# INTRODUCTION: HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT AND THE BISHOP OF ROME

Roman episcopal leadership in late antiquity has typically been studied as a public or civic phenomenon, and as a chapter in the inexorable "rise of the papacy." This book presents a new approach. Instead of charting the growth of an exceptional ecclesiastical government or the popes' efforts to remake Rome into a Christian city, it examines the attempts of Roman bishops to anchor their authority in domestic life.[1] During late antiquity, the popes faced a fundamental and daunting task: to persuade an exceptionally rich and high-status community of Italian Christians to trust their judgment in some of the most central matters of the household, from marriage, sexual relations, and slavery to property administration. To establish their reputations as strong spiritual leaders, Roman bishops had to convince their congregants, including their own clergy, that they possessed a special expertise in the art and science of household management. Domestic life and models of governing, this book argues, were central to the formation of papal authority in late Roman Italy.

Elite households offered the Roman church a variety of resources – material, political, and social – that gave new meaning to the power and stature of its bishops, as Charles Pietri and others have shown.[2] The household, however, also played a formative cultural role in the making of episcopal authority. The ancient household was not a marginal female

[1] By authority, I mean something akin to the Roman concept of *auctoritas*: a form of moral and even social influence exercised by a person that was predicated on the recognition of his or her influence by others. On the topic of authority, I have found the more theoretical discussions of Sennett 1980, Kaufman 1983, and Lukes 1990 especially helpful.

[2] Pietri 1978, 1981, and 1981a. See also Llewellyn 1976; Cooper 1999; and Lizzi Testa 2004: 93–127.

space only obliquely relevant to the governing of city and state. It was a highly masculine institution, the empire's primary unit of production and wealth, and the most morally revealing realm with respect to the character and capacities of its leaders.[3] In antiquity, estate management (*oikonomia*) was a discourse, a system of ideas and practices associated with the running of a large aristocratic household.[4] The system encompassed everything from administering property and disciplining dependents to the oversight of justice and religious order within the home. *Oikonomia* was also a dynamic discourse that underwent revision in the hands of Christian moralists. The following chapters show how late ancient discourses of household management shaped not only the rhetorical presentation of Roman episcopal authority but also its concrete practice.

*The Formation of Papal Authority in Late Antique Italy* examines the manifold ways in which Roman bishops drew upon both traditional and emergent constructs of *oikonomia* to define and exercise their government of the Roman church. The book analyzes papal authority as a form and expression of household management in three closely related domains: the bishop's own domestic administration in Rome, the households of subordinate Italian clerics, and the homes of elite laypeople in Italy.[5] First, the bishop's domestic administration is explored as both an idea and institution. Specifically, the study traces the development of stewardship as a model of episcopal government in theoretical discussions of the Roman bishop's responsibilities and influence. It also argues that Roman bishops built a type of ecclesiastical household in Italy from and through which they oversaw the church.

Second, the book investigates the rhetorical and material developments that shaped the relationship between the bishop of Rome and his subordinate clergy. Particular attention is given to higher clerics who

[3] See Veyne 1978; Shaw 1987; Wallace-Hadrill 1988; Shaw 1987; Cooper 1992 and 2007a; Saller 1994; and Milnor 2005. On the centrality of the household in the late Roman economy, see Cracco Ruggini 1995 and Sarris 2006.

[4] Throughout the book, I translate *oikonomia* variously as "domestic administration," "household management," and "estate management." Most scholars, however, use these English phrases (and especially "estate management") more narrowly to refer exclusively to the administration of property and labor. Cf. Saller 1999: 184–85. Alternatively, I wish to convey the broader remit of the term as it was understood by ancient writers.

[5] I do not consider monasteries and monastic households in any detail. This is not to suggest that they were unimportant to Roman bishops and their exercise of estate management. On the contrary, they present certain complexities that demand a separate study.

administered Rome's titular churches and the suffragan bishops whose sees fell directly within the pope's ecclesiastical jurisdiction, *Italia suburbicaria*. Here the discussion focuses on the bishop's endeavors to govern the domestic life of clerics, namely their proprietary interests, sexual habits, and marital relationships. The boundary dividing a clerical from a lay household was remarkably fluid in late antiquity, just as it was between the church and other contemporary domestic institutions. In fact, Roman bishops attempted to define the clerical household as something different from its lay counterpart in order to place it more firmly under their control.

Third, *The Formation of Papal Authority* describes the complex relationship between the Roman bishop and the households of lay aristocratic men and women, primarily those who owned property and/or resided in Italy. Treating lay and clerical households separately allows us to compare the somewhat invasive tactics that popes used to govern the homes of clergymen with the relatively restrained techniques they employed when intervening within lay Christian households. Specifically, we explore how Roman bishops attempted to forge reputations as expert "domestic counselors" on new and newly problematic matters involving marriage, slavery, and private estate churches. The book also emphasizes the resistance that bishops encountered when they tried to intervene within the domestic sphere, especially (although not exclusively) from lay householders. In fact, this study concludes that the popes' influence on everyday life remained limited. The late Roman householder did not "cede" his authority to the bishop in religious and ethical matters, as one recent study has suggested.[6]

In foregrounding the household, the present study builds on more than fifty years of scholarship on Christianity, the late Roman aristocracy, and family life.[7] It takes particular direction from research that illuminates the relationship between emergent Christian values and traditional domestic practices and ideologies – what Peter Brown once called "respectable Christianity."[8] As scholars have shown, Christian values, especially those associated with asceticism, neither unmoored nor dramatically transformed the prevailing laws and habits of domestic

[6] Cooper 2007: ix, 29–55. See also 2007a: 32–33.
[7] Gaudemet 1958; Brown 1961; Shaw 1987; Hunter 1987, 2003 and 2007; Markus 1990: 45–83; Reynolds 1994; Evans Grubbs 1995; Cooper 1996 and 2007; Nathan 2000; Salzman 2002; and Bowes 2008.
[8] Brown 1961: 9.

life.[9] This book thus also locates *dissonances* between Christian ethics and Roman household traditions (both social and legal) and elucidates how and why Roman bishops endeavored to claim expertise over their resolution. Although scholars have explored how bishops and other Christian moralists pressed for new formulations of domesticity, none has explained how domestic discourses came to shape the very government of the church.[10]

Moreover, rather than exclusively examining formal, prescriptive documents (e.g., treatises on marriage and virginity, Christian conduct manuals, and canons issued by ecclesiastical synods), *The Formation of Papal Authority* privileges evidence for Roman bishops operating on all levels of domestic society and engaging in both everyday and extraordinary household events. Tax fraud on ecclesiastical estates, collecting rents from delinquent tenants, clerics who flaunted celibacy rules and whose heirs committed sex crimes, Christians who remarried after their spouses were carried off into captivity but later returned home, fugitive slaves who joined monasteries or entered the church order, and local bishops who misappropriated the church's wealth for their personal use are among the many domestic matters that preoccupied late antique Roman bishops. Their routine involvement in these issues played a formative role in the development of their authority, even if they did not always resolve them permanently or definitively.

## *OIKONOMIA*: AN ANCIENT DISCOURSE OF ELITE MASCULINE AUTHORITY

When Roman bishops presented themselves as experts in household management, they drew on an ancient discourse of elite masculine authority. By the fourth century, the term *oikonomia* had a range of meanings.[11] Its primary definition, and the one explored in this book,

[9] See, for example, Evans Grubbs 1995; Cooper 2005; and Bowes 2008. In fact, recent work has stressed how even ascetic ideologies were shaped by traditional domestic practices. See Elm 1994; Jacobs and Krawiec 2003; and Rousseau 2005.

[10] For example: Laeuchli 1972; Brown 1990; and Cooper 2005, 2007 and 2007b.

[11] Hellenistic authors used *oikonomia* to connote the general arrangement of one's life and actions, of political affairs or wealth in a city, or more broadly still, the good ordering of nature and the cosmos. See Natali 1995: 98–99. In ancient rhetoric, *oikonomia* also was a formal literary property and principle of interpretation that involved subordinating the individual parts of a discourse for the overall whole. See Eden 1997: 27–30. Within a Christian theological and pastoral framework, *oikonomia* came to mean God's dispensation on earth as well as a spiritual father's "temporary

was "household" or "estate management."[12] A household (Latin: *domus*; Greek: *oikos*, *oikia*) in the ancient world, at least the kind owned and administered by late Rome's elite citizens, involved much more than simply a nuclear family living together in a single abode.[13] A household typically included multiple properties scattered over many different regions as well as hundreds (and in some cases, thousands) of dependents, whose livelihoods were directly linked to the householder and his lands. The early fifth-century *domus* of Melania the Younger and Pinianus, for example, reputedly included a portfolio of properties located across the Mediterranean (Spain, Italy, Sicily, North Africa, Greece, and Egypt) and at least 8,000 dependent laborers.[14] Certainly the size of their *domus* was exceptional (they were perhaps the wealthiest couple in the empire). But its general features (multiregional land holdings and many dependents) are representative of contemporary elite households.

Great expertise was thus needed to manage such an extensive and complex enterprise. Consequently, *oikonomia* was a specialized branch of practical knowledge and personal ethics and was also widely perceived as a mode of government. For instance, the early imperial agronomist Columella (ca. 4–70) called household management both a *scientia rusticationis* ("knowledge of agriculture") and a *scientia imperandi* ("knowledge of commanding others").[15] Let us consider briefly the history of these dimensions of household management: its association with a specific field of knowledge and ethics, and its link to governing and political life.[16]

The discourse's foundations were laid in classical Greece, when writers invoked the household in theoretical discussions of political government and social organization. Both Plato (ca. 428–348 BCE) and Aristotle (384–322 BCE) posited the *oikos* as an integral part of the larger whole

adjustments to prescribed reprimands." On the latter, see Demacopoulos 2007: 12. *Oikonomia* could also connote stewardship. See below.

[12] *Oikonomia* was often transliterated as *oeconomia* in Latin. The Roman "economic vocabulary" also included words such as *ordo*, *ordinatio*, *dispensatio*, *cura*, *procuratio*, and *administratio*. See Meyer 1998: 56–58.

[13] Most scholars believe that a nuclear unit constituted the core of the Roman household. See Saller and Shaw 1984 and Shaw 1984. Martin 1996 critiques Saller and Shaw's methods and conclusions, however, arguing that lateral relations were also central in Roman family life. For a description of the late Roman family, see Cooper 2007: 107–11.

[14] On Melania and Pinianus' wealth, see Harries 1984; Giardina 1988; Cooper 2005; and Chapter 1.

[15] Columella, *De re rustica* 11.1.6.

[16] Meyer 1998 offers a broad survey of *oikonomia* in classical, late antique, and medieval literature see.

of the city-state.[17] In Plato's words, it was "the starting point of the city-state."[18] Although the two disagreed over the household's function as a direct model of civic government (Plato thought that it was an apt paradigm; Aristotle firmly rejected this position), they concurred that its administration – what Aristotle called its *oikonomia* – was a crucial mechanism in the foundation and preservation of a sound state.[19] For without the *oikos*, a city-state would lose its primary source of virtue, wealth, and members.[20]

The city's dependence on the household made the householder's good exercise of *oikonomia* critical. Ancient thinkers were thus driven to define precisely what good household management entailed. For example, Aristotle characterized household management as a mode of ruling (*archein*) exercised by the householder to inculcate moderation, order, and justice within his home.[21] His contemporary Xenophon (430–354 BCE) authored the first extant handbook on the subject, the *Oikonomikos*.[22] In it he expressly identified household management as both a form of practical knowledge (*epistemē*) and a concrete skill (*oikonomikē technē*).[23] For Xenophon, household management was the domain of an elite gentleman, a landowner with property, slaves, and an industrious wife whom he educated and entrusted to manage certain (typically internal) aspects of his *oikos*. The household administrator's most important responsibilities were to acquire wealth (*chrēmatistike*) and to maintain domestic order. This involved everything from organizing a pantry to directing his wife's activities and disciplining slaves.[24]

Hellenistic thinkers further developed several of these core ideas about household management: a synecdochal relationship between household and state, an association of *oikonomia* with the activities of a male propertied householder (especially his acquisition of wealth), and a prevailing emphasis on the maintenance of order. Members of the era's major philosophical schools authored treatises "concerning household

[17] Distilled discussions of fourth-century BCE philosophical views of the *oikos* appear in Pomeroy 1994: 33–40 and Cartledge 2000: 13–14, 17.
[18] Plato, *Laws* 720e–721a.
[19] Plato, *Laws* 672a, 720e–721a. Aristotle, *Pol.* 1252–1261; 1280b33–4 and *NE* 1160a–1161a.
[20] See Foxhall 1989: 22–44; Swanson 1992: 16–31; and Gaca 2003: 41–58.
[21] Swanson 1992: 18–25.
[22] For an introduction, English translation, and commentary, see Pomeroy 1994.
[23] Xenophon, *Oec.* 1.1, 6.8.
[24] Xenophon, *Oec.* 8.3–9; 6.8.

management" (*peri oikonomias*).[25] In them, Epicureans, Stoics, and Neopythagoreans discussed the exercise of *oikonomia* by the "wise man," placing special emphasis on the philosopher's management of his own wealth.[26] According to the late Stoic (and teacher of Augustus) Arius Didymus, the wise man is "fortunate, happy, blessed, rich, pious, a friend of divinity, worthy of distinction, and . . . both skilled in estate management and the acquisition of wealth."[27] For many of these thinkers, household management was both a precise field of activity with empirical rules (*technē*) and a subjective state of mind or disposition (*hexis*).[28] Household management, in other words, was a set of practices that defined who you were in ethical terms.

Cicero (106–43 BCE) and other Roman writers understood well these dynamics of *oikonomia*. In one forensic speech, Cicero viciously attacked the domestic administration of his client's accusers in order to impugn their public reputations and hence cast doubt on the validity of their charges.[29] Elsewhere he argued that any strike made on his own household was itself an attack on the *res publica*.[30] Cicero's claim was perhaps less startling to his audience than we might think given the long-standing connection in Greco-Roman thought between the household and the state.[31] Rome, of course, was both a commonwealth (*res publica*) and "the fatherland" (*patria*), a nation of people who mythologized themselves as an ancient race of highly disciplined farmer-soldiers. Authors such as Cato the Elder (234–149 BCE) and Columella pushed the discourse in more empirical directions by writing agronomical handbooks.[32] As a recent study has shown, these practical treatises were also highly

[25] Cf. Ps-Aristotle, *Oikonomia* and Philodemus, *Peri oikonomias*. These and other treatises are summarized and discussed in Natali 1995 and Baloglou 1998.

[26] The accumulation of wealth by the philosopher, however, was fiercely debated among Stoics and other philosophical sects: Natali 1995: 119–26.

[27] Stobaeus II.7, 11g (trans. Natali 1995: 114).

[28] Natali 1995: 103; 115–16.

[29] Cicero, *Pro Caelio* as discussed by Leen 2000/1. As Leen shows, household management also functioned as a rhetorical trope in ancient oratory.

[30] Cicero, *De domo sua* 146. See also *In Cat.* 4.12 and Sallust, *Bell. Cat.* 52.3.

[31] See Cicero, *De officiis* 1.17.54 for the *domus* as "the foundation of civil government and the seedbed of the state." For Cicero, *domus* and *civitas* were integral components of the *societas hominum*. See *De officiis* 1.53.

[32] Cf. Cato, *De agr.* and Columella, *De re rustica*. The Roman agronomical treatise is a particular subgenre of Hellenistic household management literature, although Xenophon had also discussed many concrete topics in the *Oikonomikos*. Xenophon's *Oikonomikos*, in fact, was well known among Latin-speaking audiences, primarily through a now lost translation by Cicero. See Pomeroy 1994: 69–73.

moralistic works that linked estate management to a particular model of elite masculinity and power.[33] In fact, Cato himself stands among a select group of great Roman statesmen whose austere, rural, and chaste households were thought to exemplify the nexus between *domus* and *res publica*.[34]

Many elite thinkers thus believed that expertise in domestic administration directly translated into expertise in public life. "A man ought to have his household well harmonized," Plutarch (46–120) opined, "who is going to harmonize state, forum, and friends."[35] As numerous studies have shown, the Romans perceived virtually all dimensions of *oikonomia*, from the physical architecture of a home to the preservation of a chaste marriage and the education of children, as ethical variables that potentially determined an elite man's capacity to lead.[36] Household management was so closely linked with public administration in Greco-Roman culture that Tacitus drew a direct analogy between governing a *domus* and governing the province of Britain.[37] In so doing, Tacitus mobilized an established tradition that the emperors themselves had helped to develop. Augustus (31 BCE–14 CE) was a trendsetter in this regard.[38] Augustus showcased his expertise by treating his slaves and dependents well, by eschewing ostentatious luxury, and most significantly, by underlining his oversight and promotion of Roman "family values."[39] Scholars also underscore the extent to which his state administration was effectively an extension of the emperor's private household.[40] Indeed, the emergence of a monarchical government produced a new Roman expression of domesticity, which presented the emperor as the world's householder and the empire as his household.[41]

[33] Cf. Cato, *De agr. praef.* 2 (ed. Goujard 1975: 9): "When our elders praised a good man, 'good farmer and good cultivator' is how they praised him" (Et viram bonum quom laudabant, ita laudabant: bonum agricolam bonumque colonum). See Reay 1998.
[34] Plutarch, *Cato maior* 22 and *Numa* 3.5–6 and 4.1.
[35] Plutarch, *Moralia* 144 C (*LCL*: 2.333).
[36] See, for example, Wiseman 1987; Shaw 1987: 12–14; Wallace-Hadrill 1988; Cooper 1992 and 2007a; Eck 1997; Edwards 2002; and Milnor 2005.
[37] Tacitus, *Agricola* 19.2.
[38] Severy 2003 and Milnor 2005.
[39] Cf. Suetonius, *Aug.* 34, 67, 72–73, 76–77. Household management was just as frequently used as a tool of imperial critique. Suetonius, for example, also enumerated Augustus' many affairs as well as his penchant for debauched dinner parties.
[40] Severy 2003.
[41] Alföldi 1971; Severy 2003; Milnor 2005. Cf. Seneca, *De clementia* 1.14.2 and 1.18.

## THE FOUR PRINCIPAL DOMAINS OF ANCIENT HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT

When the emperors presented themselves as householders par excellence, they did more than simply adopt a rhetorical stance. Household management was an intrinsically material discourse defined largely by concrete practices. These practices can be placed under four primary (and overlapping) areas of activity: property administration, the ordering of social relationships, ethical oversight, and religious care. Because we shall return to each of the four areas throughout the book in considerable detail, what follows is an outline meant to provide the reader with an introduction to the discourse's general parameters.

In Roman society, a householder or *paterfamilias* ("father of the family") was first and foremost an owner of private property. According to the early third-century jurist Ulpian, a *paterfamilias* is the person within a family who "has dominion in the home (*qui in domo dominium habet*)," that is, who has primary ownership of all property (e.g., lands, buildings, animals, and slaves) related to the household.[42] As Richard Saller notes in his discussion of this passage, because the holding of private property was a right extended to all legally independent (*sui iuris*) men and women,[43] a person did not need to be a father in the biological sense to be a *paterfamilias*.[44] (This meant that a woman could also be a householder or even a *paterfamilias* – a matter to which we shall return). Similarly, *dominus/a*, another Latin word used to denote a householder with a primary meaning of "proprietor" or "owner" (typically of slaves), underlines the economic basis of domestic authority in the Roman world. Because of this, Roman commentators on household management emphasized the importance of financial propriety and acumen. According to Seneca (1–65), a "good father of the family (*bonus paterfamilias*) should increase what we have inherited. This inheritance shall pass from me to my descendents larger than before."[45] Conversely, a *malus paterfamilias* failed to ensure his children's financial and moral future by (for example) appointing an unscrupulous guardian to oversee them.[46] A good household

[42] *Dig.* 50.16.195.1–5.
[43] On property ownership as a concept of Roman civil law, see Kaser 1971: 97; 119–26; 373 and 400–10; Honoré 1987; and Garnsey 2007: 181–92, who argues that the Romans saw property ownership as a "legal right."
[44] Saller 1999: 184–89.
[45] Seneca, *Ep.* 64.7.
[46] Seneca, *De Ben.* 4.27.5.

administrator was thus expected to master a range of complex financial and other skills related to the oversight of agricultural estates and urban properties, most of which were either leased to renters (*conductores*) or managed directly through agents.

Because the ancient economy was largely "embedded" within Roman society, a householder's social powers and functions were often inextricable from his financial practices.[47] For instance, as Seneca's emphasis on the heirs of the *bonus paterfamilias* implies, paternity was tightly yoked to property ownership in Roman culture. In his capacity as a father, a *paterfamilias* theoretically exercised *patria potestas* over his children for his entire life.[48] *Patria potestas* ("paternal power") was essentially an economic power, which established a father as the legal owner of all property and income generated by or bequeathed to his dependent children. Paternal power also involved the householder's control over his children's bodies. A father could sell or abandon his children and discipline them corporeally.[49] Children were also legally required to obtain their father's permission to contract a marriage. Culturally speaking, paternal power underlined the high status of fatherhood in Roman society and the importance that the Romans placed on obedience. But the father's relationship to his children was never purely autocratic.[50] The central Roman domestic value – *pietas* – underscored the reciprocal nature of domestic relationships.[51] Children were obliged to carry out their fathers' wishes, but fathers were also required to nurture, educate, and provide materially for their children, as Seneca's remark on the *bonus paterfamilias* shows. This reciprocity was precisely the kind of social ordering that all good householders were expected to foster.

[47] Finlay 1999.

[48] This meant that adult children could be under the power of a living father. However, life expectancy rates and the common use of legal tools such as emancipation made the grown man subject to *patria potestas* a rarity. See Saller 1994: 43–69, and 120–21, and esp. tables 3.1.e and 3.2.e. Saller estimates that only 39 to 43 percent of men at age 25 would have had a living father, a percentage dropping to 28 to 32 percent at the age of 30.

[49] Romans even believed that a father could kill a child in certain circumstances. On the so-called *ius necis ac vitae* as a powerful cultural myth (but not a legal right), see Thomas 1984 and Shaw 2001. The abandonment of children was more stringently regulated in the late empire: see Evans Grubbs 1995: 271.

[50] On the stereotype of the authoritarian Roman father, see Dixon 1992: 44; Saller 1994: 102–3; and George 2005: 41–42. I return to this issue in Chapter 1.

[51] Saller 1994: 105–14.