1. INTRODUCTION

It is unmistakably clear that, in addition to the situation in the churches in western Asia Minor to whom he wrote, Ignatius was profoundly concerned about the situation in the churches of Syria (and, perhaps, of Antioch in particular). It is also unmistakably clear that Ignatius appealed to authoritative traditions from the first century to address his second-century situation. My central question here is what kind of access did Ignatius have to gospel traditions from the first century. The question is partly answered by the near universal agreement that Ignatius’s allusions to gospel traditions have a distinctive Matthean flavour to them.
But agreement stops there. R. M. Grant commented some fifty years ago that few topics in Ignatian studies have been more “militantly debated” than whether Ignatius knew the gospel of Matthew.\textsuperscript{1} Somewhat at issue is when the written form of the Christian tradition gained a prominent and somewhat trusted status. The sides are split (quite unevenly) into three positions: (1) those who contend that Ignatius had access the gospel of Matthew; (2) those who contend that Ignatius had access to some of the same written sources that Matthew used (in particular, M\textsuperscript{2}) but not to Matthew’s gospel itself, and (3) those who contend that Ignatius simply had access to a Matthean-flavoured Antiochene oral tradition. The solution to these matters could be affected by where in the second century we date Ignatius.

The oral tradition option seems to be somewhat the default position now, and if it cannot be shown for certain that Ignatius had access to either Matthew’s gospel or to his special sources, then the parallels between Matthew and Ignatius can be accounted for, supposedly, by both having drawn from the same oral tradition. Scholars as diverse in their sentiments as Professors Koester and Bauckham hold to the oral tradition option. Since they are both here today, I thought I should play the devil’s advocate (in this case, Matthew’s gospel being the devil). Basically I will look at a number of specific matters to determine what has been said and what may need to be qualified.

Before I do that, let me note a couple of matters. First the environment for the composition of Matthew. B.H. Streeter was the first to argue the case for Antioch
for the locale, against the witness of Irenaeus and Papias. Although Streeter may have overstated the case, most still opt for Antioch as the setting for the Gospel of Matthew (if they opt for anything). One of the strongest arguments for placing Matthew in Antioch had been Ignatius’s knowledge of the gospel.

One would have thought that the case for Antioch as the setting for the composition of Matthew’s gospel would have been weakened with Ignatius’s knowledge of that gospel now in doubt. But that has not been the case. Curiously, one of the strongest arguments now for placing the composition of Matthew’s gospel in Antioch is Ignatius’s lack of knowledge of that gospel (though I am not sure that anyone has stated the matter that explicitly). This new situation has developed from trying to explain traces of Matthean-like material in the Ignatian letters by contending that both authors simply shared the same environment in which a distinctive Jesus oral tradition had its life and history.

The second introductory matter relates to evidence. Professor Koester raised the bar high by accepting as evidence for dependence on the gospel of Matthew only cases where the parallel in question shows Matthew’s redactional hand. While this criterion does come close to providing certainty, rarely do we ever have the luxury of—nor, I think, the need for—this kind of certitude in our reconstructions of the past. It appears that the primary criterion used to establish Matthean/Ignatian dependence has changed somewhat since Professor Koester proposed his criterion. Now the question seems to be not whether we can establish
that Ignatius used Matthew’s gospel but, rather, whether we can establish that Ignatius did not—that is: that Ignatius used Matthew’s source rather than Matthew—assuming that Matthew and his source are different. The change is a slight but not insignificant adjustment to the debate.

Now to the main points for discussion and disagreement.

2. A PREFERENCE FOR ORAL TRADITION?

Was there a preference for oral tradition over written texts in early Christianity? Although that seems to be on its way to becoming a near-consensus view, I think it is at least sufficiently exaggerated to be misleading.\(^7\) Granted, there was a desire—by some who were writing texts—to hear from eyewitnesses, as comments from Luke and Papias would seem to suggest. But neither of the two passages in Luke and Papias can bear the weight they are often forced to carry. In situations where eyewitnesses were not available, there is nothing to indicate from either of these statements that oral tradition was favoured over written material. Indeed, both Luke and Papias are *writers*, and they use *written* sources and show respect for *written* sources.

Take Luke, who first mentions both eyewitnesses and written sources.\(^8\) Although Luke mentions eyewitnesses, he does not depreciate the written text. In fact, in Luke’s environment written texts seem to be a widely used and useful way to transmit the Jesus traditions, and Luke is heavily indebted to a *written* gospel
(and perhaps other written sources) for much of his own writing. Indeed, it is likely that Luke used written texts far more than he used oral traditions in compiling his own work. Oral tradition and written text do not stand in conflict nor does oral tradition (perhaps except for eyewitness reports) have status over written text. Even for Luke, although he claims access to eyewitnesses, some “eyewitness testimony” that he uses must have been already contained in written texts.

Many think that a stronger—indeed, incontrovertible—case for a preference for oral tradition is found in a statement by Papias. Papias, writing when those who had heard eyewitnesses were still alive, comments that he sought out such individuals, adding that he “did not think that information from books would profit [him] as much as information from a living and surviving voice.” But to say that Papias’s comment demonstrates a high regard of early Christians for oral tradition over written text, as many do, sensationalizes what is perhaps a fairly mundane point. Is Papias saying anything more than that he would rather hear it “from the horse’s mouth,” so to speak—what Papias calls a “living and surviving voice”—a sentiment probably widely shared throughout the ages in a variety of cultures but an access rarely available to most people—indeed, rarely even sought by most?

It may even be that Papias’ comment merely reflects literary convention, given that Papias is a historian of sorts, though I think that the comment is more substantial than that. Papias does seem to have a genuine concern about his sources and he seems to have put some effort into assuring that his sources go to source.
But it is an overstatement to read his comment as a general widespread preference of oral over written in early Christianity. For one thing, it is hardly obvious that Papias is presenting his method as standard Christian practice. That he states the matter in as much detail as he does perhaps suggests that his approach was a departure from customary practice, or that he was being especially diligent. Further, it is unlikely that Papias’ approach would have been practical for leaders of most Christian churches, or even desirable or possible for most Christian adherents. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, we should note how Papias himself transmits this “living and surviving voice.” He writes it down. His is not an environment where tradition is received orally and passed on orally, devoid of written text. He himself writes a five-book collection of the traditions he has gathered, and he speaks—not negatively—of earlier writers.

For most members of Christian congregations, the question of eyewitnesses would not have been an issue. Whether by remoteness of time or space, the majority of early adherents would not have personally met one of the eyewitnesses, and they may have been satisfied simply knowing that there were eyewitnesses, if even that would have been a most pressing matter for them. The stories they know probably came from their bishop or their elders, and nothing seems to suggest that the average adherent would have distinguished between hearing either a text read or having a story told from someone they considered the repository of the tradition.
In addition to the comments of Luke and Papias, some have pointed out, in support of the theory that there was a preference for oral tradition in early Christianity, that even after written gospels appear, oral tradition does not immediately die out but continues to have a place in the transmission of the Christian story.¹⁵ That certainly is one way to describe the historical reality. But it is not the only way. It is just as accurate (and perceptive) to say that even though the transmission of the Christian story was handled orally from the beginning and continued to be so transmitted for many decades, written material incorporating the oral tradition appeared early and was seen to provide a useful and acceptable means for conveying the Christian tradition even though the oral tradition was still active.

However we put the matter, it seems that the environment of early Christianity was as textual as it was oral. The Jewish scriptures were read publicly as well as referred to frequently in Christian preaching and writing, letters and letter-like sermons and expositions to and from churches and church leaders were collected, preserved and read and reread, and various gospel-like compositions and collections circulated and gained status prior to the gospels with which we are now familiar. This was not an environment that eschewed written material in favour of the oral.
3. DISTINCTIVE LOCALIZED ORAL TRADITIONS?

The appeal to a shared oral tradition to explain the similarities between Matthew and Ignatius requires a particular view of the oral tradition that is often asserted but rarely defended. The assumption seems to be that the oral tradition from which Matthew and Ignatius both drew was distinctive enough from the oral traditions elsewhere that it bore particular marks that were sufficiently detectable and distinguishable so as to be identifiable when used by an author. With such distinctive localized oral traditions, writers could have reflected similar markings without one writer being directly indebted to the other.

But can this widely accepted view of the oral tradition bear the weight it must carry? I contend that it is more hazardous than helpful to speak of geographically distinct areas where discrete oral traditions had their life in the earliest period. Too often, the amorphous oral tradition of an area simply takes the shape of whatever theory chooses to adopt it, for it has no shape of its own. So the preliminary questions must be: what exactly do we mean by oral tradition, and is there any way to identify specific localized oral traditions and fluff them out with content?\textsuperscript{16}

The matter is complicated. At the most fundamental level, we lack basic evidence. For one thing, our access to oral traditions is never direct. Such oral traditions, where they have survived at all, survive piecemeal in and as written tradition. Further, for most documents, the specific locale of composition cannot be determined or is disputed. Even when a location can be identified, the supposed
localized traditions generally survive in no more than one document, for rarely do we find a number of documents addressed to the same area. Even for Antioch, perhaps the chief center of early Christianity, we have only the Ignatian material that can be tied directly to the area.\textsuperscript{17} Although it is possible that Matthew’s gospel was written there too, we must remember that the most convincing reason we have for placing Matthew’s gospel in Antioch is because of the parallels to Matthew that surface in the Ignatian letters.

Granted, each area may have had some stories unknown in other areas (though we would be hard-pressed to identify such stories\textsuperscript{18}). But there is nothing that suggests that each area had a vast collection of unique traditions that overwhelmed the broader traditions common to churches in widely diverse geographical areas. Too often it seems that we simply use what is mentioned in one text but not in other texts from other areas as reflective of a unique, area-specific oral tradition. That will not do. A particular document or author might reflect the \textit{local} tradition—but to specify what that tradition is from any particular document would require substantially more information than we at present possess. Any one document cannot reflect—or cannot be known to reflect—a distinctive, localized tradition. It might just as well reflect a considerably wider tradition on the one hand or an author’s peculiar and perhaps narrower perspective on the other.\textsuperscript{19}

To complicate matters further, it seems that various “distinctive traditions” were known in the same areas. For example, Ignatius seems to reflect elements of a
Johannine-like tradition\textsuperscript{20} as well as a Matthean-like tradition, not to mention a heavy debt to the Pauline tradition. What, then, would be the shape of an “Antiochene oral tradition” that supposedly both Ignatius and the author of Matthew drew from? And if the Antiochene tradition reflected such a mixture, how is it that the Antioch-composed Gospel of Matthew has largely escaped this Johannine and Pauline influence but the writings of Ignatius have not?\textsuperscript{21}

In the end, I think we would be hard-pressed to make any case for something we might call an “Antiochene” oral tradition for the early period, and we would be even more hard-pressed to specify what an oral tradition of a Matthean flavour would have looked like, though we are assuming we can do that when we say that the Ignatian parallels with Matthew reflect a Matthean (or an Antiochene) oral tradition rather than dependence on Matthew’s gospel (or on a Matthean special source).

\textbf{4. THE IDENTIFICATION OF MATTHEAN ALLUSIONS IN IGNATIUS}

Creating an agreed-upon list of parallels and allusions to Matthew in the Ignatian material cannot be expected to succeed, given that readers are struck in different ways by what constitutes an allusion.\textsuperscript{22} Consider the following conclusions of key investigators of the question.\textsuperscript{23} Of the thirteen passages listed by Massaux, Koester agrees on ten but offers six others that Massaux does not list. Koester lists only three of Inge’s main seven, whereas Massaux lists all seven.
Sibinga lists twenty-eight possible parallels, considerably more than most would count, and over half of which are uniquely his. And of the thirteen parallels Sibinga considers in detail, five are from his idiosyncratic selection. Further, six of Sibinga’s twenty-eight passages have parallels to Mark also and four to Luke. That leaves eighteen parallels to Matthew alone (a key point in Sibinga’s presentation. But of these eighteen, eight are not recognized as parallels by Trevett or Massaux. Of the remaining ten, five may have parallels with Mark or Luke or both. Inge considered ten possible parallels, seven of which he placed in categories b or c. Sibinga states that of the seven, only one is not from special M material, which is true only if the broadest definition of M is used.

To avoid as much as possible idiosyncratic selection, I have considered only the allusions listed by at least two of the five scholars examined here. That means that I have set aside one allusion identified by Inge, one by Massaux, three by Koester and nine by Sibinga. That has left a list of twenty-one possible allusions for my main examination (see Appendix A).

5. THE IDENTIFICATION OF “M” MATERIAL

If we are going to account for Matthean parallels in Ignatius by appeal to either Matthew’s special source or Matthean-like oral tradition rather than the Gospel of Matthew itself, we must have a way to distinguish these kinds—a near impossible task, I suggest. Simply assigning to a written source M or to Matthean/
Antiochene oral tradition everything in Matthew that does not have parallel with Mark or Luke is inadequate. Granted, we know that Matthew used sources (Mark and “Q” in some form—oral or written—bear witness to that). Thus it would not be surprising if Matthew were to have used other sources, such as a hypothetical M, too.

But—and I believe this is a crucial point—it would be more surprising if Matthew brought nothing himself to his gospel. And by this I don’t mean just his redactional pen. However Matthew came to be engaged in the work of producing a story of Jesus, it is highly unlikely that he started his quest for material without a body of stories already in his memory, however these might have come to him. And if he was either commissioned or encouraged to write the story, that would likely indicate that he was viewed as someone who already had more than an average grasp of the tradition. Indeed, he may have been considered a reliable source by his community for information of this kind before he made any attempt to write his gospel. He may have even been a primary source of much of the oral tradition for his community, and perhaps this was almost a precondition for his taking up the task of putting the tradition into writing. Thus, looking from Matthew backward to an Matthean-like oral tradition or an M source may, in some ways, be putting the cart before the horse (or, in Matthew’s case, before the ass).

Herein lies a problem for speaking of M or of Matthean-like oral tradition. While an M source or a Matthean-like oral tradition might be a meaningful and
perhaps necessary concept, if either is to be a meaningful concept with reliable content, we must find some way to factor in and distinguish what is more properly considered Matthew’s own material. I am not sure how we can do this successfully (if we can at all), but I am sure that it must be done if we are to pronounce with any confidence about the content of M or the content of Matthean-like oral tradition. And maybe we don’t need to worry about M at all, if Paul Foster is correct. In his article on the demise of the M-source hypothesis, he states that “It appears unlikely that the theory of an M source will be taken up again by future generations of scholars…”

Various efforts have been made to distinguish Matthew’s own material from Matthew’s M source (oral or written) beyond the simplistic mathematical formula where M or Matthean-like oral tradition equals the Gospel of Matthew minus whatever Markan and Lukan parallels Matthew contains. One effort to establish the content of M has been made by Stephenson Brooks. Without here going into his method, I will note that only three of Sibinga’s nineteen Ignatian/Matthean parallels come from Brooks’ identification of M material, a judgment in sharp contrast to Sibinga and Bauckham’s conclusion that most of the Ignatian/Matthean parallels are from M material (written or oral). And only five of thirty-one parallels (from the combined list of parallels identified by the five primary scholars considered here) are listed by Brooks as M material. Whatever we might make of Brooks’ overall analysis, the fact is that his criteria for identifying M material is no
more overly exacting or excessively rigorous than is Koester’s criterion for identifying Matthean gospel material. I am not suggesting the Brooks has provided a solution to this puzzle, but his work demonstrates how significantly different the outcomes can be when we try to identify M material on some basis more nuanced than simply listing whatever Matthew has that Mark and Luke do not.

6. THE LOOSENESS OF IGNATIUS’S USE OF MATTHEAN MATERIAL

Ignatian parallels with Matthew’s gospel generally are suggestive, at best. Some scholars have tried to counter this evidence by noting Ignatius’ special circumstances—a prisoner on his way to martyrdom, and thus unlikely to have ready access to a copy of Matthew. But we really do not need to look to Ignatius’s special circumstances to account for a looseness in Ignatius’ use of early Christian writings. The reality seems to be that early church fathers generally played loose with the text.31 They are less quoters of the text than they are reflectors of the world the text has influenced. Let me illustrate. If I were to say: “Matthew I know, and a Matthean oral tradition I know, but who is this special Matthean source?” I suspect that many of you would recognize that my language has been influenced by the text of Acts, without me having quoted any line from the seven sons of Sceva story or any hint of expectation on my part that some might flee this room naked and wounded.32 In fact, it might even be argued that a greater impact of the
Acts material on me is suggested when my expression is shaped by the parlance of Acts rather than when I am consciously quoting Acts.

Putting aside this concocted illustration, in order to determine how loosely a written text might be quoted or might serve as the springboard for ideas or catchwords or phrases, we need a situation where we have no doubt (1) that a written source lies behind an author’s expression, and (2) that it is unlikely that the “quoted” material in question existed in oral form as its primary vehicle of transmission. Fortunately, we have such material for Ignatius’s use of written material—the letters of Paul. Almost everyone concedes that Ignatius knew 1 Corinthians and at least a few of the other letters attributed to Paul. It is generally conceded that Ignatius’ use of Paul’s letters is, at best, loose. If, then, Ignatius uses Paul’s writings loosely—writings which he knows and that we know he knows—then the loose use of Matthean material by Ignatius would lose its relevance for the question of whether Ignatius knew the gospel of Matthew.

7. IGNATIUS’S FAILURE TO USE SUPPORTIVE MATTHEAN MATERIAL

We need to be cautious about our expectations about when and how an author might have used a text with which he or she was intimately familiar. For example, Sibinga, in regard to a particular parallel between the Gospel of Matthew and Ignatius, argues that if Ignatius had ever heard of the Matthean passage, “it left little impression with him,” which Sibinga finds “the more surprising” as Matthew
had applied the illustration to false teachers, and this would have fit nicely with a theme of pressing concern for Ignatius. But how do we know what should strike us as surprising? Perhaps 1 Corinthians can be helpful here. It is clear that Ignatius knew 1 Corinthians (some say, almost by heart\textsuperscript{34}). Yet not only does Ignatius only loosely quote 1 Corinthians, he does not draw at all on 1 Corinthians where we might have expected him to have done so. Consider two of Ignatius’s pressing concerns: the unity of the Christian church and the defence of the reality of Jesus’ human life (Jesus really died, he really was resurrected, etc.). No document in early Christian literature spelled out these matters as clearly as 1 Corinthians.\textsuperscript{35} Yet it does not occur to Ignatius to appeal to this material. Surprising? Yes. Significant in determining whether Ignatius knew 1 Corinthians? No. What we might expect an author to do if he or she were familiar with a text and what they actually do can be at least baffling—and a poor guide.

8. IGNATIUS’S UNEVEN USE OF MATERIAL IN MATTHEW’S GOSPEL

A key point in Bauckham’s appreciation of Sibinga’s work is that Sibinga had noted that Ignatius alludes more often to distinctive Matthean material than to Markan and Lukan parallels in Matthew. On this point Sibinga is correct. Of the twenty-one allusions in my main list of allusions, eleven are indeed drawn from M material. Then Sibinga points out that the special Matthean material makes up only about twenty-five percent of Matthew’s Gospel. This, too, is correct, though we
might quibble whether or not we might add a few more percent to that number. But Sibinga’s next step is problematic. Sibinga concluded that it is unlikely that Ignatius was using the gospel of Matthew, for had that been the case there should be, supposedly, a more even distribution of the allusions drawn from throughout the gospel. While agreeing with Sibinga in part, Bauckham does call for some caution in that Ignatius’s particular concerns in his letters might have dictated some preference for M material. Bauckham points to matters related to false teachers, a concern more prevalent in M material.\(^\text{36}\) Even granting that, however, Bauckham thinks that Sibinga’s main insight still stands, for Bauckham cannot find “any other possible reason for Ignatius’ preference for M material.\(^\text{37}\)

Before I address other possible reasons, I must challenge Sibinga’s statistics. Sibinga points out that in Inge’s list of seven allusions, six are from M material, which is correct.\(^\text{38}\) The problem is that in a less idiosyncratic list (one compiled from the lists of several scholars who have studied the matter—a list I am using in this paper), only eleven out of some twenty-one allusions are drawn from M material. Or consider Koester’s list: only seven of seventeen are from M material. Or Sibinga’s own lists (where he agrees with one other scholar): ten of eighteen are drawn from M material. Or Trevett’s list: twelve of eighteen. Massaux and Bauckham are the highest: twelve of sixteen from M material. That still may strike one as curiously high, and I will return to this matter in point #9 following. But note here that the situation is probably not as stark as Sibinga viewed it.
Now back to our primary question. Should Ignatius’s allusions to Matthean-like material be spread relatively equally over all of Matthew’s gospel if Ignatius had been influenced by Matthew’s gospel rather than the oral tradition? I think caution is called for here. For one thing, it strikes me as probable that sayings material would be more significant in shaping one’s speech than would narrative material. Observe that when Ignatius is referring to narrative material from the gospel tradition, he is primarily doing so to make the point established by the narrative. There was a star. Jesus was truly born, of David’s line. His mother was Mary. He ate and drank. Pilate did him wrong. He was crucified and raised from death. Ignatius’s language is not shaped by this narrative tradition—but his content is. When we turn to Ignatian allusions to sayings, it is the language and turns of phrasing that seem to reflect the more significant impact. If this is the case (and I do not claim to have established this), then we might expect that Ignatius’s allusions to Matthean material would be drawn disproportionately from sayings material. And that is what we have: sixteen of the twenty-one allusions are to sayings material (see Appendix A).

But is there any concrete evidence that writers who appropriated the written gospel traditions showed a preference for sayings material over narrative material? I decided to sample one document (Irenaeus’ book 2 of Against the Heresies39) to see whether the issue might be worth pursuing in more depth. Of the thirty-five passages from Matthew’s gospel quoted or alluded to by Irenaeus in Book 2, thirty-
two are from saying material; less than ten percent come from narrative material. This is an even heavier preference for sayings material than we find in Ignatius.

Becoming intrigued by the possibility that sayings material might have a greater impact on allusions and turns of phrase used by later writers, I expanded my examination over the Christian literature up to Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian. *Biblica Patristica* lists over 3500 illusions to Matthew’s gospel in this literature. Of these, I counted 3053 drawn from sayings material but only 548 from narrative material. Thus allusions to Matthean sayings materials is over five times more frequent than allusions to Matthean narrative materials in the literature of the second century, and I would guess that this could be spun out for every century after that to the present with not dissimilar results. Ignatius’s heavier use of sayings material is not a problem.

But is there a problem if the Ignatian illusions are largely drawn from M material and not just from sayings material generally?

9. **IGNATIUS’S PREFERENCE FOR M-SAYINGS MATERIAL**

We noted briefly in the previous segment that Ignatius does not just reflect a greater influence of sayings materials over narrative, he reflects an influence within the sayings material of M tradition sayings over the sayings in the triple tradition or in Q. Sibinga carries the observation one step further, contending that Ignatius does not just reflect a preference for M material, but that the pool of
gospel traditions familiar to Ignatius had a much heavier concentration of M material than the gospel traditions available to Matthew. The basis for this conclusion is that Matthew had access to Mark and Q material, which Ignatius did not. But that is drawing too much from too little, particularly if Ignatius is dated late. Under the scenario of a late date for Ignatius, it would be difficult to argue that Ignatius, the leader of the Christian community in one of the primary Christian centres and a person who shows a marked imprint of Matthean-like tradition, did not know the gospel of Matthew itself, where Markan and Q material could be found. Further, if Matthew, the author, is placed in Antioch, it would be curious if Matthew had access to Mark and Q but these materials were unknown to Ignatius.

A more important question might be whether Ignatius shows the sweeping preference for M material that Sibinga has suggested. Thirteen of the twenty-one allusions to Matthew are in M material sections. Comparing that to Book 2 of Irenaeus’s *Against the Heresies*, of the thirty-five allusions or quotes to material in Matthew’s gospel, fourteen are from M material. Thus we have a 62% use of M tradition in Ignatius and a 40% in Irenaeus. How significant that difference is will strike people differently, but given that there is no question that Irenaeus knew both Mark and Luke and almost no question that Ignatius did not, somewhat more traces of Mark and Luke might be expected in Irenaeus’s writings. Indeed, if we added Q to the mix, counting only the Q material where it appears that Ignatius or Irenaeus
was influenced by the Matthean version, we have a 71% count of M or Q in Ignatius and a 60% count in Irenaeus.

The same conclusion can be drawn from an examination of the Christian literature of the second century. From the data in Biblica Patristica, 40% of sayings are from the M tradition most narrowly defined. The data in Biblica Patristica does not allow us to examine passages shorter than a verse, but were we able to examine that kind of shorter material found in Matthew but missing from Mark or Luke, the percentage of M material would be higher, and probably not much different from what we find in Ignatius.

By nature, I don’t trust statistics. I use them here only to show that numbers that might seem significant when calculated only from Ignatian data seem more mundane when similar calculations are made on other documents that offer a wider control.

10. IGNATIUS’S AGREEMENT WITH MATTHEW’S SOURCE AGAINST MATTHEW

One point remains that might yet serve as adequate evidence that Ignatius did not know Matthew’s gospel. Sibinga contends that Ignatius routinely disagrees with Matthew in favour of Matthew’s source. He offers the following condition: “Ignatius depends on Matthew, if the Gospel is not contradicted jointly by one of its sources and Ignatius.” Or, putting the matter more strongly: “Ignatius’ dependence on Matthew is proved fully if he never agrees with a source against the
gospel.”42 According to this test, Sibinga concludes that Ignatius did not use Matthew’s gospel but rather his M source. Bauckham modifies that position slightly by arguing that Matthew’s special source was not a written document but simply the oral tradition that both Matthew and Ignatius drew upon independently.43 In this, Bauckham agrees with Koester’s position, and he specifically defends Koester against criticisms made by R. M. Grant.44

But such an investigation is not a simple matter. Having concluded that most of Ignatius’s Matthean-like allusions come from the special M source, our starting point is a comparison of the text of Matthew to a now non-existent source. Thus we are far removed from the kind of situation where Matthew’s text can be compared with his Markan or Q source, for example. Matthew’s source for M material passages will always be a reconstructed source, usually with nothing but the Gospel of Matthew itself to provide the evidence for what that source supposedly looked like. Such examination marks scholarship at its most adventurous—which may (or may not) be a good thing.

Sibinga reaches the following conclusion about whether Ignatius follows Matthew or his source. Although Sibinga lists over thirty possible allusions, he considers only thirteen in detail. Sibinga cannot determine for seven of these thirteen whether Ignatius can be said to follow Matthew or his source.45 In an eighth case, Sibinga allows that Matthew appears to be the source.46 That leaves five allusions where Sibinga concludes that Ignatius agrees with Matthew’s source

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against Matthew—not an overwhelming collection from the many allusions that Sibinga identified. I look at these briefly in Appendix B. Individuals will be swayed in different ways by the arguments.\textsuperscript{47} The matter is hardly cut and dry and ready to be bronzed.

\section*{11. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DATE OF IGNATIUS}

If Matthew is dated in the 80s or 90s of the first century (or even in the 70s) and Ignatius dated to the 130s (or later)—a spread of forty to seventy years, one must wrestle with two questions. One, what did a Antiochene/Matthean oral tradition, from which Matthew supposedly drew, look like in the first century? And, two, is it realistic to contend that Matthew and Ignatius drew from the same pool of oral tradition if their writings are separated by as much as seventy years? Bauckham gives some consideration to the matter, using the gap (which he puts at twenty to thirty years) to account for the slight differences in the oral tradition that both drew from. But given the time gap between the two (whether two or three decades or half a century or more), would not Matthew’s gospel have exercised some (and perhaps considerable) influence on the shape of the gospel tradition (oral or written) from which Ignatius drew, particularly if Matthew’s work was specifically designed for use in the Christian assembly or at least gained influence as its value came to be seen by the Christian community? I contend that it would be somewhat baffling if the gospel of Matthew, dated much earlier than Ignatius’s
letters but written in the same church orbit, did not exercise influence (at all!) on Ignatius’s writings.

On the other hand, if we date the Gospel of Matthew later or the Ignatian letters earlier, we might need to change our question from “Did Ignatius know Matthew’s Gospel?” to “Did Ignatius know Matthew?”
APPENDIX A
MATTHEAN ALLUSIONS IN THE IGNATIAN WRITINGS
compiled from lists by leading researchers on the topic
where at least two agree on the allusion

Column 1
^ sayings
____ underlined: Brooks’ M source

Column 2
treated by Sibinga (1-13)

Column 3
M || in Matthew only / pericope not in either Mark or Luke
Q || in Matthew and Luke
m || in Matthew only / pericope in either Mark or Luke (or both) but not the portion with allusion
= || in Matthew and in either Mark or Luke or all three
+ || in Matthew against Mark or Luke
– || in Mark or Luke (or both) against Matthew
≠ || but no synoptic version matches better than any other
Jn || in Matthew and John

Column 4
I i Inge (7) (I = some probability; i = uncertain)
M Massaux
K Koester
S Sibinga
B b Bauckham (B = certain; b = probable)
* listed by Trevett

| Matt | S# | || | Author | Ign. | || reference |
|------|----|----|----|--------|------|-------------|
| 2:2  |     | ^  |    | M      | MKsb*| Eph 19.1-2  |
| 3:7  | 1  |    | Q  | jKS    | Eph 11.1| Lk 3:7      |
| 3:15 | 8  | m  |    | jMKSB*| Smyrn 1.1| Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22; Jn 1:29-34 |
| 5:46 | Q  | -  | Kb | Poly 2.1| Lk 6:33 |
| 7:15 | m  |    | MkSB*| Phid 2.2| Lk 6:43-45 |
| 8:17 | 9  | m  |    | jMKSB*| Poly 1.2-3| Mk 1:32-34; Lk 4:40-41 |
| 10:16| 10 | m  |    | jMKSB*| Poly 2.2| Mk 6:8-11; Lk 9:2-5 |
| 10:42D | 3  |    | = or + | Sb* | Smyrn 10.1| Mk 9:41 |
| 12:33b | 4  | Q | or + | jMKSB*| Eph 14.2| Lk 6:44 |
| 13:24-30...43 | M | Sb* |       | Eph 9.1; 10.3; Phid 3.1-2:18 |
| 15:13 | ^  | 11 | m  | jMKSB*| Trall 11.1| Mk 7:1-23; Lk 6:39 |
| 16:17 | m  |    | MK*| Phid 7.2| Mk 8:27-30; Lk 9:18-21 |
| 16:26 | ≠ | jS*| Rom 6.1| Mk 8:36; Lk 9:26 |
| 18:19-20 | ^  | M  |    | jMKSB*| Eph 5.2 |
| 19:11-12 | ?| 12 | m  | jMKSB*| Smyrn 6.1| Mk 10:2-12; (4:9); Mk 16:18 |
| 23:8  | 13 | m  | Sb | Eph 15.1| Mk 12:37-40; Lk 20:45-47 |
| 23:27 | 6  | Q  | +  | MKS*| Philad 6.1| Lk 11:44 |
| 26:7  | 7  |    | = [+] | jMKSB*| Eph 17.1| Mk 14:3; [Lk 7:38; Jn 12:3] |
| 27:52 | m  |    | jMKb*| Magn 9.2| Mk 15:33-39; Lk 23:44-48 |
APPENDIX B
BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF SOME MATTHEAN IGNATIAN ALLUSIONS
(judged by Sibinga to be significant)

Matthew 3:15 || Poly 1.1
Matthew: ἡμῖν πληρωσαι πασαν δικαιοσύνην
Ignatius: ἵνα πληρωθῇ πασα δικαιοσύνη ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ
Bauckham considers this passage (#8 of Sibinga’s analysis) as the one passage on which the case for Ignatius’s knowledge rests, and Koester makes this the one case where Matthew may have influenced Ignatius, but only in an indirect way. Sibinga attributes this allusion to editorial or traditional (liturgical) influence, not to Matthew, in spite of the parallel explanation that one finds in Matthew and Ignatius, but not in Mark, Luke or John. Sibinga’s argument works here only if we should expect Ignatius to conform even to the level of the voice of the matching verb. This is an unacceptable standard in light of what we know regarding how first-century Christian writings were used by second-century authors. The more substantial links here relate to content and idea, which makes Ignatius’s link to Matthew’s Gospel a more reasonable conclusion. 

Matthew 4:8 || Luke 4:5 || Rom 6.1
Matthew: τὰς βασιλείας τοῦ κόσμου
Luke: τὰς βασιλείας τῆς οἰκουμενῆς
Ignatius: αἱ βασιλείαι του ἀιῶνος τουτου
Sibinga (#2) thinks that Matthew’s phrasing likely belongs to the latest strata of the gospel and not to Matthew’s source, which Sibinga implies would have been the source that Ignatius used. But that assumes too much, for Luke presents an alternative reading. Thus one would need to argue that both Luke and Matthew altered their source, or that Luke retains his source but that M altered its source and then Matthew altered M. While that is possible, it is as simple to say that since κόσμος and ἀιῶν are synonyms for Ignatius (a point that Sibinga makes), Ignatius simply uses a synonym for κόσμος here since he had just used the word κόσμος in the previous phrase (τα περατα του κοσμου οúde αἱ βασιλείαι του ἀιῶνος τουτου). Or we might just as well dispense with this passage altogether, since only Sibinga lists it as a Matthean allusion.

Matthew 10:42D || Mark 9:41 || Smyrn 10.1
Sibinga (#3) finds a parallel in the Western text of Matthew, which he attributes to Matthew’s source or, less likely, to Matthew. The difference is that Matthew and Mark use the active verb, the Western text of Matthew the passive. Sibinga also
thinks that the saying does not fix into the larger context or either gospel. But is that the case? The larger context of the passage in Matthew (which is not the same in Mark) involves the reception and refreshment of those who arrive at one’s door. (Ignatius uses ὑποδεξάμενοι. Matthew uses δεχόμενος.) This is the context of Ignatius’ comment and thus makes Matthew’s Gospel a credible source of Ignatius’s reflection, unless one wants to argue that it is the theme of Matthew’s source as well. How much the reference to ἐνα των μικρων τουτων is odd in this passage will strike different readers differently.

Matthew: ἐκ γαρ του καρπου το δενδρον γινωσκεται
Luke: ἐκαστον γαρ δενδρον ἐκ του ἵδιου καρπου γινωσκεται
Ignatius: φανερον το δενδρον ἀπο του καρπου αὑτου
Sibinga (#4) has a complex and (I find) baffling explanation. I have already discounted one point in Sibinga’s dismissal of the Matthean/Ignatian connection in section 7 above. Both Ignatius and Matthew have του καρπου αὑτου. Luke reads του ἵδιου καρπου. Although Thomas (43-45) has some parallel with some of the material in Matthew and Luke, it does not speak of a tree being known by its fruit. It does seem that the idea could well have been a common proverb among Christians (and perhaps more widely), but we cannot say what the most common form of the saying was, or even that Ignatius’s expression of the saying was not influenced by Matthew’s gospel. The thought is clearly the same, and unless the form of the saying is largely fixed, Ignatius might well have used a different way from Matthew’s wording to express the same idea. If we argue that the form of the saying was largely fixed, we have clear evidence in the diversity of expression here that it was not so fixed that one might not play with the form. Certainly, it is a stretch to conclude, as Sibinga does, that “if Ignatius ever heard [this passage in Matthew], it left little impression with him.”51

(#11) Matthew 15:13  ||  Trall 11.1; Philad 3.1
Matthew: πᾶσα φυτεια ἣν οὐκ ἐφυτευσεν ὁ πατὴρ μου ὁ οὐρανιος
ἐκριζῷθησεται
IgnTrall  οὕτωι γαρ οὐκ ἔισιν φυτεια πατρος
IgnPhilad  δια το μη ἐἶναι αὐτους φυτειαν πατρος
Sibinga (#11) favours Matthew’s source over Matthew, in spite of the wording being paralleled in Matthew and Sibinga being unable to specify “the exact wording” of the source. The reason for rejecting Matthew as the source is that Matthew sometimes employs a stylistic device whereby both a noun and a verb form of the same word is used, as he does in this passage—πᾶσα φυτεια ἣν οὐκ ἐφυτευσεν. If Ignatius had used the same stylistic device as Matthew, then the case
for Ignatius’s use of Matthew would have been strong, but it is not an argument 
against Ignatius’s use of Matthew that Ignatius has only the concept and not the 
stylistic device, as Sibinga concludes, stating that “it is somewhat more likely that 
[Ignatius] agrees with the source against Matthew.” Frankly, it is not more likely at 
all.

Matthew: ἀνθρώπος ἢν ὦκοδεσποτὴς / ἀπεστείλεν
Mark: ἀνθρώπος / ἀπεστείλεν
Luke: ἀνθρώπος / ἀπεστείλεν
Ignatius: ὅν πεμπεῖ ὦ ὦκοδεσποτὴς ἐς ἵδιαν ὦκονομίαν, οὕτως δει ἥμας αὕτον 
δεχεσθαί

Sibinga’s # 5, like #4, is baffling, but at least it is not complex. While admitting 
that Ignatius follows Matthew in his use of the more specific phrase ἀνθρώπος ὦκοδεσποτὴς rather than the simple ἀνθρώπος, Sibinga argues this word must be 
from Matthew’s source rather than from Matthew. Even if true, there would be no 
way to establish that Ignatius used Matthew’s source rather than Matthew’s gospel, 
as Sibinga seems to imply. But Sibinga’s argument regarding the use of 
ὁκοδεσποτὴς is questionable. Pointing to the fact that five of the seven Matthean 
uses of the word ὦκοδεσποτὴς have no parallel to Mark or Luke, Sibinga 
concludes that the use of ὦκοδεσποτὴς is more likely characteristic of Matthew’s 
source than of Matthew’s “editorial activity.” But the fact remains that Matthew 
does use ὦκοδεσποτὴς in 21:33 but the Markan and Lukan parallels do not. 
Sibinga is forced to argue here that Matthew’s special source had this passage too, 
and that is where Ignatius got it. As Sibinga says: “Matthew follows his special 
source against Mark, and Ignatius goes along with the source and Matthew.” That 
makes the boundaries of M seem a little too convenient and plastic. A much more 
simple explanation is that Ignatius’s source is Matthew’s gospel. But maybe we 
should not consider this an allusion at all, for only Sibinga identifies it as such.

Matthew 23:27 || Lk 11:44, 47 || Philad 6.1
Matthew: ταφοὶς κεκοσιμενοίς...δόσεων νεκρῶν
Luke: τα μνήμεα τα ἁδηλα...τα μνήμεα των προφητῶν
Ignatius: στηλαι ἐσιν και ταφοι νεκρων

This passage almost certainly shows Matthean influence, though Sibinga (#6) opts 
for the Western text of Luke in one part of the passage and with Matthew 
(“probably against his source”52) in another part of the passage. Against 
dependence on Luke are the following points: (1) the “Pharisee” context, which 
could link the parallel to Luke, would have been largely irrelevant (both in time 
and space) for Ignatius, and there would have been no reason for Ignatius to have
included that phrase even if under the influence of Matthew’s gospel; (2) the gospel of Luke is most probably not known to Ignatius, and (3) two of Ignatius’s three key words (ταφοι νεκρών) are found in Matthew but none in Luke, thus Matthew seems a more probable source for Ignatius, given the various other points of contact that link Ignatius to Matthew over Luke.
Bibliography


ENDNOTES


4 In one recent study on the situation in Antioch, Magnus Zetterholm, The Formation of Christianity in Antioch (New York / London: Routledge, 2003), argues that the Gospel of Matthew was well established within the routines of the church in Antioch by the 90s, so much so that when a schism of Gentile Christians from the Jewish element developed in the church, the Gentile Christians continued to use the Gospel of Matthew in their newly constituted assembly. On such a reconstruction, the prominence of the Matthean-like material in Ignatius’s writings could be explained. More important, if Zetterholm’s reconstruction holds, we have a remarkably early situation where a written gospel has something approaching revered status, if not perhaps yet authoritative status. This may suggest that the composition of that gospel was an act aimed at producing an authoritative document or a reliable witness rather than simply a compilation of stories told by some anonymous tale-collector and tale-spinner that gradually, over many decades, gained for itself some standing within the community.


9 About 30% of Luke’s material has parallels with Mark (or with both Mark and Matthew) and another 30% with Matthew alone. Luke mentions that many (πολλοί) had composed written accounts of the Jesus tradition. If Luke uses the written sources of Mark and Q (assuming Q is written), it would seem likely that he has used material from other of these written accounts that he speaks of, even if he finds them inadequate as measured against what he hopes to produce. He at least seems to assume that these previous written accounts do contain eyewitness testimony.

10 It is unclear when Papias collected such oral accounts and when he composed his five books. There could have been some time between the collecting and the writing, though the more likely guess would be that the two activities are conceived as one project and thus related somewhat closely in time. Papias is placed in the first half of the second century, but more specific dating is not possible.

11 Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.39.2.

12 A number of scholars recognize that Papias’s praise for the “living voice” is not a dismissal of written traditions, though comments such as that of Cyril C. Richardson that Papias “records his disdain for books: is common enough [Early Christian Fathers (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 21].

13 One might argue that Papias lives in an environment where all Christian writers make every effort to go to source, and he simply wants to assure his readers that he has been as diligent as everyone else, but this does not strike me as the most obvious setting for his comment.


16 At a later period, a particular text might have become a favourite, and so somewhat coloured the traditions of an area, as the Thomas tradition seems to have done for Syria. But we have nothing like this in the earliest period that can be identified.

17 Bauckman associates five Christian writings with Antioch: the Ignatius’s letters, the Didache, the Gospel of Peter, the Ascension of Isaiah, and the Gospel of Matthew, all of which used the special Matthew tradition, the supposed oral tradition of Antioch [Richard Bauckham, “The Study of Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospels: Problems and Prospects,” in Gospel Perspectives, Vol. 5. The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels, ed. David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 380. But how much does the placement of these documents in the area of Antioch not presuppose the Matthean character of the oral traditions in that area?

18 The presence of a story in one document and its absence in another does not help us in identifying local traditions unless we assume that what is absent in a document is unknown to the author and to the area. For Acts, we might argue that stories about incidents in Antioch may not have been widely known elsewhere, but it is quite another matter when we try to identify particular stories about Jesus as specific to an area.
There is a danger in thinking that we can determine the theology of an individual by looking at one document, and that danger becomes greater when we try to determine the theology of a large geographical area or even of a local church tradition.


It is possible that Matthean and the Pauline tradition stand in conscious opposition to each other’s position, but that simply serves to muddle further any attempt to define an “Antiochene” tradition.

All data mentioned in this paragraph is provided in Appendix A.


Where two or three Ignatian texts seem to parallel one Matthean text, my count of Sibinga’s list treats each as a separate parallel.

By broadest definition of M, I mean any material in Matthew that is not in Mark or Luke, down to the level of short phrases. By a narrow definition, I mean pericopes in Matthew that are not in Mark or Luke or at least full sentences that are added to shared pericopes or significantly different from the shared pericopes.

Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids / Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006), 269, makes both individuals and the community as a whole primary repositories and transmitters of the oral tradition. That, I think, would have been more likely the ideal (if that) than the reality.


See Appendix A.
30 See Appendix A.


37 Bauckham, “The Study of Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospels,” 396, points out that some of Ignatius’s choice of M material could have resulted from one of the concerns he had when he wrote the letters. Even so, there would still be a preference for M material over shared Markan and Lukan material.


39 I chose that text because I wanted the following conditions met: (1) the theme is not starkly different from that of Ignatius, and Irenaeus’ interest in heresies provided a common enough ground, and (2) that there could be not doubt of the author’s knowledge of written gospels. Clearly, Irenaeus, as the defender of the four-gospel tradition, passes the test. The third condition was that the book already had an index of quotes and allusions to the written gospels. This third condition was met when volume 65 of the Ancient Christian Writers series came across my desk. My observations are from data supplied there [Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, trans. Dominic J. Unger, ACW 65 (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 2012)].


41 See Appendix A.

42 Sibinga, “Ignatius and Matthew,” 265.


45 Sibinga’s #1, 3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13,

46 Sibinga’s #7.

47 Sibinga’s # 2, 4, 5, 8, 11.

48 Inge considers ten parallels but judges three to be dubious. See Appendix A.


52 Sibinga, “Ignatius and Matthew,” 274.