

The Institutionalisation of the Early Church

A Network Perspective on the Fulfilment of Church Functions

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Mediterranean World III: The Blue Network

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Introduction

“They revered him as a god, made use of him as a lawgiver, and set him down as a protector, next after that other, to be sure, whom they still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world” (*The Passing of Peregrinus* 11).

The person referred to in this passage is a man named Peregrinus, the historical main character of a satire written by Lucian in the second half of the second century C.E. Part of it describes Peregrinus’ stay with a christian congregation in Palestine. Lucian portrays him as a charlatan and a fraud because he tricks an entire Christian congregation into believing him to be an honest Christian when he was most likely a Cynic. He was handed great riches and quickly became a prominent figure within the community. The man was exiled later, most likely because he ate something he wasn’t supposed to, whereby the Christians figured out he hadn’t been honest with them (*The Passing of Peregrinus* 11-16). The rest of the account focuses mostly on how Peregrinus’ life came to an end. He threw himself on a burning pyre at the Olympic games of 164 C.E. (*The Passing of Peregrinus* 36).

This text is special, because it grants a unique insight into the pagan perception of the nature of early Christian societies.¹ However, its satirical nature makes it difficult for it to be used as a proper historical source, so it will not be used as such, but more like a window through which to start a research. Lucian’s satire raises many questions when read analytically. The one that intrigued me most concerns the quick inclusion of Peregrinus into the Christian congregation. The level of acceptance is remarkable. He attains functions like the ones above and he is even called ‘The New Socrates’ (*The Passing of Peregrinus* 12). The humorous nature of the text probably made Lucian exaggerate many aspects of this story and it triggers thoughts on the social structure of early Christian congregations of the second century C.E. How were they organised? What functions could people fulfil and how could these be obtained? The historical dimension is especially interesting, because Christianity was carving out a place for itself in the world. Growing numbers of followers of Jesus’ lore would need to be organised. Slowly but steadily, the religion institutionalised. The creation of an institutional-

¹ Jan Bremmer, “‘Peregrinus’ Christian Career’,” in *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino Garcia Martinez*, eds. A. Hillhorst et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007): 729-747.

sed church, as Hoogerwerf calls it, is completed by the end of the second century. At this point a distinction can be made between true Christians and heretics, for true Christians would accept the apostolic baptism, recognise the New Testament as the holy scripture and would comply to the wishes of the bishops. I believe this tripartite to be quite simplistic, but useful for this essay. It gives us a chronological framework with a stage in which Christianity at a moment in time found itself in and provides us with three distinct characteristics for the institutionalisation of the church.²

When reading the account on Peregrinus, it was especially striking that it was so easy for him to attain so many different and important functions at that moment in time. I must admit that my presupposition was that it would get more difficult to become attain functions as congregations became more institutionalised. Again, it is doubtful this even slightly resembles how situations alike could have occurred, but it is certainly worth looking into. Therefore, my research question is: in what way did the increasing institutionalisation and hierarchisation affect the nature of early Christian networks? I have chosen to focus on the end of the first and beginning of the second century and the region of Asia Minor, because it was this period when these processes started, and because there are several appropriate sources that can be used for social network analysis.

In the first chapter I will analyse the history of research on church related subjects and how they have changed with the advent of other disciplines into historical science. In the following chapter I will turn my attention to sociological researches, to see how these might help in uncovering the qualitative aspects of religious networks. In the third chapter I will expound on the organisation of first century Pauline congregations, so we can sense the change they went through in the fourth and final chapter. There I will examine the letters of Ignatius to the Smyrneans, Magnesians and the Ephesians, and Eusebius' writings on Hierapolis' first bishop, Papias.

This essay is important in such a way that it critically analyses how changes in organisation of congregations through hierarchisation and institutionalisation have affected the nature of early Christian networks. I will offer sound arguments in this present-day scientific discussion, working at the frontiers of knowledge. I will propose that these processes made

² Andries Hoogerwerf, *De toekomst van het christendom: van instituut naar beweging* (Budel: Uitgeverij DAMON, 2007): 16-17.

local Christian networks of Asia Minor both more uniform and more autonomous at the same time.

An Historiographical Perspective

Early Christianity has always been a popular research subject. Especially the contrast that is often constructed on the rise of Christianity, starting as a small Jewish sect and evolving to become one of a few world religions, has received much attention. Many different explanations have been advocated, but this is not the time and place to discuss them. Part of this rise concerns the institutionalisation of the church, which I perceive as the registering of, for example, concepts, social roles, norms and values into an organisation, a social system or a society as a whole. This registering can forge a more organised congregation with specific roles, behavioural rules and in the Christian case also a canon of texts that would form the New Testament. Institutionalisation can increase the unity of a group.³

The majority of much earlier research on the hierarchisation of the church explains the formation of specific church offices as a process of biological growth, an organic situation that would naturally occur. Due to the limited literary evidence from the earliest Christian era's, histories of these times were often written by looking backwards. Especially the Middle Ages in Europe had strictly and rigidly developed organisational structures and therefore the earliest congregations would have simpler, less developed versions. The types of sources that were used were mostly ecclesiastical and theological of nature, concentrating research mostly upon internal influences and largely ignoring possible external influences. However, Faivre, the leading scholar on this subject insisted in 1983 that in the first three centuries A.D. there was no systematic distinction between a supposed clergy and laity as seen in later times. There is simply no textual evidence for this.⁴

The internally oriented and theologically based perception has slowly been replaced and transformed by a range of new approaches, making use of political, economical, archaeo-

³ Hoogerwerf, *De toekomst van het christendom*, 16.

⁴Karen Jo Torjesen, "Chapter 19. Clergy and Laity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, eds. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 391-392.

logical, religious and even gender-based studies.⁵ The studies have become much more interdisciplinary. Georg Schöllgen has, for example, analysed the financial support that church leaders could provide to their followers⁶, and Michael White has used Christian architecture and the art and descriptions found inside to reveal that reparations and renovations of houses were often paid for by bishops and presbyters.⁷ This provides us with a new perspective on the relationship between those who attained offices and those who did not. Under influence of growing interest and a growing need for gender-based studies the roles of women has been shown to not have been marginal in the leadership of churches, but that Christianity opened the way to challenge cultural norms that dictated women's inferiority and subordination.⁸ In contrast to the earlier internally oriented religious documents, scholars like Allen Brent and J.B. Rives analysed the external influences that the Roman state religion has had on the formation of an episcopacy. They considered this evolution as a reaction to outside processes and events. For this essay, the introduction of sociological theories is most important, which will be discussed in the next chapter. For now, it should be clear that research on this subject grew to become more interdisciplinary through examination of a new range of sources and by adopting other sciences into the historical discipline.

Sociological concepts

Sociology has become increasingly important for historical research as it offers a new method for researching past processes. Group dynamics and the coming and going of leadership figures can be explained in new ways. For example, the creation of a clergy, people with specific roles within the church community, is essentially a process of exclusion through which an

⁵ For a short introduction to these new approaches concerning the development of a clergy see Karen Jo Torjesen, "Chapter 19. Clergy and Laity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, eds. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 392-396.

⁶ Georg Schöllgen, "Die Anfänge der Professionalisierung des Klerus und das Kirchliche Amt in der Syrischen Didaskalie, JAC" in *Ergänzungsband 26* (Munster: Aschendorff Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1998): intra.

⁷ Michael White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1997): intra.

⁸ Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993): intra

elite is shaped.⁹ According to Pierre Bourdieu as soon as a specific group becomes known as specialists on religious matters, they monopolise their position by exclusion of those who are unskilled in the doctrines.¹⁰ This contradicts considerably to the work of Shirley Jackson Case in *The Social Origins of Christianity*.¹¹ Where Bourdieu seems to point to the creation of a clergy as the work of higher status individuals, Case calls attention to the rise of authoritative leadership in the form of bishops as a process stimulated by what could be called the laity, or the majority of believers.¹² Discussion abounded in the first and second centuries about a Christian identity and what it meant to be a Christian. According to Case, for leaders to be able to preserve the present state of affairs, heresy was likely an incentive for the congregations to stimulate the importance of authoritative leadership. This necessity in turn resulted in the formalisation and recognition of the bishop's supremacy, especially during the second century when the canon came into being. Bishops became recognised officeholders "who assumed supervision over all preaching, teaching, and ritualistic observances in connection with the community's life".¹³ It is possible Bourdieu's theory can better be applied to the earliest of congregations, but it is nonetheless a very different social perception on the formalisation church offices.

Alexander Wedderburn gives another argument for the recognition of official tasks. For him, the phenomenon that is often referred to as 'early catholicism' can be seen as a reaction to a new situation. It is a perceived movement that put more stress on order, authority and tradition. The apostles were the foremost sources of authority during their lifetimes and were able to refute those they thought false preachers with false messages. As they passed away, one after the other, these sources of authority left a hole that needed filling. In order to protect itself from these dangers, it is possible a defence mechanism was somehow triggered at this time, leading to an increased institutionalisation and hierarchisation, to fill up the gaps

⁹ Karen Jo Torjesen, "Chapter 19. Clergy and Laity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, eds. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 389.

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, "Genese et structure du champ religieux" *Revue française de sociologie* 12, (1971): 304.

¹¹ Jackson Case, Shirley, *The Social Origins of Christianity* (New York: Cooper Square Publisher, Inc: 1975).

¹² Jackson Case, *The Social Origins*, 199-202.

¹³ Ibidem, 200.

the apostles left behind.¹⁴

As to some core social theory, I wish to use Max Weber's perception of authority, which he describes as a legitimate form of domination: the "probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a give group or person".¹⁵ He distinguishes three different types: authority based on tradition, on charisma and on rational-legal arguments. Traditional authority can be gained when there is a believe that one should rule because others did so before this person and thus requires an historical example or precedent. Charismatic authority can be derived through a person's actual character traits, skills or accomplishments or by other people's perception of them. In other words, it is based on a relationship between leader and follower which makes this type of authority fragile. Perceptions of someone can quickly change, look only at how Peregrinus ate the wrong food, was unmasked as a fraud and was consequently exiled from the Palestinian Christian community. Rational-legal authority is, according to Weber, only possible in the modern world because it relies on rational rules which are formally enacted. It requires a highly bureaucratised society, for a person's authority is no longer based on the individual, but on the office he fulfils or the job he executes. It is the position that an individual holds that stands in high regard.¹⁶

The types of authority can be identified as several stages through which bureaucratisation of a society can develop. The earliest forms of social Christian gatherings probably had to deal with the charismatic qualities of individuals, like those Jesus and his apostles had. Their characters and achievements were held in high regard by their followers and thus were mostly likely the source of their esteem. Mark Edwards regards the entire first and second centuries as being based hereupon, but this seems unlikely considering the proces of institutionalisation was under way immediately from an earlier period of time, being accelerated with the early catholicism movement.¹⁷ Traditional authority does not seem to be of great relevance in the early christian era, as offices were not hereditary.¹⁸ It is however, very well possible

¹⁴ Alexander J.M. Wedderburn, *A History of the First Christians* (London: T&T Clark Intt., 2004): 175-176.

¹⁵ Max Weber et al., *Economy and society : an outline of interpretive sociology*, ol. 2. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968) 212.

¹⁶ Encyclopedia of Social Theory, George Ritzer, Sage Publications, 2005, S.v. "authority".

¹⁷ Edwards, *"The Development of Office"*, 316.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

that once authority was claimed, relatives had easier access to this same status. On the subject of rational-legal based authority I disagree with Weber, for in my opinion the office standing in higher regard than the officeholder must have been possible when the offices became recognised as such officially. These differently based types of authority can be seen as different stages that a society can go through. For example, Weber believes the rational-legal argument to be possible only in highly bureaucratised societies.¹⁹ By analysing the fundamentals of authority as described in Ignatius' letters and the Eusebius' works on Papias an hypothesis can be drawn about the nature of the network leading figures became or were part of.

Other important sociological concepts that can be used are 'social class' and the 'patronage system'. The way they affect group formation processes within early Christian congregations, is remarkable in the Roman period for they were the most important aspects of society that Roman elites could identify themselves with. It is generally believed that when members from social upper classes turned Christian they were quickly included into leadership roles, because of their financial means and prominence.²⁰ The patronage system functioned as a reciprocal system where the patron would provide protection and support to clients from lower classes, who would in turn serve the patron with honour and loyalty. It was a very useful system to convert monetary wealth into social power.²¹ Charles Bobetz shows this in his study from 1990 where he analyses a recently converted aristocratic Cyprian who gains important functions within a church congregation. He shows how a patron's wealth and his social network could gain him access to offices by providing financial support to others.²² This is a practical approach to the subject. Handing out gifts and giving material support generally puts other people in good moods. A patronage system could well be analysed for Papias to learn more about the relationship between social elitist Christians and non-elites. Just like the concept of authority, the patronages system and interactions between social classes could tell us much and more about the nature of early Christian congregations.

¹⁹ Encyclopedia of Social Theory, George Ritzer, Sage Publications, 2005, S.v. "authority".

²⁰ Wedderburn, *A History*, 133.

²¹ Torjesen, "Clergy and Laity", 392-392.

²² Charles Bobetz, "Cyprian of Carthage as Patron: A Social Historical Study of the Role of Bishops in Ancient Christian Communities". (Yale University dissertation; Ann Arbor: UMI, 1990): intra.

Church Tasks in First Century Eastern Pauline Churches

The goal of this chapter is to first form a general picture of how Christian congregations were founded, most notably those founded by Paul during his travels across the northeastern Mediterranean World. This way, there is also a geographical accordance between this chapter and the next, where the Pauline community of Hieropolis in Asia Minor will be discussed. Social origins and the establishment and instalment of church functions, may they be recognised officially or not, will be discussed. This will create a background against which we can demonstrate the presence of leadership figures in the second century.

The organisation of the church congregations of the first century was generally fluid. The different roles that were to be played out by the participants were still relatively unclear in comparison to the more strict church order that developed from the second century into the third and fourth. This is only logical for new social gatherings. Wedderburn is confident that up to this point, we have no evidence for any Christian from the very moments who were either from the highest or lowest level of society. No Roman senator or knight is known to have been Christian in the first century.²³ It is generally agreed however that there must have been relatively more well-to-do people who served as hosts by offering their houses to be used for meetings. These patrons were likely responsible for “hosting meals, writing letters of recommendation, giving to leaders, and sending contributions to other churches”.²⁴ The importance of these Christians was, in my opinion, underrated by Stambaugh and Balch, who wrote their *The Social World of the First Christians* in 1986. They agree that some must have acted as hosts to their fellows, but believe that the first groups that were formed following egalitarian principles, like in Jerusalem, where Christians practiced community ownership of goods.²⁵ The more recent research of Wedderburn points out that these more well-to-do members of congregations might have supported the community materially or financially and might have gained importance because of exactly these things. It is likely that the authority they gained from these activities remained informal and that there were given no real ‘office’.²⁶

²³ Wedderburn, 130.

²⁴ Torjesen, 397.

²⁵ Stambaugh and Balch, *The Social World of The First Christians* (London: SPCK, 1986): 55.

²⁶ Wedderburn, 133-134.

Wedderburn seems to attempt to view the first Christian groups essentially from a practical perspective. He writes of tasks that were to be performed and that the people were identified by these tasks and not by any title. The title of ‘deacons’ (*diakonoi*) and ‘overseers’ (*episkopoi*) should therefore not be seen as official offices but more like natural roles that one could fulfil.²⁷ This is strengthened by the fact that terms like *diakonoi* were used in the Greek speaking world as early as the third century BCE, meaning a “servant or office-bearer in pagan temples or cultic societies, and also in the sense of one who serves at the table”.²⁸ The term *episkopoi* was used in the Greek world for someone who performed administrative duties and acted as overseers of temple complexes or synagogues.²⁹ More concretely, besides administration, these individuals also cared for the sick and poor and to some degree trained orphans.³⁰ Senior members were likely designated the function of elders (presbyteros), carrying responsibility for the group,³¹ whatever a vague description like this might mean. It may well have been possible that these were standardly used terms. It is roles like these and the tasks that accompanied them that Wedderburn wants us to believe were likely to have been played and performed by the wealthier members of Christian societies, mostly because they had the monetary means that could aid this.³² Another important factor is what he believes is the structure of the Graeco-Roman household that had a great impact on the structure of early Christian churches.³³ This differs considerably from older researches like that of Stambaugh and Balch, who write that “there was a conscious rejection of the status-conscious norms of society”.³⁴

Building on Wedderburn’s and Weber’s researches and theories, it seems the tasks and functions that were acted out in the first centuries were based on a combination of monetary

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Wedderburn, 397.

³¹ Torjesen, 397.

³² Wedderburn, 133-134.

³³ Ibidem, 121-150.

³⁴ Stambaugh and Balch, *The Social World*, 55.

wealth and social status, which were turned into social wealth through, for example, the hosting of meals, the usage of their houses as churches, and the character traits of individuals. Wedderburn expresses this acutely: “In the Pauline churches one finds, then, a form of church order which was by no means tightly defined in its structure, with relatively few specific offices or titles for their holders, an order which arose out of a number of different factors - social as well as charismatic.”³⁵

The First Bishop of Hierapolis: Papias

Huttner has analysed two epistles that are part of the Pauline corpus, the Epistle to Philemon and the Epistle to the Colossians and found a social network that “substantially influence or even guided the emergence of the Christian churches in the Lycus Valley”.³⁶ He applied a form of network theory by analysing the links that the persons in the Epistles had with Philemon and later also with the Colossians. He finds there were two groups present: local Christian communities and authorities associated with Paul, who, from a distance, guided decision making. The groups were had already built up correspondence and friendship, but this was enhanced by a group of middlemen.³⁷

Ignatius of Antioch has written letters to the Christian congregations of Ephese, Magnesia and Smyrna around 110 C.E. He uses these letters to urge the Christians to “act in accord with the bishop’s mind” (*Letter to the Ephesians* 4.1), and his helpers, the *presbytery*. If one should not follow the leadership of the bishop, this individual “shows his arrogance by the very fact of becoming a schismatic” (*Letter to the Ephesians* 5.3) and will lack “God’s bread” (*Letter to the Ephesians* 5.2). In other words, when one would not heed of the local bishop, he or she would be outside the church and incapable of getting salvation.³⁸ With these letters, Ignatius clearly attempts to impose his organisation ideal on other congregations in order to create unity within the Christian faith. It is an attempt to identify a Christian identity,

³⁵ Wedderburn, 137/138.

³⁶ Ullrich Huttner, *Early Christianity in the Lycus Valley* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013): 97.

³⁷ Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 97.

³⁸ Bart Ehrmann, *After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 325.

and single out those “who have wrong notions about the grace of Jesus Christ” (*Letter to the Smyrneans* 6.2), and who are at variance “with God’s mind” (*Letter to the Smyrneans* 6.2). This forms a common discussing throughout the first two centuries of Christianity’s existence.

To the Magnesians he delivers a similar message: “Let the bishop preside in God’s place, and the presbyters take the place of the apostolic council, and let the deacons (my special favourites) be entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ who was with the Father from eternity and appeared at the end [of the world]” (*Letter to the Magnesians* 6.1). Very clearly, Ignatius attempts to convince the congregations of the source of the bishop’s and presbyter’s authority. Bishops have the authority to speak in God’s name, presbyters can be compared to the apostles, and the deacons with Jesus Christ. In a way this conforms to Max Weber’s ‘traditional authority’, because Ignatius realises that someone must speak on behalf of God, that Jesus Christ must have a worldly counterpart, and that the physical absence of apostles left this same cleft of authority as mentioned above. This is a type of authority based on a historical precedent. For the sake of better organised church communities, Ignatius wishes these to be filled in by bishops, presbyters and deacons. He does not, however, expand on the qualities or abilities an officeholder should possess. Had he done that, ‘charismatic authority’ might also have been a source of the clergy’s power.

By agreeing to these conditions, the Magnesian Christians would become an example to others as a sign of a non-corrupt organisation (*Letter to the Magnesians* 6.1). The amount of unity he would like to see is substantial: “You must have one prayer, one petition, one mind, one hope, dominated by love and unsullied joy - that means you must have Jesus Christ” (*Letters to the Magnesians* 7.1). This is likely the most straightforward clue to be obtained from sources concerning the institutionalisation of the early church; if Ignatius’ suggestions were adopted and followed by these congregations on a short-term basis then all noses would have pointed in the same direction. However, the letter do not necessarily say anything about the nature of these local Christian network around 110 C.E.. But the fact that Ignatius found it necessary to write congregations implies institutionalisation needed a helping hand, and that the church order was far from crystallised. From this source, local christian networks from early second century Asia Minor could still have had a fluid nature. To analyse this network more in-depth I have chosen to analyse a source about Papias, bishop in the city of

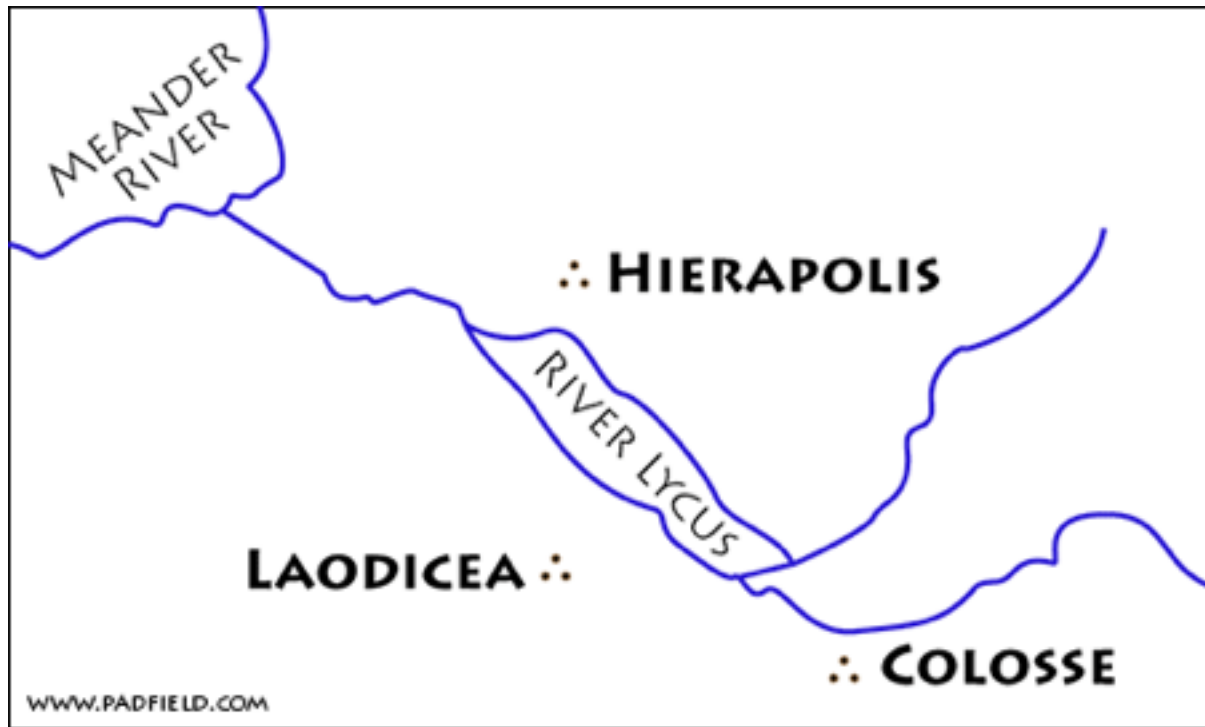


Figure 1. Schematic overview of Lycus Valley, Asia Minor

Hierapolis, in Asia Minor. The city was one of the major cities of the Lycus Valley and lied north of the river Meander, raised to about 350 meters above the valley floor. It was connected to the city of Laodicea through a bridge that spanned across the river. The distance between these centres was about 12 kilometers. Both were originally founded as military strongholds by the Seleucids in the 3rd century BCE and, important for this research, both had Christian communities.³⁹ It is, however, unknown whether Paul actually ever visited them, but Ullrich Huttner does mark them as Pauline, for they have likely stood in close contact with Pauline authorities.⁴⁰

For the 2nd century, the most prominent figure to appear as officeholder in Hierapolis was Papias. In fact, Papias is, as far as we know the city's first bishop, having been in office approximately between around the year 100.⁴¹ He seems to have established himself as a leading church figure around the time when Ignatius of Antioch visited the nearby churches of Philadelphia and Tralleis. In accordance to Huttner and the above letters from Ignatius this seems to be the period when both hierarchisation and institutionalisation were taking big

³⁹ Huttner, 24-26.

⁴⁰ Huttner, 97.

⁴¹ Ibidem, 213.

steps in western Asia Minor.⁴² Papias may have been one of the first individuals to seize the opportunities that this movement brought by asserting himself or being asserted as a bishop. A written work is known of Papias, discussed in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, which was called *Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord* (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.1). However, we know very little about his personal life, apart from him being the one who "heard John and was a companion of Polycarp" (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.1). Huttner has devised a hypothesis about his name. Apparently Papias is a very common name in and around Phrygia (central Anatolia) and a typical Anatolian nickname. It is therefore likely to say that he came from this region and possibly even Hierapolis itself. The fact that this local individual gained authority makes Christianity in this region seem autochthonous of character. Whereas earlier, preachers and organizers like Paul established Christian communities in Asia Minor, authoritative figures now spawned from the congregations themselves.⁴³ This is an important development in that it marks a shift in their self regulating capacities, for it was no longer necessary for leading figures to come from outside a network. In other words, the local Christian networks provided their own ecclesiastical order, even though this was officially still limited to only a bishop.

Eusebius provides no evidence for how Papias might have attained this function. We do not know whether he gained his authority through his charisma nor was assigned to his authority, as the letters of Ignatius might suggest. This general movement towards hierarchisation and institutionalisation from the start of the 2nd century might point in that direction; Papias might have profited from this trend to assume a role as bishop within his Christian community.

Conclusion

Historical research on religious subjects like the hierarchisation and the institutionalisation of the early Christian church has become increasingly interdisciplinary. No longer do historians linger and rely on theological texts only. This shift has paved the way for other disciplines, of which sociology is most important for this essay. Several sociological concepts have been

⁴² Ibidem, 273-275.

⁴³ Ibidem, 216.

examined, like the triple meanings of Max Weber's authority and the interaction between social classes through patronage systems as examined by Bobetz.

As to the discussion on hierarchisation and institutionalisation, Wedderburn as aptly made his case on the fulfilment of tasks within early Christian congregations: organisational features have likely been in place from the very beginnings of communities, largely designed and acted out by member of higher social classed, for they had the monetary wealth and status create their own authority. Titles and offices were a later feature, installed when the needs were higher were them to be recognised as such. This happend from the late 1st and early 2nd century onwards in Asia Minor, as exemplified by the letters Ignatius wrote to the Smyreans, the Magnesians and the Ephesians. He attempted to convince these communities of the necessity of conforming to a specific organisational model, featuring the bishop as the main leading figure. This message urging uniformity was part of a movement that attempted to accelerate both the institutionalisation and the hierarchisation of the church.

Examining literature on Hierapolis' first bishop, it becomes clear that the nature of the local Christian networks changed. With the advent of Papias as bishop, the Pauline community of Hierapolis no longer relied on external authoritative figures to lead them: they would now be led by their own.

The harsh reality of this research is that we really have too little knowledge about the personal lives of leading figures like Papias to properly apply the kind of sociological concepts proposed by Bobetz and Weber. Bobetz has shown that with a little more information about origins and provenance, much more can be investigated and learned. This is the biggest shortcoming of social network theory applied in a qualitative manner like this one: with a lack of source material, it is ridiculously difficult. Another deficiency is the fact that only an entire networks nature can be, and in this case has been determined through the analysis of one single person.

This brings us back to the figure we started out with: Peregrinus. An analysis like this one, applying Webers' and Bobetz' sociological concepts, might very well be possible on Lucian's *The Passing of Peregrinus*. As said before, the problem here is the satirical nature of the text, making almost all statements doubtful at the least. Alas, we have come a little closer to uncovering the nature of early Christian networks. By the turn of the first century a process was in motion, whereby the increasing urge for the closely intertwined hierarchisation and

institutionalisation altered the networks by making them both more uniform to their neighbours' and more autonomous.

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Figures

Figure 1: Schematic overview of Lycus Valley, Asia Minor: <http://www.padfield.com/2005/images/laodicea-map.gif> (accessed May 31, 2015).