

Investigations into the Logistics of Ignatius's Itinerary

Vincent van Altena

Vincent van Altena combines a job as senior Geographic Information Systems specialist at Kadaster with interdisciplinary doctoral research at Delft University of Technology and Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam on using spatial-temporal research methods for the interpretation of early Christian literature.

V.P.vanAltena-1@tudelft.nl; v.p.van.altena@vu.nl

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7093-7435>

Abstract:

From the post-apostolic era several writings have been handed down to us which provide a glimpse into the developments of Christianity in the early second century CE. Among these writings are seven letters of Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch who was led in captivity into Rome to die a martyr's death. During his travels Ignatius wrote a number of letters to Christian churches. The aims of this article are (1) to offer possible geographical reconstructions of Ignatius's travels to Rome and (2) to analyse the social world that can be extracted from Ignatius's letters and other contemporary sources (e.g. Polycarp's letter to the Philippians). This may enable us to visualise the relationships between Ignatius and the congregations as well as to gain insights into the social coherence of early Christianity.

Keywords:

Ignatius of Antioch; itineraries; hospitality; care for prisoners

Introduction

Ignatius and his Letters

Apart from the seven letters from his own hand, not much is known about Ignatius. He is 'without beginning or ending',¹ and although tradition tells he died a martyr's death in the Colosseum under Trajan,²

¹ Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1992), p. xxix; Markus Vinzent, *Writing the History of Early Christianity: From Reception to Retrospection* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 268 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108647052>>.

² Jerome (*Vir. ill.* 16) dates his death to the eleventh year of Trajan, i.e. 107–108 CE. Trebilco and Mellink are inclined to follow this traditional dating, see Paul Trebilco, 'Christian

both date,³ place,⁴ and cause of death are disputed. Possibly, he was of Syrian origin, and Joseph Lightfoot inferred from Ignatius's negative self-designation⁵ that he might have been a pagan persecutor of Christians before his conversion.⁶ He was the second or third bishop of the church in Syrian Antioch and (indirectly) succeeded Peter in that office (Origen *Hom. in Lucam* 6.4 and Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.22.1, 3.36.2).

Most about Ignatius is known from his letters, in which he introduces himself consistently as 'Theophoros'.⁷ Under the guard of ten Roman soldiers (Ign. *Rom.* 5.1), he travelled from Antioch to face a martyr's death in Rome. On the way the company halted in Philadelphia, Smyrna, and Troas (respectively Ign. *Phld.* 7, 12.1; *Smyrn.* 10.1; *Phld.* 11.2, *Smyrn.* 12.1 and *Pol.* 8.1). Despite his captivity, Ignatius met representatives of the churches of Philadelphia, Smyrna, Ephesus, Tralles, and Magnesia. Subsequently he wrote letters to each (and to the

Communities in Western Asia Minor into the Early Second Century: Ignatius and Others as Witnesses Against Bauer', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 49, no. 1 (2006), 17–44; Albert Osger Mellink, 'Death as Eschaton: A Study of Ignatius of Antioch's Desire for Death' (doctoral thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2000), p. 50.

³ Nowadays, most scholars opt for a death between 100–117 CE at the end of Trajan's reign or in the early days of Hadrian, e.g. Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, Yale Publications in Religion, 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960); William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), p. 5. Bakker and Decreet propose 114–117 CE as a more fixed date which enables them to be more specific on the persecution in Antioch, see Hendrik Adrianus Bakker, *Exemplar Domini: Ignatius of Antioch and His Martyrological Self-Concept* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003); Étienne Decreet, 'Circonstances et Interprétations Du Voyage d'Ignace d'Antioche', *Revue Des Sciences Religieuses*, 82, no. 3 (2008), 389–99 <<https://doi.org/10.4000/rsr.433>>. Because of an assumed relationship to Ptolemy's writings, Barnes suggests a date in the 140s CE, see Timothy D. Barnes, 'The Date of Ignatius', *Expository Times*, 120, no. 3 (2008), 119–30 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524608098730>>.

⁴ Alternative locations for his martyrdom have been suggested. From *Pol. Phil* 9.1–2 it has been inferred that Ignatius was martyred in Philippi. In a sixth-century document John Malalas suggests Antioch as the location of trial and execution (John Malalas *Chron.* XI).

⁵ Ignatius describes himself as *ἐκτροματ*: a child untimely born (Ign. *Rom.* 9.2) and he uses *ἔσχατος* to depict himself as being the least of the Antiochian Christians (Ign. *Eph.* 21.2, *Trall.* 13.1, *Smyrn.* 11.1). Ignatius mimics the terminology and self-designation of the apostle Paul, cf. 1 Cor 15:9.

⁶ Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers—Part II: S. Ignatius S. Polycarp Revised Texts* (London: Macmillan, 1885), 1:28.

⁷ *Θεοφορος* could be rendered as *Θεοφόρος*, 'bearer of God', or *Θεόφορος*, 'borne by God'. The latter gave rise to the legend (known since the 9th century CE) that Ignatius was the child Jesus took in his arms (Mark 8:9), cf. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p. 36.

church of Rome), in which he exhorts them, warns against heresies, and expresses his yearning for martyrdom. From Troas he was deported to Neapolis (Ign. *Pol.* 8.1).

From the letter of his contemporary Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, and recipient of Ignatius's only personal letter, it can be inferred that Ignatius visited Philippi (Pol. *Phil* 9.1) After these events Ignatius disappears from sight. The final trajectory of his travel and his death are hidden in the past and can only be conjectured.

Ignatius's letters were held in high esteem in the early church, but their number and authenticity have been disputed.⁸ Three 'recensions' (i.e. different collections) of the Ignatian epistles exist. Most elaborated are the Latin and Greek editions of the long recension, which were published during the late Middle Ages⁹ and contain an interpolated collection of the seven letters in the middle recension, appended with other letters claiming Ignatian authorship.¹⁰ Earlier Roman Catholic scholars accepted this collection as authentic, but Protestant scholars rejected them mainly due to their strong emphasis on episcopacy.

In 1848, William Cureton maintained that only the three letters in the so-called 'short recension' are authentic.¹¹ His view was rebutted in 1885 by Lightfoot who advocated the authenticity of the 'middle recension': the letters to the Ephesians, the Romans, the Magnesians, the Trallians, the Philadelphians, and the Smyrnaeans, and a personal letter to Polycarp. Although most scholars nowadays follow Lightfoot

⁸ See Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Monarchical Episcopacy*, T&T Clark Theology (London and New York: Continuum, 2007); Barnes, 'Date'.

⁹ Faber published a Latin edition of 11 letters in 1498, Usher a Latin edition in 1644 and Vos a Greek edition in 1648, see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. by F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, 3rd rev. ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 822.

¹⁰ For an English translation, see Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 1: The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (Buffalo, NY: CLC, 1885).

¹¹ Cureton based his work on a Syriac manuscript which only contained shortened versions of the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Romans, and Polycarp, see William Cureton, *Corpus Ignatianum: A Complete Collection of the Ignatian Epistles, Genuine, Interpolated and Spurious; Together with Numerous Extracts from Them, as Quoted by Ecclesiastical Writers down to the Tenth Century: In Syriac, Greek, and Latin; an English Translation of the Syriac Text, Copious Notes and Introduction* (London: Rivington, 1849).

and accept the seven letters as authentic, this position has not been uncontested.¹²

Previous Research

Ignatius's letters have been examined from different angles in modern study.¹³ Initially, the question of the authenticity of the letters was dominant, but gradually the emphasis shifted to researching the relationship of Ignatius to other Christian and contemporary thought.¹⁴

Topics that have been researched include, for instance, church structure,¹⁵ gifts, and ministries.¹⁶ Further topics concern the intertextuality of the Ignatian letters with the canonical¹⁷ and apocryphal¹⁸ gospels, and with contemporary writings; questions about an Ignatian eschatology;¹⁹ the relationship with and attitude of Ignatius towards Jewish Christianity;²⁰ and the background(s) of his opponents.²¹

¹² See Robert Joly, *Le Dossier d'Ignace d'Antioche*, Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, 69 (Bruxelles: Université libre de Bruxelles, 1979); Vinzent, *Writing the History of Early Christianity*.

¹³ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p. 2.

¹⁴ Corwin, *Ignatius and Christianity*, p. 10.

¹⁵ Joseph Azize, 'Ignatius of Antioch on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy: Logic and Methodology', *Phronema*, 30, no. 2 (2015), 105–36; Allen Brent, 'The Ignatian Epistles and the Threefold Ecclesiastical Order', *Journal of Religious History*, 17, no. 1 (1992), 18–32.

¹⁶ Joel C. Elowsky, 'The Ministry in the Early Church', *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 76, no. 3/4 (2012), 295–311; Kenneth Berding, "'Gifts' and Ministries in the Apostolic Fathers", *Westminster Theological Journal*, 78, no. 1 (2016), 135–58.

¹⁷ Walter J. Burghardt, 'Did Saint Ignatius of Antioch Know the Fourth Gospel?', *Theological Studies*, 1, no. 2 (1940), 130–56.

¹⁸ Pier Franco Beatrice, 'The "Gospel According to the Hebrews" in the Apostolic Fathers', *Novum Testamentum*, 48, no. 2 (2006), 147–95.

¹⁹ Fritz Guy, "'The Lord's Day" in the Letter of Ignatius to the Magnesians', *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 2 (1964), 1–17; Richard B Lewis, 'Ignatius and the Lord's Day', *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 6, no. 1 (1968), 46–59; Edward Fudge, 'The Eschatology of Ignatius of Antioch: Christocentric and Historical', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 15, no. 4 (1972), 231–37.

²⁰ Paul J. Donahue, 'Jewish Christianity in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 32, no. 2 (1978), 81–93; Robert R. Hann, 'Judaism and Jewish Christianity in Antioch: Charisma and Conflict in the First Century', *Journal of Religious History*, 14, no. 4 (1987), 341–60.

²¹ Daniel L. Hoffman, 'Ignatius and Early Anti-Docetic Realism in the Eucharist', *Fides et Historia*, 30, no. 1 (1998), 74–88; Michael D. Goulder, 'Ignatius' "Docetists"', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 53, no. 1 (1999), 16–30.

More recent studies have approached the texts from sociological²² and psychological²³ perspectives.

Outline of this Research

Although Joseph Lightfoot, Virginia Corwin, Leslie W. Barnard, and William R. Schoedel have already researched much of the geographical background and societal aspects of the Ignatian letters, the logistics surrounding Ignatius's travels have not been researched thoroughly. This article aims to fill this research lacuna by (1) offering possible geographical reconstructions of Ignatius's travel to Rome, and (2) by analysing the social world which appears from Ignatius's letters. For this reconstruction, knowledge about travelling in the ancient world and information from literature will be used to gain a better understanding of the reality behind Ignatius's epistles.

Section two of this article explores what it meant to travel in Roman times: what modes of travel were available to a second-century traveller and how did lodging function? Furthermore, the social cohesion and the far-reaching efforts to support fellow believers in the first centuries of Christianity are examined. These generic insights are used in section three to reconstruct a mental picture of the social cohesion and logistics surrounding the movements in Ignatius's letters. Section four then summarises the findings.

Background

Travelling

The ancients had multiple motives for travelling.²⁴ Many travels were made for business reasons, to further trade or government, but also for

²² Drake Williams III, 'Pointing to a Paragon in Early Christian Communities: Considering Prototypical Behavior in the Letters Which Ignatius of Antioch Wrote', in *Drawing and Transcending Boundaries in the New Testament and Early Christianity*, ed. by Jacobus (Kobus) Kok, Martin Webber, and Jermo Van Nes, Beiträge Zum Verstehen Der Bibel, 38 (Berlin: LIT, 2019), pp. 115–35.

²³ Mellink, 'Death as Eschaton'; Bakker, *Exemplar Domini*.

²⁴ Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 147.

the sake of health, for pilgrimage, to attend festivals, and sometimes merely to see the world or to take a holiday.

In the first two centuries CE, almost the whole Mediterranean could be traversed without crossing a border, utilising Latin for the western, and Greek for the eastern part of the empire. A traveller only needed Roman coins, and a planned network of waterways and Roman roads, primarily intended for fast military actions, was at their disposal.

If the time of the year was right and budget permitted, the traveller could journey by sea. The fear of pirates was almost completely banished.²⁵ Nevertheless seafaring was still highly dependent on the weather conditions and was most favourable in the months of May to October. In the other half of the year weather conditions could be so unfavourable, and the risk of shipwreck so great, that a sea voyage was only undertaken for exceptional reasons such as the transport of military troops or to alleviate an urban food crisis. Weather also had its impact on the navigation capabilities of the crew. They needed to rely on landmarks during daylight, and stars at night to determine their position. Cloudiness by day and night was to be avoided. It would take centuries before the compass would be employed in nautical navigation.

Although travelling by boat had its advantages, it was there primarily for the transport of cargo. Passenger vessels did not exist, and a traveller was completely dependent upon the availability of a freight ship sailing in the desired direction. Cargo ships did not provide facilities, so passengers would stay on deck during the journey, where they were on their own, and if they had the luxury, were catered for from their own foods by their own servants.

Other factors that increased the unpredictability of seafaring were not only the changeability of weather conditions, but also the widespread belief of the Romans that dreams and real-life occurrences provided omens that encouraged or deterred a sea journey.

Travelling over land was more time-consuming and required the necessary physical effort, not only for crossing distances but also because camping equipment, such as kitchenware and bedding, had to

²⁵ Casson, *Travel*, p. 122.

be taken along. On the other hand, a land journey was less sensitive to seasonal influences or bad weather.²⁶ Weather, though, did have its influences on a daily travelling schedule. Not just daylight but also acceptable temperatures were needed to travel safely and comfortably.²⁷

Transport and Lodging

The Emperor Augustus introduced the *cursus publicus*, a system primarily intended for official messaging in the Roman Empire. It consisted initially of a network of places where the official messages had to be transferred regularly to new couriers. The system was revised so that now carriages and (pack) animals were replaced, which also had the advantage that the courier could provide any additional information to the official message. Later, the system also provided facilities for the transportation and housing of individuals.²⁸

Usage of the *cursus publicus* was strictly reserved for officials from the government or the military. They received a *diploma*, or warrant, to grant them permission to use designated facilities (including transport but also often sustenance) for a specific purpose over a delimited period. These facilities needed to be provided by the local population, but it was also decreed that the locals should be compensated financially. The certainty of having transport and housing facilities available for a journey made a *diploma* a treasured possession.²⁹ Well-to-do people had their own outdoor villas or a large network of other officials or friends to turn to for a stay, but these first-class facilities of transport and

²⁶ Casson, *Travel*, p. 180.

²⁷ Compare the account of Aristides leaving Smyrna to travel to Pergamum in a summer in the late 160s CE: ‘When the preparations had all finally been completed, it was noon and too hot for him to be out on the road. He waited around a few hours until the sun lost some of its bite, and about half past three in the afternoon he and his party got into their carriages and started off.’ (Aristides *Or.* 27:1–8) See Casson, *Travel*, p. 193.

²⁸ Casson, *Travel*; Anne Kolb, ‘Transport and Communication in the Roman State: The *Cursus Publicus*’, in *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire*, ed. by Colin Adams and Ray Laurence (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2012), pp. 95–105.

²⁹ These advantages led to misuse and abuse, see Pliny the Younger’s fairly harmless example: ‘up to this moment, I have never accommodated anyone with a diploma. [...] However, my wife heard that her grandfather died, and since she wanted to run to see her aunt, I thought it unnecessarily severe to deny her the use of a diploma.’ (Pliny *Ep.* 10: 1 20) Abuse however grew to great proportions and ultimately selling one’s *diploma* could be punished by death, see Casson, *Travel*, pp. 188–89, 351–52.

lodging were certainly not at the disposal of a captive second-century bishop, who was being deported by a band of Roman soldiers.³⁰

If the rank-and-file traveller was to avoid camping in the open field or sleeping on the street, their only available option was an inn. Inns were situated at a day's travel distance along Roman roads, and a town usually contained a multiplicity of them. They provisioned food for guests as well as the general public, offered lodging, shelter and care for pack animals, and repair facilities for travel equipment. In addition, inns functioned as centres of *divertissement* (entertainment, gambling, and prostitution).

Hygiene was an issue, as a legend in the apocryphal *Acts of John* illustrates. While returning from Laodicea to Ephesus, John and his servants spent the night at a deserted inn. It appears to have been past midnight that the apostle, having been given the only available bed, cried out 'I tell you, you bugs, to behave yourselves, one and all; you must leave your home for tonight and be quiet in one place and keep your distance from the servants of God.' His servants laughed at the event, but the next morning they were surprised when they found the bugs properly lined up at the front door.³¹

Hospitality in the Early Church

Given the deplorable state of inns, not much was to be expected from commercial hospitality. For that reason, high-placed officials preferred private hospitality offered by friends and relatives or the hospitality gained from strangers upon the display of a diploma. Though hospitality to strangers was a virtue in the Roman world, hospitality in reality was limited to people of similar social standing.³²

³⁰ Time and circumstances changed during the centuries. Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 10.5.23) documented a letter from the Emperor Constantine to Chrestus, bishop of Syracuse, in which he grants him a *diploma* to use the *cursus publicus* for himself, two companions, and three servants when travelling to the Synod of Arles (314 CE).

³¹ Acts of John 60, 61 (*New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. by Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. by R. McL. Wilson, 2 vols (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 2: 193–94).

³² A passage in Justin Martyr's Apology probably illustrates the change in stance towards outsiders '[...] we who hated and destroyed one another, and on account of their different manners would not live with men of a different tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them' (Justin 1 *Apol.* 14.3).

In Judaism private hospitality (which included strangers) was a virtue (e.g. Lev 19:33–34 and Deut 10:17–19) and was a by-product of personal piety towards God. This virtue was held in high esteem in the Jewish tradition,³³ but even then, ideal and reality were not completely interchangeable.³⁴

The New Testament continues the exhortations to be hospitable (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:9), especially to those who preach the gospel (3 John 8). It also offers several examples of hospitality within the early Christian congregations: in Acts 18:27 Apollos receives a letter of recommendation from the disciples in Ephesus with a request to provide him hospitality in Achaia. Similar requests to the congregations in respectively Rome, Corinth and Colossae were made for Phoebe (Rom 16:1–2), Barnabas (Col 4:10) and Timothy (1 Cor 16:10–11). In the last case this also included material support for travelling. John³⁵ even commends a congregation for its hospitality to strangers (3 John 5–7).

Ignatius *Trall.* 12.1, *Eph.* 2, *Magn.* 15, and *Smyrn.* 9.12 show that Ignatius also experienced such hospitality, both from congregations and individuals. He uses *ἀναπαύω* (to cause to halt, rest and therefore, refresh) several times to describe how he was received by the congregations, and this support was probably expressed mentally and materially.³⁶ In the context of Ignatius's deportation this also shows the social cohesion in the early church. It is not coincidental that Ignatius uses the expression *ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία* to emphasise the unbreachable unity of the church (Ign. *Smyrn.* 8.2).

Other illustrations of the early church's social cohesion are abundantly available in second- and third-century writings. For instance,

³³ See the Mishnah tractate *Abot*: 'Jose b. Joezer used to say: let thy house be a house of meeting for the Sages and sit amid the dust of their feet, and drink in their words with thirst [...] Shammai said: Make thy [study of the] Law a fixed habit; say little and do much, and receive all men with a cheerful countenance' (*m. 'Abot* 1.4,15). (*The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes*, trans. by Herbert Danby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 446, 447.)

³⁴ cf. Gen. 44:4; Sir 29:21–28.

³⁵ The identity of the author of the 3rd epistle attributed to John is obscure.

³⁶ 'in all things': *ἐν πᾶσιν* (Ign. *Eph.* 2.1), *κατὰ πάντα* (Ign. *Smyrn.* 9.2, 12.1, 2); 'by body and spirit': *σὰρξί τε καὶ πνεύματι* (Ign. *Trall.* 12.1).

Tertullian describes a voluntary monthly offering which is spent for caring for the needy, the aged, and the imprisoned (Tertullian *Apol.* 39, 5–6).³⁷

In *De Morte Peregrini* the Roman satirist Lucian depicts an hilarious portrait of the pre-Christian, Christian and stoic phases in the life of Peregrinus Proteus, and his 'heroic' death. Although Lucian is at times evidently misinformed about Christianity,³⁸ his information about Peregrinus's Christian phase of life is illustrative for the social cohesion in the early church.³⁹

Peregrinus joined the Christians of Palestine where he quickly gained a prominent position among them, which eventually led to his capture and imprisonment.

Well, when he had been imprisoned, the Christians, regarding the incident as a calamity, left nothing undone in the effort to rescue him. Then, as this was impossible, every other form of attention was shown him, not in any casual way but with assiduity; and from the very break of day aged widows and orphan children could be seen waiting near the prison, while their officials even slept inside with him after bribing the guards. Then elaborate meals were brought in, and sacred books of theirs were read aloud [...] Indeed, people came even from the cities in Asia, sent by the Christians at their common expense, to succour and defend and encourage the hero. They show incredible speed whenever

³⁷ 'Even if there is a chest of a sort [...] Every man once a month brings some modest coin — or whenever he wishes, and only if he does wish, and if he can; for nobody is compelled; it is a voluntary offering [...] to feed the poor and to bury them, for boys and girls who lack property and parents, and then for slaves grown old and shipwrecked mariners; and any who may be in mines islands or prisons [...].' (Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, *Apology: De spectaculis*, trans. by Terrot Reaveley Glover, The Loeb Classical Library, 250, repr. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998)).

³⁸ 'Lucian's ignorance of Christianity and Christian doctrine is really monumental', so asserts Gilbert Bagnani, 'Peregrinus Proteus and the Christians', *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte*, 4, no. 1 (1955), 107–12 (p. 111).

³⁹ Lucian's portrait of the Christian Peregrinus shows some resemblances with the portrait of Ignatius. This seems to presuppose knowledge on Lucian's side of Ignatius's letters. These resemblances are however not of such a kind that they justify Völter's odd claim: 'Vielmehr müssen der Verfasser der kleinasiatischen Ignatiusbriefe und Peregrinus Proteus eine und dieselbe Person gewesen sein' (Daniël Völter, *Polykarp und Ignatius und die Ihnen Zugeschriebenen Briefe* (Leiden: Brill, 1910), p. 174).

any such public action is taken; for in no time they lavish their all.
(Lucian *Peregr.* 11–13)⁴⁰

Lucian's disdain for the charlatan and profiteer Peregrinus is evident in the story's sequel where he describes how Peregrinus continued to live off the purse of early Christianity after being released.⁴¹

Several passages in the *Didache*⁴² confirm the potential abuse of the early church's hospitality. The document not only exhorts the church to test the teachings of travelling preachers, but also to limit their stay to a maximum of one, two, or, occasionally, three days and to support them only with bread, not with money. Such admonitions were to prevent profiteers from parasitising the early Christian communities (*Did.* 11.1–12.5).

Care for Prisoners

Besides the general care for and hospitality to strangers, the involvement with imprisoned co-believers is also a relevant feature of the social world behind Ignatius's letters.

Incarceration had no formal legal status as a punishment in Roman times. It was intended as a remand awaiting execution. However, delays in the judicial process, combined with poor circumstances and psychological pressure, meant that imprisonment was experienced as punishment.⁴³ The mode of custody to which one was sentenced depended on 'the nature of the charge brought, the honourable status,

⁴⁰ Lucian, *The Passing of Peregrinus, The Runaways, Toxaris or Friendship, The Dance, Lexiphanes, The Eunuch, Astrology, The Mistaken Critic, The Parliament of the Gods, The Tyrannicide, Disowned*, trans. by Austin Morris Harmon, The Loeb Classical Library, 302 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), vol. 5.

⁴¹ See Lucian *Peregr.* 16: *ἔχων ἐπόδια τοῖς Χριστιανοῦς ἔχων*, ('possessing an ample source of funds in the Christians'). D. Plooiij and J.C. Koopman, *Lucianus, de dood van Peregrinus van inleiding en aantekeningen voorzien*, Aetatis Imperatoriae Scriptorum Graeci et Romani Adnotationibus Instructi, I (Utrecht: G. J. A. Ruys, 1915), p. 79, see this as an allusion to the generic hospitality commonly displayed within early Christianity.

⁴² The *Didache* is an early Christian document that probably can be dated to the early second century CE and might have originated in Syria, the same period and region as Ignatius's letters, but within a more Jewish context.

⁴³ Brian M. Rapske, 'Prison, Prisoner', in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 827–30.

or the great wealth, or the harmlessness, or the rank of the accused' and an accused could 'be sent to prison, delivered to a soldier, or committed to the care of their sureties, or to that of themselves' (Justinian *Dig.* 48.3.1).

The severity of military custody (including transport and incarceration) depended on several factors. In the case of military transit, the rank, experience, and number of soldiers assigned for guarding could be brought into accordance with the custodian's importance or status.⁴⁴ Prisoners and guards were often chained together. The conditions in a prison were very poor. Often the places were overcrowded, poorly ventilated, devoid of natural light and extremely filthy. Daily diets were merely intended for survival. Against this background the care for prisoners becomes a necessity instead of a luxury and it is known from second-century sources that even the bribing of guards was utilised to facilitate contact.⁴⁵

The story of the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas⁴⁶ supports this picture. The deacons Tertius and Pomponius bribed the soldiers to obtain better conditions for the imprisoned (*Pass. Perp.* 3.7), and many believers visited the prisoners for mutual comfort (*Pass. Perp.* 9.1).⁴⁷

Tertullian, the North African apologist from Carthage, is also familiar with the custom among early Christians to support imprisoned

⁴⁴ Rapske, 'Prison, Prisoner', p. 828, seems to imply that this explains the huge number of soldiers appointed to guard Ignatius (*Ign. Rom.* 5.1). It is however not convincing that an aged bishop, who desired his martyrdom, had such status and importance. The number of soldiers could equally well be explained by other factors, e.g. the need to collect several prisoners in Asia Minor and Macedonia to deport them to Rome, see Pol. *Phil* 9.1. This suggestion has the advantage that it also explains why the band took the inefficient land route instead of making the voyage by sea.

⁴⁵ *The Martyrs of Lyons*, which should probably be dated to 177 CE, was written by the churches of Lyons and Vienne in Gaul to the churches of Asia and Phrygia. It tells of a very cruel persecution. The whole atmosphere was so hostile that the Christians were not allowed to bury their martyrs. Neither supplications nor efforts to bribe could persuade the guards (*MartLugd* 1.61), see *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, ed. by Herbert A. Musurillo, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), vol. 2.

⁴⁶ *The Passio Sanctorum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, presents five second-century martyrs from the early African Christian movement. In the work, the spotlight is on Perpetua, a high-born, twenty-two-year-old, breastfeeding woman, and her pregnant slave Felicitas, cf. *Pass. Perp.* 2.2, 7.4, 16.2.

⁴⁷ That they even had the opportunity to dine together twice (*Pass. Perp.* 16.2, 17.1) seems to be an exceptional treatment by a guard.

Christians. He writes that ‘also individual brethren from their own private resources supply to you in your prison’ (Tert. *Ad mart.* 1). In a different passage, Tertullian exhorts the early Christians not to exaggerate their concern for martyrs: ‘Plainly, your habit is to furnish cookshops in the prisons for untrustworthy martyrs, for fear they should miss their accustomed usages, grow weary of life, [and] be stumbled at the novel discipline of abstinence.’ (Tert., *De jejum.* 12.3) Apparently, Tertullian believed that only true martyrs were worthy of the care of the early Christian community.

It is against this background that the letters of Ignatius should be read. During his travel in custody, under the guard of Roman soldiers, he probably was taken from barracks to barracks, or to some other sort of military station where he was imprisoned in whatever kind of jail was available. Conditions must have been poor and his relationship with his custodians was grim (Ign. *Rom.* 5.1).

Still, his letters provide evidence that he was able to be in contact with fellow Christians, and to write letters to the churches that sent him delegates. These delegates appear to have been instrumental in sending his letters, as ordinary people had to rely on their own couriers.⁴⁸

These examples demonstrate that hospitality for fellow believers and care for prisoners in the early church were not limited to ideals, but part of church policy.⁴⁹ This widely practised early Christian tradition can be traced back to Jesus’s words,⁵⁰ and the early church’s passion to

⁴⁸ The prime service of the *cursus publicus* was only available to officials or the well-to-do who gained access to the system through bribery or influence, see Casson, *Travel*, p. 223.

⁴⁹ A commendable study says that ‘from a very early point [...] church help was structured’ and comprised several roles where ‘church members donate; church leaders visit and disburse help’ which was especially evident ‘where churches come to the prisoner from a distance’ (Brian M. Rapske, ‘The Importance of Helpers to the Imprisoned Paul in the Book of Acts’, *Tyndale Bulletin*, 42, no. 1 (1991), 3–30 (pp. 13, 14)).

⁵⁰ ‘Luke is also speaking to the Christian community of his day, relating details of its missionary endeavours to the ministry of Jesus himself. Thus the teaching of the Christian community in the Period of the Church is rooted in his teaching and in a command of Jesus himself.’ (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible, 28A, 2 vols (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:845.) Jesus’s instructions to the seventy(two) in Lk 10:3–11 ‘are economic’ and place ‘his emissaries in a place of tension between dependence on and the abuse of hospitality’ (Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 413–414).

obey them is also evident from the logistics people were willing to organise to assist their fellow believers. The next section will elaborate on these geographical aspects.

Geography of Ignatius's Letters

Somewhere in the second half of the first quarter of the second century, Ignatius was arrested in Antioch on the Orontes. Local persecution appears to have prompted his arrest and his *damnatio ad bestias*. Since the sentence had to be executed in Rome, the bishop was deported under the guard of ten Roman soldiers. It is probable that an envoy was despatched from Antioch to inform the local church in Rome (Ign. *Rom.* 10.2).⁵¹ Such a journey would have been most efficient over sea and might have taken approximately twenty-one days (Figure 1).⁵²



Figure 1: Possible trajectory of the envoy's sea journey from Antioch to Rome (Ign. *Rom.* 10.2).

⁵¹ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, pp. 11–12, and Corwin, *Ignatius and Christianity*, p. 14, consider it likely that the ones preceding Ignatius were also victims of the same persecution.

⁵² Modes, durations and distances of the individual travels have been derived from *The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World* <<https://orbis.stanford.edu>> (except for the trajectory over land from Laodicea ad Lycum–Philadelphia–Smyrna where GIS data was used). When using Orbis, it should be borne in mind that it is a reconstruction based on documented, historical, and conjectured data. Therefore, actual journeys may have taken much longer due to the unpredictability of the weather or the unavailability of vessels. Cicero (*Fam.* 16:21:1) wrote that it took 46 days to despatch a letter from Rome to Athens since there was no ship readily available, but he also recounts a different occasion where the same travel was made *sane strenue*, mighty quickly, in only 21 days (*Fam.* 14:5:1).

Instead of a direct journey by sea, the band of soldiers took an indirect route through Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Italy.⁵³ The first trajectory, between Antioch on the Orontes and Philadelphia in Asia (Figure 2), can only be conjectured. One possibility is that they went from Antioch to Seleucia to embark on a ship heading for a southern port in Asia Minor, for example, Attalia,⁵⁴ which was approximately 678 kilometres and would have taken five to six days. From there they might have continued their journey over land to Laodicea ad Lycum, a journey of eight days and 225 kilometres.



Figure 2: The two options for the trajectory between Antioch ad Orontes and Laodicea ad Lycum.

The alternative is that the military escort and captive(s) left Antioch and headed northwest towards Tarsus in Cilicia. After crossing the Taurus

⁵³ Mellink, ‘Death as Eschaton’, pp. 20–21, deems it likely that already at this point the group consisted of multiple prisoners. This might be conjectured from the size of the squad, but it is unclear whether and when other prisoners were added. The indirect course of the route across Asia Minor and Macedonia might be explained if the squad had the assignment to pick up other prisoners along the way to the capital, see Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, pp. 11–12.

⁵⁴ For instance Trebilco, ‘Christian Communities’, and Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p. 11, suggest that Ign. Rom. 5.1 could provide evidence that the first trajectory of Ignatius’s travel was partially over sea. However this inference is not conclusive, since the verse could also apply to future sea voyages, see Corwin, *Ignatius and Christianity*, pp. 14, 16.

mountains, passing through the Cilician gates, they probably would have continued their land journey until they reached Laodicea ad Lycum.⁵⁵ The total distance of 900 kilometres could be covered in thirty-one days.

Close to Laodicea ad Lycum, where the rivers Maeander and Lycus converged, the road branched into a northern and western stretch. Some scholars suggest that Ignatius might have expected that they would have proceeded in their journey over the main highway across Southern Asia Minor to embark in Ephesus.⁵⁶ The squad of soldiers, however, preferred the northern branch towards Philadelphia (88 kilometres, 3 days). Here the company halted. Probably, as will have been the case in earlier, unnamed villages where they needed to spend the night, the soldiers made use of accommodation in military encampments, perhaps even from the *cursus publicus*, and otherwise of existing inns. Ignatius probably was locked up in whatever cell was available. In Philadelphia, Ignatius had the freedom to meet and teach local Christians (Ign. *Phld.* 7.1), but there appears to have been a conflict between him and some of the Philadelphians.⁵⁷

The stay in Philadelphia probably lasted only a few days before the band continued its travel to Smyrna. The distance (130 kilometres) would have required a multi-day journey (4.5 days) and it seems very likely that they spent one of the nights in Sardis, the capital of the Roman province Asia Minor.

⁵⁵ Since Rheus Agathopous and Philo from Cilicia have followed Ignatius (Ign. *Phld.* 11.2), it has been inferred that the journey must have been over land. Bart Ehrman supports a land journey, though he does not reference Ign. *Phld.* 11.2, see *The Apostolic Fathers: Epistle of Barnabas, Papias and Quadratus, Epistle to Diognetus, The Shepherd of Hermas*, ed. by Bart D. Ehrman, Loeb Classical Library, 25, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2:204.

⁵⁶ E.g. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*. Ignatius's description of the Ephesian church as 'You are a passageway [*πάροδος*] for those slain for God' (Ign. *Eph.* 12.2) might not only be metaphorical, but also an allusion to the highway in reality, see Corwin, *Ignatius and Christianity*, p. 16; Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 779; Franco Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, English edition ed. by Madeleine Goh and Chad Schroeder (Boston, MA: Brill, 2015).

⁵⁷ It might be that the quarrel with some of the Philadelphians (see *twες* [...] *twov*, Ign. *Phld.* 7.1, 2) was over the authority of the verbal tradition against the Jewish scripture.

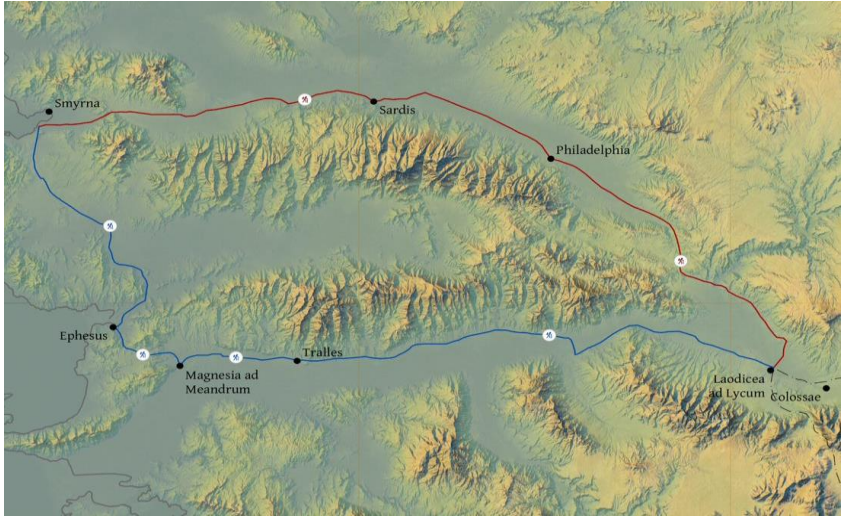


Figure 3: Ignatius's route through Philadelphia and the route of the messengers through Tralles, Magnesia and Ephesus.

The squad of soldiers and their captive(s) appear to have reached Smyrna sometime in the middle of August. The most probable scenario is that Ignatius was placed into custody again, perhaps together with other captives. Possibly the delay was due to some arrangements the soldiers had to make, or they might have halted to pick up some other captives. It could also have been that they had to wait for a ship heading in the direction of Troas to become available. Whatever the reason, the delay provided an opportunity for Ignatius to meet with local Christians, including bishop Polycarp. These individuals became dear to him and expressed their support both mentally and materially (Ign. *Smyrn.* 9.2, *Magn.* 15, *Eph.* 2.1; 5.1). Besides the Smyrnaeans, Ignatius could also rely on representatives from the local churches in Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles.

At what moment these churches had been informed about Ignatius's journey of captivity and his prospective stay in Smyrna is not stated in the epistles. One option is that the churches may have been informed when Ignatius had already reached Smyrna.⁵⁸ This would

⁵⁸ Corwin, *Ignatius and Christianity*, p. 17.

require the despatch of an envoy towards Ephesus, a distance of 72 kilometres that could be traversed in two and a half days, subsequently to Magnesia, (1 day, 21 kms), and to Tralles (1 day, 28 kms). This does not seem a very likely option since the journey there and back (when done by foot) would have taken ten days.

It seems more likely that an envoy was despatched via the southern route from Laodicea to Smyrna, informing the churches of Tralles, Magnesia and Ephesus that Ignatius was on his way to Smyrna.⁵⁹ It took about four days to reach Tralles (120 kms). There, Bishop Polybius joined the envoy (Ign. *Trall.* 1.1) and together they traversed 28 kilometres to reach Magnesia in one day. In that town, the company of travellers expanded with the addition of presbyters Apollonius and Bassus, Bishop Damas, and the deacon Zotion (Ign. *Magn.* 2.1). They continued their journey and reached Ephesus after another day (21 kms) where they met representatives of the local church. Receiving the news about Ignatius's journey in captivity, an Ephesian delegation of at least five people (Bishop Onesimus, deacon Burrhus, Crocus, Euplus and Fronto, Ign. *Rom.* 10.1) were enabled to meet Ignatius in Smyrna (Ign. *Eph.* 1.2; 21.1). The travel party, which meanwhile had grown to more than ten people, will have covered the final 70 kilometres to reach Smyrna in two and a half days, and there they became acquainted with the imprisoned bishop.

Ignatius and these representatives must have had some time and opportunity to build a relationship and to discuss the situation of the local churches, especially in the case of the deputies from the Ephesian and Magnesian churches (the Trallian bishop Polybius seems to have returned earlier to his hometown (Ign. *Trall.* 1.1; 13.1)). In response to their support and the reports concerning the local situation, Ignatius wrote letters to each of these churches. The delegates from Ephesus and Magnesia may have delivered them to their hometowns and to Tralles.

On 24 August, Ignatius wrote a fourth letter to the church in Rome (Ign. *Rom.* 10.3). He announced his arrival to the Roman congregation in order to prepare their response towards him. He wanted

⁵⁹ Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers II*, vol. 1; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*; Mellink, 'Death as Eschaton'; Corwin, *Ignatius and Christianity*.

to prevent any action on their side that might hinder his martyrdom. Therefore, the letter had to reach Rome before the arrival of Ignatius himself, and it has been suggested that Crocus acted as the courier for this letter (Ign. *Rom.* 10.1).⁶⁰ If he were the one carrying the letter to Rome and there was some sense of urgency, seafaring might have been the best option. Crocus could have embarked in Smyrna on a ship for Corinth, where he continued to Regium. From there, the final trajectory would have led him to Rome. The journey from Smyrna to Rome was about 2100 kilometres and would have taken at least seventeen days (Figure 4). The letter-carrier probably arrived in Rome in mid-September.



Figure 4: Possible route of the letter carrier (Crocus?) from Smyrna to Rome.

It is quite possible that the group of soldiers and their prisoners resumed their journey soon after the letter to the Romans was sent (Figure 5). Whether their journey to Troas continued over land (9.3 days) or by sea (2.1 days), is unknown, but Ignatius was now accompanied by Burrhus, the deacon from Ephesus (Ign. *Eph.* 2.1). This man was generously facilitated by the Smyrnaeans and Ephesians to

⁶⁰ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, p. 12.

support Ignatius, and would also serve as Ignatius's amanuensis (Ign. *Phld.* 11.2; *Smyrn.*12.1).⁶¹



Figure 5: Options for Ignatius's route from Smyrna to Troas.

Ignatius had been followed by Philo from Cilicia, and Rheus Agathopous from Syrian Antioch. The texts are silent about whether Rheus Agathopous, after leaving Antioch, picked up Philo in Cilicia, but it appears that they had both been informed that Ignatius had taken the northern route to Smyrna, and they continued their travel jointly to Philadelphia. In that town they visited the local church, but not every member of the Philadelphian community received them positively (Ign. *Phld.*11.1).

From Philadelphia, Philo and Rheus Agathopous travelled to Smyrna (Ign. *Smyrn.* 10.1) and the attitude of the Smyrnaean church towards them appears to have been very positive: the Smyrnaeans refreshed both men in every way (Ign. *Smyrn.* 10.1, cf. 9.1–2), probably informing them that Ignatius already left for Troas. So, they travelled on. (Figure 6)

⁶¹ Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, pp. 216, 251, suggests Burrhus could also have served as the letter carrier for the three epistles that were sent from Troas.



Figure 6: The trajectory of Philo and Rheus Agathopous.

Having travelled more than 1400 kilometres,⁶² they were finally able to catch up with Ignatius in Troas (Ign. *Phld.* 11.1; *Smyrn.* 13.1), and to bring him the good tidings about the church in Antioch (Ign. *Pol.* 7.1; *Smyrn.* 7.1; and *Phld.* 10.1). This news brought the troubled mind of Ignatius to rest (cf. Ign. *Eph.* 21; *Magn.* 14). Rheus Agathopous seems to have left Ignatius before Philo (Ign. *Smyrn.* 13.1).⁶³

Subsequently, Ignatius wrote letters to the churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna, and to the Smyrnaean bishop Polycarp. In these letters he expressed his gratitude for the restored peace in Antioch and exhorts his addressees to rejoice with him. He also urged them to send ambassadors to the church of Antioch in Syria to congratulate them (Ign. *Phld.* 10.1; *Pol.* 7.1; 8.2; *Smyrn.* 7.1–3), as neighbouring

⁶² If the voyage was partially over sea, it could be traversed in 24 days. If it was fully over land, on foot, it would have taken about 48 days to reach Troas from Antioch.

⁶³ The fastest mode of travel to return to Antioch would have been a sea voyage of 9 days, but this was dependent on the availability of transport. Furthermore, the time of year was less favourable.

churches had already done in person or by letter (Ign. *Phld.* 10.2, *Pol.* 8.1).

Considering the short letters written from Troas (Ign. *Phld.* 11.2; *Smyrn.* 12.1; *Pol.* 8.1), Ignatius's stay was apparently rather short and abruptly terminated (Ign. *Pol.* 8.1). Maybe a change of weather or favourable omens made a vessel available to transport the band to the European continent.

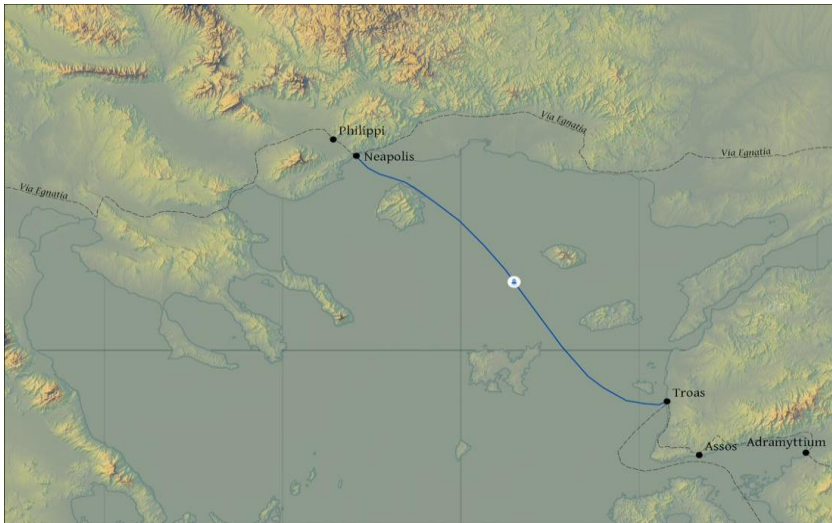


Figure 7: Route of Ignatius to Neapolis and thence Philippi.

The distance between Troas and Neapolis, the seaport of Philippi, was 347 kilometres and could be covered in two and a half days. From the harbour they probably proceeded on foot to reach Philippi in half a day (19 kilometres) (Figure 7). In that city, two other captives appear to have been added to the band (*Pol. Phil.* 9.1). Unfortunately, the contemporary accounts stop here, and it is not certain what happened next. Ignatius may have died a martyr's death in Philippi,⁶⁴ or he may have faced his execution in Rome.

⁶⁴ Vinzent, *Writing the History of Early Christianity*, p. 278, claims that the ninth chapter of Polycarp's letter 'introduces Ignatius together with his companions Zosimus and Rufus as

Assuming the probability of a martyr's death in Rome, the squad of soldiers presumably continued their travel from Philippi over the Roman highway, the *Via Egnatia*. The journey of 540 kilometres would have taken approximately eighteen days and would have led them via Thessalonica and Hereklea. When they finally reached the harbour in Dyrrachium, they probably embarked on a ship to cross the Adriatic Sea to land at Brundisium, a distance of 169 kilometres which took a little more than one day.



Figure 8: Trajectory from Philippi to Rome.

To reach Rome, a land journey along one of the usual routes, for instance the *Via Appia*, has often been proposed.⁶⁵ In September or October they could reach the city in eighteen days, covering 539 kilometres. However, an alternative route over sea is also possible: they could have set sail from Brundisium to round the southern Italian coast. Comprising 1174 kilometres, this route is significantly longer, but it would only have taken approximately nine days. (Figure 8) Along the way they might have docked in various harbours. A clue that earlier

martyrs who together with others were killed in Philippi?. However, it is unclear on what basis Vincent infers that the place of death should be Philippi.

⁶⁵ See Corwin, *Ignatius and Christianity*; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*; Mellink, 'Death as Eschaton'.

generations found such a sea voyage from Brundisium over Regium to Rome plausible, might be discovered in the spurious letter from Ignatius to the Philippians.⁶⁶ On the other hand, at this time of year sea travel was less favourable.

Trajectory	Journey	Distance (kms)	Duration (days)	Mode
Antioch - Attalia	1a	678	6	sea
Attalia - Laodicea	1a	225	8	land
<i>Antioch - Laodicea</i>	<i>1b</i>	<i>900</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>land</i>
Laodicea - Philadelphia	2	88	3	land
Philadelphia - Smyrna	3	130	5	land
Smyrna - Troas	4a	277	9	land
<i>Smyrna - Troas</i>	<i>4b</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>sea</i>
Troas - Neapolis	5	347	2.5	sea
Neapolis - Philippi	6	19	0.5	land
Philippi - Dyrrachium	7	540	18	land
Dyrrachium - Brundisium	8	169	1	sea
Brundisium - Rome	9a	539	18	land
<i>Brundisium - Rome</i>	<i>9b</i>	<i>1174</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>sea</i>

Table 1: Summary of distances, durations, and modes of travel in Ignatius's voyage (alternative trajectories are italicised).

Probably after spending more than forty-two days over certainly more than 3000 kilometres (Table 1) – a journey with several stops that enabled the bishop to communicate with representatives of local churches – the band finally reached Rome (most likely no earlier than halfway through October). There, Ignatius likely died his desired martyr's death fighting the beasts. During his travel and imprisonments, he had met with local church members, but also with delegates and envoys who were willing to travel over 10,000 kilometres to lend their support (Table 2).

⁶⁶ 'I have sent you this letter through Euphаний [..] happening to meet with him at Rhegium, just as he was going on board ship' (psIgn. *Phil.* XV).

	Trajectory	Distance (kms)	Duration (days)	Mode
1. Envoy to Rome	Antioch – Attalia	678	6	sea
2. Envoy and delegates	Attalia – Laodicea	225	8	land
3. Letter to Rome	Antioch – Laodicea	900	31	hybrid
4. Letters from Smyrna	Laodicea – Philadelphia	88	3	land
5. Rheus Agathopous	Philadelphia – Smyrna	130	5	hybrid
6. Philo	Smyrna – Troas	277	9	land
7. Letters from Troas	Smyrna – Troas	295	2	hybrid
8. Phil. envoy to Antioch	Troas – Neapolis	347	2.5	hybrid
9. Sm. envoy to Antioch	Neapolis – Philippi	19	0.5	sea

Table 2: Summary of distances, durations, and modes of other journeys.

Conclusion

What exactly happened to the bishop on his way from Syria to Rome remains hidden in the past. Nonetheless, this study has shown that it is possible to enhance the image that emerges from Ignatius's letters based on historical-geographical details.

The extensive infrastructure of roads, waterways and inns made it relatively easy to travel from the farthest corners to the capital of the Roman Empire. Yet there were also the inevitable obstacles, including the weather and the availability of accommodation, that made the speed of travel unpredictable. Likewise, the quality of lodging could be very poor, and hygiene problematic for the rank-and-file who could not use first-class facilities.

The situation would probably have been worse for captives since they were condemned to whatever meagre prison was available. Since the only aim of the Roman soldiers was that Ignatius survived the

journey to fight the beasts, he did not have to expect any care. But he received much.

From early Christian tradition it appears to have been customary to provide hospitality to unknown fellow believers and to support the imprisoned. Likewise, no expenses nor efforts were spared to support an unknown bishop morally and materially. Envoys were sent over long distances and stewards enabled for longer periods of time. Moreover, delegates provided company to an unknown; namely the captive, needy Ignatius. Here we see that neither space, time, nor expenses hinder the words of Jesus in Matt 25:35–36, 40 from materialising.