 30-31. See also Clare Rothschild, *New Essays on the Apostolic Fathers*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 375 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 86-93.

chapters 1-2 and then quotes Deuteronomy 3:1: "My beloved ate and drank and was enlarged and grew fat and kicked."[78] This, according to the author, is the reason that "jealousy and envy, strife and revolt, persecution and rebellion, war and captivity" arose in the congregation—they were blessed, and like God's people of old, responded to God's blessing with rebellion.[79] This wickedness of God's people was specifically displayed in the rebellion of "young against the old" which, as Clement will later clarify, was a rebellion against the congregation's ordained leaders.[80]

Already one sees Old Testament patterns of wickedness explaining the present Corinthian situation. However, Clement then cites Cain's murder of Abel as the Scripture's first instance of "jealousy and envy," the very sins behind the rebellion at Corinth.[81] The author connects this primeval sin—a jealous evildoer murdering his brother—to the present rebellion against the presbyters. Then come the examples of Jacob, Joseph, David, and especially Moses as those who suffered at the hands of the jealous.[82] Significantly, in this biblical pattern of jealously leading to wickedness, Dathan and Abiram are said to have "revolted against the servant of God, Moses."[83] While the other Old Testament examples imply jealously leading to rebellion against ordained leadership, Clement's description of Moses as the "servant of God" brings this explicitly into view. The author's use of examples in this first section shows that he viewed the present rebellion against the suffering presbyters as fulfilling the Old Testament pattern

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[78] 1 Clem. 3.1.

[79] "ζῆλος καὶ φθόνος, ἔρις καὶ στάσις, διωγμὸς καὶ ἀκαταστασία, πόλεμος καὶ αἰχμαλωσία." 1 Clem. 3.2.

[80] "οἱ νέοι ἐπὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους." 1 Clem. 3.3. See my argument in chap. 2 that this passage refers not merely to the "old" of the congregation but to the congregation's ordained leadership.

[81] 1 Clem. 4.7.

[82] 1 Clem. 4.8-13.

[83] "στασιάσαι αὐτοὺς πρὸς τὸν θεράποντα τοῦ Θεοῦ Μωϋσῆν." 1 Clem. 4.12.

of the wicked persecuting the righteous out of jealously.[84] This pattern strongly suggests that 1 Clem. envisioned pastoral suffering caused by the wicked as the norm for present pastoral leaders; indeed, it was the fulfillment of Scripture.

The Old Testament pattern was also being fulfilled in the present time.[85] While citing other examples, Clement focuses primarily on the apostles who suffered at the hands of evil men, saying, "Let us set before our eyes the good apostles."[86] Peter is the first recent example, who because of "unjust jealousy endured not one or two but many sorrows."[87] Just like the deposed presbyters, the chief of the apostles endured many sorrows because of the unrighteous jealousy of the wicked. So too Paul has "become a great example of patience" in suffering due to the persecution of the jealous wicked.[88] While other examples are also cited, the argument of the opening of 1 Clem. is as follows: (1) the Corinthian rebellion was a fulfillment of Old Testament pattern of God's people responding to blessing with wickedness, (2) the specific manifestation of this pattern was "jealousy and envy" leading to rebellion against the presbyters, (3) this particular rebellion is in line with the Old Testament pattern of the wicked persecuting the righteous out of jealousy, especially righteous leaders, and (4) that pattern persists to the present time, especially in the examples of the apostles, who both endured and ministered in their sufferings at the hands of the wicked. So, these opening chapters portray the present Corinthian rebellion as a fulfillment of the regular pattern of the wicked persecuting the righteous, especially righteous leaders. So even while Clement

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[84] L. L. Welborn argues that the destructive effects of ζῆλον build throughout the opening section of 1 Clem and are aimed at the motivations of those who led the rebellion against the presbyters. See L. L. Welborn, *The Young against the Old: Generational Conflict in First Clement* (Lanham, MD: Fortress, 2018), 136.

[85] 1 Clem. 5.1.

[86] "Λάβωμεν πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἡμῶν τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς ἀποστόλους." 1 Clem. 5.3.

[87] "ζῆλον ἄδικον οὐχ ἕνα οὐδὲ δύο ἀλλὰ πλείονας ὑπήνεγκεν πόνους." 1 Clem. 5.4.

[88] "ὑπομονῆς γενόμενος μέγιστος ὑπογραμμός." 1 Clem. 5.7.

urges repentance from such wickedness, he views pastoral suffering as normative in the letter's theological vision.

**Old Testament patterns in 1 Clement 42-45.** This vision for pastoral suffering articulated through Old Testament patterns also undergirds 1 Clem. 42-45. After describing how the apostles appointed their first converts to be bishops and deacons, the author cites Moses as an example, who wrote God's law down and who was followed by the prophets.[89] What is most instructive about Moses's example, however, is his preparation for "jealousy" arising about his leadership.[90] According to the author, the events of Numbers 16-17—Korah's rebellion, judgment, and Aaron's vindication—were all things that "Moses knew beforehand."[91] As God's prophet, Moses knew and prepared for suffering and strife as a leader. How does this connect to the present conflict at Corinth? The apostles, like Moses, "knew . . . that there would be strife about the name of bishop."[92] These apostles even received full foreknowledge of the conflicts to come, and so instituted the offices to have a permanent character.[93] Through Moses's example fulfilled in apostolic preparations, Clement clearly envisions the reality of pastoral suffering, especially from strife about pastoral authority—it is such a regular feature of pastoral ministry that God prepared beforehand a way to deal with it.

Almost immediately after this passage the author once again cites Old Testament precedent to condemn the actions of the rebels at Corinth; in doing so, he strongly implies that suffering would attend the ministry of righteous pastoral leaders. After noting that the Corinthians have searched the Scriptures, the author admonishes

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[89] 1 Clem. 42.1-43.1.

[90] 1 Clem. 43.2.

[91] "προῄδει Μωϋσῆς." 1 Clem. 43.6.

[92] "ἔγνωσαν . . . ὅτι ἔρις ἔσται ἐπὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς." 1 Clem. 44.1.

[93] 1 Clem. 44.2.

them that in those Scriptures "you will not find the righteous being thrown out by holy men. The righteous were persecuted, but by the lawless."[94] These righteous men—Daniel, Ananias, Azarias, and Mishael being chief Old Testament examples—all nobly endured their sufferings at the hands of the wicked.[95] The author goes on describing the patent wickedness of the Old Testament persecutors and says once again that those who endured suffering patiently in the Old Testament were rewarded by God.[96] Coming on the heels of Clement's clearest description of the rebellion at Corinth, the applications of these stories are clear: the wicked are the rebels at Corinth and the righteous suffering patiently are the deposed presbyters.[97] Once again, even with these stories aimed at condemning the rebels, they envision suffering as the norm for faithful pastoral leaders.

**Exhortation to the Rebels to  
Suffer for God's People**

Clement's vision for pastoral suffering through the use of Old Testament examples takes an interesting turn toward the end of the letter, where Clement calls the rebels to repentance.[98] Here timeless principles and Old Testament examples encourage the *rebels* to be true pastoral leaders by being willing to suffer for the good of their community—in this case, in being willing to be exiled so that the congregation can be reconciled to their rightful leaders. While the author waits until 54.2 to directly suggest that the rebels ought to subject themselves to exile for the good of their community, he

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[94] "οὐχ εὑρήσετε δικαίους ἀποβεβλημένους ἀπὸ ὁσίων ἀνδρῶν. ἐδιώχθησαν δίκαιοι, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ ἀνόμων." 1 Clem. 45.4.

[95] 1 Clem. 45.5-7.

[96] 1 Clem. 45.8.

[97] Grant connects the previous sections to this exhortation by saying, "Since church order is based on God's plan and expresses it (chs. 40-44), only wicked have persecuted, or more precisely, driven out the righteous." Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2:74.

[98] For this section of the letter being addressed to the rebels and calling them to repentance, see Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2:82-83. Grant also notices the function of Old Testament examples in Clement's exhortation to the rebels. See also Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 113.

says in 51.2 that those who live in fear and love "will that they themselves fall into suffering rather than their neighbors.[99] While this is a general principle that could apply to all Christians, most of the examples that the author gives next are leaders who choose to suffer rather than have their people suffer. Notably, Moses is again cited as the exemplar of a leader willing to suffer for his people.[100] After the people of Israel sinned and God said that he would destroy them, Moses pleads with the Lord, asking him to forgive the people "or also wipe me out of the book of the living."[101] The author immediately notices the mighty love of Moses, connecting his love to his willingness to be destroyed with the people rather than let them suffer.[102] Here, Moses "plays the role of the valiant shepherd seeking God's forgiveness on behalf of a sinful people to the point of offering to die with them."[103] If the rebels want to be true pastoral leaders in the model of Moses, they too should be willing to suffer for their community, as Clement immediately points out.[104] In a different rhetorical context true pastoral leaders are suffering—this time, out of love for their people.

**Gentile examples.** Clement goes beyond the paragon example of Moses, describing a wide variety of noble leaders who suffered for their people.[105] Immediately after encouraging the rebels to embrace voluntary exile, Clement gives Gentile leaders, many suffering Christians, Esther, and Judith as exemplars of noble suffering.[106] First,

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[99] "ἑαυτοὺς θέλουσιν μᾶλλον αἰκίαις περιπίπτειν ἢ τοὺς πλησίον." 1 Clem. 51.2.

[100] Rothschild, *New Essays on the Apostolic Fathers*, 88.

[101] "ἢ καμε εξαλειψον εκ βίβλου ζώντων." 1 Clem. 53.4.

[102] 1 Clem. 53.5.

[103] Rothschild, *New Essays on the Apostolic Fathers*, 88-89.

[104] 1 Clem. 54.1-2, which comes right after the expression of Moses's great love for his people.

[105] Grant argues that this section is about examples of people who have voluntarily gone into exile. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2:87. I will show that Grant's view is too specific, and the examples here are of voluntary suffering on behalf of others.

[106] 1 Clem. 55.

Clement brings forward the example of Gentile rulers who "gave themselves over to death, in order to deliver their citizens by their own blood," even sometimes embracing voluntary exile.[107] Perhaps seeking to put the rebels to shame, the author notices that even Gentile leaders have died, sacrificed for the good of their communities, and embraced exile for the peace of their people![108]

**Christian examples.** Moving on to suffering love among Christians,[109] Clement first notes that many Christians have willingly suffered for the good of others—embracing prison to free others and selling themselves into slavery to feed others.[110] He then describes women like Judith and Esther, who courageously led God's people as they were empowered by the grace of God. However, as several authors have noticed, Clement appears to have intentionally left out some aspects of Esther and Judith's stories and highlighted others.[111] Both Judith's execution of her enemy and Esther's sexual relationship with Ahasuerus—key features of these stories in their original contexts—are passed over in order to highlight the danger they put themselves into for the sake of others.[112] Both women are said to have willingly put themselves in κίνδυνω ("danger, peril") out of love for their people, seeking to deliver them.[113] Esther's humility and piety

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[107] "παρέδωκαν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς θάνατον, ἵνα ῥύσωνται διὰ τοῦ ἑαυτῶν αἵματος τοὺς πολίτας." 1 Clem. 55.1.

[108] Others have noticed that Clement may be imitating Plutarch's method of citing multiple and various historical examples to encourage correct moral behavior. See Janelle Peters, "Rahab, Esther, and Judith as Models for Church Leadership in 1 Clement," *Journal of Early Christian History* 5, no. 2 (2015): 101; Kathleen Wicker O'Brien, 'Mulierum Virtutes (Moralia 242E-263C),' in *Plutarch's Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 106.

[109] Though these sections are clearly related and connected to each other. See Janelle Peters, "Judith and the Elders of *1 Clement*," *Open Theology* 7, no. 1 (2021): 60.

[110] 1 Clem 55.1.

[111] Peters, "Rahab, Esther, and Judith," 106-8; Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 87-88.

[112] Peters, "Rahab, Esther, and Judith," 106-7; Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 88.

[113] 1 Clem. 55:5-6. Judith is said to have "παραδοῦσα . . . ἑαυτὴν" to peril and Esther is said to have "ἑαυτὴν παρέβαλεν" to peril. Both phrases indicate that these women willingly placed themselves in

are highlighted in combination with her willingness to endanger herself for her people.[114] Both women, by God's grace, succeeded and did in fact deliver their people from harm. The message to the rebels at Corinth is clear: true pastoral leaders, ones who are filled with faith and trust God, suffer for the good of their people. The rebels at Corinth have so far shown themselves to be false leaders. However, if they embrace voluntary exile, suffering for the good of the church—they will be redeemed, showing themselves to be true pastoral leaders in the end.

**Summary**

While 1 Clem.'s vision for ministerial suffering does not, like Ign. *Pol.*, include multiple exhortations for pastoral leaders to endure suffering, the author nevertheless envisions pastoral leaders as sufferers, primarily from strife over their office. Three main elements communicate the reality of suffering for pastoral leaders. First, dead pastoral leaders are called blessed because they no longer have to fear the strife that could come upon any living presbyter. Second, Clement interprets the rebellion at Corinth as the fulfillment of biblical patterns of the wicked rebelling against righteous leaders, implying this as the norm in a fallen world. The clearest evidence that Clement saw pastoral suffering as normative is that he argues that the apostles instituted succession because they knew beforehand that faithful pastoral leaders would face strife over their authority. Third and finally, Clement's appeal to the rebels idealizes leaders both Gentile and Christian who suffer for the good of their people. These elements together demonstrate a clear vision for pastoral suffering. Remarkably, even in a historical context

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harm's way for the sake of others, see BDAG, 758, 761-63. There is also the possibility that this language conveys a connection of the sacrifice of these women to the sacrifice of Christ, especially given that παραδίδωμι is the verb often used in New Testament texts to describe Jesus's betrayal, e.g., Matt 27:18, Mark 13:11, Acts 3:13. This possibility is made more likely in light of the fact that Clement has just described Gentile leaders who delivered their people "by their own blood." In these ways, the women serve as examples of Christ's sacrificial love for others, and thus the model for pastoral leaders.

[114] 1 Clem. 55.6. See Peters, "Rahab, Ester, and Judith," 106-7.

widely regarded as having persecution from the Roman Empire,[115] both Clement and Ignatius envision pastoral suffering especially coming from within the church.

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**Soundings for Pastoral Suffering in
the Rest of the Apostolic Fathers**

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While Clement and Ignatius clearly demonstrate a vision for pastoral suffering, other documents in the Apostolic Fathers are better said to imply this and will be taken together. What follows will be an exploration of soundings for this theme in Polycarp's letter to the Philippians, the Didache, and the Shepherd of Hermas.

### Polycarp to the Philippians: If Pastoral Leaders Are Examples, They Are Sufferers

While Pol. *Phil*. gives no direct statement that pastoral leaders are called to particular suffering, suffering is a clear theme of the letter that is often underemphasized.[116] Peter Oakes has shown three ways a context of suffering pervades Polycarp's letter: (1) 9.1-2 holding up recent martyrs that had travelled through Philippi, (2) the historical context of Philippi in light of New Testament and other evidence, and (3) the repeated exhortations to suffer and endure well.[117] He has also noted that the kind of suffering most likely faced by the Philippians would be economic in nature and that, regarding martyrdom, there "would be specific danger to church leaders."[118] Given evidence from Acts, Paul's epistle to the Philippians, and other contemporaneous accounts, Oakes's reading of the presence of suffering in Philippian community at the time of writing and its centrality to the letter seems warranted.

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[115] The author himself appears to recognize this persecution in 1.1, though there is some debate about what exactly he is referring.

[116] Peter Oakes, "Leadership and Suffering in the Letters of Polycarp and Paul to the Philippians," in Gregory and Tuckett, *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*, 2:363.

[117] Oakes, "Leadership and Suffering," 2:364-68.

[118] Oakes, "Leadership and Suffering," 2:364-65.

If this is the case, then Pol. *Phil*. implies that pastoral leaders will suffer in their office for two reasons: first, because they are examples to the congregation, and second, because Polycarp's special focus on avoiding the love of money may reveal the economic suffering leaders were to expect. As I have argued above, pastoral leaders are to be moral examples according to Polycarp; they are to be "always seeking what is good in the sight of God and man."[119] With the exhortations to suffer well in the epistle,[120] it follows that the leaders of the congregation would be the most expected to patiently endure suffering. Secondly, as I have pointed out above, a particular requirement of pastoral leaders in Pol. *Phil*. is to avoid the love of money—both in the character requirements in 6.1 and especially in Polycarp's mourning over Valens in 11.1. If, as Oakes has argued, economic suffering was the primary kind of suffering to be endured by the Philippians, then the focus on turning away from the love of money in Pol*. Phil*. 11 probably has pastoral suffering in view. Oakes has even suggested that Valens's fall was perhaps due to the fact "that he had compromised his Christianity to escape economic suffering."[121] In light of Polycarp's use of idolatry language and desire for Valens's repentance, this reading appears especially likely.[122] These considerations strongly suggest that, while all Christians are expected to endure suffering in Pol. *Phil*., pastoral leaders would especially expect and embrace it as a part of their calling to lead God's people in virtue.

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[119] Pol. *Phil*. 6.1.

[120] Pol. *Phil*. 8.2, and 9.1-2. Polycarp also mentions "patient endurance," drawing from Revelation's language about suffering, in 12.2 and 13.2.

[121] Oakes, "Leadership and Suffering," 2:369.

[122] Pol. *Phil*. 11.2-4. Polycarp specifically says that anyone who does not avoid the love of money "*ab idoloolatria coinguinabitur*, *et tanquam inter gentes iudicabitur*" ("by idolatry will be polluted and just as one of the Gentiles will be judged"), which especially suggests the possibility that Valens fell away from the faith because of an unwillingness to embrace economic suffering.

## The Didache: Exemplary and Poor
## Pastoral Leaders

A similar picture emerges from the Didache: (1) if pastoral leaders embody the moral framework of the Didache, they would be exemplary sufferers and (2) some leaders needed to embrace economic suffering in their ministries. The Didache begins abruptly, teaching baptismal candidates about the necessity of suffering well and blessing those who persecute them.[123] After briefly describing the two ways, exhorting the hearers to love God and one's neighbor, the Didachist immediately clarifies what it means to love God and to love one's neighbor: "Now this is the teaching of those words: bless those who curse you and pray on behalf of your enemies and fast on behalf of those who persecute you."[124] The phrase "those words" can refer to nothing else but the previous command to love God and one's neighbor, and the author clarifies those words with instructions on responding to suffering from one's enemies with blessing. The next verses cite several ways a Christian should live out this ethic, including non-retaliation, tangibly blessing persecutors, and giving to those who beg.[125] So, the very beginning of the Didachist's vision for the "way of life" highlights "personal ethics towards enemies and persecutors."[126] This implies that suffering righteously was an expected feature of the Christian life in the Didache's community and central to the Didache's vision for Christian ethics.[127] The centrality of suffering in the moral vision of the Two Ways, taken

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[123] On the "Two Ways" section as teaching baptismal candidates, see Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, ed. Harold W Attrige, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 59. See also Jonathan A. Draper, "First-Fruits and the Support of Prophets, Teachers and the Poor in *Didache* 13 in Relation to New Testament Parallels," in Gregory and Tuckett, *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*, 2:226.

[124] "τούτων δὲ τῶν λόγων ἡ διδαχή ἐστιν αὕτη Εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς καταρωμένους ὑμῖν καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ὑμῶν, νηστεύετε δὲ ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς." Did. 1.3. On the Didachist's use of the Two Ways tradition and the relationship of this passage to the Matt 5:43-48, see Shawn J. Wilhite, *The Didache*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 99-106.

[125] Did. 1.4-5.

[126] Wilhite, *The Didache*, 105.

[127] Some scholars, however, read these commands along sociological lines, arguing that this command is specifically for newcomers to the community who would be ostracized by family members.

with the Didachist's assertion that virtue is central to pastoral genuineness,[128] strongly implies that pastoral leaders would have been expected to be model sufferers. One can surmise that a community commanded to suffer well would hold that standard particularly for prophets they tested and worthy men they ordained.

Other passages imply an embrace of economic suffering for itinerant pastoral leaders. While the Didache commands all Christians to give to the needy and refrain from an inordinate love for money, itinerant pastoral leaders seem to be qualified in part by their embrace of economic suffering.[129] Apostles and prophets are to "be received as the Lord," implying hospitality given by the community.[130] However, these itinerant pastoral leaders may only stay for at most two days, may only take bread when they leave, and are regarded as false if they ask for money.[131] While these instructions protect the community from charlatans who would abuse their hospitality, they also point to a pastoral ideal of poverty and the potential sufferings associated with it for itinerant pastoral leaders.[132] Takaaki Haraguchi has argued that an early Christian ideal for itinerant ministers, shown in modified form in Did. 11-13, included the embrace of a wandering and vulnerable life.[133] While his analysis is not convincing at every point, especially his contention that

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See Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope & Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C. E.* (New York: Newman, 2003), 112-15. Milavec's reading seems to be special pleading, going against the purpose Two Ways as a general vision for the Christian life and assuming that a narrowly accurate date and historical setting for the Didache can be ascertained. His argument for there being no general persecution for Christians in the Didachist's community rests on the assumption that it was written/completed between AD 50 and AD 70, an issue far from settled.

[128] See chap. 3.

[129] The ethical instructions to all Christians are found in Did. 1.5, 4.5-8, and 5.1.

[130] "δεχθήτω ὡς Κύριος." Did. 11.4. See also Did. 12.1-2.

[131] Did. 11.5-6.

[132] See Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 176. Niederwimmer, with many others, argues that these instructions are given to protect the community from "deceivers."

[133] Takaaki, Haraguchi, "Das Unterhaltsrecht des frühchristlichen Verkündigers: Eine Untersuchung zur Bezeichnung Ergatēs Im Neuen Testament," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 84, nos. 3-4 (1993): 178. Haraguchi writes of the itinerant

ἐργάτης ("worker") became a technical term in early Christianity, he demonstrates evidence of an ideal of poverty in parts of early Christian pastoral theology. Moreover, he gives a plausible background to the commands of Did. 11-13 regarding these leaders.[134] Shawn J. Wilhite likewise concludes that "these itinerant individuals entrust themselves to poverty and to the generous communities, and ultimately to God, who will nourish and provide for them."[135] Overall, it is difficult to understand the lives of itinerant pastoral leaders in Did. 11-13 apart from their embrace of at least economic insecurity, if not economic suffering. In addition to modeling the loving suffering idealized in the Two Ways, itinerant pastoral leaders were also expected to embrace some form of economic suffering as a part of their pastoral leadership.

**Hermas: Struggles with the Family**

While Pol. *Phil.* and the Didache's soundings for pastoral suffering run along similar lines, the Shepherd of Hermas's vision for pastoral suffering is similar to Ignatius and 1 Clement, describing difficulties in the church as the chief source of pastoral suffering. However, this picture rests upon Hermas being a pastoral leader in his community, an idea I have referenced throughout this project but will particularly defend now because of its special relevance to pastoral suffering. In short, I will argue that Hermas was a pastoral leader in his church and that the references to his "family" and "his children" are, at least in part, references to the people of the Christian congregation he leads. This position has a significant history in scholarship with various levels of

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office: "Die Bezeichnung weist sowohl auf die Pflicht zum schutzlosen Wanderleben als auch auf das Recht auf Unterhalt hin."

[134] Contra Draper, who calls Haraguchi's view "an invention of modern scholars." Jonathan Draper, "First Fruits and the Support of Prophets, Teachers and the Poor in Didache 13 in Relation to New Testament Parallels," in Gregory and Tuckett, *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*, 2:227. Draper's contention that Did. 11-13 is merely about the obligation of a community to support a network of travelling ministers underplays the numerous commands forbidding these leaders for staying for more than a day or two.

[135] Wilhite, *The Didache*, 200.

appropriation.[136] In the following, I will summarize and build on Steve Young's work in approaching Herm. as, in part, the journey of a pastoral leader from discouragement with the sin in church he leads to patience and steadfastness in ministry.[137]

**Hermas as a pastoral leader.** Young cites convincing evidence for seeing Hermas as a pastoral leader, aside from the symbolic features of Hermas which lend itself to this sort of analysis.[138] First, at the beginning of the book, even though Hermas's initial sin appears to be his desire for Rhoda, the elderly woman then appears and accuses him of not appropriately ministering to his family and allowing them to be corrupted because of his indulgent attitude towards their sins.[139] Right before the lady appears, Hermas is instructed to pray that God would "heal your sins and your whole family and all of the saints."[140] Hermas's sins, the sins of his family, and the sins of all the saints are connected, suggesting a "mingling of categories" between Hermas's earthly οἶκος and the οἶκος of the church. [141] Moreover, though Young does not point this out, οἶκος is used in broader Christian literature and at least one time in Herm. itself as referring to the

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[136] Marcus Dibelius fully takes this position, stating "daß die Familie des Hermas in Wahrheit die Christengemeinde ist." Marcus Dibelius, *Der Hirt des Hermas*, Die Apostolischen Väter 4 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1923), 420. Lage Pernveden argues that Hermas was a prophet of some kind but not the leader of a local congregation, see Lage Pernveden, *The Concept of the Church in the Shepherd of Hermas*, Studia Theologica Lundensia 27 (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1966), 150. Carolyn Osiek also takes a mediating position, saying that in some instances references to Hermas's family are literal and autobiographical and in others they are "a cipher for the whole community." Carolyn Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 49. The most recent commentary on Hermas takes a different mediating position, stating that mentions of Hermas' family serve "as a type of the believers in the church." Michael J. Svigel and Caroline P. Buie, *The Shepherd of Hermas: A New Translation and Commentary*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary 4 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023), 71-72.

[137] Steve Young's view on this matter is articulated at length in Steve Young, "Being a Man: The Pursuit of Manliness in The Shepherd of Hermas," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 237-55.

[138] There remains debate on how to classify the genre of Hermas, but scholars generally agree on the book containing symbolic and apocalyptic elements. See the discussion on genre in Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 10-12.

[139] Young, "Being a Man," 241; citing Herm. 3.1.

[140] "ἰάσεται τὰ ἁμαρτήματά σου καὶ ὅλου τοῦ οἴκου σου καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων." Herm. 1.9.

[141] Young, "Being a Man," 243.

church.[142] These lexical considerations taken with the appositive structure of Hermas's οἶκος and πάντων τῶν ἀγίων in 1.9 points strongly toward viewing Hermas's family and children symbolically as the members of the church he leads. A similar sandwiching of Hermas's family with the saints occurs in 6.3-6, where Hermas is commanded to make the words of the vision known to "your children and your wife," words which immediately have relevance to "all the saints," "the elect," and even "the leaders of the church."[143] As Young points out, τέκνα was often used in Christian literature to refer to "the spiritual children of a teacher or members of the church."[144] Moreover, immediately before Hermas is told to speak to his children, the lady asks him if he can "proclaim this to the elect of God."[145] Thus Young appears right in seeing the various "mingling of categories" between Hermas's family with the saints as pointing very strongly to Hermas's family and children representing, at least in part, the people of the church he leads.[146]

**Hermas as a suffering leader.** If Hermas's "family" and "children" are symbolic or even typological references to his church community, then he has suffered and endured various afflictions as a leader of that community.[147] The text bears witness to significant community strife and sin in Hermas's community, even among the leaders themselves.[148] Seemingly related to these dissensions, Hermas is said to have "had your own great afflictions because of the disobedience of your family, because it was not a

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[142] See BDAG, 699; Herm. 90.9.

[143] "τοῖς τέκνοις σου πᾶσιν καὶ τῇ συμβίῳ σου," "πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις," "τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς," and "τοῖς προηγουμένοις τῆς ἐκκλησίας." Herm. 6.3-6. Once again, I am following Young's work here.

[144] Young, "Being a Man," 242. Young refers to BDAG, 995. BDAG points out that Herm. 17.1 specifically refers to all believers as "τέκνα."

[145] "ταῦτα τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀναγγεῖλαι." Herm. 5.3.

[146] Young, "Being a Man," 243.

[147] See n136 above for Svigel and Buie's typological view.

[148] See Herm. 17.1-10.

concern of yours."[149] While these leadership afflictions are in part because of Hermas's negligence, they are indeed great: θλίψεις is elsewhere used in Herm. to describe great times of evil, perhaps the end times or times of persecution.[150] Hermas's pastoral negligence has contributed to the dissension and internal conflict in his community, which has in turn greatly afflicted him. As a result of these pastoral afflictions, Hermas is said to be gloomy, resentful, and to have a withered spirit, burdened by his sorrows over the sins in his community.[151] Considering all of these things together, Young avers that Hermas

> finds it easier to face a wild beast (a symbol of persecution) without doubt than to deal with the everyday frustrations of his community. . . . Hermas is the discouraged pastor of his people. He has tried to be self-deprecating, lenient and long-suffering. As a result he has become abused, weary and resentful. The crisis is not the θλῖψις of external persecution, but the internal "crisis" of an upwardly mobile church and the cognitive dissonance which that creates for its pastor-prophet-paterfamilias.[152]

Whether or not one receives Young's particular reading of the "internal crisis" afflicting Hermas and his church, the picture of Hermas as a discouraged leader rather than merely a discouraged father makes the best sense of the evidence.

**Instructions for pastoral difficulties.** From this place of pastoral discouragement, Hermas is called to endurance and faithful instruction of his sinful people for their maturity and salvation. After the initial rebuke for his pastoral negligence in 3.1, Hermas is encouraged that the Lord will have mercy on and "ἰσχυροποιήσει" ("strengthen") he and his people.[153] He is then commanded: "Only do not be negligent,

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[149] "μεγάλας θλίψεις ἔσχες ἰδιωτικὰς διὰ τὰς παραβάσεις τοῦ οἴκου σου, ὅτι οὐκ ἐμέλησέν σοι περὶ αὐτῶν." Herm. 7.1.

[150] See Herm. 6.7 and 7.4 in close proximity to the cited passage. See also analysis of this term along eschatological lines in Svigel and Buie, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 137-40; Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 91.

[151] Young, "Being a Man," 248-249, citing Herm. 2.3, 7.1 and 19.2.

[152] Young, "Being a Man," 249.

[153] Herm. 3.2.

but be encouraged and strengthen your family. For just as the blacksmith, by hitting his work with a hammer, masters the thing which he wanted to do, so also the daily righteous word masters all evil. Do not stop, therefore, admonishing your children."[154] Hermas is called to repent of his pastoral negligence, take courage, and strengthen his people just as the Lord has promised to strengthen him. He will strengthen them by preaching the Word and admonishing his people, for this alone is capable of mastering and overcoming the evil that has taken control of his congregation. In doing so, Hermas must be like the diligent blacksmith, who daily works to master his craft. This image portrays the church as Hermas's work, and Hermas faithfully working hard to mold his people into righteousness and maturity. As a further pastoral encouragement toward this difficult work, Hermas is promised that the almighty God who created the world and his church is now making a way for them and fulfilling his promises to them.[155] In the context of pastoral suffering, these exhortations to Hermas bear remarkable resemblance to Ignatius's exhortations to Polycarp.

Hermas is also admonished to refuse both resentment and indulgence towards his people who have wounded him. In 6.4-7, Hermas is given the following in staccato-like fashion: an exhortation to make known the revelation to his family, a warning that those who do not repent shall not be saved, a call to make known the revelation to leaders of the church, and a call to "endure the coming great affliction."[156] Immediately after, he is told that he

> must no longer resent your children, nor allow your sister to have her way, so that they may be cleansed from their former sins. For they will be instructed with righteous instruction, if you do not resent them. Resentment brings death. But you,

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[154] "σὺ μόνον μὴ ῥαθυμήσῃς, ἀλλὰ εὐψύχει καὶ ἰσχυροποίει σου τὸν οἶκον. ὡς γὰρ ὁ χαλκεὺς σφυροκοπῶν τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ περιγίνεται τοῦ πράγματος οὗ θέλει, οὕτω καὶ ὁ λόγος ὁ καθημερινὸς ὁ δίκαιος περιγίνεται πάσης πονηρίας. μὴ διαλίπῃς οὖν νουθετῶν σου τὰ τέκνα." Herm. 3.2.

[155] Herm 3.4. There is a probable allusion to Isa 40:14 in the verse's reference to God removing mountains and hills and making all things level for his people that further presses the point that God is going to be good to his church and that these promises to Hermas are meant to encourage him as a pastoral leader.

[156] "ὑπομένετε τὴν θλῖψιν τὴν ἐρχομένην τὴν μεγάλην." Herm. 6.4-7.

Hermas, have had your own great afflictions because of the disobedience of your family, because it was not a concern of yours.[157]

This full quotation gives further context to the recognition of Hermas's pastoral sufferings above. While recognizing that Hermas has suffered at the hands of his people, he must refuse to resent them and instead minister to them in love. At the same time, Hermas must not indulge his people and allow them to continue to have their own ways, but must seek to correct them and restrain their self-indulgence. Indeed, if he will choose to love and correct his people in spite of their mistreatment of him, they will be given "παιδείᾳ δικαίᾳ," a phrase that indicates not only verbal instruction but also holistic formation into maturity, especially with connotations of correction and discipline.[158] As I have pointed out in the previous chapter, παιδεία is word Herm. elsewhere associates with the essential pastoral goal of sanctification. The pastoral combination of correction with forgiving love to difficult people renders a similar picture of endurance in ministry as Ign. *Pol*.

**Hermas's growth as a leader.** Aside from viewing references to his family and children as members of his congregation, Young gives another reading of Herm. relevant to pastoral suffering: he sees Hermas's moral journey in the work as a journey of a leader. While not central to the argument of this chapter, this reading is important because it points to the possibility of a pastoral leader enduring and growing through suffering. Young shows that Hermas goes from having an old and withered spirit to a recovered youthfulness through the course of the book.[159] He also moves from resentment to joyfulness and from isolation to fellowship, possibly symbolizing his renewed willingness or ability to engage with his church community through the

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[157] "μηκέτι μνησικακήσῃς τοῖς τέκνοις σου, μηδὲ τὴν ἀδελφήν σου ἐάσῃς, ἵνα καθαρισθῶσιν ἀπὸ τῶν προτέρων ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν. παιδευθήσονται γὰρ παιδείᾳ δικαίᾳ, ἐὰν σὺ μὴ μνησικακήσῃς αὐτοῖς. μνησικακία θάνατον κατεργάζεται. σὺ δέ, Ἑρμᾶ, μεγάλας θλίψεις ἔσχες ἰδιωτικὰς διὰ τὰς παραβάσεις τοῦ οἴκου σου." Herm. 7.1.

[158] BDAG, 748.

[159] Young, "Being a Man," 250, citing Herm. 20.2 and 88.5.

comforting presence of the Shepherd and others.[160] Most convincingly, the end of Herm. depicts Hermas as a willing pastoral leader.[161] After being commended for his righteousness and told again to speak to others, Hermas says, "I proclaim to every man the mighty acts of the Lord" and is then told to "remain therefore . . . in this ministry and complete it."[162] Hermas has gone from a negligent and discouraged pastoral leader to one commended and intent on continuing a faithful ministry. The final chapter of Herm. exhorts him again in his ministry courageously and promises him the Lord's blessing in it.[163] These final pictures of Hermas indicate that while difficulties may continue to attend his pastoral leadership, he is now fit with the willingness and commitment to diligently minister through them. Young concludes his analysis of Hermas's ministerial progress by saying that "the story of Hermas is not merely the story of a single Christian leader struggling with the daily work of ministry. The message entrusted to him must be distributed to others throughout the church."[164] With its clear direction toward the whole Christian community, Hermas's transformation from the negligent and discouraged pastor to the diligent and faithful one aims to encourage Christian leaders of his day.

**Summary.** If indeed Hermas was a pastoral leader growing from discouragement to endurance in the difficulties of ministry, a vision of pastoral suffering from within the church emerges with clear similarities to that of Clement and Ignatius. What Hermas contributes distinctly to this vision is a recognition that leaders are not necessarily blameless in their ministerial sufferings. According to Herm., pastoral sufferings from sinful church members may very well be the result of sinful pastoral

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[160] Young, "Being a Man," 250-251, citing Herm. 9.5, 22.3, 47.7, and 87.6.

[161] Young, "Being a Man," 250-252.

[162] "*omni homini indico magnolia domini*" and "*permane ergo . . . in hoc ministerio et consumma illud*." Herm. 112.3-4.

[163] Herm. 114.1.

[164] Young, "Being a Man," 253.

negligence. The pastor is not merely called to endurance, but also repentance in the midst of pastoral sufferings.

## The Martyred Pastor

Before concluding, it is important to note that some postapostolic pastoral leaders suffered to the end, and their attitudes towards martyrdom round out the postapostolic picture of the suffering pastor. Both Ignatius and Polycarp expressed that following Christ in suffering and death, when necessary, was preeminent. However, these pastors and their people were evidently pulled between continued faithful ministry and potential faithful martyrdom. For example, in Mart. Pol., when Polycarp hears that the mob is looking for him, he planned to stay in the town and face martyrdom, but was persuaded by "the many,"[165] almost certainly a reference to his church, to flee. As the authorities persist in searching for him, he eventually refuses to move anymore, saying, "Let the will of God be done."[166] He is captured and proceeds to amaze all involved with his godliness in facing martyrdom. After he is killed, the author says that Polycarp's prowess *as a pastoral leader* was proven by his martyrdom. By his faithful death, Polycarp "became in our time an apostolic and prophetic teacher."[167] Three elements of this account portray the tension between faithful ministry and faithful martyrdom in the postapostolic age. First, the leader was willing to face martyrdom and did not seek to flee it. Second, his people urged him to flee, ostensibly out of love and so that his faithful ministry could continue. But finally, when a leader faithfully underwent martyrdom, their true leadership was actually proven! These three features of pastoral martyrdom, shared with Ignatius, show the pull early Christian communities faced between having faithful

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[165] "πλείους" Mart. Pol. 5.1.

[166] "Τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ γενέσθω." Mart. Pol. 7.1.

[167] "ἐν τοῖς καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς χρόνοις διδάσκαλος ἀποστολικὸς καὶ προφητικὸς γενόμενος." Mart. Pol. 16.2. Holmes translates this phrase, even more emphatically, that Polycarp "proved to be an apostolic and prophetic teacher in our own time." Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 325.

pastoral leaders continue and allowing them to be exemplars of Christ's suffering and death.

These themes and competing pulls surround Ignatius's experience of and attitude towards martyrdom. Like Polycarp, Ignatius did not offer himself up for martyrdom, but rather was arrested by the authorities. Evidently, some in the Christian community sought to prevent his execution, leading him to plead with the Roman church to allow him to be martyred.[168] In his appeal to the Romans to not hinder his martyrdom, he even said, "I do not want you to please men, but to please God."[169] Ignatius's further appeals, expressed passionately in Ign. *Rom.* and in other epistles, emphasized that his martyrdom would please God and prove Ignatius as a true disciple.[170] However, even with his face set toward martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius expressed great anxiety over the health of his church in his absence—he was still a pastor, concerned chiefly with his church's wellbeing.[171] Like Polycarp in Mart. Pol., Ignatius expressed a firm determination to imitate Christ and please God via martyrdom, a deep concern for his people's health in his absence, and, though not directly related to his pastoral leadership, the conviction that he would be proven true by faithful martyrdom.[172] These intertwined and complex ideas show early Christian leaders and communities navigating the occasional tension between the ideals of faithful pastoral ministry and faithful pastoral suffering.

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[168] Ign. *Rom*. 1-2.

[169] "Οὐ γὰρ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀνθρωπαρεσκῆσαι, ἀλλὰ Θεῷ ἀρέσαι." Ign. *Rom*. 2.1.

[170] Ign. *Rom*. 2-7; Ign. *Trall.* 12.3.

[171] Ign. *Rom*. 9.1; Ign. *Phld.* 10.1; Ign. *Smyrn.* 11.1-3.

[172] However, in Ign. *Rom.* 2.2 Ignatius does connect his identity *as a bishop* to his impending martyrdom, implying that he, like the author of Mart. Pol., saw faithful martyrdom as especially showing a pastoral leader to be true.

## Conclusion

Outside of martyrdom, when pastoral suffering is most clearly articulated in the Apostolic Fathers, it comes surprisingly from within the church. In this vision for ministry, pastoral leaders would suffer as a result of the manifold difficulties in faithfully leading God's people to maturity and faithfulness—especially because of encounters with rebellious Christians and false teachers. With Ign. *Pol*. and 1 Clem. making this explicit, and it likely being a part of the symbolic vision for ministry in Herm., this appears to be the kind of pastoral suffering seen as most peculiar to pastoral leaders in this era. This bears striking resemblance to the picture of pastoral suffering in the New Testament.

Other documents in the Apostolic Fathers do not explicitly envision this peculiar pastoral suffering for the leaders of God's people. However, if the principle holds that pastoral leaders were to be exemplary Christians, Pol. *Phil*. and Did. imply that pastoral leaders must be willing to suffer with patience. If all Christians are called to this, then pastoral leaders are especially called to this. Moreover, a willingness to embrace some form of economic suffering also appears to be a pastoral requirement. The lines between pastoral virtue and pastoral suffering are blurry on this point, but it appears that more than just not being lovers of money, some pastoral leaders would need to embrace economic deprivation as a result of their ministerial roles.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION: AN APOSTOLIC
VISION FOR MINISTRY?

Many studies on early Christian leadership have made bold claims from
ambiguous evidence. Some of my proposals below will appear bold in today's scholarly
context, but I believe they are based on an extensive body of clear evidence. In short, I
am proposing another set of theological judgments or "family resemblances" in early
Christian theology that has hitherto gone unrecognized: a theological vision for who
pastoral leaders are, what they do, and the difficulties that would attend their ministries—
an "apostolic vision for ministry." The presence of this vision strongly suggests that
while the early church may have had a "fixed but flexible"[1] structure for ministry that
developed over time, any diversity and development of this structure existed within a
stable theological vision for ministry. In other words, the early church had unity about
pastoral ministry, it just was not the kind of structural unity that has been the main
scholarly question asked of the documents. What follows will summarize the findings of
this study, suggest an alternative narrative about the beginnings of Christian ministry, and
make a few suggestions for theological retrieval.

**Summary of Findings**

This study has demonstrated theological unity about pastoral identity and work
in the apostolic and postapostolic ages as witnessed to in the New Testament and
Apostolic Fathers. My summary of findings will describe the four main theological
judgments I have argued for—pastoral virtue, authority, work, and suffering—in the New

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[1] Michael J. Svigel, "Can an Ecclesiology Be Biblical and Not Apostolic?," *Bibliotheca Sacra*
176, no. 701 (2019): 79.

Testament and Apostolic Fathers respectively. At some points, I will note potential areas of development between the apostolic and postapostolic periods.

**Pastoral Virtue**

Early Christian literature insisted most upon pastoral virtue, making public blamelessness and a particular nexus of relational virtues essential for pastoral leaders. In the New Testament, the Pastoral Epistles emphasized that a leader's godliness had to be proven and public before a they could be ordained. Other New Testament passages insisted that leaders be righteous and blameless (Acts 20:17-38, 1 Thess 2:1-12, and Heb 13:7). Authors did not feel the need to spell out what exactly this general virtue meant; there appeared to be an assumption that communities would recognize blameless men when they saw them. However, specifics were given about pastoral virtue in this period, with great emphasis given on the need for particular virtues for pastoral leaders. The necessity for humility, gentleness, and a right relationship to money attended almost every depiction of ministerial virtue in the New Testament—whether depicted in Paul's example (Acts 20:33-35 and 1 Thess 2:1-12), lists of character qualifications for leaders (1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9), or in exhortation to leaders (1 Pet 5:2-5 and 2 Tim 2:24-25).

The Apostolic Fathers carry forward this vision for pastoral virtue, emphasizing a publicly seen yet unspecified "worthiness" and highlighting relational virtues, with several remarks about a leader's relationship to money. Like the Pastoral Epistles, Poly *Phil*. lists requirements for elders in a systematic fashion, with godly public behavior and gentle dealings with others especially highlighted. Similar to Paul's autobiographical accounts and Hebrews 13:7, Ignatius and Clement emphasize the preeminent virtue of present leaders or (in Clement's case) unjustly deposed leaders. Ignatius's letter to Polycarp praises his general virtue and exhorts him to further virtue, highlighting especially his gentle dealings with the disobedient. The Shepherd of Hermas rebukes unvirtuous leaders especially for their relational sin and pictures ideal pastoral

leaders as united, humble, and eminent in godliness. The Didache requires residential leaders to exhibit godliness and tests the itinerant ones with the same standard of godliness. These diverse expressions render the same theological judgment that virtue, and virtue of a particular kind, was essential for pastoral leaders in the first 150 years of Christianity.

One potential area of development in postapostolic literature was the growing emphasis on virtue as *revelatory* of genuine pastoral leaders. While the New Testament described virtue as necessary and prerequisite, some the Apostolic Fathers asserted that virtue revealed true leaders—an unvirtuous pastoral leader was a contradiction. This occurred in three main ways: (1) Polycarp implied that Valens's sin revealed that he did not know the nature of his office, (2) the Didache insisted that the life of the prophet revealed his genuineness, and (3) Ignatius's effusive praise of pastoral leaders indicated that he could not have imagined an unvirtuous leader. To give a concrete example of how these statements about pastoral virtue indicate development, the Pastoral Epistles would have a seriously sinning elder rebuked publicly (1 Tim 5:20), while Polycarp, the Didache, and Ignatius may have said that individual was no true elder at all. While the Apostolic Fathers may have drawn from the Gospel saying that a tree was known by its fruit (Matt 7:16-18 and Matt 12:33), the tendency to imply virtue as revelatory of genuineness indicates a growing emphasis on pastoral virtue in the postapostolic era.

**Pastoral Authority**

Pastoral authority was closely related to pastoral virtue, with both apostolic and postapostolic works tethering a leader's authority to their virtue. Outside of the Pastorals, the New Testament directly connected leaders' virtuous pastoral labors to their authority (1 Thess 5:12 and Heb 13:17). In the Pastorals, Paul gave side-by-side exhortations about virtue and authority to Titus and Timothy (1 Tim 4:2, Titus 2:15, and Titus 3:8). This connection between authority and virtue continued in the Apostolic Fathers. Ignatius's reminder to Polycarp that he is under God's authority, Hermas and the

Didache's virtue tests for prophets, and Clement's emphasis on the deposed presbyters' blamelessness all point to the fact that pastoral authority was not a clerical *a priori* or solely institutional, but tethered to a leader's godliness.

The New Testament and Apostolic Fathers also shared a fundamental insistence on obedience to pastoral leaders and similar ways of grounding their authority. The New Testament gave consistent admonitions that pastoral leaders be obeyed and respected (1 Thess 5:12, Heb 13:17, and 1 Pet 5:4) and the Pastorals charged pastoral leaders to exercise authority (Titus 2:15 and 2 Tim 4:2). Exhortations to obedience were more numerous in the Apostolic Fathers but the same in substance. The stated purpose of 1 Clement was the Corinthians' return to obedience to their pastoral leaders; Ignatius emphasized submission to pastoral leaders in nearly all his epistles; Polycarp commanded it once; the Didache and Hermas implied it strongly.

A particularly close correspondence between the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers was how authors connected the authority of pastoral leaders to God's authority. Paul's Miletus speech says the elders were made overseers by the Holy Spirit; Ephesians 4:11 similarly pictures pastoral leaders as gifts given by the risen Christ. More directly but communicating the same judgment, Ignatius and the Didache command God's people to view and obey their leaders "as the Lord." The sharing of two key metaphors gives an even more striking point of correspondence. The Pastorals and Ignatius describe leaders as the Lord's "steward," representing God's interests to God's people, both overseeing and serving his household. Shepherding imagery conveys pastoral authority directly in 1 Peter, Ignatius, and Hermas, with Polycarp and Clement using aspects of the shepherd/flock metaphor. In light of how postapostolic articulations of pastoral authority have been written off as later developments, the remarkable conceptual and literary correspondence about pastoral authority suggests significant continuity.

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**Pastoral Work**

The witness to pastoral work is slightly more varied, but regarding preaching, oversight, and the goal of sanctification, apostolic and postapostolic literature speaks with one voice. Exhortations to preach faithfully and descriptions of preaching leaders permeate the New Testament (Heb 13:7, 1 Thess 5:12, 1 Tim 4:11-13, 2 Tim 4:2-5, and Titus 2:15). The preaching ministry of pastoral leaders is likewise described in Ignatius, Hermas, and the Didache, with Polycarp's Epistle and 1 Clement strongly implying it. Moreover, this element of pastoral work brings in postapostolic works without other major soundings for pastoral theology, with the Martyrdom of Polycarp, Epistle of Barnabas, and 2 Clement giving witness.

Authors often connected preaching to the main goal of pastoral labor—the spiritual good of God's people. Timothy would be an instrument of salvation to his people by keeping watch over his life and teaching (1 Tim 4:16); Polycarp must likewise exhort all people so that they could be saved; the teachers of the Didache had to teach in a way that adds to righteousness. Both the elders of Acts and the bishops of the congregations Ignatius wrote to would protect their people from false doctrine; Ignatius added that submission to pastoral leaders is inherently sanctifying. Other texts articulated this more generally, like Herm.'s visions of the blessing of good pastoral leaders and Ephesians 4:11's description of them as the gift of Christ for the maturity of the church. With a wide variety of expressions, these texts rendered the judgment that good pastoral labor sanctifies God's people.

Key to sanctification was general pastoral oversight. The New Testament articulated this especially using shepherding imagery, with pastoral leaders called to give "careful attention to the flock" and specifically commanded to "shepherd" God's people (Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2). Leaders were also pictured as laboring among God's people generally and exhorted to give practical oversight to a variety of areas of church life (1 Thess 5:12, 1 Tim 1-2, and Titus 3). The Apostolic Fathers continue this theme, describing pastors as leading the church generally and giving admonishing care to the

straying and rebellious. Pastoral oversight, like preaching, was for the church's wellbeing.

Pastoral leadership of gatherings and pastoral care for the poor may be points of development in this period, though discerning this is complicated by a lack of specific evidence in the New Testament. Moreover, only Ignatius, the Didache, and Hermas describe pastoral leaders overseeing Christian gatherings, while only Ignatius, Polycarp, and Hermas bear witness to pastoral care for the poor, making these less prominent themes. Comparing 1 Timothy 5:3-16 to Ign. *Pol*. 4.1 gives an example of how this development may have occurred. While 1 Timothy 5:3-16 gives general instructions for caring for widows, with Timothy arguably responsible to ensure that the church as a whole did this appropriately, Ignatius makes this Polycarp's particular charge—he himself is to be the widow's guardian. Plausibly, overseeing Christian gatherings and care for the poor was a general pastoral responsibility in the apostolic age, one that is particularized and personalized in some postapostolic texts.

**Pastoral Suffering**

The final shared feature of early Christian pastoral theology is the most neglected and surprising: that leaders were expected to labor in a context of conflict and suffering. In the New Testament, Paul's example was constantly associated with faithful ministerial suffering (Acts 20:19, 1 Thess 2:1-12, 2 Tim 1:12, and 2 Tim 3:11); he also commanded his lieutenants to suffer well, warned them against false teachers, and predicted suffering as a feature of ministry in the last days (1 Tim 1:3-4, 1:8, 1:19-20; 2 Tim 1:8, 4:14-15; Titus 1:9-10, and Titus 3:10-12). Outside of the Pauline corpus, 1 Peter 5:1-5 strongly implied that suffering would attend faithful ministry.

At least three postapostolic texts picture pastoral leaders suffering difficulties from within their congregations. Ignatius exhorts Polycarp to embrace the necessary sufferings for his ministry and connects his suffering to his imitation of God and Christ. The vision of 1 Clement describes righteous pastoral leaders persecuted by the rebellious

as normative, indeed, as the fulfillment of Scripture. Less explicitly, Hermas is pictured as a pastoral leader struggling with his pastoral failures and the resulting conflict in his church. More than this, the martyrdom of pastoral leaders looms in the background of these texts, with the Ignatian corpus and the Martyrdom of Polycarp indicating that pastoral leaders were particular targets of martyrdom and showing how they willingly embraced suffering to follow Christ.

**Summary: An Apostolic Vision
for Ministry**

All of this conceptual (and in some cases literary) correspondence between apostolic and postapostolic documents shows a profound unity about pastoral leadership in the first 150 years of Christianity. With some questions remaining about early Christian leadership structures, the evidence indicates an apostolic vision for ministry—core theological judgments about pastoral virtue, authority, work, and suffering—lying behind the various expressions found in the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers. Similar to core apostolic judgments about Christ's person and work that underlie various Christological expressions found throughout this literature, these judgments were variously expressed but make the same substantive assertions about pastoral leadership. This strongly indicates that Christian leadership was a Christian distinctive, one, like the Incarnational narrative, chiefly influenced by apostolic teaching.

## An Alternative Narrative

If the above findings are true, they suggest an alternative narrative about the development of pastoral leadership in the early church. As I have described, the three primary narratives put forward about the development of leadership in the church are: (1) uniform pastoral organization, often argued from confessional perspectives, (2) significant diversity, discontinuity, and change in pastoral leadership over the first and second centuries, and (3) cultural or social forces determining the nature and development of early pastoral leadership. I propose that the most plausible and evidence-

based narrative for the development of pastoral leadership and organization in earliest Christianity *begins with theological unity about pastoral identity and work*. However fixed or fluid early Christian leadership structures were, they existed within a unified and stable theology of pastoral identity and work. Regardless of who had preeminent authority in a particular congregation or how churches in a particular city or region were structured, all leaders were expected to be virtuous, regarded with authority, oversaw, and taught, often suffering in their work.

This narrative suggests not only a unity about pastoral ministry in the early church but also implies how unity and diversity coincided in early Christianity. Previously cited studies by Michael J. Svigel, Lewis Ayres, and others have shown how the Incarnational narrative was articulated in diverse ways within a set of shared theological judgments. My project has shown this to be the case regarding early Christian pastoral theology as well. This intimates that an insistence on theological judgments with a flexibility about those judgments' expression is the best way to conceive of unity and diversity in early Christianity. This picture of unity and diversity accords with the testimony of the church fathers about an orthodox tradition and accounts for the diversity between early Christian communities.

Historically, how does one account for this shared pastoral theology? This is a difficult question, and my answer will the only place in this project where I attempt a plausible reconstruction without explicit evidence. To bring forth a very old view, I believe that this shared pastoral theology was a part of the apostolic, kerygmatic tradition of the early church, received and applied in fresh ways over time. Describing this tradition as it has been understood by many,[2] D. H. Williams says that it

> denotes the acceptance and handing over of God's Word, Jesus Christ . . . and how this took concrete forms in the apostles' preaching (*kerygma*), in the Christ-centered reading of the Old Testament, in the celebration of baptism and the Lord's Supper,

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[2] By many here I mean Christians historically and conservative patristics scholars. Many scholars of early Christianity today flatly deny this, often as a presupposition.

and in the doxological, doctrinal, hymnological and credal forms by which the declaration of the mystery of God Incarnate was revealed for our salvation. In both *act* and *substance*, the Tradition represents a living history which, throughout the earliest centuries, was constituted by the church and also constituted what was the true church.[3]

According to Williams, this tradition was founded on an oral tradition that preceded the New Testament documents and was witnessed to in the New Testament.[4] It consisted of the teaching of Jesus and the Christ-centered interpretation of the Old Testament passed on to the apostles by Jesus and witnessed to in their preaching and testimony.[5] It also contained kerygmatic tradition, liturgical or "church" tradition, and ethical tradition.[6] This tradition was not only witnessed to in the canonical documents, but was also a key factor in the reception of certain documents as canonical—indeed, the canonical documents show only the "tip of the confessional iceberg," or "polaroid shots of the church's living faith."[7] After the apostolic age, this tradition was not static but "dynamic," a "construction of how the church addresses its present circumstances by utilizing what it has received."[8] In other words, the church's received tradition "developed" as it was applied to new circumstances, with new applications but an adherence to what was received from the apostles.

Many today see this narrative of a fixed apostolic tradition applied in developing ways in the church's differing historical contexts as ludicrous, and it is beyond the scope of this conclusion to fully defend the classic view as articulated by Williams. I would point out, however, that those who deny this as plausible do so against the early church's

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[3] D. H. Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 1999), 36.

[4] Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism*, 35, 42-43. Williams cites 2 Thess 2:15, Luke 1:1, and Heb 2:3 as New Testament texts that show awareness of this tradition.

[5] Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism*, 41-42.

[6] Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism*, 55.

[7] Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism*, 45, 61.

[8] Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism,* 37.

own testimony[9] and struggle to readily explain the theological convictions behind the eventual reception of the canonical documents.[10] The early church, or so-called "proto-orthodox" community, clearly had a shared theology and culture. Those who view second century statements about apostolic tradition with a hermeneutic of suspicion struggle to explain from where this theology and culture came.

I bring up the classic view of the tradition as articulated by Williams because it is the best historical explanation for the shared pastoral theology revealed by this project. How else does one explain the prevalence of these shared convictions, often expressed with literary correspondence, over the course of century in the midst of various Christian communities? Especially hard to otherwise explain is the insistence on pastoral virtue, authority, and work with the relative lack of specificity about ministerial structure (outside of Ignatius's epistles). This indicates a shared tradition with insistent and clearly stated views about the identity and work of pastoral leaders but less said about the structures in which they would minister. Moreover, the notion that the tradition was dynamic, being received, applied, and used to evaluate the church's changing situations explains the various ways pastoral theology is expressed in these documents. For example, Polycarp's requirements for elders could be seen as a positive articulation of a received pastoral theology, while Herm.'s rebukes toward unvirtuous leaders applied this same pastoral tradition to a new situation—one where the leaders of God's people did not

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[9] In the Apostolic Fathers, 1 Clem. specifically speaks of "the traditions" in the context of obeying pastoral leaders, see 1 Clem 7.2. Multiple New Testament texts also appeal to oral, apostolic tradition, see Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism*, 35, 42-43. Later authors would be more explicit, such as Irenaeus, who said,

> The church, though dispersed through our whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith . . . the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes  these points [of doctrine] just as if she had but one soul, and one in the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.10.1-2)

[10] For an introduction to the rule of faith and its role in the reception of Scripture, see Michael J. Kruger, *Christianity at the Crossroads: How the Second Century Shaped the Future of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018), 135-65, 202-26.

embody the virtues needed for their roles. First and second consensus scholars have long recognized particular oral or written traditions behind postapostolic expressions of pastoral theology.[11] Moreover, recent scholars have cited oral tradition as explanatory of the "fixity within flexibility, or stability within diversity" of the theological expressions of the Apostolic Fathers.[12] What I am suggesting is that this oral tradition was more robust, closer to the classic view, and spoke explicitly about pastoral leadership.

This alternative narrative of a traditional, unified, and flexibly expressed pastoral theology has explanatory power even if one concedes the unfounded historical assumptions of many scholars. For an example, consider if one conceded the first consensus narrative of the genuine "charismatic Paul" and the institutionalization witnessed to by the non-Pauline Pastoral Epistles and Apostolic Fathers, going as far as to say that 1 and 2 Corinthians were the only genuinely Pauline epistles.[13] Within these narrow constraints, one could still show an essential theological unity between Paul, the author of the Pastorals, and Ignatius on pastoral virtue, aspects of pastoral work, pastoral suffering, and arguably, even pastoral authority! Consider how the following themes of the Corinthian correspondence coheres with the vision outlined in this project: Paul defends his ministry in 2 Corinthians through his godly character, highlighting his gentleness, humility, right relationship with money, and love for his people (2 Cor 10:1 and 2 Cor 11:7-10); he even uses similar terminology as the Pastorals and Apostolic

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[11] For example, as I cited in chap. 4, Aaron Milavec goes as far as to suggest a "common tradition" between the Didache and various New Testament texts concerning the pastoral requirement of gentleness, a right relationship to money, and to being tested. Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope & Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C.E.* (New York: Newman, 2003), 588-89.

[12] Stephen E. Young, "The Jesus Tradition in the Apostolic Fathers," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Scott D. Harrower (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2023), 74.

[13] 1 and 2 Corinthians are mentioned here because they are the most universally agreed upon to be Pauline. Pauline authorship is so universally agreed upon that some major commentaries do not even address the issue of authorship, assuming them to be Pauline. See David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003). See also Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 40 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

Fathers.[14] He insists that he has an authority for the church's "building up," (2 Cor 10:8) commands the Corinthians obey him (1 Cor 4:19-20), and exhorts them to submit to Stephanas, a leader said to labor for their good (1 Cor 16:15-16). In 1 Corinthians 4:1 Paul even uses the image of a steward to describe pastoral leaders, the same word and arguably same concept as the Pastorals and Ignatius. He notes that ultimately a pastoral leader's commendation and therefore accountability come from God (1 Cor 3:13-15 and 2 Cor 10:18) and describes himself as a preacher (1 Cor 1:23 and 1 Cor 2:1-5). He especially emphasizes his immense sufferings as proving his genuineness (1 Cor 4:9-13 and 2 Cor 11:22-29).[15] What all of this shows is that Ignatius and Paul agree in substance about pastoral identity and work even if one reconstructs them as diametrically opposed about ministry structures. My contention is that their agreement is based on a shared tradition about pastoral leadership. At the very least, this shows a remarkable convergence in the first 150 years about leadership—one can read nearly any description of pastoral leadership in apostolic and postapostolic literature and find the pastoral ideals of 1 and 2 Corinthians generally confirmed and nowhere denied. The burden of proof is on scholars who deny a unified theology of ministry in early Christianity to explain this nearly comprehensive theological agreement.[16]

This alternative narrative also explains aspects of early Christian pastoral leadership that other narratives do not. For example, while many second consensus scholars have accounted for expressions of pastoral virtue and authority via the

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[14] Paul describes himself as πραΰτητος, a word used to describe pastoral leaders in 2 Tim 2:25 and Ign. *Pol*. 2.1. In 1 Tim 6:11 Paul commands Timothy to strive for similar word, πραυπηθιαν.

[15] One may argue that these features were unique to Paul himself and not emblematic of early Christian leaders, but this goes against Paul's stated desire for others to imitate him (1 Cor 11:1) and the strong likelihood that Paul's vision for ministry and the Christian life in 2 Corinthians was *intended* to be exemplary. See chap. 3, where the exemplary nature of Paul's self-descriptions is argued for from other Pauline epistles.

[16] Willy Rordorf, "La theologie du ministère dans l'Église ancienne." In *Church, Ministry, and Organization in the Early Church Era*, eds. Everett Ferguson, David M. Scholer, and Paul Corby Finney, Studies in early Christianity 13 (New York: Garland, 1993), 58.

*paterfamilias,* household structures, and Hellenistic virtue lists, they have not accounted for the expectation of pastoral suffering via these cultural influences. While not as directly related to pastoral theology, Ignatius and Polycarp's attitudes toward suffering and martyrdom show the difficulty of accounting for early Christian emphases by way of cultural context, since these attitudes were scoffed at by conservative Hellenist critics of Christianity.[17] Additionally, those who posit the synagogue as the chief influence on early Christian leadership struggle to explain the prevalence of preaching for early Christian pastoral leaders, with Old Testament elders not being preachers.[18] Explaining all of the various emphases of early pastoral theology *together* seems to require an apostolic tradition that spoke to pastoral identity and work.

It is worth noting that the vision described in this project continues through later Christian pastoral theology. Even with the remarkable differences in context and conceptions of ministry between the Apostolic Fathers and the fourth century, Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom affirm each of the themes outlined in the Apostolic Fathers. Gregory of Nazianzus goes to great pains in *Oration 2* to describe the necessary virtues required of ministers, the purpose of ministry as sanctification, the priority of preaching, the difficulty of pastoral ministry, and the immense accountability of pastoral leaders before God.[19] John Chrysostom likewise describes the immense difficulties of leading the church, manifold virtues required of pastoral leaders, and the necessity of skill in preaching.[20] I have argued elsewhere that figures as far removed from the second century as John Calvin extensively reflected on pastoral suffering within a larger vision

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[17] See R. Joseph Hoffman, introduction to *Celsus: On the True Doctrine: A Discourse against the Christians* (New York: Oxford University, 1987), 28.

[18] Jim Hamilton, "Did the Church Borrow Leadership Structures from the Old Testament or Synagogue?," in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 25.

[19] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations* 2.13-16, 22, 38, 45-46, 63-72.

[20] John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood* 3.3-10, 3.16-17, 4.4-8, 6.1-6.

of ministry that affirmed pastoral virtue, authority, and work.[21] Throughout the history of

the church, the virtue, authority, work, and suffering of pastoral leaders have been central

and constraining truths within a wide diversity of ecclesiological and ministry

structures.[22]

Which brings us to today, where pastoral ministry is largely unmoored from

this tradition and where there is a tacit denial that an early catholic pastoral theology even

exists.[23] Largely because many believe the early church had no shared pastoral theology,

the Apostolic Fathers have been especially neglected in attempts at pastoral theological

retrieval, with most works starting with Gregory of Nazianzus.[24] Without any conception

of a pastoral tradition, many modern conceptions of ministry are "biblical but not

apostolic"[25] or highly influenced by secular models of leadership.[26] I would suggest that

the prevalent lack of pastoral health, indicated by recent ministry scandals and the

alarming statistics about pastoral wellbeing, is partly a symptom of this disconnection

from the tradition.[27] Simply put, today's pastors need apostolic and postapostolic pastoral

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[21] Leland Brown, "The Standard-Bearer: Pastoral Suffering in the Theology of John Calvin," *Themelios* 47, no. 2 (August 2022): 326-36.

[22] For a book-length treatment that largely demonstrates this, see Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classic Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001). Purves works through five classic pastoral works, and the major four themes I have outlined in this project appear in most of these classic works, even with hundreds of years and theological differences separating many of their authors.

[23] This is in part due to the common narrative that the early church quickly fell away from biblical patterns. See James F. Stitzinger, "Pastoral Ministry in History," *Masters Seminary Journal* 6, no. 2 (1995): 151-56.

[24] Purves's *Pastoral Theology* is a key example of this. Christopher Beeley, while arguing that there is not a comprehensive description of ministry in early Christian writings, does mention Ignatius several times. Christopher Beeley, *Leading God's People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

[25] Svigel, "Can an Ecclesiology Be Biblical and Not Apostolic?," 62.

[26] Bill Hull, *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating Our Addiction to Secular Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 15-20.

[27] For an example of the statistics, see Barna Research Group, "38% of Pastors Have Considered Quitting Full-Time Ministry in the Last Year," accessed December 24, 2023, https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being/.

theology. Jorg Ulrich argues that a specific use of the Apostolic Fathers is to address today's "question of directing, leading, and steering within the church(es) and the criteria thereof," in other words, who should lead and how they should lead.[28] I believe that this project has fleshed out how the earliest Christians envisioned both of these key elements of leadership in the church.

What remains is to retrieve and apply this vision to modern ministry, and I will close by suggesting two promising paths forward. First, because it speaks across ecclesiological lines, this vision for pastoral leadership can and should be applied to Christian leaders in a wide variety of denominations. Secondly, pastoral virtue and suffering seem to be the particular needs of the hour in the Western church, and the institutions responsible for training leaders should especially consider how to form virtuous men capable of endurance through hardship. A very first step would be recognizing the existence, wisdom, and relevance of works like Ignatius's letter to Polycarp for present and future pastors. A robust retrieval of the apostolic vision for ministry will enable many to "run your race with endurance and exhort all people, that they may be saved."[29]

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[28] Jorg Ulrich, "The Apostolic Fathers Yesterday and Today," in *The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction*, ed. Wilhelm Pratscher, trans. Elizabeth G. Wolfe (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2010), 258.

[29] Ign. *Pol.* 1.2.

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ABSTRACT

THE PASTORAL THEOLOGY OF THE
APOSTOLIC FATHERS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024
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This dissertation argues that early Christianity possessed a stable and unified theology of pastoral identity and work. Historic studies of early Christian leadership sought to justify present ecclesiological structures from apostolic and postapostolic texts, finding mutually exclusive leadership patterns in the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers. More recently, studies have either argued for discontinuity between these periods, significant diversity among postapostolic documents, or outside forces having primary influence on the nature and development of early Christian leadership. In contrast, this project will demonstrate in the texts of the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers that early Christians articulated a vision for ministry with four shared theological judgments about pastoral ministry: pastoral virtue, pastoral authority, pastoral work, and pastoral suffering. Regarding pastoral virtue, both a general blamelessness and a particular nexus of relational virtues were required for all who would lead the church. Additionally, all pastoral leaders were view with spiritual authority, often related to God's authority and with repeated admonitions for Christians to obey pastoral leaders. While there is some diversity in pastoral work in this period, the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers consistently attribute preaching, spiritual oversight, and presiding at Christian gatherings as the central works of pastoral leaders. Finally, apostolic and postapostolic literature described pastoral leaders as sufferers, particularly suffering from the difficulties of ministry in the life of the church. These four theological judgments are

expressed variously but equally insisted upon by the documents of the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers. This theological vision shows remarkable theological stability in early pastoral theology even in the midst of the development of ministry structures and strongly suggests a measure of catholicity about pastoral leadership in the earliest periods of Christianity.

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