

SECTION 1: THE CHURCH

A: INTRODUCTION TO METHODOLOGY

1. Note on Method

- a. The common method in approaching the doctrine of the church by Protestants is as a separate item from the doctrine of God and Christology. (In some ways this is a reaction to the Roman Catholic habit of identifying a visible institution as the extension of the incarnation, so that outside of its boundaries there could be no salvation.)
- b. This method implies that the essential nature of the church is in some way disconnected from the reality of God and the incarnation.
- c. The result is that analogies for the church or sought in this worldly entities, like the state as an institution, or an army.
- d. The necessary result of this is hierarchicalism, individualism and fragmentation in Christian circles.
- e. An alternative approach is to begin with the reality of the trinity. This follows the biblical order in Genesis one (and elsewhere) where humanity as the people of God reflects at its own level the kind of being that God is at his level.
- f. Christology and soteriology then become integral to ecclesiology as they fill out the analogy of relationship between God and his people which is restored in the person and work of the Son of God and applied by the Holy Spirit.
- g. Since there are many models of the trinity, the implicit or explicit doctrine of the Godhead with which one operates will always determine one's functional image of the church.
- h. The model of the trinity adopted in this unit is a social model of God. God is a community of Persons – in – relation. The characteristics of the trinity can briefly be described as follows.

2. Trinitarian Ecclesiology

- a. The nature of the Persons is such that their very being is constituted by their communion. The Father *is* the Father of the Son, the Son *is* the Son of the Father, the Spirit *is* the Spirit of the Father and the Son. The Persons do not exist outside of their relationships. The relationships as such are absolute.
- b. To be a Person is to be entirely inclusive. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit completely interpenetrate each other, they possess exhaustive relational knowledge in this communion of perfect love. Each of the Persons exists *in* the other Persons.
- c. This interpenetration is distinct for each of the Persons, they do not relate in identical ways but in the manner of who they are as Father, Son and Spirit.
- d. The entirety or complex of the relations makes up “ God “.
- e. Jesus came that we may share in his relationship with the Father (sonship) in the Spirit

(John 20:17,21 – 22).

- f. Incarnation and atonement are inclusive acts whereby through being “ in Christ “ we are one with God and partakers of the divine nature (John 15:1ff; 17:20 –23; 2 Peter 1:4).
- g. The essential nature of the Church is therefore relational - communion of the most inclusive possible kind, the one new humanity in Christ (Eph 2:15) is a new and corporate person. As such the church must be by nature as one, holy and catholic (complete) as God , a reality communicated through the apostolic gospel.
- h. This has a number of profound implications as to the form or shape of the church:
- i. Church Types

- a. the *Church of the Father* with its specific focus on creation, the work/s of the heavenly Father.
 - (i) a focus lends itself to neglect the salvation “effected by Christ”e.g. liberalism.

“Its positive emphasis upon the value of man is not matched by the complementary truth of his deep need of forgiveness by the death of Christ.” (Adam 1986:8)
 - (ii) civil religion falls into this category. In the American case God is the source of life and of inalienable rights, as well as being the guide of national history. Cf. the alliance between church and state in South Africa (Afrikaans), and in Serbia.
- b. the *Church of the Son*, which concentrates on the Son who is the Saviour, and neglects the Father and the Spirit. Such theology of a saving God is reflected, “in open admission of sin and guilt, and acceptance of God’s judgement and His highest standards, in the sure knowledge of forgiveness in Christ. Just as the Church of the Father’s neglect of salvation leads to the forgetting of judgement and grace, so also the Church of the Son may go to the other extreme and enforce a strict moral code on its members, and treat people as sinners rather than as people in God’s image.” (Adam 1986:9). Viz. conservatism. This functional emphasis on the Redeemer (Jesusolatry) tends to neglect nature and history.
- c. the *Church of the Spirit*, which concentrates on the empowerment to minister. The emphasis is on the power and gifts of the Spirit. While the Church of the Father looks at creation, and the Church of the Son looks at the church since Christ’s birth, the Church of the Spirit however is concerned with the work of God today, with little or no emphasis on the tension involved in waiting for the return of the Son i.e. triumphalism.

“Whereas the Church of the Father tends to forget that God’s promises of salvation have been fulfilled in Christ, the Church of the Spirit is in danger of expecting too much fulfilment in this present age.” (Adam 1986:11)

Emphasis on the Spirit tends to neglect the testing of spirits, and community formation.

(Adam. P. 1986. *Living the Trinity*. Bramcote: Grove.)

- j. Trinity, Church and Society

- a. disintegrated understanding of the 3 Divine Persons leads to a disunited society without integrated expression
 - b. in colonial and agrarian societies the father has knowledge and power; paternalism. People are objects of help. God is represented as almighty Father, supreme Judge and absolute Lord of life and death. There is no real room for the Son and the Spirit in communion with the Father. With the Father as dominant the relationship is vertical with believers as servants and not sons, e.g. Spain, Latin America.
 - c. in modern and democratic environments the leader is part of a political party or social movement, he/she has reached this position through personal endeavour or by charismatic personality. The extreme expressions are the “duce”, “Führer”, “caudillo”. This person is the big brother, guide or companion. Jesus is the “Brother” or “Chief”. This leads to emotional or juvenile piety and enthusiasm for the “leader” Jesus. The religion of the Son is dominated by horizontal relationship.
 - d. in charismatic groups, subjectivity and personal creativity predominate. Individuality is expressed in terms of “witnessing”, “God enlightened me”, “the Spirit led me” etc. In the religion of the Spirit alone the main relationship is with the inner self.
 - e. in disintegrated societies relationships in their three dimensions are juxtaposed and not cohesive:
 - Verticality: Father (God) as oppressive, mystery, unpredictable, hidden (oppression)
 - Horizontality: Son, self sufficiency, authoritarianism (domination by leaders)
 - Interiority: Spirit, anarchism, lack of concern (insensitivity)
 - f. to be integrated a society needs an upward reference point and memory of origins (Father); sideways relationships and solidarity (Son), and a personal dimension and inner life of creativity and dreams (Spirit).
 - g. without community and participation society is pathological. Upwards, outwards and inwards must coexist.
 - h. “The Trinity is our true social program.”
(L. Boff 1988, *Trinity and Society* .Maryknoll: Orbis)
 - i. This trinitarian reality is communicated by the dominant images of the church in the New Testament: the church as the household of God, the bride of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit (see later).
- k. Church as Community
- a. Communal rather than individualistic. The church is part of the essence of the Christian life. The church is not an assembly of isolated congregations but one community bound together in Christ, reflecting the life of God. Persons exist in relationship within this community.
 - b. Ecumenical rather than isolated. The church must express its organic nature in a practical way, not by seeking institutional unity but a relational oneness of love

which respects unity in diversity.

- c. Egalitarian rather than hierarchical. The hierarchies imposed on many churches reflect a non – social model of the trinity. A functioning trinitarian ecclesiology encourages the full participation of all members of the church as an expression of their joint share in the life of God.
- d. Non sexist. The full equality of the Persons of the trinity encourages the full participation of men and women in the life of the church according to the gifts which God bestows. Based on the principle of the interpenetration of Persons and their inclusivity, and the observation that in the economy of the incarnation the roles of the Spirit and the Son appear reversible, no person within the body of Christ is in a permanent structure of subordination. Relationships of ‘subordination’ and ‘superordination’ will change according to the operation of the gifts and graces which the Spirit continuously supplies.

(K. Giles, *What on Earth Is the Church?* Dove 1995)

3. The Church and the Fullness of God

- a. An approach to the theology of the church based on the trinity points in the direction of the church as sharing in the fullness of God (Eph 1:22 –23; 4:10; Col 2:9 –10)
- b. The nature of the church cannot therefore be comprehended in relation to any one of the three Persons of the Trinity alone. The people/household/building/flock of God, the body/bride of Christ and the temple of the Spirit are not separate or divergent realities but cohere in terms of the purpose of the church to image the totality of the divine nature. Since the divine nature exists in the perfect complementarity of the diverse properties of the three Persons expressed in love, the love of God (God) cannot be expressed on the earth as it is in heaven (eschatologically) other than by these distinct realities.
- c. This means that where any of the three relations is neglected or expressed in a manner which does not include the others, the revelation of God, which is the content of the gospel of salvation, will be impaired.
- d. Only by living faithfully as the children of God, the brothers/body/bride of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit can each of the three Persons be imaged: the fullness of Father (Eph 3:19), Son (Eph 1:23; 4:10, 13; Col 2:9 –10) and Holy Spirit (Acts 2:11; 4:31; Eph 5:18- 19).

B: ELECTION, COVENANT AND COMMUNITY

Introduction:

The doctrine of election like the doctrine of the trinity precedes the doctrine of the church. This doctrine explains how there can be a church. By examining the origin of the church further insight is gained into the nature, destiny and mission of the church in the plan of God.

A. The Election of Israel

1. Election *ex nihilo*

- a. the object of election does not exist prior to the act of election
election creates its own object: God creates what he elects
(Gen 17:7ff; Rom 4:5,17,19,24)
- b. this means that election is not selection
- c. election is the means to the creation of Israel
- d. Israel can only exist as the elect of God, named and given identity by him
(Gen 17:5; 32:28; Ps 132:13 – 14; Isa 43:1,6,7,15,20,21; 44:1,2; 49:1,7)
- e. no grounds for election can be found in Israel
(Deut 7:7; 9:4,6)
- f. Yahweh elected to show forth his power in weakness
- g. this magnifies his electing love which is the ground of election
(Deut 7:6ff)

2. Election and covenant

- a. election is grounded in the covenant
- b. election is to an exclusive covenant relationship
(Deut 10:14 – 15)
- c. this constitutes Israel as a holy nation
(Ex 19:5 – 6, Deut 7:6)
- d. Israel belongs uniquely to God
(Ex 34:9; Deut 4:20; 32:8 – 9)
- e. this is expressed by the language of election:
 - (1) God only *knows* Israel
(Amos 3:2 cf. Jer 1:5)
 - (2) Israel only *knows* God
(Deut 13:2,6,13)
- f. this knowledge is personal, intimate and experiential

- g. God ties *his* name to Israel
(Ex 3:15)
- h. this means that ,by grace, God and Israel form a complex unity
- i. God is the husband of Israel, Israel is God’s wife
(Isa 54:5; 61:10; 62:4 –5; Jer 3:20; 31:32; Ez 16:32; 23; Hos 1 -3)
- j. Israel is God’s son, God is Israel’s father
(Deut 32:6; Isa 63:16; Hos 1:10; 11:1)
- k. this contains within it all the elements of the covenant
 - (1) victory over enemies
 - (2) inheritance of nations
 - (3) blessing and cursing in relation to Israel
(Psalm 2)
- l. Israel is a unit – in – relation to God, the temple in which he dwells
(Lev 26:12, Ezek 37:27; Isa 60:19; Zech 2 :10 – 13)

3. Election and community

- a. individuals are not elected as such
- b. the primary election is of Abraham and his *seed*
(Gen 12:3,13:15)
- c. election is corporate, collective and national
(Ex 19:5 – 6; Deut 7:6; 10:15; 14:2; Ps 105:6,43;Isa 41:8)
- d. this does not mean that all Israel is faithful, there is an “elect remnant”
(Isa 10: 20 – 23; 14:1; 65:9)
- e. it is the corporate “people of God” that is an abiding group
- f. this concept is developed retrospectively in the New Testament
(Rom 9 – 11)
- g. the notion of a collective unity can be elucidated in terms of a corporate solidarity, the priority of unity over diversity, community over individuality
- h. this is expressed in a variety of ways in the Old Testament
 - (1) a family is identified with its ancestor
(Ge 13:15 – 17; Isa 41:8; Hos 11:1; Mal 1:3 –4)
 - (2) punishment and blessing on a corporate scale
(Ex 20: 5 –6; Num 16; Josh 7; Gen 12:3; Ex 32:13)
 - (3) the sacrifices for the nation on the Day of Atonement
(Lev 16:16,19,21)

(4) prayers expressing corporate responsibility

(Ezra 9:5 –15; Neh 9:33; Dan 9:5 – 9)

(5) guilt borne by descendants

(2 Sam 21: 1- 14)

i. other collective metaphors include:

(1) flock

(Pss 23; 78:52; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3; Jer 13:17; 23:1; Hos 4:16)

(2) house

(Ex 16:31; Lev 10: 6; 19:3; Ru 4:11; 1 Sam 7:2 – 3; 2 Sam 12:8; Isa 2:5; Jer 2:4; 5:15)

(3) people

(Deut 7:6; 14:2; 21:8; 1 Sam 2:24; 1 Ki 8:30,33 – 34; Isa 43:20)

j. this does not exclude but highlights individual identity and responsibility

(Jer 31:29 – 30; Ezek 18:2 – 4)

4. The purpose of election

a. election is to a special destiny

b. this involves service

c. such service may entail special suffering

d. this destiny is achieved through the special power of *blessing*

(Gen 12:2 – 3)

e. the ultimate meaning of election is not revealed under the old covenant

f. the goal of election looks beyond Israel to all nations (Gen 12:3)

g. this is attached to the knowledge which God has of Abraham that leads to intercession

(Gen 17:19; 23 – 33)

h. prophetic passages speak of the election of the nations

(Isa 19:19 – 25; 45:20 – 25)

i. Israel serves a religious role of witness, messenger and priest to the peoples

(Isa 42:19,43:10; 45:14 cf. Ex 19:6)

j. disobedience to the covenant leads to cursing

(Deut 7:25 –26,27- 29; Ezek 35 – 44; Am 3:2)

5. Election and Messiah

- a. there is a progressive narrowing down of election to an individual
- b. this is the Servant of the Lord
(Isa 41:8 –9; 42:1)
- c. he is the answer as to how Abraham and his seed will be a blessing to the nations
- d. he is the living covenant between God and the people
(Isa 42:6, 49:8)
- e. the mediation of election is through the expression of God's power in weakness
(Isa 52:13 – 53: 12)
- f. through the rejection of the Servant Israel will somehow fulfil the divine purpose of election
- g. from the perspective of the New Testament the whole history of God's covenant with Israel prophetically prefigures the fulfillment of its election in Jesus

B. Election and Jesus as Messiah

1. Jesus as the Electing God

- a. as the Word who is Jesus Christ is always with God, this reality of God concerning his Son is the basic determination of God concerning all things. “Jesus Christ was the choice or election of God in respect of this reality (which is distinct from himself)...In the beginning with God, i.e. in the resolve of God which precedes the existence, the possibility and the reality of His creatures, the very first thing is the decree whose realisation means and is Jesus Christ.” (Barth)
(John 1:1 – 18; Rom 8:29f.; Eph 1:4; 3:10; Col 1:15)
- b. the content of God’s gracious act of election is the elected human Jesus Christ. He is the relation between God and humanity.
- c. if Jesus is only elected and not also Elector we have no real knowledge of our election, for the electing God is either behind or above him
- d. like the Father and the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ participates in the divine decree of election as a divine subject. “In no event which takes place between the Father and the Son is the Son merely an object.” (Barth)
- e. in this way God has ordained himself to be the person called Jesus. This is the God who loves humanity as he has eternally loved himself.
(John 17:24)
- f. this means that God has tied himself to the universe in the fullest possible way
- g. in the Gospel of John the Father gives the elect to the Son, this does not mean that Jesus is only passive in election
(John 6:37; 17:2,6,9)
- h. Jesus himself chooses who will follow him, this separates them from the world
(John 13:18; 15:16,19)
- i. this is not to be understood as a representative and instrumental action only but an act of divine sovereignty
(Cf. John 1: 3,10; Rom 8:29f.; Eph 1:4; 3:10; Col 1:15)
- j. Jesus is the immediate executor of election
(Matt 28:18; John 5:22,26,27; Rev 3:5)

2. Jesus as the Elect Servant

- a. the election of Jesus is pre –temporal
(Eph 1:4)
- b. the elect person Jesus Christ is the true object of the divine predestination
- c. the baptism of Jesus is the occasion of the Father’s public declaration that Jesus is his elect Son
(Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22)
- d. the background is the conflation of the images of the Davidic king and the suffering servant
(Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1)
- h. God’s good pleasure (*eudokeo*) in Jesus seems in context to carry the sense “pleasurably choose” for service
(Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Matt 12:18. Cf. 2 Peter 1:17)
- i. the election of Jesus means that he is uniquely holy
(John 6:69; 10:36; 17:16; Acts 3:14; 4:27; Rev 3:7. Cf. Rom 1:4)
- j. Jesus was chosen to fulfil the divine plan the Messiah would suffer and die, rise again and rule over creation
(Matt 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22; 24:26; Acts 2:33; 3:20; 4:28; 13:29; Eph 1:9 – 10; Heb 10: 9 –10; 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8)
- k. the election of Jesus by God is set in opposition to rejection by his people
(John 1:11; 1Pet 2:4 – 6)
- l. whether or not Jesus is the Messiah, the chosen of God, is the principal point of contention with the Jewish leaders
(Matt 27:43; Luke 20:2; 22:35)
- m. the rejection of Jesus is the outworking of the divine predestination that God has chosen for himself reprobation, perdition and death; he has made our guilt his own. “Predestination is the non – rejection of man.” (Barth)
- n. by rejecting its election Israel becomes the means for the taking away of the sin of the world and the origin of the church
- o. some texts tie the election of Jesus to his sonship (John 1:34; Luke 9:35; 22:35. Cf. Rom 1:4; 2 Pet 1:17)
- p. in Johannine language this appears to be conveyed by the term *monogenes* (“only”, “unique”)
(John 1:14,18, 3:16,18, 1 John 4:9)
- q. the early church identified Jesus as Isaiah’s chosen Servant of the Lord
(Isa 41:8 – 9; 42:1; 53: 7 –8; Matt 8:17; 12:18 – 21; Acts 3:23; 4:25,27,30; 8:32 - 33)

- r. the prophetic, priestly and kingly elements of Israel's election are fulfilled in the life of Jesus as the Messiah
- s. his life service qualifies him to be judge of all
(Acts 10:42; 17:31)
- t. this is verified by the resurrection
(Acts 17:31; Rom 1:4)
- u. Jesus is the only individual in the Gospels who is said to be "elect"

3. Election is in Christ

- a. election occurs in the sphere of the reciprocal knowledge of Father and Son
(Matt 11:25 – 27; Luke 10: 21 – 22; John 15:10,16; 17:20,23,2,6,9)
- b. this involves the power to know the Father *in* Jesus
- c. this is more than knowing God through Jesus or in terms of benefits deriving from him
- d. the entry into the sphere of the divine knowledge brings salvation
(John 17:3)
- e. God chose and accepted the church in Christ in eternity
(Eph 1:4,6)
- f. Jesus is the principal Elected One, and God has chosen an elected body to be included in him
- g. this means participation in Christ's election
- h. we are all called to fulfil the election of Jesus
- i. this is achieved through the cross where the previous division between Jew and Gentile is overcome
(Eph 2:11 – 22)
- j. the one new humanity is the church and the *mystery* of the church
(Eph 3:4 – 9; 5:32; Col 1:26 – 27)
- k. the permanent existential and ontological centre of being of the church is Jesus
- l. Christ is "the mirror of election....we cannot find the certainty of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we look at him apart from the Son."
(Calvin)
- m. this is central to the meaning of the new covenant, in Christ God chooses for himself a whole people

4. The Corporate Election of the Church

- a. since the church has inherited many of the terms, categories and promises God gave to Israel as the elect people of God, it follows that the church is an elect people
(Rom 2:28; 9:25; 11:17 – 24; Gal 6:16; Phil 3:3etc.)
- b. if the church is the nation that inherits the kingdom belonging to Israel, then the church must now be the elect community
(Matt 21:43)
- c. this is confirmed by the numerous corporate metaphors used to describe the church: the body of Christ, the temple, the bride, the people of God etc.
(1Cor 12:12 – 27; Eph 1:22 – 23; 1Cor 3:16 – 17; 6:19 – 20; Rev 19:7; 21:9; 2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1; Gal 3:26 - 29; 6:10 etc.)
- d. the corporate election language of the Old Testament is directly appropriated to the church
(1 Peter 2:9 cf. Ex 19:5 – 6; Deut 7:6; 10:15; Isa 43:20 (LXX); 61:6)
- e. a congregation can be identified as elect
(1 Peter 5:13; 2 John 1,13)
- f. God is able to choose a company with certain characteristics who constitute the church
(1 Cor 1: 27 – 28; James 2:5)
- g. a group of people appears chosen to/responds to the gospel call
(Acts 13:48; 2 Thess 2:13; Tit 1:1; Heb 9:15; 1Peter 1: 1-2; 2 Peter 1:3,10; Jude 1)
- h. groups are appealed to respond to the gospel
(Acts 2:39; 3:17ff; 2 Cor 5:20; 1Thess 1:4 – 10 etc)
- i. the *church* is chosen in Christ in eternity; the whole framework of the Ephesians epistle bears this out
(Eph 1:4; 2:12, 16 etc.)
- j. this indicates that the frame of reference of the New Testament doctrine of election is not individualistic but inclusive or organic
- k. this finds its broadest expression in Paul’s use of Adam – Christ typology
(Rom 5:12 - 21; 1 Cor 15: 22)
- l. what is in mind is a solidarity between the “one” and the “many”
(Rom 12:12; 1 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:16 etc.)

5. Election is of Grace

- a. the election of Jesus to *be* the Christ is wholly dependent on the power of God. “As Abraham gets a son by divine miracle, Israel by a divine creative action gets Jesus out of virgin soil.” (Daane)
- b. God is the subject of election
(Rom 8:28 – 38; 2 Thess 2:13)
- c. election is a divine prerogative which creates its own object
(Rom 9: 1 –24; Gal 1:15)
- d. this creation occurs in Christ
(Eph 2:10,15)
- e. that the Gentiles are now included in the people of God is a supernatural (unnatural) phenomenon that surpasses the exclusive election of Israel
(Rom 11:17 – 24)
- f. the basis of God’s election is grace
(Rom 11:5; 2 Tim 1:9)
- g. this is emphasised by the eternal nature of God’s choice
(Acts 15:16 –18; Eph 1:4; Rev 13:8; 17:8)
- h. foreknowledge as a foundation of election seems to be a knowledge of persons as such, not of properties
(Rom 8:29; 11:2; 1 Peter 1:2 cf. 1 Peter 1:20)
- i. this means personal effort and status are irrelevant
(Rom 9:30; 11:6; 1 Cor 1:27 – 28)

6. The Purpose of Election

- a. the dominant purpose of election is Christlikeness
(Rom 8:29)
- b. this means sonship
(Rom 9:24 – 26; 1 John 3: 1- 3)
- c. the goal of election is holiness
(Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; Eph 1:4; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 4:7; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:15; 2:10
Cf. Eph 5:27; Col 1:22 - 23)
- d. this effects an eternal witness of the church to the love of God
(Eph 1:22; 2:7; 3:10 etc.)
- e. the corporate election of the church, Jew and Gentile, is the concrete sign and reflection in history of God’s plan to unite everything in the cosmos under the headship of Christ
(Eph 1:10)

- f. the elect community witnesses to the fact of the election of Jesus as the Christ, and so calls the world to faith in him
- g. that to which it witnesses by its existence is the passing away of the old reality in Christ and the birth of the new creation
- h. the church is the mirror of the mirror of election, it is called to mediate Christ, this is its inner reality
- i. this means service to the whole of humanity, to be a blessing for the nations

7. Election and Suffering

- a. “the elect” in the Synoptics are usually referred to in the context of tribulation (which is eschatological)
(Matt 24:22,24,31, Mark 13:20,22,27; Luke 18:7)
- b. they are those who are covered by God’s protection
(Luke 18:7)
- c. others may fall away but the elect endure
(Matt 25:10,24,31)
- d. this element of preservation and perseverance is also found in John
(John 6:37; 15:16 (2); 17:2,11 – 12)
- e. to be called to be a Christian is, in the epistles, to be called to suffer
(Phi 1:29; 1Pet 2:21)
- f. the Apocalypse sees the saints as “called and chosen and faithful”
(Rev 17:14)
- g. the election of Paul is associated with suffering
(Acts 8:16; 1 Cor 4:9,13; 2 Cor 11:23, 27; 2 Tim 1:12; 2:9 – 10; 3:11)
- h. many of these passages link Paul’s suffering as an apostle to the salvation of the elect
(2 Tim 2:10 etc.)

8. Implications of a Corporate View of Election

- a. one is chosen into a way of life that is essentially communal
- b. the assertion that individuals are chosen in eternity is abstract and empty without a corporate human reality in which they are elected
- c. it is the *community* which comprehends the fullness of the love of Christ, the joy of the individual is found in communion
(Eph 3:14 – 21)
- d. this negates the individualistic and consumerist orientation of western Christianity

- e. life in the church as the elect community of God is set by immersion in the Father – Son relationship of unconditional love and not by social contract
- f. the unity of the church is a fact and not a goal
- g. violation of this unity has severe consequences
(Acts 5; 1 Cor 11: 29; cf. Josh 7)
- h. to be a Christian is to be called into service, to be a co – labourer with God in community formation
(1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 6:1)

C: WHAT IS CHURCH?

The English word ‘church’ derives from the Greek word *kuriakon* which means ‘belonging to the Lord’. Cf. German, *kirche*, Dutch, *kerke*, Celtic, *kirk*.

1. The Old Testament Background to “ Church ”

1. Two main Hebrew words are used for this:

- a. *edah*: this means the congregation or the whole nation of Israel, whether assembled or not. This is a use concentrated in the Pentateuch (though not in Deuteronomy). It is virtually always translated as *synagoge* in the L.X.X.
- a. *qahal* : appears about 123 times, is translated in the L.X.X. by *ekklesia* about 73 times and by *sunagoge* 35 times. In the older parts of the Old Testament the word can be used of any number of people assembling for any purpose (Gen 49:6; Num 22:4; Pss 26:5; 89:6etc.). It is however most commonly used of Israel being assembled for a specific purpose (Ex 16:1; Num 10:3; 14:5; 16:2 etc.). In some passages (which include post – exilic texts) the reason for assembly is to worship Yahweh (Mic 2:5; Joel 2:16; Pss 22:23; 35:18; 40:9,10; 89:5; 107:32; 149:1). In Deuteronomy *qahal* is used exclusively to denote the congregation of Israel when it is assembled to hear the Word of God at Mt. Sinai (Deut 5:22; 9:10; 10:4; 18:16) and of the worshipping community thereby constituted (23: 3, 4, 9). The theological entity of Israel as the people of God is in mind.

In Ezekiel, a priestly writing, *edah* is completely absent. *Qahal* takes on the same meaning as *edah* , the covenant people of Israel (16:40; 17:17; 23:3, 46,47; 32:22,23; 38:4,7,13,16).

In Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah both terms appear. However when the author is not using sources *qahal* is consistently used in a sense which would earlier have been conveyed by *edah*

(2 Chron 23:1 –3; 29:20, 23,28,30,31). The word *qahal* is prominent in events where ‘all Israel’ gathers, such as the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem, the construction of the temple, Hezekiah’s reforms. The intent is to depict Israel as a worshipping community, not just a mere gathering.

Other examples of the use of *qahal* where the idea of assembling is missing are Ezra 2:64; Neh 5:13; 7:66; 13:1). Israel in these texts is a religio – political entity.

It can be concluded that *qahal* and *edah* have lost their distinctive meanings in Deuteronomy and post exilic texts.

2. The Greek translation of the Old Testament never uses the word *ekklesia* (which appears about one hundred times) for *edah*, but uses it exclusively for *qahal*. *Qahal* however is sometimes translated as *sunagoge* Most of the uses refer to Israel as assembled, but there are some cases where the religious community of Israel seems to be meant (Deut 9:10; 18:16; 23: 1ff; 31: 30). Other examples of this use seem to be Ezra 2:64; 10:8; Neh 7:66; 8:17). Thirty three texts in 1 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles refer to Israel as a worshipping community.

3. Examples from the L.X.X. where the meaning of *ekklesia* and *synagoge* seem to run together include Deuteronomy 5:22; Proverbs 5:14 and Psalm 40:11f. If these words can stand in near synonymous parallel it indicates that overlap in the meaning of the Hebrew originals *qahal* and *edah* was occurring.

4. The writers of the New Testament therefor found in *ekklesia* a word which could denote both a simple gathering (the classical Greek use; cf. Acts 19:32,39,41) and the people of God who assemble.

2. The Term “ Church “ in the New Testament

1. The English “church” is a translation of the Greek *ekklesia* .

2. This term appears 114 times in the New Testament, mainly in Paul, Acts and Revelation.

3. The reason why this term is used in the New Testament is that by this time *sunagoge* had become identified as the meeting/meeting place of a local Jewish community. The use of *ekklesia* marked out the Christians as a community distinct from Judaism.

4. The Uses of *ekklesia* in the New Testament.

1. Of local churches

a. mentioned by name

(Acts 8:1; 11:22; 13:1; Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; Rev 2 – 3 ,etc.)

b. not mentioned by name

(Acts 11:26; 12:1,5; 14:27; 15:3; Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 6:4; 15:4,5,12,23; 3 John 9,10; etc)

c. in the plural

(Acts 15:41; 16:5; 1 Cor 16:1,19; Gal :1:2,22; cf. 1 Thess 2:14; Rev :1:4; 22:16, etc)

d. most of these are references to the churches of a region.

e. in the singular of Christians spread throughout a region greater than a city (Acts 9:31)

e. there are wider expressions; especially “ all the churches of the Gentiles “ (Rom 16:16); “of the saints” (1 Cor 14:33), “of God” (1 Cor 11:16 cf. 1 Cor 7:17 etc.)

f. the use of the plural in this way suggests that there is no notion of a collective regional or national church (Gal 1:13 refers to the whole church as it first existed only in Jerusalem, or of persecuted believers *as* they assembled.)

- g. the focus on meeting is particularly clear in 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 11:18;14:19,28,34,35)
2. Of the entire church
- a. this appears to be Paul's use in Ephesians (1:22,23; 3:10,21;5:23,25,27,29,32) and Colossians (1:18, 24) and in 1 Cor 10:32; 12:28. Acts 20:28 uses the same language.
 - b. this could refer to the whole body of Christ scattered throughout the world: the universal church
 - c. alternatively the context in Ephesians and Colossians is the heavenly sphere where Christ is raised and the church is with him (Eph 1:3, 2:5 – 6; Col 1:15 – 20, 3:1 – 3)
 - d. this finds support from other places in the New Testament
 - i. the children of the “ heavenly Jerusalem” (Gal 4:25 – 27)
 - ii. the membership of the heavenly community (Phil 3:19)
 - iii. the assembly of the “ heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb 12:18 – 24)
 - e. this however cannot be the exclusive reality of the universal church
 - i. other contexts do not have a heavenly dimension
 - ii. the focus is on the state of believers and not their gathering
3. Of house churches
- a. these are mentioned in a number of locations (Rom 16:5; 1Cor 16:19;Col 4:15;Philemon 2)
 - b. on occasion this seems to be the complete church in the city
 - c. in the case of Romans 16:13 the qualification “whole church “ implies that smaller gatherings of believers existed cf. 1 Cor 14:23
 - d. this could be thought of as *part* of the church in a place , so that the whole church is formed when the different household units come together
 - e. no text refers to the “churches “ of a certain city
 - f. in line with the above points however:
 - i. if church is assembly of the people of God, then the house churches are fully churches
 - ii. each of the churches is also an earthly manifestation of the eternal and heavenly church which gathers around Christ
 - iii there is no such a thing as the church *of* Ephesus or the church *of* Rome, the church is not constituted by a place but by the people who gather in a place. It is not the case of the church in one place as distinct from the church in another, but of the one church present in both places. Cf. The church *in* Ephesus or *in* Rome.

4. Conclusions: Church as Community

- a. there is one community of God that can be expressed in many ways: in a household, in a city, in a region, or all believers on earth.
- b. believers are the *ekklesia* of God because they share together the life of Christ
- b. the church is not constituted institutionally or by any other means than the action of God
- c. it would be best to translate the Greek word *ekklesia* as ‘community’ rather than as ‘church’. This more accurately conveys that the *ekklesia* involves more than congregating (in a building) and can refer to the whole Christian community, the Christian community in a particular location, or to the community as it meets together.

4. Images and Metaphors of the Church

1. Introduction

Like the Old Testament, the New Testament uses numerous images of the church. Apart from those considered below these include a vine (John 15:1ff; 1 Cor 7:9 cf. Isa 5), an olive tree (Rom 11: 13 – 24), a flock (Matt 26:31; Luke 2:8; John 10:16; Acts 20:28 –29; 1 Peter 5: 2 – 3 cf. Jer 23; Ezek 34), a lampstand (Rev 1:12 – 20 cf. Ex 25: 31 -40), citizens (Gal 6:10; Eph 2:19). The plurality and diversity of images conveys the multifaceted nature of the church under various aspects of its relationship with God. Many of these pictures are derived from the Old Testament. The most important images are discussed below

[Related to this, but distinct, are titles of the church. (Considered apart from the simple and most common description ‘the church’.) These include ‘the churches of Christ’ (Rom 16:16 only); the ‘church of God’ (1 Cor 1:2; six uses in all); ‘the church of the firstborn’ (Heb 12:23 only); the ‘church of the living God’ (1 Tim 3:15 only); the ‘churches of God’ (1 Thess 2:14 only); the ‘church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and in Christ’ (2 Thess 1:1 only).]

2. The People/Household of God.

1. It has a rich Old Testament background (Ex 15;13,16; Num 14:8, Deut 32:9 –10; Isa 62:4; Jer 12: 7 – 10; Hos 1:9 – 10; 2:23 etc.)
2. It is a common expression in the New Testament where it takes up a fuller meaning than in the Old and is expressly connected to the Fatherhood of God as revealed in Jesus. The church is “ the household of God ”(Acts 15:7 –11, 14- 18; Rom 9:24 – 26; 2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1; Gal 3:26 –29; 6:10; Eph 1:3 –7; 2:14 –22; 1 Tim 3:15; Heb 3:6; 10:21; 1 Pet 2:5,9)
3. This implies sharing in all that Jesus knows of the Father, an internal relationship (Col 3:1ff) which ensures access to God (Eph 2:18) and makes the church the dwelling of God (2 Cor 6;16; Eph 2;22 etc). (See also the material on the temple below)
4. It is reflected in the familial language Christians use of one another: “brothers”, ”sisters”, “fathers” etc.
5. In the later parts of the New Testament (1 Tim 3:15) it has connotations of location in the world, good management, prescribed ordering, the respect of outsiders and so on. This represents a more established situation.

3. The Body of Christ.

1. This has no obvious Old Testament analogies.
2. It is a dominant feature of Paul’s ecclesiology (1 Cor 12:12 – 27; Eph 1:22- 23; 4:15 – 16; Col 1:18; 2:19).
3. In 1 Corinthians the unity in diversity of the church is emphasised, with mutual dependence and interconnectedness. Christ is not viewed as the head of the body.

4. In the Ephesian and Colossians passages, which refer to the universal church, Jesus is the head and the church is like the rest of the body. This implies rule, as the head Jesus rules over all (Col 2:9 – 10). The church exists to do the will of Christ and to be his presence in the world. The church as the body of Christ cannot be an invisible or mystical reality but must reveal in concrete form and behaviour the character of her head.
5. The reasons for the "use" of the body image appear to be as follows:
 - a. The church participates in the life of Christ. To be "the body of Christ" is to be taken up into the eschatological character of the Christ event. In the new reality constituted by the humiliation and exaltation of Christ a depth of relatedness impossible for the old people of God is actualised, this is communicated by the "body" language of the New Testament.
 - b. By the action of the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead the people of God are made alive with him (Eph 2:5). The earthly – historical humanity becomes the body of Christ only by means of his abiding presence, Jesus himself is the essence of the church.
 - c. As the church cannot be without Christ, so Christ cannot be without the church. Jesus is the Christ not by being in communion with the Father alone, but because in the plan of God he is intrinsically related to the church in the Spirit. Christ is a relational reality who exists "for us". To think of Jesus as a reality separate from his body the church would be to conceive of him as an individual and not as a person. (This is also taken up in the "bride" metaphor in the New Testament.)
 - d. It is because Christ is the Saviour of the church that it is his body (Eph 5:25 – 30). The new humanity of the second Adam is so centred, dependent and subjugated to him through his saving acts that it may be called his "body". (Note the analogies to Eve being of the body of Adam, his unfaithfulness to her in the Garden of Eden and her disobedience to the Word of God she had heard from him.)

4. The Bride of Christ

1. The Old Testament considers Israel to be betrothed to Yahweh (Isa 54: 5; Ezek 16; Hosea).
2. This is most explicitly a Pauline image (2 Cor 11: 1 –2; Eph 5: 23 – 32). It is however picked up in those pictures of the church being united to God as bride to groom (Rev 19:9; 21:2).
3. The archetypal marriage is not Adam and Eve but Christ and the church. Paul designates this as a 'mystery'. In Ephesians this is something previously hidden but now revealed (Eph 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 6:19).
4. What is conveyed by the metaphor is intimacy, unity and the subordination of the church to Christ. She is to have no other primary affection than Christ.

5. The ‘presentation’ of the church to the groom is not something solely reserved for the future but is an example of realised eschatology, in the present time the church is united to Jesus by the action of Word and sacrament.

5. The Temple of the Spirit

1. The temple image has its origins in the Old Testament. The purpose of a temple in the ancient world was to be a place where the divine being would be worshipped and where he would dwell. (The temple is God’s house, 2 Chron 6:1- 2; 7:16 etc.)
2. In the New Testament the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16 – 17; 6:19 – 20; Eph 2:19 – 22; 1 Peter 2:5).
3. It is the nature of the Spirit to immerse believers in the Father - Son relationship. He constitutes us in this way, as baptised members of the body (1 Cor 12:13), to be the children of God and brothers and sisters first of Christ and then of one another (Rom 8:29; Heb 2: 11- 12,17).
4. The Spirit does this because as the one who empowered Christ to go to the cross (Heb 9:14) and who raised him from the dead (Rom 1:4; 8:11; 2 Tim 3:16) he is the actualiser of the eschatological age (for in his bringing Christ for us history becomes eschatology). It is into this reality that the church is baptised in the Spirit (Acts 2:17).
5. The nature of the communion of the church with Christ in the Spirit is such that no relational distance exists, to be bridged by grace or something thought of as external to the life of God himself.
6. To be indwelt by the Holy Spirit means that the body of Christ is called to live in a holy way both in the world and in relation to each other, this is the context of the temple passages in 1 Corinthians and the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 :22- 23.
7. The Spirit’s presence unites us to Jesus the one true worshipper of the Father, so that together we worship him “ in Spirit and in truth “ (John 4:23- 24).

D: THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1. The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament.
 - a. The primary term is *malak*, which means “to be king” or ‘to rule “. It has several cognates.
 - b. *Melukah* refers to “kingship” or the quality of ruling. This is referred to Yahweh twice (Ps 22:28; Obad 21).
 - c. *Malcuth* means “royal honour,” “power,” “dominion,” in the early books of the Old Testament it refers to the rule of the king, in the later parts, where most of the occurrences are, it moves in meaning to the concept of realm. It is used for Yahweh’s universal (Ps 103:19) and eternal dominion (Ps 145:13).
 - d. *Mamlakah* is the most common cognate. It means “right to rule “ and “realm ruled “. God rules by right over Israel (2 Chron 13:8) and over the world (1 Chron 29:11).
 - e. The right to rule and realm ruled are two poles of the one basic concept. Israel is of central significance to God’s kingdom, but one day all the nations will confess God as King (Zech 14:9,16).
2. Jesus and the Kingdom of God.
 - a. The main term in the New Testament is *basileia*, it means the state of being king, the nature of kingship. It thus refers to “dignity ” or “power ”.
 - b. Eighty per cent of the uses are in the Synoptic Gospels, particularly in the phrase *basileia tou theou*. This was the topic of Jesus’ preaching (Matt 4:23; Mark 1:15; Acts 1:3).
 - c. In the teaching of Jesus the kingdom of God is both a present eschatological reality, something which is ‘at hand’, (Matt 11:2 – 26; Mark 1:14 – 15; Luke 4:21; 17:20, and a future event (Matt 6:6 – 9; Luke 21:31; 22: 16 - 18).
 - d. The kingdom is both a realm over which God reigns and the active ruling of God in power.
 - e. The latter is especially related to the overthrow of the power of the devil (Matt 12:28 –29; Luke 10:9,18,20) in the ministry of Jesus.
 - f. It is an urgent matter of radical decision that people enter the kingdom (Mark 9:47; Matt 21:31 –32).

3. The Relationship between the Church and the Kingdom of God.
 - a. The church is not the kingdom. Jesus and the apostles preached the kingdom and not the church (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31). It would not make sense to pray “your church come “. The kingdom however encompasses all over which God rules, not just those who recognise his authority.
 - b. The kingdom power of God creates the church, for as people enter into the kingdom by new birth they enter into the fellowship of the church. The church is the product of the kingdom.
 - c. The church witnesses to the kingdom by preaching the gospel. (See under “1. “ above and Matt 24:14).
 - d. The church is the instrument of the kingdom as the followers of Jesus preach the good news, cast out demons, heal the sick, care for the poor and so on (Matt 10:8; Luke 10:17 etc.). As it lives out the life of Christ the church is the sign and anticipation of the kingdom on earth.
 - e. The church is the custodian of the kingdom, as it has been given the keys of the kingdom (Matt 16:19).
 - f. Both kingdom and church are eschatological realities. In its participation “ in Christ “ the church shares in the fullness of the reality of the End which has already come in Jesus. This is manifested by the transformation of human lives. Now this happens in a real but partial way (Matt 25:34; 1 Cor 6:9 -10), when Jesus returns for the church this will be complete (1 Cor 15:24 -28). (“Already” and “ not yet “.)
In the meantime, the ascension means that the church must have historical shape and form. “the Church is the sphere where through the Spirit the new world breaks into the old, the arena within the limitations of the old where God acts freely upon men through Word and Spirit ...the sphere within the time – form of this world where God and man meet in love and man is translated into the Kingdom of god’s dear Son.” (T.F. Torrance).
 - g. The mystery of the kingdom of which Jesus (Mark 4:11) spoke is revealed in the manifestation of the gospel as the mystery of God’s plan in Christ (Rom 16:25 – 26; Eph 3:3 –6; Col 2:2). Since Jesus is the King (Matt 25:34; Luke 1:33; Rev 17:14; 19:16) he is the full and final key to the kingdom rule of God which has been completely exerted in his saving work. This is why the apostles preach Christ (rather than the kingdom or the church), for he is the reality of both.

Implications:

1. No particular ecclesiastical reality can be identified with the kingdom of God. This is true both for the claims of the Roman Catholic Church and various sectarian groups.
2. All forms of the church must be partial, temporal and culturally conditioned, for the kingdom has not yet come.
3. This encourages humility in the place of triumphalism, which is the temptation where the church is confused with the kingdom. Participation of the church in the kingdom is only through its priesthood, its ministry as suffering servant. (John 16:33; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 1:9; 12:11)

4. The church is a dynamic and pioneering reality, drawing its life from eternity, unable to be constrained by any earthly structure.
4. The Nature of the Church: The Church and Israel
 - a. Israel understood her life to be constituted by the covenantal relationship instituted by God. This relates back to God's promises to Abraham, and not to the covenant at Sinai. The Law and the cult were introduced to regulate the already existing relationship.
 - b. Jesus' institution of the new covenant is the fulfilment and not the abrogation or replacement of the Old Testament promises to Israel (Luke 22:20; Heb 8:8 – 10).
 - c. Jesus is the true Israel
 1. He fulfils the prophecies spoken to Israel in the Old Testament. For example, he receives the gifts of Gentiles (Matt. 2: 11) predicted to Zion (Isa. 60: 1-6), and he is the one called out of Egypt (Matt. 2: 15 = Hos. 11: 1).
 2. He applies to himself Old Testament texts related to Israel. For example, his (faithful) use of Deuteronomy 6-8 in Matthew 4: 1-11 and his use of Israel's national lament (Matt. 27: 46 cf. Ps.22: 1).
 - d. Israel's rejection of Jesus is anticipated (Matt.23: 29-32) and means the formation of a new people of God (Matt.21:23-22:14).
 - e. Jesus is the heir of all God's promises. He is the Son of the woman (Gen 3:15), the "Seed of Abraham" (Gen 12:1 – 3), and the "Son of David" (2 Sam 7:12 –16).
 - f. The gift of the Spirit ushers in participation in the life of Christ through the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. This was an eschatological reality which could not exist until Jesus had:
 - a. Fulfilled the law by his perfect obedience and faith (Rom 10:4; Heb 12:1).
 - b. Taken away the curse of the law by bearing its penalty for all (Gal 3:13).
 - c. Risen to new life in glory.
 - g. Pentecost was not the beginning of an entirely new phase of salvation but the renewal of the people of God.
 - h. Old Testament terms applied to Israel are transferred to the church. The language of priesthood and election (Exodus 19: 5-6), the imagery of the temple (Ezek. 40-48), is fulfilled in the church (1 Peter 2: 5,9). God's people (Hos 2:23) are the Christian community (1 Pet. 2: 10). Paul follows this course. Words addressed to Israel in the Old Testament are cited to Christians (2 Cor. 6: 2). Those who are in union with Jesus comprise the new Israel of God (Gal 3:29; 4:21; Rom 15:8). This is a relational reality that exists for all who have been inwardly circumcised (Rom 2:28 -29) and thus share the faith of Abraham (Rom 4:11 –12; 9:6 -8), inheritance is by promise and not ethnic descent (Gal. 3: 24-29; Rom 9:25).
 - i. The promises concerning the inheritance of Abraham (Genesis 17:8) are transferred to the Christian community. Peter takes the word 'inheritance', which generally in the Old Testament referred to the promised land (e.g. Psalm 105: 11), and uses it to refer to the Christian's inheritance in heaven (1 Peter 1: 3-5). Hebrews speaks about the 'rest' which had been promised to Israel when they settled in the promised land under Joshua, but the 'rest' now means all that Christians are invited to enjoy in their present experience and in heaven (Hebrews 3-4).

Even for Abraham the promised land was only a symbol of the ‘better country’, the heavenly country, God’s ultimate goal for his people (Hebrews 11: 8-16). Paul says as much when he declares that God promised to Abraham and his descendants not ‘the land’ but ‘the world’ (Rom. 4: 13).

- j. Believing Jews and Gentiles together make up the new humanity which exists only “in Christ” (Eph 2:11 –19).

E: The Dimensions of the Church

1. Recognising the Church

- a. this question has forced itself upon the church since earliest times; the epistles abound with references to “false apostles” (2 Cor 11:13), “false brothers” (2 Cor 11:26; Gal 2:4)”, false teachers” (2 Pet 2:1) ,those who have “gone out” (1 John 2:19) and so on.
- b. the classic Protestant approach is that of Luther: the church is found where there is a proper preaching of the gospel and a proper administration of the sacraments.
- c. the classic Roman Catholic position is that of the 4 notes of the church in the Nicene Creed: the church is “one, holy, catholic and apostolic”.
- d. these 2 positions can in fact be combined in terms of the presence of Christ in the Word:
 - a. Jesus gathers the church to himself through the spoken word and the gospel sacraments/ordinances.
 - b. The church is holy because through the gospel it is one with the holiness of Christ and will be presented holy and blameless before him (John 13:10; 15:3; 1 Cor 1:30; 6:11; Eph 5:25 – 26; Col 1:22; 1 Thess 3:13).
 - c. The church is catholic because it proclaims the saving message for all humanity which knows no boundaries of race, gender, class etc. (Rom 1:15- 16; Gal 3:28) and the gospel is eternal (Rev14:6).
 - d. The church is apostolic because it is built on the foundation of the gospel revealed and proclaimed by apostles and prophets (Rom 1:1ff; 15:16ff; 1 Cor 1:17; 15:1ff; Gal 2:7; Eph 2:20 etc.).
 - e. the classical approach to this question is in terms of the visible and invisible church:
 1. This distinction is introduced in order to emphasise that the church is not identical with any visible organisation, such as the Roman Catholic Church. Traditional Catholicism saw the true church as identical to those who were in tangible communion with the Pope.
 2. The invisible or spiritual dimension of the church refers to the church’s relationship with God through Christ in the Spirit. Here it is completely one. There is a mystery about this element of the church’s life. This can be related to the invisible (except to faith) eschatological destiny of the church as the new creation.
 3. The visible aspect is the church as it is open to human investigation. This could be put in terms of the church as a sociological reality.
 4. The two aspects are not identical, but this does not imply that there are “two churches”.
 5. The emphasis on the distinction is to keep in mind that not all those which claim to be part of the true church are so.
 - a. Jesus examines the church as well as individuals (1Thess 2:4; Rev 2:23)
 - b. there may be those inside the assembly who do not really belong to it (1 Cor 5:13; 2 Tim 2:20; 1 John 2:19). This may be so in terms of faith and conduct.

6. There may be unrecognised true believers (1 Ki 19:18).
7. There are degrees of purity in the church.
8. The tension between the theological reality of the church and its manifest life cannot be resolved in this age by reorganisation or discipline; it will remain until the time when God makes all things new.

2. The Oneness of the Church

1. The unity of the church is grounded in the oneness of God as trinity

- a. that there can only be one God is a basic element of biblical teaching (Deut 6:4; 1 Cor 8:6 etc.)
- b. as such there can only be one people, one bride, one body, one temple, one flock and so on
- c. the language of the New testament affirms that the church is essentially one; a unity which has been created by the work of Christ (Eph 2: 11 – 22; 4:4 –6 cf. Jer 32:39; Ezek 11:18;37:15 – 24)
- d. to believe that the church can be essentially divided is to be that Christ is divided (1 Cor 1:13)
- e. the church is one because Jesus is one and he is the content of the gospel (Rom 1:3 – 4; 15:19; 1 Cor 9:12; 15:3 – 8; 2 Cor 2:12; 9:13; 10:14 etc.).
- f. in terms of the prayers of Jesus, what is imparted to the church is a share in the relational unity of the Father and the Son; the oneness of the church is of the same essential order as that between the Father and the Son as God (John 17:20 –23 cf. 11:41 - 42)
- g. Paul correlates the unity of the church to common possession of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:30; Eph 4:3,6)
- h. the Spirit creates unity not by imposing uniformity but uniting through the sovereign distribution of diverse gifts. This is a participation in the nature of the life of God, as the Spirit has always lived as the common bond between the Father and the Son in their mutual complementarity.
- i. appeals to Christian unity therefore cannot be to create but to realise and express an existing reality (Rom 15:5 – 7; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 13: 11; Eph 4:3; Phil 1:27; 4:2; Col 2:2; 1 Pet 3:8)

2. Implications of a trinitarian perspective on Christian unity

- a. in terms of sharing in the unity of God the unity of the church is a unity of indwelling; God dwells in his people and they dwell in him (John 14:23; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:22; 3:17; Col 1:27; 3:2; 1 John 4:16)
- b. Christian unity is interpersonal not organisational, doctrinal or tradition based but relational
- c. Christian unity is characterised by continuous cooperation in relation to common goals which have to do with the salvation of the world; this in itself is a participation in the work of God viz. God's own work *as* Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Cf. Rom 5:8; 2 Cor 5:19)

- d. Christian unity preserves intact our personal identities and properties. Oneness does not entail confusion of identity any more than does the oneness of the persons of the trinity.
- e. Christian unity involves mutual interdependence whereby identity is given by positive relationships

(Cf. John 5:17,19 – 23)
- f. Christian unity involves mutual self giving

(John 5:19; 13:14 – 15; 1 Cor 9:19f; 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 2: 5 – 8)
- g. Christian unity involves suffering, this is a sharing in the unity between humanity and God
forged in the passion of Christ
(2 Cor 1 :5; Eph 3:13; Col 1:24)
- h. this suffering is contingent upon and creative of humility where the concerns of others are elevated above our own; this is a sharing of the sufferings of Christ
(Phil 2: 1 – 11; 3: 10)

3. The importance of Manifest Unity

- a. the essential oneness of the church increases the importance of visible unity
- b. this is clear by the strength and frequency of the injunctions listed above and the positive tone to displays of unity in the New Testament
(Acts 2:44, 46 ; 4:32 – 37; 1 Thess 4:9 – 10 etc.)
- c. failure to display unity has had the most serious consequences for the history of the development of western civilisation: Enlightenment thinkers e.g. Descartes, Locke, Kant wrote against the background of religious wars and sought a new foundation for peace and progress in rationality, prosperity or morality.
- d. this can be understood in terms of spiritual warfare: the universal Fatherhood of God (Eph 4:6) is practically denied by the manifest disunion of the church. Thus the eternal wisdom of God in reconciling all to himself is not made plain to the principalities and powers in the heavenly realms (Eph 3:10). They are therefore strengthened in their rebellion against his authority as their only true Father (Eph 3:14 -15).
- e. the progress of the gospel is hindered because unbelievers are less able to see the reflected glory of Christ in his church, which is his image. The blinding of the minds of the lost by the devil continues (1 Cor 3: 21 – 23; 11:7; 2 Cor 4:4).
- f. since the attack of the spirits is upon humans, and most especially those who bear the name of Christ and accept the gospel, this conflict ultimately relates to the question of the identity of Jesus, is he the Son of the Father who has objectively reconciled the world to himself?
- g. the recognition of Jesus as sent by the Father is correlated to the manifest unity = visible reconciliation of his people

(John 17: 21 –23)

3. One Church Gathered around Christ

- a. Jesus taught that he would gather the flock of God to himself (John 10:16)
- b. this is Paul's perspective in Ephesians and Colossians (see above),it is also that of the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 12:18 – 24)
- c. the Apocalypse conceives of a heavenly assembly around the exalted Lamb (Rev 5; 7:9ff; 14:1 –5)
- d. these teach us that the unity of the church is not a property it possesses in its own right but is something which is realised through the saving relationship which she enjoys with Jesus. He is the origin and reality of her oneness.
- e. since the whole Jesus meets with each local assembly (Matt 18:20), the fullness of what it means to be the one church is present in every place

4. Divisions in the Church

- a. as noted above, the only basis in the New Testament for the differentiation between churches is locality
- b. grounds of ethnicity, culture, class, age, education etc. are nowhere regarded as reasons for Christian gatherings
- c. to make these a basis for unity would be to deny the reconciliation and the new humanity which has been effected in Christ (Eph 2:14ff)
- d. the unity which the church enjoys is one of participation in Christ's relationship with the Father, as such it is an eschatological unity of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17) where all divisive elements have been taken away
- e. the universal church does not constitute a structure over and above the local churches, nor does the presence of house churches in a city imply separation in a locality, the distinct meetings are only for purposes of practicality, the gathering of the whole church images and actualises the communion of all Christians in a city
- f. it is impossible to conceive of the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the temple of God and so on in the plural

5. Grounds for Separation in the Church?

- a. this is to be distinguished from cases involving individual people which arise in the circumstances of church discipline
- b. the only grounds for organised group separation in the New Testament would seem to be when the central truth of the gospel is denied (Gal 1: 6 – 10; 1 John 2: 18 – 19)

- c. such bodies would in fact not be true churches at all, so are not examples of separation or division from the church
 - d. the existence of rival Christian “churches” does not appear until the second century. The Church Father Irenaeus put forth the prevailing principle; “No reformation able to be effected by them will be of great enough importance to compensate for the damage arising from their schism.”
6. Denominations
- 1. There are arguments for the view that denominations should be accepted as regular forms of “ church”
 - a. The Spirit is free to raise up structures as he wills.
 - b. The differences between denominations are not matters of indifference. Christians must be free to worship according to their conscience as shaped by the Bible.
 - c. The origin of denominations is a godly response to sin in preexisting church institutions. Denominations are not sects but by their very name “denomination” indicated that the true church of God was wider than themselves.
 - d. Since no church has a complete grasp of divine truth, the true church of Christ cannot be fully represented by any single ecclesiastical institution.
 - e. The history of denominations shows that they can be an effective sign of Christ’s presence.
 - f. The denominations provide a vehicle whereby Christians divided by location, language and other differences may cooperate.
 - g. Paul can speak of “ the churches of the Gentiles “ (Rom 16:4; cf. 16:16; 1 Cor 14:33). This wider usage makes it possible to speak, by analogy, of Christians united together by a common heritage and doctrinal confession as a distinct Christian community, that is a church.
 - h. Even if we do not find something corresponding to denominations in the New Testament, we find supra –congregational links, like that between Paul and his congregations, the work of Timothy and Titus, and the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) as precursors of such structures.
 - i. Differences of opinion regarding the outward form of the church are inevitable. We cannot hope for complete reconciliation within the church until the time of eschatological fulfillment.

2. There are reasons to dispute the above arguments.
 - a. In scripture, any sort of division is regarded negatively (1 Cor 1: 10ff.; Eph 4:4 –6; cf. 1 Cor 3:3 –4; Gal 5:19 – 20; Jude 19).
 - b. There are no examples in the New Testament of true believers separating on the grounds of doctrine; heretics are excluded as they do not belong to the body at all, and relational ruptures within a congregation are to be dealt with by discipline.
 - c. Christians are always exhorted to manifest the maximum cooperation and unity (Eph 4:1,3; Phil 2:1f.).
 - d. This is based on the grounds of the very nature of the gospel and of Christ himself: Paul’s ultimate retort runs “ is Christ divided? ” (1 Cor 1:13). The image conveyed by denominations is that the church is divided, if so, then Jesus cannot be persuasively communicated as the one sent by the Father (John 17:20 – 23). The call to manifest Christian unity is not a tactical maneuver but part of the salvation – history plan of God.
 - e. If the church by its essential nature partakes of the heavenly and eschatological reality of the reconciliation and new creation of all things in Christ (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:28; Eph 1:20; 2:11 – 22 etc.) then it is called upon to image something of the End in the present. That is full and complete unity.
 - f. The oneness of the church is unrelated to any structure or ecclesiastical organisation as such , the “ one world church “ already exists and is a reality in its *communion* with Christ. The basis of oneness can not be external but mutual participation in the life of God.
 - g. The local churches of the New Testament cooperate and help one another (Acts 11:28 – 30; Rom 15:25- 29; 16:1; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Cor 8:1 – 14; 13:13; Phil 4:22; 1 Thess 2:14). The council of Jerusalem is not a precedent for denominations but a matter which had to be dealt with at Jerusalem because the false teaching arose there (Acts 15:2, 24) and threatened the whole mission and express identity of the church.
 - h. There can only be one bride, one body, one temple one flock and so on. No one would seriously speak of many brides etc but by misuse the expression “ churches “ has become acceptable !!

7. The Church in the City

- a. that there is such a church is true to the New Testament description of the church in the cities of that time
(Acts 8:1; 11:22; 13:1; Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; Rev 2 – 3 ,etc.)
- b. this finds support from the imagery of the single lampstand for each city in Revelation (Rev 2 – 3)
- c. city churches appear to have a single administrative or governing body
(Acts 14:23; 20: 17; Tit 1:5)

- d. the typological association between a city and the kingdom of God is strong throughout scripture
- e. Babel represents a city in rebellion
(Gen 11)
- f. Jerusalem is an elect city inhabited by God
(1 Chron 23:25; Pss 9:11; 76:2; 132:13 – 14; Joel 3: 17, 21; Zech 8:3; etc.)
- g. God's presence and reign in Jerusalem will be complete eschatologically
(Isa 24:13; 35:10; 64:10; 65:18; Jer 3:17; Zech 8:3)
- h. in the New Testament this eschatology can be vertical as well as future: there seems to be an intimate association between the present heavenly Jerusalem and its temple and the church on earth
(Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22; Rev 3:12; 13:6)
- i. the coming heavenly Jerusalem which represents the perfection of the church cannot be discontinuous with its state upon the earth; both then and now the church is the bride of Christ , the temple of God and so on
(1 Cor 3:16; 6:18; Eph 2:21 – 22; 5:26 – 27; Rev 19:8; 21:22)
- j. the builder of the city whose foundations are Christ is God
(1 Cor3: 10 - 11 ; Eph 2:20; Heb 11:10, 16; Rev 21:14)
- k. the one communion of the saints in the Spirit must embrace present and future, heaven and earth
- l. as the glory of the nations will flow into the new Jerusalem so the glory of each nation should flow into the church in the city
(Rev 21:26)
- m. as the church gathers in unity in each city it manifests God's ultimate and eternal purpose for all creation symbolised by the new Jerusalem; it is the city set on the hill which cannot be hidden, it is the light of the world radiating Christ in the midst of the darkness etc.
- n. this is a powerful demonstration to the forces of darkness that that time of rule is coming to an end and a welcoming invitation to God to ever more intense take up habitation in the city where each church dwells

3. The Holiness of the Church

1. The Holiness of the Church is Grounded in the Holiness of God

- a. this is explicit in the Bible
(Lev 11:44; 1 Pet 1:16)
- b. each of the persons of the trinity is holy
Father (68x in O.T. ; John 17:11)
Son (Mark 1:24; Acts 3:14)
Holy Spirit (by definition)
- c. this holiness is a feature of the relationships between the persons, as are all the attributes of God
- d. since the root meaning of ‘holy’ is to be cut off or separated out, the holiness of God may be understood as totality, permanency and exclusivity of relationship. Holiness relates to the interpenetrative power of the divine relationships, or intimacy.
- e. holiness therefore is a matter of great beauty as it attributes unique worth to its object
(1 Chron 16:29; Pss 29:2; 96:9)
- f. for the church to be holy is to be called into an exclusive love relationship with God; this is embodied in covenant
- g. this holiness cannot be considered to be a property of sinful human beings as such, but only by virtue of their participation in the holiness of Christ
(Heb 7:26; 1 Cor 1:30)
- h. the cross is the place where this objectively takes place, for here humanity is cleansed from all defilement by judgement
(John 17:17 – 19; Rom 3:23 – 26)
- i. eschatologically the church will be revealed as perfectly holy
(1 Cor 1:8; Phil 1:10; Col 1:22; 1 Thess 3:13; 5:23; Rev 19:6 – 8; 21:2)

2. The Church is Called to Practical Holiness

- a. this is based on its essential identity as a holy people
(1 Cor 3:16 – 17; 2 Cor 1:1; Col 3: 1 – 3; 12; 1 Pet 2:9 – 10; 1 John 3:1- 3)
- b. its ultimate motivation is to effect the indwelling of God amongst his people
(Lev 26:12; Jer 32:38; Ezek 37:27; 1 Cor 3:16 – 17; 2 Cor 6:16 – 7:1; Col 3:12, 16; Heb 12: 9- 10; 14)
- c. that is, the imperative and motivation for holiness in the life of the church is not moralistic but
relational intimacy, holiness effects union

- d. to compromise with the world is to commit spiritual adultery
(Judges 2:17; 8:27; 1 Chron 5:25; Ps 106 :39; Ezek 6:9; 16; 23; Hos; 1 Cor 10:22; James 4:4)
- e. the people of God are therefore to come out of the world (in terms of their behaviour)
(Ezek 20:34,41; 2 Cor 6:17; 7:1; Rev 18:4)
- f. for the church to be manifestly holy is to be separated out from the world in such a way that the final destiny of humanity in relation to God is made clear
(Eph 5:8 – 14; Phil 2:15; Rev 22:11)
- g. for the church to live like this, as the epistles show (especially 1 and 2 Peter and Revelation) will involve great suffering i.e. deepening participation in the holiness of Christ

3. The Problem of Unholy People

- a. there are various ways in which the church has sought to solve this problem which seems to contradict its essential nature
- b. the first way is to exert rigorous discipline to purify the body. This approach invariably generates legalism and hypocrisy and is lacking in love
- c. the second approach is to say that the church is holy but its members are not. This traditional Catholic solution makes an artificial distinction between the body of Christ and its members.
- d. another solution is to say that part of the Christian is holy and another part is unholy. This neglects that the whole person is in relation to God.
- e. the manner of approach of the New Testament is to recognise that the people of God share a holy status which is to be expressed in an ongoing manner.
- f. This is simply to say that the best manner of promoting holiness in the church is to preach the gospel

4. The Church is Catholic

1. The Meaning of ‘Catholic’

- a. the English word “catholic” derives from the Greek *katholikos* meaning “ directed towards/embracing the whole”
- b. “catholic” therefore means universal or inclusive
- c. it does not describe any particular church group, such as the Roman Catholic Church
- d. the term does not appear in the New Testament in relation to the church
- e. historically, the term appears in the early second century as a designation of the whole church (Ignatius, *Smyrnaens* 8.2)
- f. increasingly, the description “catholic” was identified with the one orthodox church in opposition to the numerous heretical groups (Gnostics, Montanists, Marcionites, Arians etc.)
- g. the concept was employed polemically in later times to “unchurch” groups which claimed to be orthodox but failed to meet certain ecclesiastical criteria e.g. Augustine versus the Donatists, the Counter –Reformation versus Protestantism

2. Catholicity and Heresy

- a. the word *haireisis* (heresy) simply means choice
- b. as a specific content given to choice the word came to refer to deviation from the truth (Gal 5:20; Tit 3:8ff; 2 Pet 2:1)
- c. heresy is departure from the apostolic gospel concerning salvation (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6)
- d. heresy leads to a loss of the faith (1 Tim 1:9; 6:10; 2 Tim 2:18; Tit 1:16)
- e. the decisive norm for recognising heresy is the person and work of Christ (which fills out the doctrine of God)
- f. heresy is the opposite of catholicity because it denies something about the fullness of salvation wrought in Christ e.g. Docetism denies the redemption of the material world, Arianism denies that humanity has been reconciled to God

3. Catholicity and the Trinity

- a. if the attributes of the church are derived from its relationship with God then catholicity cannot be defined by geographical extension, numerical quantity, cultural variety or temporal continuity
- b. a catholicity based on the trinity defines the church in such a way that it is not seen as either uniform or fragmented
- c. the mutual indwelling or reciprocal interiority of the persons of the trinity (perichoresis) means God is a totality which is neither uniform nor made up of parts but exists as a unity in diversity
(John 7:16; 10:38; 14: 9 – 11; 17: 21)
- d. each divine person carries within itself each of the other divine persons, this is an essential element of their personhood
- e. such comprehensive mutual inclusion is the essence of catholicity cf. 2 Pet 1:4
- f. a share in this wholeness of God is granted to the church in the following way:
 1. the Spirit who is given to all Christians and who indwells them as the temple of God opens up believers to one another, to the world and to the Father and the Son. This is an extension of the eternal identity of the Spirit who has always connected the Father and the Son.
 2. the Spirit in the New Testament is predominantly the Spirit of Christ, he communicates Christ to the church. Only by being in the communion of Jesus can the church share in the inclusivity of God (John 14:20; 17:21,23,26). The incarnation is the structure which enables the impartation of the completeness of God to the church.
 - a. Christ has always been the basis for the totality/unity of creation
(John 1:3; Col 1:16 –17)
 - b. the fullness of God came to dwell bodily in Jesus (John 1:14; Col 1:19; 2:9); this happens through the gift of the Spirit (Luke 4:1; John 3:34)
 - c. the church has come to fullness in Christ
(John 1:16; Eph 1:23 ; Col 2:10)
 - d. the church is the means or medium by which Christ fills all things with himself
(Eph 3: 18 – 19; 4: 10 –13)
 - e. this is a historical process that can only be completed eschatologically. As the church becomes increasingly open to all things in God it more deeply enters the trinitarian fellowship and so becomes increasingly catholic
 - f. when the church reaches its eschatological goal (in Christ) God will be all in all
(Hab 2:14; 1 Cor 15:58; Rev 21: 3,11,22,23)

g. catholicity is a property of every congregation because the whole Christ is present in every church

4. Catholicity and the Mission of the Church

a. the topic of the mission of the church will be taken up fully in a later section (see also the notes on election)

b. that Israel had a catholic mission to the nations is taught throughout the Old Testament (Gen 35:11; 49:10; Ex 19: 5 – 6; 1 Ki 10: 24; Ezek 36: 22 – 36; Isa 2: 1 – 4; 19: 22 – 25)

c. this comes to be concentrated in Messiah (Isa 42: 1,6)

d. the mission of Jesus is catholic, in the sense that it is designed to bring salvation to the entire world (John 1:29; 3 :16 – 17; 8:12; 1 Cor 15: 27 – 28; 2 Cor 5:19; Eph 1:10; Col 1:15 –20)

e. the mission of the church is co – extensive with the salvation Jesus has wrought. It is commissioned to bring the good news to every creature, all nations and to the ends of the earth. (Matt 24:14; 28: 18 – 20; (Mark 16:16); Luke 24: 46 –47; Acts 1:8; Col 1:23)

f. it is through the church that all nations will at the End be gathered together to worship God (Rev 5:9 – 10; 7:9 ; 21: 22 – 26)

g. the form of this mission must conform to its content, this means that the basis for a triumphant theology of the church is not a theology of glory but a theology of the cross (Col 1:19 –24)

5. Implications of Catholicity

a. to belong to the catholic church is to be part of a network of relationships which transcends all exclusivity

b. this means that the identity of the church cannot be defined by class, race, language, caste, gender, wealth, education or any other ground of division that isolates human beings, for God shows no partiality (Rom 2:11; 10: 12,28,35; Gal 2:6; 3:28; Eph 6:9; Col 3:11,25; James 2:1; 1 Pet 1:7)

c. the only basis of distinction in the New Testament is the neutral one of geography

d. this does not however provide a basis for separatism on the grounds of territory e.g one must belong to the nearest local church

- e. openness to all other churches is a necessary expression of catholicity. (The criteria for which groups are actual churches involves faithfulness to the apostolic tradition. This will be developed later.)
- f. division compromises the visibility of the catholic nature of the church and diminishes its spiritual authority
- g. if each church is catholic it must contain within itself all the ministries and charismata needed for salvation
- h. as the nations will bring their wealth and glory into the new Jerusalem (the church – Rev 21: 24,26), so the church on earth must remain open for the entire natural and cultural wealth of humanity
- i. any attempt to conform the church to one particular form or cultural expression must be rejected as demonic and Babylonian
- j. catholicity is a call to both the individual and the church as a community to live a fully relational life. This entails a call to renewal. Only in this way can the mission of the church exhibit the structure of the message of salvation.

5. The Church is Apostolic

1. Apostolicity and the Trinity

- a. the English word “apostle” is derived from the Greek *apostello* meaning “to send”
- b. within the life of the trinity is an eternal movement of other - centredness which engulfs the three persons as one
- c. these are known as the trinitarian processions; the Father gives of his essence to the Son (who is “begotten”) the Father and the Son give of themselves to the Spirit (“spiration”) and the Spirit gives his life in bonding together the other divine persons
- d. the direction of these relationships flow out into the creation which is the outward expression of the inner communicative life of God
- e. the sending of the Word and the Spirit (divine missions) throughout the scripture correlates to their eternal communication of the glory of the Father
- f. this becomes explicit in the New Testament where the coming of the Word to be enfleshed means the gift of God’s own life to humanity (John 1: 14 – 16; 1 John 1: 1 –3)
- g. the Son of God is defined by virtue of his having been sent by the Father (John 3:34; 4:34; 5:23 etc., Gal 4:4; 1 John 4:9, 10,14)
- h. the Spirit is likewise sent by the Father and the Son (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:33; 1 Pet 1:12 etc.)
- i. those who are first taken up into the mission of the Godhead through the Father’s sending of the Son and the Spirit are the apostles (Matt 10:5; Mark 3:14; Luke 9:2)
- j. they continue the momentum of the Godhead into the world by being sent out in the *same manner* as Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 17:17 –18; 20:21 – 22; Acts 1 – 2 etc.)

2. Apostolicity and Authority

- a. the normative authority of the apostles derives from their association with the person of Jesus
- b. they possess the authority of eyewitnesses (Acts 1:21ff; 2 Pet 1:16f; 1 John 1:1 – 3)
- c. because of the nature of their identification with Christ, to reject their authoritative word is to reject him (1 Cor 4:1; 2 Cor 5:20; 1 Thess 4:8)

- d. there is a correspondence between the exercise of apostolic authority and what is decreed in heaven
(Matt 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23)
- e. the church is apostolic because it submits to apostolic authority. “ ‘Apostolic’ means in the discipleship, in the school, under the normative authority; instruction and direction of the apostles, in agreement with them, because listening to them and accepting their message.” (Barth)
- f. what is submitted to is not the humanity of the apostles as such, but their custodianship of the gospel which contains within it the whole saving message of Christ
(Mark 1:1; Rom 1:1,9,15; 1 Cor 1:17; 4:15; Gal 1:6ff; Eph 1:13 etc.)
- g. the gospel message is the criterion for judging the difference between true and false belief: this is a judgement concerning the relationship of persons to Christ, who is the truth
(2 Cor 11:13ff; Gal 1:8 – 9; 1 John 4:1ff; Rev 2:2; John 1:14; 14: 6; 15:26; 1 John 5:7)
- h. since the historical position of the apostles is unique, they remain for all time foundational to the life of the church
(Matt 16:13-20; Eph 2:20; Rev 21:24)

3. Apostolicity and the Mission of the Church

This material will be dealt with fully in the section on the mission of the church.

4. Apostolic Succession

- a. this has been defined by episcopal churches as a linear historical succession dependent upon physical continuity
- b. continuity with the apostles is assured by the laying on of hands in ordination by a bishop in a succession that can be traced back to the first apostles
- c. this does not operate automatically but presumes an intention to act in concert with the whole church (Hence the Roman Catholic rejection of Anglican ministries.)
- d. this understanding of succession can degenerate into a ritualistic and institutionalised form which overlooks the sovereign and free grace of the Holy Spirit
- e. the infallibility of the church is not secured by the visible or historical but by the faithfulness of God
(Rom 3:2f; Phil 1:6)
- f. succession is recognised through the confession of the church

5. Apostolic Confession

- a. this takes place when the witness of the church is in fundamental agreement with the testimony of the apostles as embodied in scripture
- b. such a confession may be embodied in creeds, preaching, prayer, evangelism etc.
- c. this is not to be construed as merely formulaic but an expression of the innermost being (Luke 6:45; Rom 10: 9 –10; Col 3: 16)
- d. the same Word which indwelled the apostles and overflowed in their testimony now indwells the members of the church and finds expression in their verbal witness
- e. it is the presence of the indwelling Christ who produces the essential continuity between the apostles and those who have believed because of their word (John 17:20)
- f. this confession is evoked by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:4; 4:8; 1 Cor 12:3; Eph 5:18 - 19 etc.)
- g. it is a confession that has to do with the name of Jesus
 1. gathering in his name (Matt 18:20)
 2. proclaiming his name (Acts 5:28)
 3. calling upon his name (Rom 10:13)
 4. baptism in his name (Acts 2:38)
- h. it is therefore concentrated in the confession that “Jesus is Lord” (Acts 2:36; 9:28; 10:36; 16:31; 28:31; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3)
- i. it is focussed on the apostolic gospel concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor 2:2; 15: 1 – 5; Gal 6:14; 1 Pet 2:6)
- j. this involves conformity to the apostolic insistence that salvation is by grace alone (Rom 3:24; Gal 2:15ff; Eph 2:8 – 9; Tit 3:7 etc.)
- k. the public and pluriform confession of faith is the constitutive mark of the church, as it is the means by which the church is formed

6. Apostolicity and Suffering

- a. the call to be an apostle cannot be separated from a call to suffer for Christ
(John 20:18 –20; Acts 5:18,40; 9:16; 20: 23 etc., 1 Pet 4:1ff, 12ff)
- b. this involves an identification with the person of Christ and his sufferings
(Phil 3:10)
- c. the willingness of the church to suffer for the cause of Christ will be evidence of its
faithfulness to the apostolic gospel
(Rev 2 –3)

F: THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH: COVENANT, COMMUNITY AND MISSION

1. The Contemporary Context

1. Historical Problems in the Western Church.

a. ecclesiocentrism

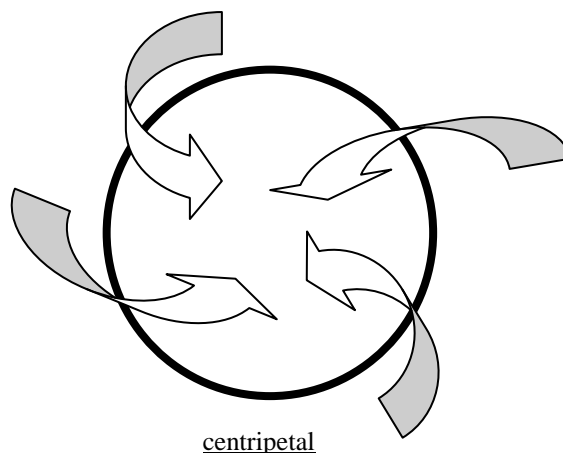
- » clericalism
- » sacramentalism
- » maintenance
- » church as gathering
- » dualism of secular and sacred

“Yes, individual ministry is encouraged, but the powerful name ‘church’ is reserved only for those activities directly sponsored by pastors and elders of local congregations. Leaders will at times preach the importance of the saints’ work. But most of what is said and done in preaching, planning and resource allocation by leaders indicates to all and sundry where the action really is and where the future really lies. This arrangement ensures that most of the momentum for ministry (and thus Christian maturity) ends up travelling towards the buildings, the meetings and the programs of the local church. The end results of the Greek infiltration is that we are kept in the crusade, tied to the nest and are unable to fly very far into the creation before we are drawn back to support the pillar....

We have failed to make the connection between the congregation context and the spheres of the created order around us so we have had to make the congregation a whole world in and of itself. The outcome is that the church has become something that is disconnected from the world and dislocated from the very life and work of the saints themselves. The consequences are taking their toll on leaders and laity. The leaders are losing their hold on the people of God and the people of God are being deprived of the necessary resources and affirmation they need to make it through their daily struggle in life and work. The sad irony is that each holds the key to the other’s life and calling.

(Thwaites 1999: 181, 190)

- » the church as an alternative answer to the world.
- » a centripetal church



b. individualism

- » societal fragmentation
 - family break down
 - mobility
 - working hours
- » church as solution to *my* spiritual needs
- » centrality of individual self-realisation, rights and freedoms
- » a centripetal church is a projection of a centripetal and individualistic culture

c. theological confusion

- » the separation of soteriology and missiology
- » the separation of ecclesiology and missiology
- » the confusion of ecclesial identity with service-in-the-world.

“When I’m around church people I always check whether they are misled by the modern secular vision. Have they substituted the vision of service for the only thing that will make people whole-community? Are they service peddlers or community builders? Peddling services is unchristian-even if you’re hellbent on helping people. Peddling services instead of building communities is the one way you can be sure not to help...Service systems teach people that their value lies in their deficiencies. They are built on “inadequacies” called illiteracy, visual deficit, and teenage pregnancy. But communities are built on the *capacities* of drop-out, illiterate, bad-scene, teenage-pregnant, battered women... If the church is about community – not service – it’s about capacity not deficiency. (J. McKnight 1989:38,40 cited in vanEngen and Tiersma 1994:246-247)

- » church as ‘external, expert superstar’ (J.V. Taylor)

2. Historical Factors Influencing an Emerging Consensus.

a. the deChristianisation of the West.

“The more the Christian West disintegrates culturally and geographically, the more the church will find its self-understanding in the context of the whole world.”

(Moltmann 1977:9)

b. the growth of a religiously pluralistic world

c. the ecumenical movement

d. the formation of global networks

e. the explosion of the church in the two-thirds world

f. the crisis of faith in the West actualises the realisation of the true situation of the church in the world, “between the times”.

“the church has always needed apparent failure and suffering in order to become fully alive to its real nature and mission”

(Kraemer 1947:26 cited in Bosch 1991:2)

3. Seeking a Paradigm: The Identity and Mission of the Church are Intercontained.
- a. “the church exist by mission as fire exists by burning” (E. Brunner)
 - b. this is not to be construed in instrumental terms.
“Mission...is seen as a movement from God to the world; the Church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is a church because there is mission, not vice versa.”
(Aagaard 1974:423 cited in Johnstone 1998:23)
 - c. if mission is viewed as instrumental it remains
 - external
 - obligatory
 - optional
 - defined in terms of its addressees, not in terms of its nature.
 - d. mission is internal to the nature of the church
Volf (5/5/01) asserts “The identity and mission of the church are the same.” “The identity of the church is the face of its mission turned inward, the mission of the church is the face its identity turned outward.”
 - e. the church as missionary community is covenantally constituted by its inclusion in the self communication of God in Christ by the power of the Spirit.
 - f. “we have to distinguish between *mission* (singular) and *missions* (plural). The first refers primarily to the *missio Dei* (God’s mission), that is, God’s self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God’s involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate. *Mission Dei* enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people. *Missions* (the *missiones ecclesiae*: the missionary ventures of the church), refer to particular forms, related to specific times, places, or needs, of participation in the *mission Dei* (Davies 1966:33; cf Hoekendijk 1967a:346; Rutti 1972:232).”
(Bosch 1991:10)
 - g. this suggests that the doctrine of God provides the interpretative key for the relationship between church, covenant, community and mission

3. Trinity and Mission: The Trinitarian Approach to Ecclesiology

1. Methodological Considerations

- a. it is a methodological confusion to consider the doctrine of the church as an item in itself, not only subsequent to but in some sense distinct from the doctrine of God and Christology.
- b. “The church is grounded in the being and life of God, and rooted in the eternal purpose of the Father to send his Son, Jesus Christ, to be the Head and Saviour of all things. The church does not exist by and for itself, and therefore cannot be known or interpreted out of itself. Both the source and the goal of the church are in the eternal love of God which has overflowed in the creation and redemption of the world. God has not willed to live alone, but to create and seek others distinct from himself upon whom to pour out his Spirit, that he might share with them his divine life and glory, and as Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwell in their midst forever. God will not be without his Church; the Church is nothing without God. But in God the church exists as the supreme object of divine grace, and in the Church God is pleased to live his divine life and manifest his divine glory. That is the mystery and destiny of the Church, hidden from the foundation of the world, but revealed and fulfilled in the Incarnation of the Son of God and in his glorious work of redemption, for in Jesus Christ the Church as the redeemed people of God is the crown of creation living in praise and gratitude to the Creator and reflecting with all things, visible and invisible, the glory of the eternal God.
(Torrance 1979:199)
- c. the proper foundation for an understanding of the nature of the church is consideration of the nature of God, this is an exercise in trinitarian theology.

2. The Ex-centric Nature of the Divine Community.

- a. the three Persons of the trinity indwell one another.
(John 14:10-11; 17:21-23 cf. 15:10)
- b. this exhaustive indwelling means that the Godhead is absolutely inclusive.
- c. this is an other-centred dynamic
(John 1:1; 10:37-38; 14:10 Father-Son; Matt 10:20; John 15:26 Spirit of Father; John 1:33; 3:34 Spirit in Son)
- d. this means that each of the Persons, and the whole Godhead, exists in ex-centricity.
- e. this is the dynamic of love (1 John 4:8,16) which constitutes the essence of God as the living God (1 Sam 17:26,36; Dan 6:26; John 6:57; 7:38-39; Acts 14:15; 2 Cor 3:3; 6:16; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Tim 3:15 etc)

3. The trinitarian Nature of the Church is Found “in Christ”

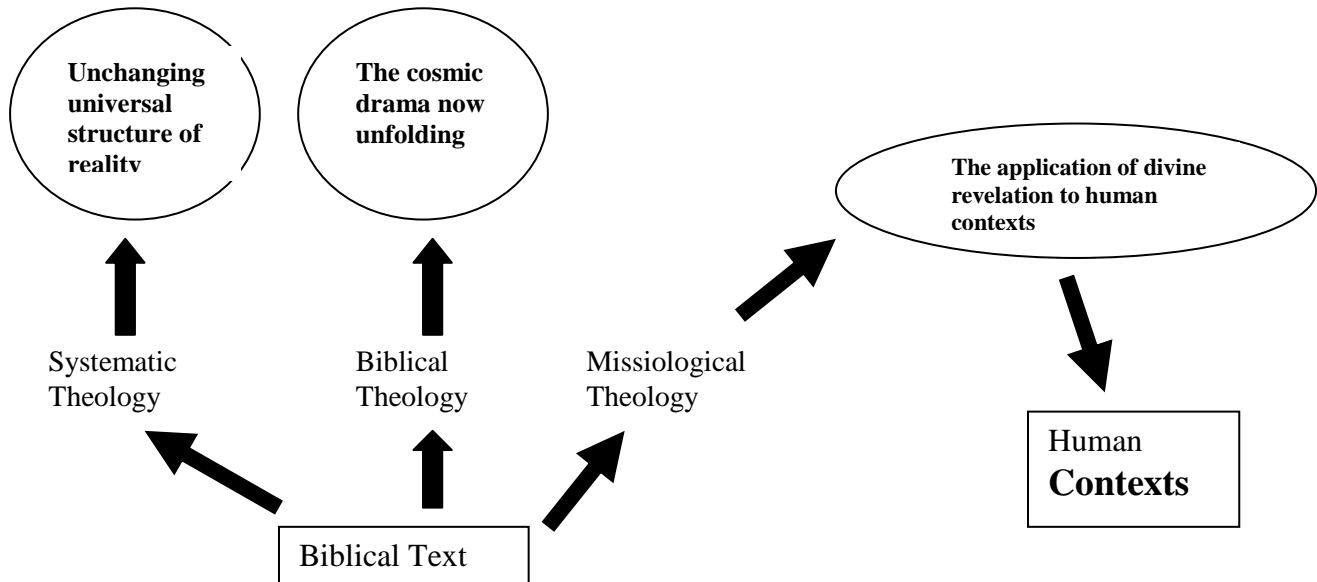
- a. Jesus is sent into the world by the Father.
(Matt 15:24; 21:37; Mark 12:6; Luke 4:43; John 3:17, 34 etc., Acts 3:26; 7:37; Gal 4:4)
- b. Jesus comes in the Spirit
(Matt 1:20; Luke 1:3 cf. Mark 1:12; Luke 4:18)
- c. the result is his subsistence as a human being
(John 1:14)

- d. the fullness of God dynamically subsists in a human person
(Col 1:19; 2:9)
 - e. this means that the reconciliation which is effected in Christ unites humanity to God.
(2 Cor 5:19; John 17:21,23)
 - f. the sending of the Son by the Father, the mission of God, effects God indwelling us by grace as he has indwelt Christ by the Spirit.
(John 15:10; 17:21-23; Rom 8:16; Gal 4:6; Eph 3:17; Col 2:10; 3:16; 2 Tim 1:14)
 - g. this means participation in the divine nature
(2 Peter 1:4)
 - h. the final reality is the mutual indwelling of God and his people.
(Rev 13:6; 21:2-3,15-16 : – the new Jerusalem is the glorified church, a supradimensional holy of holies inhabited by God; Rev 21:22-26: – the temple is God and the Lamb, in which the holy of holies, the people, are found)
4. The Spirit Co-Constitutes the Church
- a. the Holy Spirit is the personal bond of love between the Father and Son, he is the Spirit of unity.
 - b. as such the fellowship of the trinity is in the Holy Spirit.
(2 Cor 13:13)
 - c. as both Son and Spirit proceed from the Father they are inseparable.
 - d. the Spirit is particularly the Spirit of the risen and ascended Lord.
 - e. the Spirit is therefore the anticipation of the Eschaton.(Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:14) and it's consummated community
 - f. to receive the Spirit is to be baptised into the relationship between the Father and Son, to become sons in the Son of the Father within the trinitarian community.
(John 17:26; Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:4-6)
 - g. this constitutes us brothers and sisters in Christ
(Rom 8:29; Heb 2:12-44 cf. John 17:6)
 - h. "Seen from the human side the ecclesial *koinonia* is none other than the fraternity of the disciples of Christ Jesus but in so far as it is caught up, seized by the Spirit who inserts it in the relation of the Father and the Son."
(Tillard 1984:373 cited in Grenz 1994:630)
 - i. even if it is the eschatological gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:17) which constitutes the church, it is the Spirit as given by the Son (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Acts 2:33)
 - j. the Spirit constitutes the church as the body of *Christ*
 - k. the Spirit and the Word therefore co-constitute the church, as witnesses (John 14:26; Heb 2:12) (cf Christ who institutes, Spirit who constitutes)
 - l. testimony borne to Jesus is the criterion of the activity of the Spirit, and so of the location of the church.
(Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 12:3; 1 John 4:2)
 - m. the church exists in the Spirit as a witnessing community, and so is essentially missionary.

5. The Trinitarian Nature of the Church is an Open Expansive Community
 - a. this follows from its participation in the openness of the trinity to the world.
 - b. this means that the church by nature shares in the mission of God.
 - c. the aim of the church can not be to communicate itself, or make itself great, but to bring glory to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.
 - d. the horizon of the church is therefore the consummation of all things in God.
(Acts 3:21; 1 Cor 15:28; Eph 1:10,23; 4:10)
 - e. as God is a community, only a community of persons can correspond to the trinity.
 - f. the relationships between the many in the church must reflect the mutual love of the divine persons.
 - g. in this way the church is the image of God : the mirror of the divine reality.
6. Covenant Communicates the Divine Nature and Creates another Self-Communicating Community.
 - a. the church is not immediately created but is formed out of the dynamic of God's love with his people.
 - b. covenant is the means by which God gathers a people to himself.
 - c. salvation history is the history of God's gracious covenantal dealings with humanity which extends from the Old Testament saints to the eschatological new creation.
 - d. the mighty acts of grace work out God's purpose of love, which is the communication of the divine nature.
 - e. these mighty acts are peaks of trinitarian disclosure.

7. A Trinitarian Ecclesiology is Missiological.

- a. the history of theological reflection on the relationship between the church and mission has suffered from separation between various disciplines.
- b. this can be represented diagrammatically.



(Hiebert 2000: 241)

- c. this can lead to the isolation of systematic and biblical theology from missiology, so that they become abstract, or the inundation of missiological theology by particular cultural contexts.
- d. a trinitarian approach to church and mission seeks to reunite these distinct disciplines by understanding salvation history (biblical theology) as the unfolding revelation of the eternal trinitarian life (systematic theology) in a range of specific space-time contexts (mission theology).
- e. all of theology is therefore understood as missiological in nature and direction.

8. The Nature of the Church as a Missional Community is known by Participation.

- a. if the nature of the church is determined by its relationship to the Father, Son and Spirit, it is only by participation in the life of God can this nature be *known*.
- b. this means that involvement in the concrete body of the church preceded all epistemological and conceptual discussions. ‘the life of the community is prior to all possible methodological distillations’

(Yoder 1994:82, cited in Huebner 2000: 483)

- c. to operate otherwise is to attempt to disengage oneself from the community created by the *missio Dei*, the Father’s sending of the Son and the Spirit to communicate the divine life cf. 1 Peter 1:4.
- d. a genuine theology of the church, taking its character from the outreach of God, must be praxeological. The church finds itself as it participates in God’s mission whose object is the world in all its cultural geographic, national, global and historical elements.

- e. “Mission theology is the praxis of Jesus Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit reaching out to the church through the arms of those whose humanity needs healing and whose hearts need hope... If mission theology is to be integrated with church theology, let there be an authentic orthopraxy, let it dare to submit its concerns and its agenda for the healing and hope of humanity to the One who is the Advocate, the Leitourgos, and the redeemer of all humanity... If there be an authentic church, let it be found where Christ has his praxis and his pathos – let it pay the price of its orthodoxy in its true ministry and so be empowered by Christ himself.”

(Anderson 1991:126 cited in van Engen 1994:244)

4: Creation, Covenant and Community.

1. Creation as Trinitarian Revelation.

a. the creation account in Genesis 1 is implicitly trinitarian.

- (1) it is God who creates 1:1
- (2) his Spirit protects and perfects 1:2
- (3) he creates by his Word 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26

b. this is confirmed and filled out by the rest of the Bible.

- (1) the Father is the direct agent of creation.
(1 Cor 8:6; Rev 4:11)
- (2) the Son is the mediatorial agent of creation.
(John 1:1-3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16-17)
- (3) the Spirit effects order in creation.
(Job 26:13; 33:4; Ps 104:30)

c. the picture is of God as a dynamic unity or community.

2. The Image of God as Community

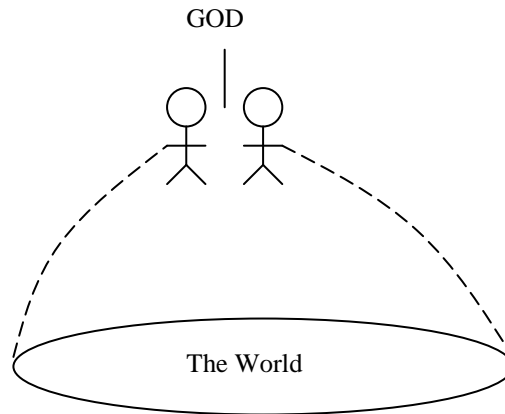
a. the meaning of the image of God.

- (1) this is to be found within Genesis 1.
- (2) the “let us” of Genesis 1:26, against the cooperation of Spirit and Word in God’s creating, points to the image as unity in diversity.
- (3) male and female interpret the image of God (Genesis 1:26b,c) in mutual complementarity (Gen 2:18)
- (4) the community of Adam and Eve, plurality in oneness.
- (5) this image is the original church.

b. the “cultural mandate”

- (1) Genesis 1:28 with 2:15,24 indicates that to be human-in-community involves.
 - * marriage as oneness
 - * reproduction of the likeness of God cf Gen 5:3
 - * expansiveness to the whole earth
 - * priesthood in creation (work, government, worship)

- (2) this mandate committed to the image of God/people of God would, if faithfully discharged, fill the whole creation with the likeness and glory of God.



3. Creation as the Context for Covenant

a. creation is the external basis of the covenant.

- (1) creation is the presupposition of the history of the relationship between God and humanity.
- (2) creation is “the theatre of the glory of God” (Calvin), the framework for God’s self communication.

b. covenant is the internal basis of creation.

- (1) the meaning of creation is not found in itself, but in God the creator.
- (2) God’s free loving relationship with humanity is the inner meaning of creation.

c. God initiates covenant relation with Adam and Eve.

- (1) he revealed himself to them by creating them and speaking his Word of blessing to them.
(Gen 1:28-30)
- (2) Adam and Eve enjoyed communion with God.
(Gen 3:8)
- (3) the elements of a covenant are present.
 - * the unconditional and gracious initiative of God
 - * the promise of life is implicit in the call to obedience
(Lev 18:5; Ezek 20:11, 13, 20; Luke 10:8; Rom 7:10; 10:5; Gal 3:12)
 - * a condition for enjoying the covenantal blessing; this is obedience to the divine prohibition in relation to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
(Gen 2:17)
 - * a penalty for covenant violation; this is death.
- (4) this is supported by:
 - * the parallel between Adam and Christ (Rom 5:12-21) implies Adam was the head of a covenant.
 - * Hosea 6:7 may read “... like Adam, they broke covenant...”

- 5: The Fall: Covenant Violation Disintegrates Community and Necessitates New Form for Mission.
1. The Fall involves Rejection of the Divine Nature.
 - a. the Fall results from believing in a lie concerning God's providential character.
(Gen 3:4-5)
 - b. the Fall results from the desire to be sovereign and autonomous.
(Gen 3:5)
 - c. this was a denial of filial status and its consequent dependence upon God and his blessing.
(Luke 3:38)
 2. The Result of the Fall is Community Disintegration
 - a. Adam and Eve are separated from God.
(Gen 3:7 ff)
 - b. Adam and Eve are separated from one another.
(Gen 3:7, 12)
 - c. Adam and Eve become subordinated to the secondary source of their life, the ground and the man, deprived from the immediacy and fullness of God's blessing.
(Gen 3:16-19)
 - d. humanity is in conflict with evil powers.
(Gen 3:15; Rev 12:7)
 - e. the earth is subject to futility.
(Gen 3:18; Rom 8:22)
 - f. physical and spiritual death becomes universal.
 - (1) the whole race falls in Adam (Rom 5:12)
 - (2) separation of soul from body means self-disintegration.
 - (3) eternal death is the ultimate penalty.
(Rom 6:23)
 3. The Fall Necessitates New Form for Mission.
 - a. the whole church fell in the sin of Adam.
 - b. God's vocation for the church remains unchanged.
(Rom 11:29)
"It fell not as a divine institution but in its constituent members, and therefore the church upheld by the eternal will of God took on at once a new form under the saving acts of history."
(Torrance 1979:201)

c. this is indicated by the *proto-evangelium*.

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

(Gen 3:15 cf. Rom 16:20; Rev 12:7)

d. men and women still move out across the earth from Eden, but now communicate separation rather than oneness with God.

e. for the earth to be filled with the blessing of God, humanity and all that fell with it must be redeemed.

6: The Noachic Covenant and the Tower of Babel

1. The Growth of Humanity Increases Wickedness

- a. Abel kills Cain and lives in terror, Lamech boasts of his killing and vows to multiply vengeance beyond God's decree.

(Gen 4:1-23)

- b. the "multiplication" of people leads to unnatural unions which somehow threatens the reproduction of God's image.

(Gen 6:1-4)

- c. the impact on God's heart causes extreme pain, because the earth is "filled" with violence ie. the opposite of the harmonious community created by God in the beginning.

(Gen 6:4c, 11-13)

2. The Flood Brings Judgement and Grace.

- a. the judgement is designed to cleanse the world of evil.

(Gen 6:13, 7:4)

- b. God's choice of Noah is on the basis of unconditional election.

(Gen 6:8)

- c. the promise to enter into covenant with Noah and his family comes through sovereign grace

(Gen 6:18)

- d. the response to the promised covenant is faith.

(1 Pet 3:21)

3. The Covenant with Noah is a Rebirth of Creation.

- a. the covenant is universal.

(Gen 9:10, 15)

- b. the covenant is everlasting

(Gen 9:10,15)

- c. the covenant repeats the original blessing

(Gen 9:1,7)

- d. the covenant amplifies the cultural mandate.

marriage Gen 9:1 cf. 1:28

work Gen 9:3 cf. 1:28

government Gen 9:2 cf. 1:29

e. the covenant promise is that the threat of human extinction, which would annul the divine plan, is revoked.

(Gen 9:11,15-16)

f. the covenant is a triumph of mercy over judgement.

(James 2:13)

4. The Tower of Babel

a. the context of the Babel incident is the table of the nations.

(Gen 10:1-31)

b. these peoples seemed to have exhibited diversity and were spreading abroad.

(Gen 10:5, 20, 31-32)

c. this is not seen as sinful, as it fulfils the primal commandment of Genesis 1:28.

d. at Babel, linguistic unity becomes the foundation for a titanic attempt to idolatrously exalt human culture to divine proportions by self-centredness.

(Gen 11:1-5)

e. the will to resist scattering across the earth is in direct violation of the primal command.

(Gen 11:4)

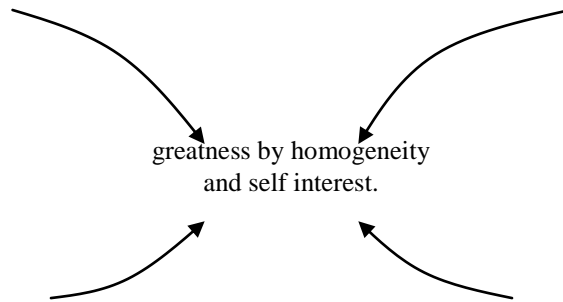
f. resistance to God's benediction upon humanity to fill the earth with the divine image and presence leads to personal intervention and judgement.

(Gen 11:5-9)

g. God scatters them by confusion of languages, this leads to the filling of the earth through a cultural diversity preventing evil unity against God, and so his own image.

h. God is not the author of division but of diversity.

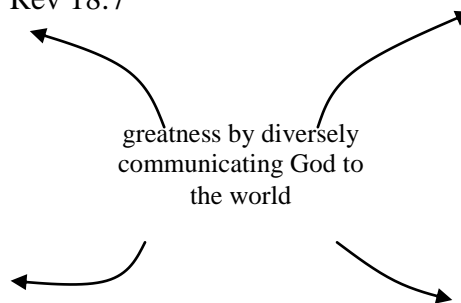
i. Babelism



this principle is repeated throughout human history

Isa 47:8; Zeph 2:15; Rev 18:7

j. the plan of God



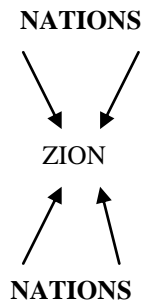
7: Election and Covenant: Community and Mission

1. Abraham

- a. the background to Abram's call is the sinfulness of the nations epitomised by Babel.
- b. the election of Abram is unconditional, he is called as a pagan and ungodly person.
(Gen 11:27-12:1; Rom 4:5)
- c. this involves a *going out* from his homeland to wherever God shall choose.
(Gen 12:1)
- d. election is in the context of promise
 - (1) a multitude of descendants
 - (2) a land for them to live in
 - (3) a special relationship with God.
(Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:11-16, 12-21; 17:1-8, 17-19; 22:15-18)
- e. this is in the sphere of blessing
(Gen 12:2; 17:16, 20, 22:17)
- f. the blessing will be imparted to all peoples.
(Gen 12:3 cf. 27:29)
- g. these elements: election, multiplication, habitation, fellowship with God and universality, represent the completion of the original promises in creation.
(Gen 1:26-28)
- i. the *seed* of Abraham is the means by which this will be accomplished; the New Testament understands this as Jesus.
(Gen 12:3; 13:15; Acts 3:25; Gal 3:16)
- j. the new community created by the Abrahamic covenant will fulfil the mission of God to fill the whole world with his glory.
- k. the New Testament sees the promise to Abraham as
 - (1) a gospel promise (Gal 3:8)
 - (2) the inheritance of the world (Rom 4:13)
 - (3) fulfilled by the gift of the Spirit (Gal 3:14)
- l. in Abraham the church is now separated out from the nations as the appointed sphere for the outworking of salvation history.

2. Israel and the Exodus
 - a. the patriarchal period and the period of sojourn in Egypt shows how the multitude of Abraham's descendants comes to arise.
 - b. the action of God to deliver Israel from Egypt is a response to the Abrahamic covenant.
(Ex 2:24)
 - c. the Exodus marks the election of Israel as a nation under God-the covenant at Sinai constitutes the people as a redeemed community.
 - d. the giving of the Law is dependent upon the Exodus as the Exodus is dependent upon the Abrahamic covenant, the Sinai covenant is therefore one of grace.
(Ex 20:1-2)
3. The Purpose of the Law
 - a. the cultural mandate is filled out in detail in relation to:
 - (1) the land
 - (2) property
 - (3) the marginalised
 - (4) social relations
 - b. the cult provides a way of maintaining the covenant fellowship with God.
 - c. the *shalom* life of Israel has meaning in a broader world context.
4. Israel and the Nations
 - a. the particularism of election is the context of the world.
(Ex 19:5)
 - b. what Adam was intended to be for the earth, and priests are for people, Israel is to be for the nations.
(Ex 19:6; Ps 67)
 - c. the holiness of Israel meant a call to be *like God*, to be his image.
(Ex 22:31; Lev 11:44; 19:2)
 - d. this would entail a history of:
 - (1) conflict with other nations, both politically and in terms of religious syncretism.
 - (2) suffering and judgement as God sought to keep the nation pure and blameless.
 - (3) exile and return, a type of national death and resurrection
cf. Ezek 37.

- e. explicit expectations that the nations would see God's light through Israel and gather to Zion.



(Ps 2; 22:27-29; Isa 2:2-4; 9:6-7; 40:1-11; 49:1-6; 55:4-7; 56:7; 60:22; 61:1f; Jer 12:14-16; Mic 4:1-4; Zech 2:11)

- f. this will be effected through a purified remnant.

(Ezra 9:8; Isa 4:3; 6:13; 7:3; 11:1; Amos 3:12, 4:11; 9:9; Mic 5:7)

- g. this finds concentration within Israel in a single individual who became known as Messiah. There are three major Messianic models in the Old Testament.

(1) the Son of David

- » this individual is the heir of God's covenant with David.

(2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 89)

- » he will exercise a perfect rule of righteousness, completely imaging God's nature.

(Isa 9:1-7; Mic 4:1-4)

(2) the Servant of the Lord

- » this individual, who is true Israel, will bring justice and salvation to the ends of the earth and be a light to the nations.

(Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-6)

- » the servant through vicarious suffering will bring salvation to many

(Isa 52:13 – 53:12)

- » suffering is an essential element in mission, bearing witness to a rebellious world

(3) the Son of Man

- » this is an apocalyptic figure who exercises universal dominion over the nations.

(Dan 7:13,14)

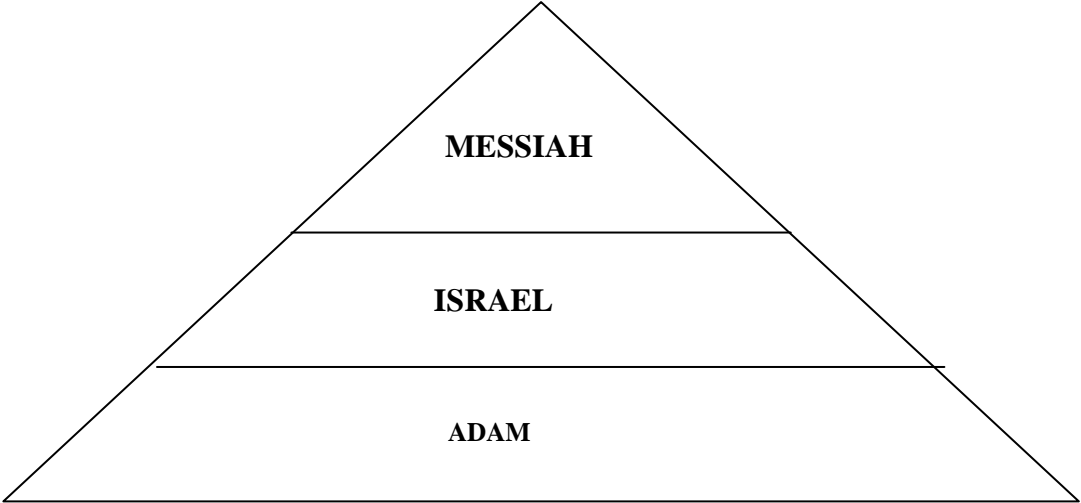
- » this prerogative is shared with the holy remnant who resists the power of evil.

(Dan 7:18,22)

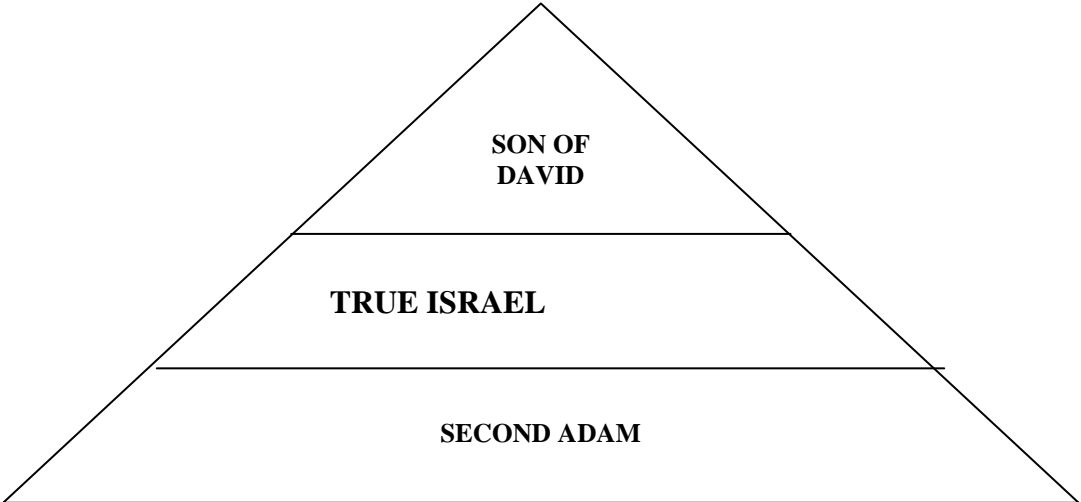
Conclusion as to the Old Testament Period.

1. The Covenant and the Election it involves can be Summed Up Diagrammatically.

(1)the concentration of election



(2)Messiah sums up all of God's purposes



2. The Old Testament Expectation is of Mission by means of Centripetal Attraction.

8. Jesus, The Kingdom and the Church.

1. Jesus Brings In the Kingdom.

- a. Jesus did not preach the church but the kingdom of God.
(Mark 1:15)
- b. this is the presence of God's ruling power, both in the present (Matt 11:2-26; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:21; 17:20) and future (Luke 21:31)
- c. it establishes God's rule over humans, evil powers and nature.
(Matt 12:28-29; 21:31-32; Mark 3:5; 4:39; 9:47; Luke 7:18-23)
- d. this is concentrated in forgiveness
(Mark 2:5; Luke 7:47-48; John 3:17-18; 5:14; 8:11)
- e. Jesus himself is the supreme mystery and sign of the kingdom.
 - (1) as the sign opposed by many and the stone rejected.
(Matt 21:42; Luke 2:34)
 - (2) as the teacher of the secrets of the kingdom.
(Matt 13:11,19)
 - (3) as the presence of the kingdom in the midst of people.
(Matt 18:20; Luke 17:21)
 - (4) as the King
(Matt 25:34; Luke 1:33)
- f. Jesus' kingdom actions reverse the power of the Fall by:
 - (1) healing relationship with God
 - (2) healing relationships between people
 - (3) healing bodies
 - (4) restoring humanity's dominion over nature
- g. as the King come in power of the kingdom, Jesus is:
 - (1) the restorer of the original blessing
(Matt 5:3-11; 11:6; 13:16; 16:17; Mark 10:16; Luke 1:42,45,48; 11:28; 24:50; John 20:29)
 - (2) the image of God
(John 1:14, 18, 5:19; 14:10)
- h. in his kingly action of the cross he fulfils the original command to be fruitful and multiply.
(Matt 27:11,29,37,42; Luke 19:14-15; 23:3; John 1:49; 12:24; 18:37)

2. Jesus Enacts the Covenant.

a. by his identification with sinners.

- (1) becoming flesh
(John 1:14)
- (2) baptised in union with those under judgement
(Matt 3:13-17)
- (3) undergoing temptation
(Matt 4:1-11)
- (4) living under the law
(Matt 5:17; Luke 2:21,27; Gal 4:4)
- (5) in every stage of human life and death
(Luke 2:40,52, 3:23 etc)

b. by his sacrificial death

(Matt 26:20; Ex 24:6-8)

c. as the Servant who is the reality of the covenant

(Isa 42:6; 49:8; Matt 12:18-20; Mark 1:11; 10:45; 14:24; Luke 4:18-21)

d. by being the Father's witness

(John 3:11, 32; 8:14; 18:36)

3. Jesus and the Church

a. Israel was central to God's rule under the old covenant

(2 Chron 13:8)

b. this kingdom would one day extend to all nations

(Zech 14:9,16; see before)

c. the gathering of the twelve around Jesus

- (1) is the expression of his Messianic and kingly authority.
- (2) is the hub of the action of the kingdom of God, for example, in the sending out of the twelve and the seventy.
(Luke 9:10)
- (3) signifies the election of a new Israel, the eschatological people of God.

d. Jesus recapitulates the history of Israel, and reconstitutes the new covenant community.

- (1) journey into Egypt and return
(Matt 2:13-15)
- (2) temptations in the wilderness
(Matt 4:1-11)
- (3) giving of a new law
(Matt 5-7)

- (4) inaugurating a new Exodus
(Luke 9:31)
- (5) opening up a new inheritance
(John 14:1-3)
- e. the church inheres in the life of Jesus.
 - (1) Messiah, as the second Adam, is a corporate person
 - (2) the new eschatological community centred on Jesus is moulded into a structured reality by its relationship to himself.
 - (3) this call is a call to take up the cross and die to self-centredness.
 - (4) by inhering in his death and resurrection, the old humanity is destroyed and reborn.
- 4. Jesus and the Mission to the Nations.
 - a. Jesus' immediate mission is exclusively to Israel.
(Matt 10:5-6; 15:24; John 1:11)
 - b. incidents in his ministry however impact some Gentiles.
(Matt 8:5-13; 15:21ff; John 4:39ff)
 - c. his teaching anticipates the inclusion of the nations.
(Matt 11:11, 21:33ff; 24:14; Luke 13:29)
 - d. his cleansing of the forecourt of the temple, reserved for the prayers of the Gentiles, is a prophetic act dignifying their incorporation into the covenant.
(Matt 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48)
 - e. the whole people of God are gathered into one through the cross.
(John 11:52; 12:32 cf. John 10:16)
 - f. Jesus commands the universal proclamation of the gospel.
(Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:7-8)
 - g. the twelve are witnesses to the identity of Jesus' relationship with the Father.
(Matt 10:18; Luke 21:13; 24:48; John 15:26-27; Acts 1:8)

5. Conclusion: The Mission of Jesus

1. The Mission of Jesus is to build the Church.

- a. this is explicit in Matthew 16:18 cf. 18:17
- b. it is implied in the references to an ongoing community of believers who will gather in his name.

(Matt 18:20; 28:19; Luke 24:17; John 14:14; 15:16; 16:23-26)

2. This occurs through Participation in his Relationship with the Father

- a. Jesus prays that the disciples may share in the unity of Father and Son.

(John 17:20, 23)

- b. this means participating in the life of the trinity.
- c. it implies an essential, dynamic unity.
- d. as one-in-love, the church's essential nature images the nature of God.

3. Centrifugal witness is essential to the presence of God.

- a. the presence of God in the Old Testament was regularly associated with commissioning to a task or fulfilment of a call.

(Gen 26:3; 28:15; 48:21; Ex 4:11-12; Josh 1:5-6,9 etc)

- b. this presence is directed to the fulfilment of the plan of God to undo the effects of the fall.

- c. because of his obedience to the Father, the Father is always with Jesus

(John 15:10; 16:32)

- d. this is a presence in the Spirit.

(Matt 3:16; Luke 4:18; John 2:33; 3:34 etc)

- e. the same principle of presence-in-obedience applies to the apostolic commission to reach the nations with the gospel.

(John 14:23;15:10; Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:48-49; John 20:21-22)

- f. this presence of Father and Son is the Spirit.

9. The Spirit Regenerates the People of God as the Body of the Risen Christ.
 1. The Gift of the Spirit Regenerates Persons.
 - a. this was taught by Jesus.
(John 3:5-8)
 - b. it means entry into the kingdom of God.
(John 3:3,5; Rom 14:17)
 - c. it means incorporation into the life of the trinity.
(John 14:20,23)
 2. The Pentecostal Gift effects the New Life of the People of God.
 - a. the outpouring of the Spirit unites the church with Christ's atoning work.
 - b. this is a spiritual renewing experience which
 - (1) imparts new life
John 20:22 cf. Gen 2:7
 - (2) raises Israel from the dead
cf. Ezek 37:9
 - (3) initiates the eschatological age at a community level
(Acts 2:28-32; 1 Cor 10:11; Heb 6:5)
 - c. it effects reconciliation, reversing the enforced scattering at Babel.
(Acts 2; cf. Gen 11)
 - d. it signifies that heaven and earth have been reunited.
 - e. it reconstitutes the image of God in the body of Christ as the bearer of the new humanity.
(Eph 2:15; Col 3:10)
 - f. the church, the new humanity, is the only tangible consequence of the completed work of Christ.
 3. The Gift of the Spirit Releases the Power of the Kingdom.
 - a. this was the topic of Jesus' final conversation with the disciples.
(Acts 1:2-3)
 - b. the universal rule of Jesus from heaven means
 - (1) the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the reign of Messiah.
(Ps 2:8; Acts 1:8; 2:36)
 - (2) the restoration of humanity's dominion over the earth.
 - c. the life of the church resembles the kingdom of God
 - (1) by the quality of community life
(Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37)

(2) through the signs of the kingdom.

(Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8 etc)

d. this is proleptic of the healing of the whole created order; the church is the sign post of the glorification of the universe.

(Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14; 4:30 cf. Dan 2:44)

“The ecclesial communion as such is the prophetic sign to the world that God has organised all things around the one whom he has enthroned at his right hand. The church has cosmic significance, precisely in its anticipation of the appearance of that order. It is the community of the *recapitulation*.”

(Farrow 1999:32-33)

4. The New People of God is Structured Apostolically as a Centrifugal Community.

a. the Spirit is sent out into all the earth

(Rev 5:6)

b. Jesus sends out the church in the same participatory manner as he was sent out in the Spirit.

(Rev 20:21)

c. the Spirit is the moving power from the One to the many, from the centre in Christ to the nations of the world.

d. this relates to the essential nature of the church, not just instrumentally.

e. communication is a fruit of communion with the trinity. The gift of the Spirit means a share in the Father's communication of the Son and the Son's communication of the Father.

g. the Spirit opens up the church as witness to the entire creation.

(Eph 3:10).

h. the church is the means by which Christ fills all things with his own life.

(Eph 1:22-23; 4:10,13; Col 2:9-10)

i. the outward movement of the people of God into all the earth by the power of the Spirit unites Christ his people and creation at all levels through evangelism, social justice, prayer etc.

j. the goal of the missionary nature of the church is socio-cultural transformation.

k. this includes all patterns of human life and behaviour: marriage, family, work recreation, economics, science and technology etc.

l. in this way the church is involved in the transformation of the cosmos.

(cf. Joel 2:28-32; Haggai 2:5-8; Acts 2:19-20; Heb 12:26-28)

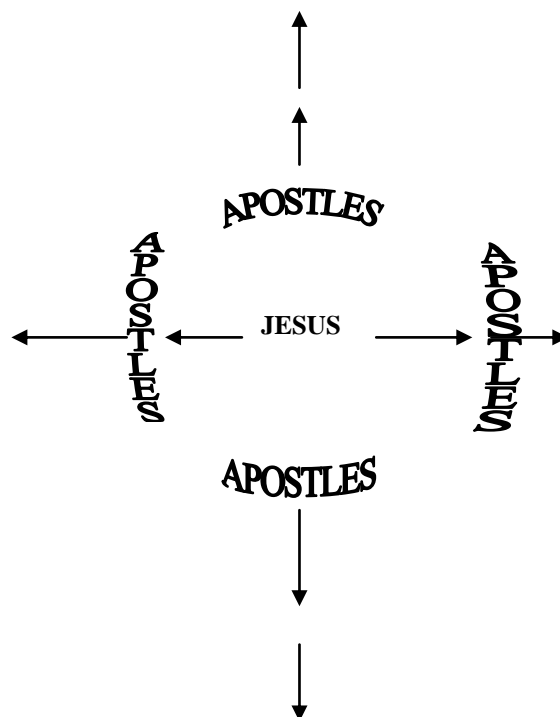
10: The Nature of the Church – Mission in Covenantal Community.

1. *Ekklesia* means Community

- a. *ekklesia* in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament translate *qahal*, this can mean both an act of assembly or the people of God.
(Deut 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1-3; 3:30; Jud 20:2; 1 Chron 28:8 etc)
- b. the New Testament contains many references to *koinonia*, which means “participation” or “to share in”
(2 Cor 1:7; Phil 3:10: suffering, Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4, 9:13: giving; Phil 1:5: the gospel; 1 Cor 10:6: the body and blood of Christ etc)
- c. the most explicit ecclesiological contexts incorporate both a horizontal and vertical dimension.
(1 John 1:2-3; 6-7)
- d. the *concept* of *koinonia* includes the Pauline union ‘in/with Christ’ material, Johannine ‘abiding’ imagery, the church as the body of Christ, believers ‘one’ with Christ and each other etc.
- e. other metaphors, such as the people of God, can be subsumed under this heading.

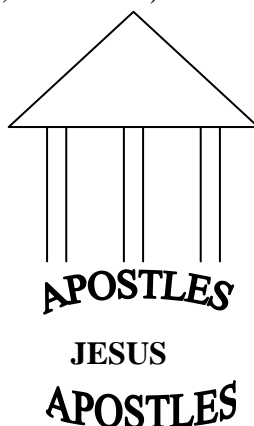
2. The Foundation of the Community is Apostolicity.

- a. there appear to be two types of texts which describe to the organic nature of the relationship between Christ, the church and the apostles.
- b. the first emphasises the sending out of the apostles by Jesus, the image here is linear and historical, they are the followers of Jesus.
(Matt 4:19; 10:16,28; John 1:43; 20:21, 21:19, 22)



- c. the second pictures the apostles gathered around the Jesus, this image is structural, the apostolic college is the foundation of the church.

(Matt 16:13-20; Eph 2:20; Rev 21:24)



- d. as the apostles gather around Jesus and are sent out by him with his presence they constitute the first church.

(cf. Mark 3:14; Matt 28:18-20; Luke 12:12)

- e. this means that the church is essentially bi-polar in its manifestation.

(1) in a concentrated form it gathers for worship (modality)

(2) in a dispersed form it scatters for service (sodality)

- f. since both of these are expressions of *ekklesia* as community, they are equally forms of “church”

- g. community formation, through the apostolic *kerygma* and *didache* (proclamation and teaching) is the conjoint goal of both.

- h. the world is saved, and judged, by the inclusive appeal of the gospel.

(John 3:16; Acts 2:21; 2 Cor 5:16-21; 1 Tim 4:10)

- i. all Christian ministry of Word, sacrament and service, in a means of inclusion in the body of Christ, and so the trinitarian communion.

3. The Identity of the Community as Body.

- a. this is a Pauline metaphor.

(1 Cor 10:17; 11:29; 12:12-27; Eph 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Col 1:18; 2:9)

- b. the local Christian community is the body of Christ in its entirety, for Christ is wholly present there by his Spirit.

(Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:13,27)

- c. through the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit, each member has a unique role to play, and is dependent upon everyone else.

(Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:14-21)

- d. the value of gifts and their contribution to the community cannot be evaluated on the basis of superficial, external observation, eg. tongues.

(Rom 12:3; 1 Cor 12:22-25)

- e. by nature, what impacts one member of the body affects the whole.

(Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:26)

- f. the unity of the body is dependent upon the variety of the various members' contributions.
(Rom 12:6,9; 1 Cor 12:6-8,12)
 - g. the properties of the church as the body 'of' Christ and 'in' Christ (Rom 12:6) are wholly dependent on the person of Christ.
 - h. in Ephesians and Colossians 'the body' is the heavenly church not the local earthly gatherings.
(Eph 1:22; 4:4; 4:15-16; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19)
 - i. as the universal body the oneness of Jew and Gentile is emphasised.
(Eph 2:15-16)
 - j. Christ is 'the head of the body'.
(Eph 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19)
 - k. this signifies Jesus as Lord of the church, the centre of its life and unity.
(cf. Col 2:9-10)
 - l. the Spirit establishes Christ's pre-eminence in the church and brings this life and unity into being.
(Eph 2:18,22; 4:3-4)
 - m. the church as Christ's body should increasingly conform to him as it matures by 'speaking the truth in love'
(Eph 4:12, 15-16)
4. The Identity of the Community is Family
- a. in the Old Testament Israel is the 'household' of God.
(Jer 38:33; Amos 5:25)
 - b. occasionally fellow members are referred to as 'brothers'
(Lev 10:4; 19:17; Deut 15:3)
 - c. Israel is not called *God's* family as such.
 - d. in the New Testament the church is 'the household of God'
(Acts 15:7-11; 14-18; Rom 9:24-26; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; Gal; 3:26-29; 6:10; Eph 1:3-7; 2:14-22; 1 Tim 3:15; Heb 3:6; 10:21; 1 Pet 2:5,9)
 - e. this is because the head of the household is God the Father.
(1 Thess 1:1,3; 3:1; 2 Thess 1:1-2; 2:16)
 - f. it is through their union with Christ that believers are members of God's family.
(Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:4-6)
 - g. this is the relationship of adult and maturing children to the Father.
(Gal 4:4-6; Eph 4:13-16)
 - h. it is a relationship of mutual indwelling.
(2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:18, 22; Col 3:1ff)

- i. the term *adelphos*, ‘brother’, abounds in the New Testament.
 - (1) in relation to Jesus and believers.
(Matt 12:49; 25:40; 28:10; John 20:17; Rom 8:29; Heb 2:11,12,17)
 - (2) in Christian relationships
(Luke 22:32; John 21:23; Acts 6:3; 9:30; Rom 15:14; 1 Cor 15:58; Phil 3:1, 4:1; James 1:2; 1 Pet 1:22; Rev 6:11 etc)
- j. there are a host of other family related terms.
 - (1) fathers
(1 Cor 4:15; 1 Thess 2:11; 1 John 2:13-14)
 - (2) mothers
(Rom 16:13)
 - (3) sisters
(Mark 10:29; Rom 16:11; 1 Tim 5:2; Phm 2; James 2:15)
 - (4) sons
(1 Cor 4:17; Phil 2:22; Phm 10)
- k. these terms embody a certain quality of relationship which was expected of the church.
- l. this included all the fruit of the Spirit and many other attitudes.
- m. ‘love’ is the principal fruit
(Rom 12:9-10; 1 Cor 13:4-8a; Gal 5:6,14,22; 1 Thess 3:12; 1 Pet 1:22 etc)
- n. in numerous texts, which call for care, consolation, service, compassion, affection etc. the motivating force is love.
(Rom 15:1-2,5-6; 1 Cor 12:25-26; Gal 6:2; Eph 4:32-5:2; Phil 2:1-4; Col 3:12-14 etc)
- o. these acts involve an empathetic identification which passes into substitution, hence the power of Christian love is sacrifice which draws its reality from the sacrifice of Christ.
(Eph 4:32-5:2; Phil 2:17; 4:8; 1 Thess 1:3)

5. The Growth and Expansion of the Community

1. Call to oneness

↓
(Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 1:10; 10:17; 12-13,20; 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 2:16; 4:3-4; Phil 1:27; Col 3:15)

2. Expressed in diversity

↓
(Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:24-26; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:14-15; 4:7-16; 1 Pet 4:10-11)

3. Empathetic relationships: participatory suffering, weakness, interdependence, joy etc in all of life.

↓
(Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:16; Eph 4:25)

4. Weakness and conflict.

↓
(1 Cor 11:18-19)

5. Confession and forgiveness at personal cost.

↓
(James 5:16; 1 John 1:9; Luke 17:3; 2 Cor 2:7,10; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13)

6. Experience and expression of:

(1) the reconciling power of the cross.

(Eph 2:15-16; Col 1:22)

(2) unconditional grace and love.

(John 13:34; Gal 5:13-14; Eph 5:2; 1 Pet 4:10)

(3) the power of the Holy Spirit.

(Acts 9:3; Rom 8:2ff; 14:17; 15:13; 1 Cor 6:19 etc)

7. Oneness expressed in the new humanity.

↓
(John 17:21, 23; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:15)

8. People added to the community.

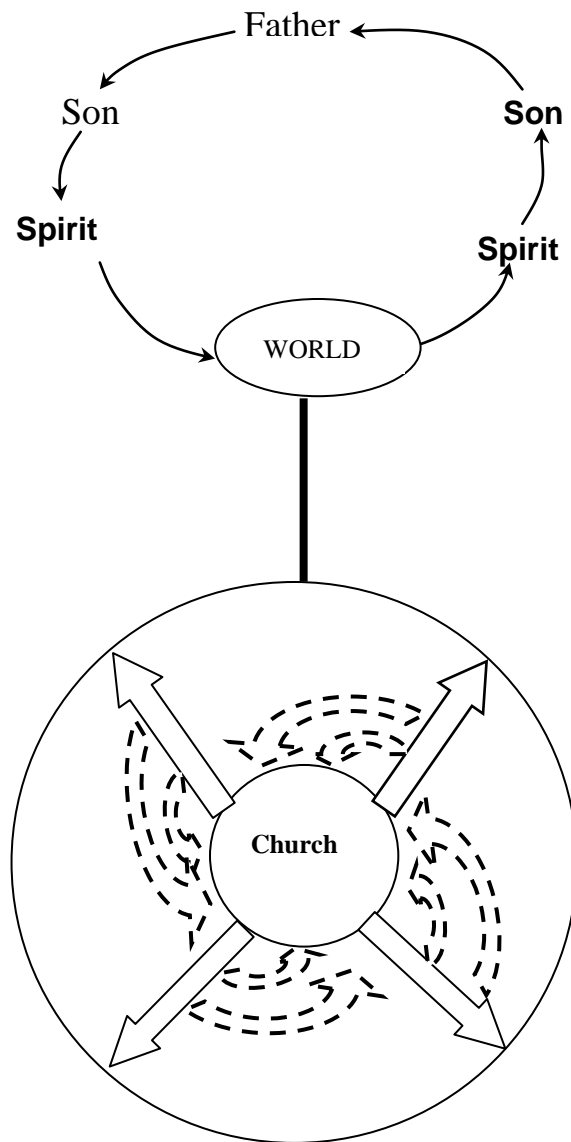
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(Acts 2:41,47; 5:14; 9:31; 16:5)

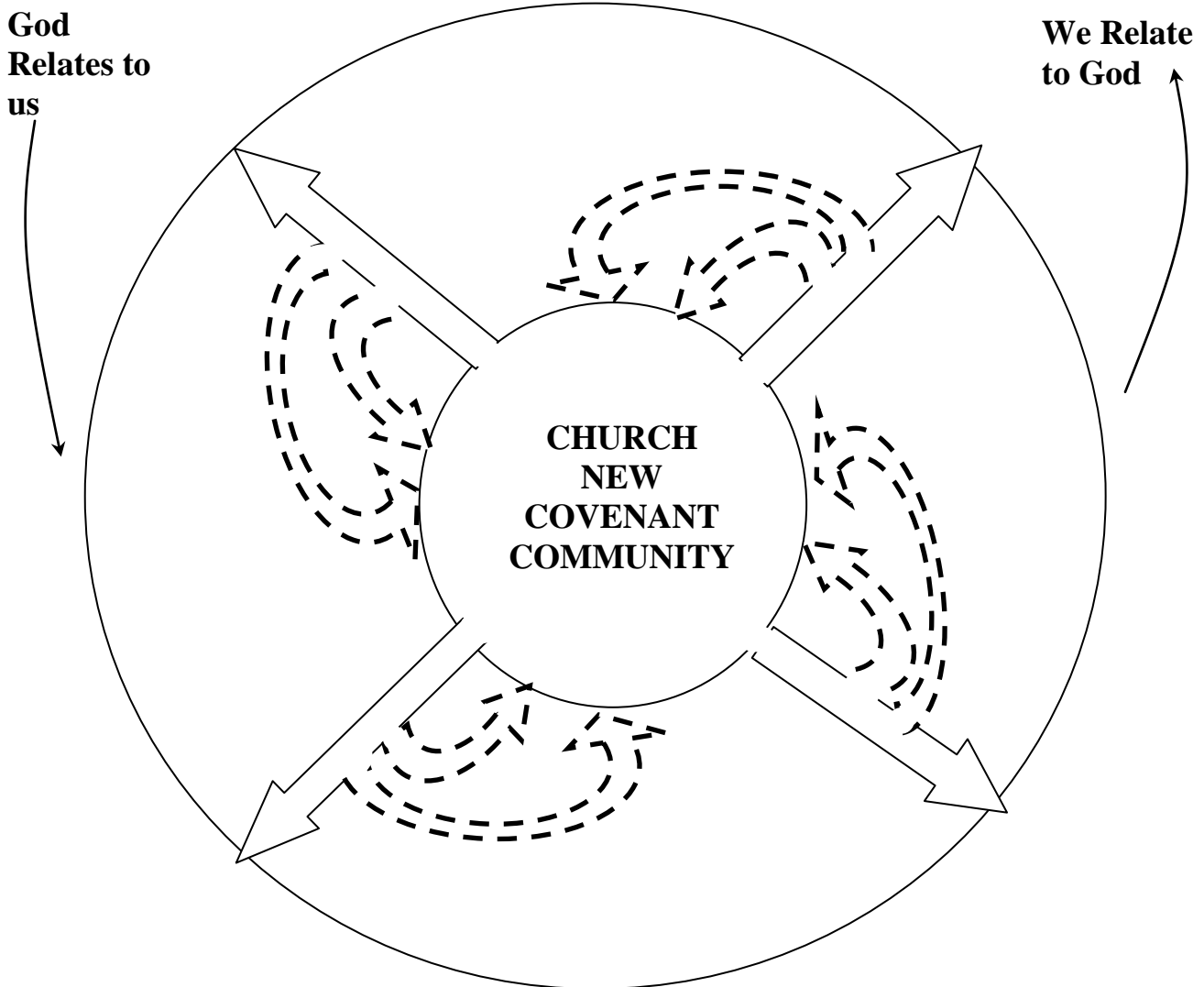
9. Multiplication and expansion through inclusion: the family grows and forms new communities.

(Gen 1:26-28; Acts 12:24-13:3ff; 19:20 etc)

God relates to us

We relate to God





As the church penetrates the world in the power of the gospel of the kingdom of God, mission is actualised through the expanding image of God and the divine plan is realised.

“that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28)

Confused attitudes to “church”

Institutionalism: Only the static boundary counts

Spiritualism: Only dynamic movement counts

Bipolar position: The direction shows where the boundary is.
Schwarz (1999:40-43) adaptation of Hiebert (1979)

SECTION 2: MINISTRY

A: Introduction to the Nature of Ministry

1. Background Considerations

1. Biblical Terminology

The dominant New Testament terms to do with ministry (*diakoneo, leitourgeo, doulos*), simply imply 'service'.

2. The Nature of Ministry: Trinitarian Dimensions

The essential nature of ministry is the giving of life. The life of the trinity consists of mutual self – giving love. The Father, Son and Spirit give of all they have to one another, the outflowing of this giving will form the essence of ministry.

2. Salvation History and Ministry

1. The Nature of Ministry: Creation and Preservation

According to Paul, God is the one who “gives all people life and breath and everything.” (Acts 17:28). The Father provides every good gift (James 1:17) to righteous and unrighteous alike (Matt 5:45), all blessedness comes from God (Acts 14:17). It is not too much to say that God makes himself the servant of humanity.

2. The Nature of Ministry: Sin

Being made, together, in the image of God, Adam and Eve had opportunity to serve one another in love. They were called to minister together as priests in creation by tending the earth, their rule over it would have reflected the kingdom of God and their faithfulness to the Word of God would have actualised their prophetic ministry.

Since sin is essentially a denial of God's Fatherly goodness, the result of “ the knowledge of good and evil “ is to turn humans into individuals who are basically centred on self - advancement. With the loss of true personhood, that is, true reflection of the communal nature of God, ministry was abandoned.

3. The Nature of Ministry: The Redeeming Ministries of the Old Testament

1. The history of covenant is the history of God calling humanity into partnership with himself in all areas of existence. God serves Abraham and his seed through covenant, so that they in turn, as servants of God, become the agents of universal blessing (Genesis 12:1 – 3).
2. Israel, if true to her calling, will be a kingdom of priests, mediating the knowledge of God in priestly service as a light to the world (Ex 19:5 – 6; Isa 60:1; 62:2).
3. In practice, under the Mosaic dispensation, ministry in the old covenant is focussed on prophets, priests and kings.
4. In the end time this will undergo a radical alteration, for all of God's people will be taken into ministry, the key to this is the internalisation of the knowledge of God and the outpouring of the Spirit (Jer 31:31 –34; Joel 2:28 – 32; Acts 2:12ff).

5. Alongside these expectations is the prophetic testimony to the coming of the complete minister, Messiah, in whom the Spirit will express the fullness of God (Isa 9:6 –9; 11:2).
6. In Second Isaiah are found the so called Servant Songs which express this from another angle:

- a. The Servant Songs : Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13 – 53:12

- b. The Servant is :

1. Called by God – Isa 42:1; 49:1, 5

Cf. Jesus – Mt 3:16-17; 17:5; 12:18-20; Mt 1:20
Paul – Gal 1:15.

2. Anointed of God for service – Isa 42:1b

Cf. Jesus – Mt 2:16; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38

Christians – Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8; 1 John 2:20, 27

3. Given words by God – Isa 49:2; 50:4

Cf. Jesus – Rev 1:16, 2:12; 19:5; John 3:34; 14:10, 24; 17:8

Christians – Luke 21:15; 2 Tim 4:17

4. Lays down his life for others – Isa 50:6; 52:13 – 53:12

Cf. Jesus – Mt 26:67; Luke 22:63; numerous allusions,
e.g. Mt 8:17; John 10:14-18

Christians – Phil 2:17; 2 Tim 4:6; 1 John 3:16 etc

5. Receives the fruit of his labour – Isa 42:7; 49:4-6; 53:12

Cf. Jesus – Luke 4:18; Acts 13:47; 26:23 etc

Christians – 1 Cor 15:58; Gal 6:9; Heb 6:10.

4. The Nature of Ministry: Incarnation

1. Jesus is the One Sent by the Father

This is the source of Jesus' authority in ministry. He is conscious of being sent by the Father (John 4:34; 5:23,30; 6:29,38; 7:16; 9:4 etc.), as such he is the life of the Father (John 14:6) and the gift of the Father (John 4:10). He is the one through whom the Father will include men and women in his own life and love.

2. Jesus is the Reality of the Covenant

(2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2; 89; 110; Isa 42:6; 49:8; Matt 26:28; Heb 7:22; 8:6; 9:15 12:24; 13:20 - 21)

3. Jesus is the True Prophet, Priest and King

(this is covered in *Survey of Biblical Doctrine* and *Jesus the Christ*.)

4. Jesus is the Servant of the Lord

Jesus is the Servant of the Lord whose entire life work is a matter of service. It is in terms of service that he expresses his self-understanding of his coming (Luke 4:16-21; Mark 10:45).

He is marked out in the role of Yahweh's Servant by God's own testimony (Mark 1:11; John 1:29,36), a subject which is consistently on his mind (Mark 9:31; 10:33,45; 14:21,24,41) especially as he approaches death (Luke 22:37; John 13:4ff; Mt 26:28).

The authors of the New Testament all emphasize the nature of Jesus' servanthood (Acts 3:13,26; 4:27, 30; 8:32-33; Phil 2:6-11; 1 Peter 2:21ff).

5. Jesus is Filled with the Spirit

(Matt 11:20-33; 13,54,58; Mark 6:2-5; Luke 4:18 –21,36; 5:17; 6:19; 10:13; 19:37; Acts 10:38 etc.)

The purpose of the presence of the Spirit in the life of Jesus is that he may accomplish the life – giving purposes of the Father.

6. Jesus is the Reality of all Ministries

Jesus contains in himself the fullness of the new covenant ministries. He is the apostle (Heb 3:1), prophet (Luke 13:33), evangelist (Mark 1:15), pastor (John 10:11; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:4; Heb 13:20) and teacher (Mark 1:27; John 13:13). Likewise he is called 'slave' (Phil.2:7), 'deacon' (Luke 22:27; Rom 15:8 etc), 'priest' (Heb 2:17; 5:5; 8:1) and 'overseer/bishop' (1 Peter 2:25; 5:4). This means that all New Testament ministries are essentially of the same order, that is, as sharing in the ministry of Christ they are non - hierarchical.

The grace that is manifested in ministry is not a created reality (Roman Catholicism) nor acts or influences divorced from the person of Christ (Protestantism). Ministry does not exist outside of Jesus.

5. The Nature of Ministry: Participation in the Ministry of Christ

1. Christ Appoints the Ministers of the New Covenant

a. As the ascended Lord, Jesus gives the '5-fold' ministry gifts for the good of the whole Church (Acts 2:33; Eph 4:7-11).

b. This is repeatedly stated in terms of the life of New Testament ministers: Paul (Acts 9:15f; 26:15ff., Rom 1:1, 1 Cor 1:1, etc.), Peter (1 Peter 1:1, 2 Peter 1:1), James (1:1), Jude (1:1) and John (Rev 1:1).

2. Jesus Shares his Ministry through the Spirit

- a. The gift of the Spirit means that the eschatological age of the new covenant has arrived, Jesus imparts the knowledge of the Father's love through the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:17ff).
- b. The connection between the Spirit and ministry, e.g. Acts 8:29;13:1ff; 2 Cor 3:4ff ; is not external but the way in which we are included in the expression of the life of God.

3. Jesus Shares Himself as the Gift of the Life of the Father

- a. Jesus does not stand to Christian ministry as an historical example to a present imitation, but the life of Christ is the content of Christian ministry. Jesus seeks to serve his Bride through the power of the Holy Spirit by the gifts he gives in the Body.

Having ascended to the Father's right hand where he has received the promise of the Spirit, the reigning Lord loves the Church through the Spirit as the content of his glorious life (Acts 2:33). This glorious ministry of the Spirit, is, in Paul's words, 'the ministry of justification' (2 Cor.3:9). Justification, as the verdict first passed on Christ (Rom 1:4; 1 Tim 3:16) and then on the believer (Rom 5:1), sums up the entire content of the new covenant benefits (cf. 2 Cor 3:6). Here as in all ministry the pattern is : Christ receives from the Father, believers receive from Christ, believers pass on what they have received from Christ.

- b. From another angle, this is 'the ministry of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:18). God, having reconciled the world to himself in Christ (2 Cor 5:19); Rom 5:10; Col 1:20), now draws us covenantly into relationship with himself so that we become his fellow workers (1 Cor 3:9) in the service of the gospel for the salvation of the world.

4. Servants of One Another in Love.

As Christ has commanded us to serve each other (Luke 22:26; John 13:15-17), we must identify ourselves as servants of God (Acts 20:19; Rom 12:11; 1 Peter 2:16; Rev 1:1), and all acts of ministry as acts of service (Acts 6:1, 4; 19:22; 20:24; 1 Cor 16:15; 2 Cor 4:5; Phm 13).

3. Ministerial Authority

1. Authority as Institutional

The right to require obedience is referred back to a place in a chain of command. Essentially, the levels of authority constitute the institution, which may be ecclesiastical, e.g. Roman Catholicism; doctrinal, e.g. conservative Evangelicalism; or charismatic, e.g. Pentecostalism.

Not to obey is represented as unfaithfulness to ‘mother Church’, or ‘the Bible’, or a rejection of God’s ‘anointed leader’. There is an implicit identification between the ‘officers’, ‘orders’ or ‘ministries’ of the Church and the authority of God.

2. Authority as Pragmatic

This operates in terms of a functional approach to life and ministry. In practice the pastor is respected to the degree that he ‘gets results’. This may be defined in terms of church attendance, numbers of converts, teaching ability, prophetic revelation and so on.

In practice, where institutional authority leads to clerical control, this position leads to control by strong-minded people in the congregation. (Or, perhaps, elders versus pastors.)

3. Authority as Relational

Whereas the institutional position thinks of authority as inhering in persons per se, and the pragmatic position views authority as existing only in the operation of a gift, this position understands the Scripture to teach that authority inheres in gifted persons as they relate to others in service. This can be developed from a trinitarian theology of relationship, where the differentiation in the order of authority between the persons is an expression of their love for each other Father, Son, Spirit in their distinction.

a. The corporate nature of authority

As the Spirit and the Son exist in communion with the Father, the gifts which they bring can only properly exist in the fellowship of the household of God, the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. The gifts of ministry exist within the sphere of the Spirit as the bond of love between Christ and the church. Where this love is not acknowledged there can only be disorder and abuse.

b. The priority of service

(i) Authority as gracious gift

The pattern of authority and submission revealed in the relationship between Jesus and the Father is the true content of all human authority.

The most ultimate statement that Jesus makes in this regard is that he ‘lives’ because of the Father (John 5:26; 6:57). Jesus is both Son of God and Son of Man because of the eternal initiating love of the Father. Although not representing an event in time, the Son is the gift of the Father. (The Holy Spirit the gift of Father and Son). The complete obedience of Jesus to the Father (John 5:30) is a response to this gift of life. Submission then is a voluntary recognition (gratitude) of the exercise of a life-giving

capacity, and authority is the ability to give for the good of another in love. The greater the capacity to give, the greater the authority. Likewise, the more one receives, the greater the mediated authority to give.

It follows then that Jesus, who gives his life freely for all in love for God and all of humanity (Mark 10:45; John 10:17-18), receives universal authority from the Father (John 17:2; Mt 28:19).

This is the authority of the mediator of eternal life (1 Tim 2:5), that resurrection life and glory imparted to the Son by the Father in virtue of his obedient suffering death (Phil 2:5-11).

(ii) Authority relates to suffering

The authority of Christ to bring salvation surpasses that of both the authority of God in creation and the redemption available under the old covenant. The new covenant effected in Christ's blood (Matt 26:28) issues in the Kingdom of God in the power of the new creation. This is a whole new order (2 Cor.5:17) of an eschatological kind (end-time, ultimate) impossible before the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The unsurpassable nature of this new reality in Christ came into existence only through his bearing away of sin, wrath, death, guilt and Satanic oppression in the cross, e.g., John 1:29; Rom 3:21ff; Col 2:15 f. It is the voluntary suffering of Christ in obedience to the Father, in love for the fallen creation, which constitutes the inner reality of his authority to bring in the new creation.

As a Son, he was perfected in his character, and so ability to receive from the Father, by his suffering (Heb 2:10; 5:8-9). This is a principle which relates to all the acts of the sons of God – the greater the suffering the greater the glory (Rom 8:17).

Paul constantly reminds his churches that his suffering is for their glory (Eph 3:13). As he fills up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of the Church the body of Christ is edified (Col 1:24). The pattern of the death and resurrection of Christ is repeated in the life of the apostle, as through his ministry he imparts eternal life to the Body of believers. '...always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be visible in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you' (2 Cor 4:10-12 cf. 2 Cor 1:8-9). This principle of suffering for the good of others is the essential component of all authentic Christian ministry.

c. Submission relates to grace.

All ministry exists to build up the whole Church into 'the measure of the full stature of Christ' (Eph 4:13). This means that submission is not institutional nor functional but consists in a willingness to receive the grace of Christ (Christ) through the mediation of a human minister. The goal and the manifestation of this are one, Christ-likeness (Rom 8:28; 2 Cor 11:2). The richer the expression of the grace of

God in the gospel, the greater the authority of the minister and the deeper the submission required and evoked. Gratitude for grace issues in love and obedience.

4. Some Key Leadership Verses in the New Testament

1. The absence of lordship

Mt 23:8 – “all brothers and sisters”

Mark 10:42-43 – “their rulers lord it over them ... But it is not so among you ... the first among you must be the slave of all”.

2 Cor 1:24 - “I do not mean to imply that we lord it over your faith”

1 Peter 5:3 - “Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock”.

2. Texts to do with obedience

Hebrews 13:17 - “Obey your leaders and submit to them ...”

Greek: *peitho* ‘to be persuaded’, and so to follow

3. Texts to do with rule

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 - ‘respect those who labour among you and are
over you in the Lord...’

1 Timothy 5:17 - ‘Let the elders who rule well ...’

Greek: *proistemi*, can mean ‘to care for’

Arguably this is the true tense, as in another passage (1 Tim 3:4-5) the synonym used for this word (v5b) certainly means “care for”.

4. Every Member Ministry

1. Ministry belongs to the Community

- a. Jesus chose the twelve apostles to be with him
(Mark 3:13 –14)
- b. They were not “ordained” in a religious sense, but constituted the nucleus of the new community of God’s people. Their ministry was an outworking of their relationship with Jesus as part of the covenant community
- c. It is in the fellowship of love and service that different expressions of grace begin to emerge. This is strikingly illustrated by Paul’s emphasis on the body and love in 1Corinthians 12 and 14.
- d. The gifts of ministry are not individual possessions, nor simply empowerment for a particular function. Both of these approaches depersonalise ministry by removing it from its relational context.
- e. It is in the bond of love with other persons, realised in the (eternal) power of the Holy Spirit, that ministries exist. Unity is the medium in which gifts are living realities embodied in persons.

2. Every Christian is set aside for Ministry

- a. The distinction between “lay ministry” and “clerical’ or “ordained” ministry is foreign to the New Testament.
- b. The background for this is the covenantal responsibility of the whole people (L.X.X. *laos*) of God to be a witness to the world.
(Ex 19:5 – 6; Lev 11: 44ff., Num 15:40., Deut 7:60)
- c. In practice public ministry was focussed in specially appointed ministers. This established a hierarchy of approach to a holy deity. The sacrificial role of a priestly hierarchy concentrated in the tribe of Levi was part of the cult associated with the temple as the authorised site of worship.
- d. This whole apparatus is abolished by the new covenant, as argued extensively in Hebrews, stated expressly by Jesus in John 4: 21 – 25 and made plain by the fact that the church is now the temple of God (see before).
- e. That there be a basic distinction within the community of God is rendered impossible by the fact that God now dwells in his people.
- f. The New Testament uses the Greek word *laos* not to refer to those who are unordained, but to the church as a whole as the people of God.
(Acts 15:14; 18:10; Rom 9: 25f; 2 Cor 6:16; Tit 2:14; 1 Pet 2:9f; Heb 4:9; 8:10; 10:30; 13:12; Rev 18:4)
- g. By the nature of the case all Christian ministry must be “lay ministry”.
- h. This is empirically true in the New Testament where there are numerous cases of ministry being exercised by unnamed or untitled individuals.
(Acts 9:10; Rom 12:4 –8; 1 Cor 5:3ff., 12 – 14; Eph 4:15 –16; 1 Pet 4:10 – 11 etc.)

3. The Priesthood of All believers

- a. This subject was central to the debates between the Reformers and Roman Catholicism over the issue of ministry.
- b. Priesthood is never attributed to an individual Christian in the New Testament. The language associated with this ministry seems to have been deliberately avoided. All mediation is concentrated in the person of Jesus.
(John 14:6; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 7:22; 8:6; 9:15)
- c. There are however a number of references to priesthood as a property of the Christian community. These seem to have as a basic background Exodus 19:5 –6.
- d. Priesthood is a prerogative of the people of God as a whole.
- e. It is best not to individualise this to refer to each believer as a priest. This may distract from the completed sacrifice of Christ.
(Heb 7:27; 9:12,28;10:10)
- f. Where priestly language is used in the New Testament it is of the devotional life of worship and praise.
(Rom 12:1; Phil 2:17; 3:3; Heb 12:28; 13:15)
- g. Believers having access to God are able to share in the High Priesthood of Christ by offering themselves in love and obedience to God and in love and service to others.
(Eph 2:18; Heb 10:19; 1 Tim 2:1)

5. Introduction to Ministry Gifts

1. Varieties of Ministries

- a. the New Testament contains a broad description of activities which can properly be considered ministries
- b. these are generally not formalised, as any activity in which Christian love is expressed can properly be designated ministry, for all such acts are acts of service
- c. they include such things as waiting at tables (Acts 6:1), teaching (Acts 6:4), material assistance (Acts 19:22; 20:24), church work (1 Cor 16:15), working for the sake of others (2 Cor 4:5), prison visiting (Phlm 13) etc.
- d. various lists of ministry gifts appear in the New Testament, but these are generally ad hoc and so non – definitive.

(Acts 13:1; Rom 12:6- 8; 1 Cor 12: 8 –10, 28,30; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 4: 10 –11)

2. Classification of Ministries

- a. various attempts have been made to classify the ministries of the New Testament
- b. some have made a 3 fold distinction between natural or personal gifts (Rom 12:6-9), ministry gifts (Eph 4:7-11) and entirely spiritual and supernatural gifts (1 Cor 12:8-10)
- c. this assumes a hard and fast division between the lists and assumes in some way that they are exhaustive
- d. another view sees distinct ministries of the word (apostles, prophets, teachers), of healing (miracles, healers), of administration (helpers, administrators) and of ecstasy (tongues)
- e. this approach assumes a level of formation in the New Testament that denies its spontaneity
- f. another classification distinguishes between the “natural” and the “spiritual”
- g. in Paul’s thinking however God is sovereign over all (Rom 11:33-36 etc). Whatever believers have is a gift (1 Cor 4:7). Whether a gift may seem to be a mix of the natural and the supernatural, or wholly supernatural, it is all God’s gift.
(The notion of a completely supernatural gift is simplistic, even in the case of miracles ordinary human words are used.
- h. the order in which the gifts appear does not seem to be a ranking, with the exception of the following:
 - (i) apostles, prophets and teachers always appear in this sequence(Eph 2:20; 3:5;4:11; 1 Cor 12:28 – 29; Rev 18:20), not because of a hierarchy, but because of their sequencing in founding and building up the church.
 - (ii) tongues is consistently placed last in 1 Corinthians because of its exaggerated status in the Corinthian church.
 - (iii) these emphases maintain the “body” analogy in Paul’s letter

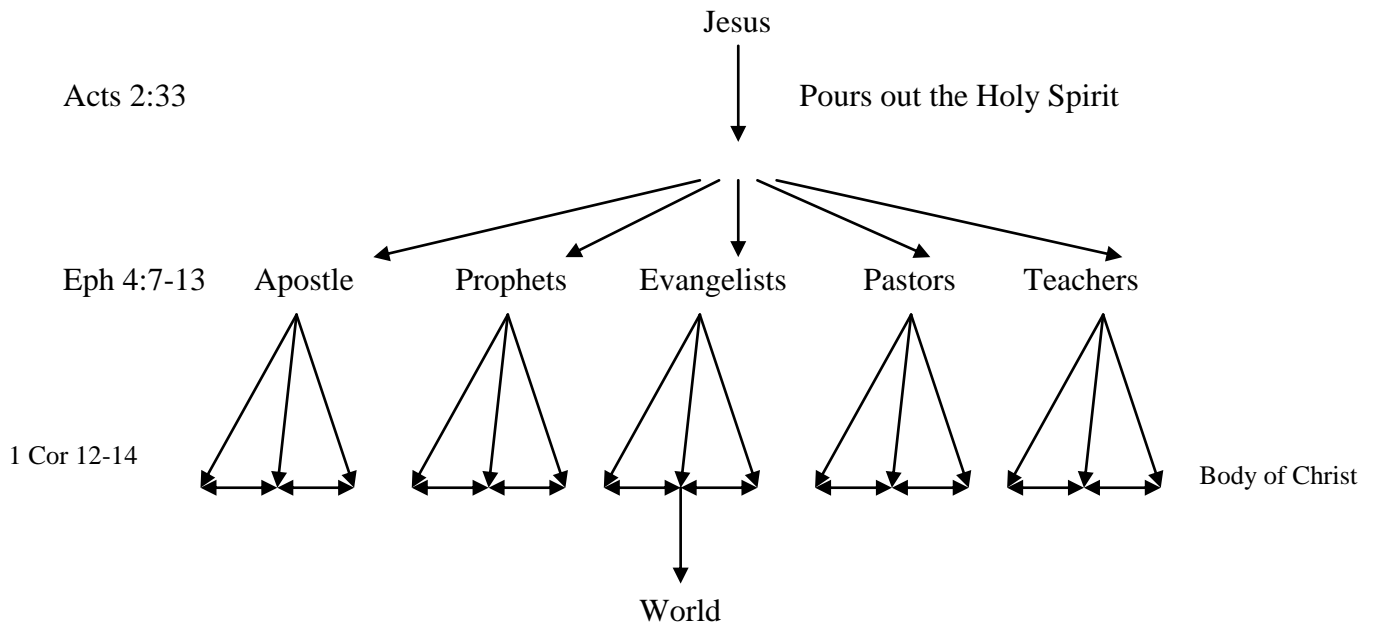
3. Office or Charism?

- a. some scholarship has claimed to find a distinction between office bearers and charismatic ministries in the New Testament
- b. offices are seen as forms of institutionalisation which developed in the later parts of the New Testament, especially as represented in the Pastoral Epistles
- c. offices are associated with recognition, permanency, separation from other members of a church, payment, ordination and so on
- d. many of these elements are already found however in Paul's early letters
(1 Cor 16:25; 1 Thess 5:12; 2 Cor 11: 7 – 9; etc.)
- e. charismatic ministries are Spirit inspired gifts given sovereignly by God for the upbuilding of the church
(1 Cor 12 –14; Rom 12: 6 –8 etc.)
- f. there seems to be no contradiction in the coexistence of these elements in the early church. In the eschatological age *whatever* builds up the body of Christ must be a charism and supernatural
- g. spiritual endowment manifested over a period of time leads to recognition and various of the other facets associated with office. The first to be seen as emerging office holders were the charismatic apostle, prophet and teacher. Other offices, such as elder, bishop/overseer and deacon emerged later.

4. Trinitarian and Christological Structures of Ministry

- a. the trinitarian context of spiritual gifts.
- b. 1 Corinthinans 12:4-6 is an (unconscious) trinitarian formula
- c. it tells us that there are varieties of gifts (*charismata*), but the same Spirit; of service (*diakonia*), but the same Lord; of working (*energemata*), but the same God.
- d. the order here is basic: Spirit, Lord (Son), God (Father)
- e. the association can be explained as follows:
 - (1) “gifts” are associated with the Spirit in these chapters.
 - (2) “service” is especially connected with the ministry of Jesus.
 - (3) “working”, the effective operation of power, emphasises that the Father is behind all gifts and ministries.
 - (4) the gifts of the Spirit enact ministries given by Jesus to fulfil the Father’s plan.
 - (5) the order here is ascending and there is a full inclusion of one order in the other. cf. John 14:17,23.
- f. the centrality of Christ.
 - (i) 1 Cor 12:3; “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” sets the stage for the discussion of the work of the Spirit in the church.
 - (ii) a truly Spirit inspired person will exalt Jesus as Lord, this is the central passion of the Spirit.
 - (iii) the Spirit, via his gifts, assists the congregation to be as Christ centred as he is. (John 16:14)
 - (iv) Jesus in the Spirit, and the Spirit in Jesus pours out in the diverse form all the life of Christ: his mind, will, plan, love, power and so on. cf. John 15:15.

(v) this can be summarised diagrammatically.



B: Gifts of Ministry

1. Ephesians 4:7 -16

- a. this passage has occupied a special place in discussions about ministry
- b. part of that reason for this is that Ephesians is believed to be a circular letter, so that it represents Paul's universal rather than contextual ecclesiology. It is also an epistle which has a very elevated Christology and mature theological reflection.
- c. the foundation of the passage is the essential nature of the unity of the church as grounded in the divine persons
- d. implicit in this is that the unity of the body of Christ will be manifest in the operation of the gifts and their results as Paul will go on to explain
- e. verse 7 makes it clear that the entire body of Christ is charismatic in nature
- f. the theological locus of the passage is the ascended Christ. These gifts are therefore often called "ascension gift ministries". They are a participation in the glorified Jesus' life and continuing ministry with particular concentrations. Paul quotes Psalm 68:18 in verse 8, the gifts represent the victory of Jesus over evil powers.
- g. the persons themselves are gifts to the church. This is different from saying that a gifting is given to certain people. (It also distinguishes these gifts from the description in 1 Corinthians 12 etc.)
- h. there is some debate as to whether 4 or 5 gifts are named in verse 11. Pastor- teacher may be one gift as a definite article ("the") is lacking before teacher. For the purpose of these notes at this stage a 5 - fold ministry will be assumed.
- i. the purpose for which these gifts are given is outlined in verse 12:
 - (1) to prepare God's people
 - (2) to bring the saints into the work of their ministry
 - (3) to build up the body of Christ
- j. the end result of these ministry gifts is found in verses 13 -16:
 - (1) the unity of the faith
 - (2) knowledge of the Son of God
 - (3) maturity
 - (4) fullness of Christ
- k. the text can be read in such a way that the whole church shares in some way in apostolicity, prophecy, evangelism, pastoring and teaching. The APEPT ministry is a function of the corporate body of Christians rather than isolated individuals. This passage seems to be descriptive of the universal church and not any particular "local congregation".

- l. nothing in the text (see later) suggests that the giftings are mutually exclusive. A person may be an apostle- prophet, prophet – teacher; evangelist –pastor and so on.
- m. the interrelationship between the 5 fold ministries appears to be crucial for the fullness of the church or its maturing as a body of people in relation to God. The unity of the church cannot be realised where there is a lack of expression or coordination between these gifts. In practice the ministry of much of the church has been dominated by pastors and teachers; amongst other things this has led to the marginalisation of mission.
- n. where the 5 fold ministry operates dynamically we would anticipate an organic, self – reproducing and sustainable system of relationships to be in place. (The needs of the whole person are met through the APEPT combination. The fruit of the teacher is other teachers and so on.)

2. Apostles

1. Jesus the Archetypal Apostle

- a. the Greek word *apostolos* means “a person sent” (from *apostello*, “to send”)
- b. only once in the New Testament is Jesus explicitly called an apostle (Heb 3:1)
- c. the Gospels however reveal that Jesus had a deep consciousness of being sent by the Father
(Matt 15:24; Luke 4:18; 43; 41x in John)
- d. he associates his authority with the one who sent him, and establishes the same order of relationship with those whom he sends
(Matt 10:40; Mark 9:37)

2. The Meaning and Qualifications of Apostolicity

- a. the first requirement to be an apostle is a personal call and commissioning from the Lord Jesus Christ
(Matt 10:2; 28:18- 20; Mark 6:7,30; Luke 6:13; 9:10; 24:36 – 53; John 20:21,24; Rom 1:1,5; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1)
- b. this is closely associated with being an eye witness of the resurrection
(Acts 1:21 –22; 2:22ff; 3:12ff; 4:8ff; 5:29ff; 10:34ff; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8)
- c. to have brought a church into existence is a qualification that Paul mentions; the apostles are pioneer missionaries (1 Cor 12:12; cf. Rom 15:19); this is compatible with the ministry of the apostles recorded in Acts
(2:43; 5:12; 14:3; 15:12)
- d. another qualification for apostolicity is to preach the true gospel
(Gal 1:6 –7; 2 Cor 11 – 12)
- e. this would appear to be a function of the special insight into divine mysteries granted to the apostolate
(Rom 11: 25 –32; Eph 3:1 –6; 1 Tim 3:16)
- f. another characteristic of a true apostle is blameless integrity
(1 Cor 1:12; 2:17; 4:2; 7:2)
- g. apostles are people who exercise authority. This may be over antikingdom forces of evil (Matt 10:1; Mark 3:15; 6:7; Luke 9:1) or in the churches they had founded (1 Cor 11:7; 2 Cor 12:14ff; Phil 2:12 etc.). There is also a broader apostolic authority in the church as a whole (Romans; Colossians; James; 1Peter). Apostles had authority to impart spiritual gifts (Rom 1:11; 2 Tim 1:6).

3. Who Were the Apostles?

- a. there are a number of places where apostles additional to Paul and The Twelve appear to be named
- b. Barnabas (Acts 14:14), James (Gal 1:19); Andronicus and Junias (Rom 16:7); Silas (1 Thess 1:1; 2:6) and Timothy (2 Cor 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2:6), Apollos (1Cor 4:6,9)
- c. in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul speaks of what seems to be a wider group of eyewitnesses who are apostles
- d. some of these texts may not be clear (especially Rom 16:7 and 1 Thess), and James perhaps fits into a special category
- e. more certain however is the designation “apostles of the churches” (2 Cor 8:3 cf. Phil 2:25). This seems to distinguish those who were “apostles of Christ” from emissaries of congregations.
- f. this is compatible with the existence of a wider group of Spirit empowered pioneer missionaries who had been sent forth by Jesus to preach the gospel

4. The Apostle and the Gospel

- a. the apostles come across in scripture as primarily witnesses to Christ rather than leaders of churches
- b. the central issue for an apostle is the truth of the gospel; this comes across most clearly in Paul’s struggle with legalism and “false apostles”. He saw his apostleship as wholly in the service of the gospel (Gal 1:1). Apostolic authority is circumscribed by the gospel (Gal 2:14; 2 Cor 11:5,13; 12: 11 –12; 13:8). This explains his willingness to enter into conflict with Peter and those who had come from James in Jerusalem.
- c. apostolic authority was conditional upon the gospel and subject to the norm of the gospel.
- d. so identified is the apostle with the gospel that it is “my” or “our” gospel (Rom 2:16; 16:28; 1Thess 1:5; Rom 2:14)
- e. the central issue at stake for the apostle is faithfulness to the gospel’s universal and inclusive nature. Apostles are chosen to make known the mystery of Christ in its fullness, which entails the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God (Eph 2:11ff; 3:1ff.). This is the debate in the situations mentioned above and the apostolic council of Jerusalem (Acts 15).
- f. inclusivity through the gospel of grace is therefore of the essence of apostolicity (Gal 2:7,9)

5. The Work and the Churches

- a. this is a distinction which seems to be made in the New Testament itself (Acts 13:2; 14:26; 15:38; 1Cor 3:13- 15; 9:1,6; 16:10; Gal 6:4; Phil 2:30)

- b. there is a difference between the mission of the apostles and the churches which they planted
- c. the character of the apostolic mission is transient rather than fixed, the gathering element is secondary, this means that the work is regional not local
- d. the body metaphor is nowhere applied to the apostolic bands, their focal point seems to have been the common task and the key apostolic leader
- e. there appears to be a concentration of outward – centred giftings in the ministry team, especially evangelism
- f. the authority appears to be centred in the apostolic leader, Paul decides the movements of the group
(Acts 16:9; 18:1,18 –21; 19:21; 20:13, 16 –17; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 5:12ff)
- g. there is cooperation between the work and the churches
- h. the workers seek to nurture the churches by personal visitation and letters, sending emissaries, and praying for them
(1 Thess 1:2ff; 2Thess 1:3ff;; 3:1ff etc.)
- i. the churches seek to assist the pioneering work of the apostles by recognising and commissioning those who are called by the Spirit (Acts 13:1 –3); by forwarding financial aid (Phil 4:14 –16); by prayer (Rom 15:30 –32; Phil 1:19 –20; Col 4:18 etc.); by letters or visits (1Cor 1:11; 7:1; 16: 17 –18; Phil 2:25 etc); by assembling to hear what has taken place (Acts 14:26 –29; 18:22 –23); by sending representatives to other churches to defend the activities of the apostles (Acts 15:1ff)
- j. others seemed to have been involved with Paul in church planting (1 Cor 16:15; Philem1); or maintaining contact after doing this independently (Col 1:7; 4:12). Individuals seemed to have been commissioned by the communities for particular tasks in aiding the apostolic work (2 Cor 8:19; Phil 2:25). Paul’s itinerant co – workers were to be received by the churches to which they were sent (1 Cor 16: 10 –11; 2 Cor 7: 13 –15; 8:17,23; Col 4:7 –8)

6. The Nature of Apostolic Authority

- a. the only two occasions when Paul refers to his use of authority in a positive way are in contexts where false apostles leave him no choice
(2 Cor 10:8; 13:10)
- b. most of the Pauline metaphors are familial
(1 Cor 3:2; 4:14 – 15; 2 Cor 12:14; 1 Thess 2:7,11; Gal 4:19)
- c. in view of the desire to lead the churches to maturity the nature of the relationship is best seen as that between an adult child and a parent
- d. the self – sufficiency of the congregations in the Spirit is regularly affirmed
(Rom 15:14; 1 Thess 4:13ff.)

- e. the most common term used by Paul; in these contexts is “appeal” (23x)
(Rom 12:1; 15:30; 1 Cor 1:10; 4:16 etc)
- f. he urges passionately
(Eph 3:20; 1 Thess 4:1; 5:12; 2 Thess 2:1)
- g. Paul never uses the strong term *epititige* (“command”) for his own instructions
- h. where similar language is used it is for extreme situations
(1 Cor 11:17; 1 Thess 4:11 etc.)
- i. context and other examples (Philem 8 –9) show this is done with reluctance
- j. Paul’s desire was not to exercise authority over those churches he related to, but to partner with them in the gospel
(2 Cor 1:24; 4:5)
- k. he identifies in the strongest possible way “with” his communities
(Rom 1:12; 15:32; 16:9,21; 1 Cor 12:26; Phil 1:7; 2:2,17,25 etc.)
- l. in this way the apostle embodies the nature of the gospel of God’s Son, which is not dominance but humble service of all
- m. the ultimate authority of the apostle is the gospel. Only in so much as he remains faithful to the gospel does the apostle possess *its* authority.
- n. this is because the gospel is not just a message but a person (Rom 10:14).
- o. only by living in conformity with Christ in the gospel can the apostle exhort people to imitate himself
(1 Cor 4:6; 11:1; Gal 4:12; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:6)

7. Apostles as Fathers

- a. Paul is able to refer to himself as a spiritual father of those who were in his churches
(1 Cor 4:14- 15; 1 Thess 2:11)
- b. apostles have a unique combination of giftings which enables them both to plant churches and to mature them (Col 1:28)
- c. the spiritual fathering which constitute apostolicity would include all the (godly) elements of the life of the apostle, some of these would be: love, discipline, exhortation, provision, blessing, reproduction

8. The Apostle and Suffering

- a. sufferings endured for the sake of Christ would seem to be integral to the make up of an apostle
- b. Paul develops this theme consciously through his letters (1 Cor 4:8 – 13; 2 Cor 4:7 –12; 6:3 – 10; 11: 23- 33; Gal 6:17) and it is implicit in the rest of the New Testament (Luke 11:49f; Acts 5:18,40; 9:16; 12: 1 - 4)
- c. the apostles in fact embody the gospel which they preach, the power of the cross is made perfect in their weakness(2 Cor 12:9) so that the divine glory is revealed in their mortality (2 Cor 4:7). The sufferings of Christ and his resurrection are imparted through their ministry (Phil 3:10).
- d. as the apostle participates in the form of the life of Christ, humiliation and exaltation (Phil 2:5 – 11), the gift of the Spirit, the mark of the eschatological age, is poured out through their ministry (2 Cor 3: 1 –3). In this way the foundation of the church is laid and the body of Christ is co-constituted by the Word and the Spirit.

9. Apostles Today?

- a. this is an area of considerable disagreement amongst Christians
- b. the objections to contemporary apostleship can be summarised:
 - (1) the church was founded upon the apostles (Eph 2:20), this has been achieved
 - (2) apostles were eyewitnesses of the resurrection, Jesus has gone to heaven until the Second Coming
 - (3) apostles were chosen personally by Jesus
 - (4) apostles were authenticated by miraculous signs; since these were to attest the verbal gospel, and this role has now been taken over by the inspired scriptures, such signs are no longer extant
 - (5) apostles, as immediate representatives of Christ, has absolute authority
 - (6) apostles have an eternal and unique place of honour (Rev 21:14)
- c. reply to these points can be made as follows
 - (1) Ephesians 4 indicates that apostles are appointed *after* the ascension, their ministry will continue *until* the church reaches maturity (v. 13). If the ministry of the apostle ,with all Christian ministries, is eschatological, it must remain until the coming of Christ.
 - (2) it is explicit that to be a member of the Twelve one had to have seen the risen Lord (Acts 1: 21 – 22) and that this was Paul’s commissioning experience (Acts 9:3 – 6, 15); but this does not mean that to be an eyewitness is a sufficient criterion of apostolicity, neither is it mentioned that the broader group of apostles had seen Jesus in the body. Outside of the Gospels and Acts there is no mention of such qualifications.
 - (3) as an objection this devolves into point (2). Nothing prevents Jesus from personally calling someone to be an apostle today in a manner which could subsequently be recognised by the church. Prophets as well as apostles also have insight into divine mysteries (Eph 3:5).
 - (4) signs and wonders are not the only evidence of an apostolic ministry. Paul in fact makes much more of his suffering for the churches (2 Cor 11: 16 – 33 etc.). Philip and Stephen also did miracles. The objection assumes the cessationist position that the miraculous were restricted to the age of the apostles, and so is a circular argument.

- (5) as indicated above, the apostles did not possess such authority. In practice, such authority was embedded in the gospel; on these grounds one apostle could oppose another (Gal 2:11 –21; cf. Acts 15: 1 –35). Elders also had authority to impart spiritual gifts (1 Tim 4:14).
- (6) this argument depends on a literal interpretation of the book of Revelation. Addition of other apostles in a less foundational role would in any case not mitigate against the unique role of the original band.
- (7) the presence of false apostles implies that a larger group existed and may have been accepted in principle after the death of the majority of the first apostles (2 Cor 11:11; Gal 1:2; Rev 2:2)

10. Features of Apostolic Congregations

- a. strong on rooting believers and seekers in the Scriptures
- b. disciplined and earnest in prayer with expectation of response from God
- c. compassion for lost people
- d. obey the Great Commission
- e. vision for what people can become as disciples
- f. contextualise their language, music and style
- g. intend to include everyone in small groups
- h. prioritise the involvement of Christians in areas of their gifting
- i. provide regular pastoral care
- j. engage in multiple ministries to unchurched people

(G. Hunter, *Church for the Unchurched*, Abingdom, 1996)

3. Prophets

1. What does “Prophecy” Mean?

- a. the Old Testament Hebrew words relating to prophecy include:

- (1) *chazah* : “to gaze at, perceive, contemplate, have a vision of, to see, behold”
(Ex 18:31; Job 23:9; Pss 17:2; 27:4; Isa 1:1; 13:1; 30:10; 33:20; Ezek 13:6 –8; Mic 4:11; Hab 1:1; Zech 10:2)
- (2) *massa* : “a burden, portorage, utterance, desire”
(Prov 30:1; 31:1; 1 Chron 15:22,27; 2 Chron 17:11; Isa 13:1; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; Jer 23:33,34,36; Hab 1:1)
- (3) *naba* : “to prophesy”
(1 Sam 10:11; Jer 2:8; 26:11; 29:26 –27; Ezek 37:7; Joel 2:28; Am 3:8)

(3) *nebuwah* : “a prediction”
(2 Chron 9:29; 15:8; Neh 6:12)

(4) *nataph* : “to ooze”
(Judges 5:4; Ezek 21:2; Am 7:16; Mic 2:6,11)

b. the New Testament

(1) the New Testament Greek uses only one word, *prophetuo*, to describe prophecy

(2) it can be translated “proclaim, speak forth, prophesy, foretell, speak under divine inspiration, break forth etc.”

2. Prophecy in the Old Testament

a. the full scope of this subject is beyond these notes

b. the Old Testament prophets were authoritative communicators of the mind and heart of God

c. they were “messengers of Yahweh” because they had been admitted into the “council of Yahweh”

(Isa 6:1ff; Jer 23:18 – 22; Am 3:7)

d. they were called to become participants in the execution of the divine decree

(Isa 20:2; Jer 27:2; 50:1; Hag 1:1; Mal 1:1)

e. revelation could be in the form of an audible voice or in dreams or visions

(Isa 8:11; 22:14; Jer 1:9ff; 5:14; Ezek 1:14ff; 37:1ff; Am 7 – 9; Hag 1:1; Mal 1:1)

f. the common introduction of prophetic utterances was the messenger formula “thus says Yahweh”

g. prophetic speech took many forms: hymns (Am 4:13; 5:8f; 9:5f), songs (Isa 12), law (Isa 1:10 – 17; Am 5: 21 – 24); parable (Isa 5: 1- 7); pronouncement of absolution (Isa 41:8ff; 43: 1- 4; 44:1- 5); laments (Jer 9:16 – 21; Am 5:1- 5); wisdom sayings (Am 3:3- 8); dramatised legal proceedings (Isa 1:18- 20; 3:13 – 15; Mic 6:1- 5; Hos 2:14 – 17)

h. there are three overall messages: judgement speeches to Israel, judgement speeches to foreign nations, salvation speeches to Israel

i. prophets were to be tested in relation to idolatry and accuracy in forthtelling

(Deut 13:2 – 6; 18:20; Jer 28:8 – 9)

3. Jesus as Prophet

a. Jesus regarded himself as a prophet

(Luke 1:33 cf. Matt 23:29 – 39; Mark 6:4)

b. the crowds and disciples regarded him as a prophet

(Matt 21:11 – 16; Mark 6:15,28; Luke 7:16; 24:19; John 4:19)

- c. the Gospel writers present him as “the prophet”, the successor of Moses promised in Deuteronomy 18:15
(Luke 4:18 –18; 7:16,22,39;24:19 –21; John 6:14; 7:40)
 - d. no sharp distinction is made between Jesus as prophet and Jesus as teacher
(Luke 7:39 –40)
 - e. his authoritative teaching and proclamation is prophetic speech
(Matt 8: 9- 10; Mark 1:22,27; Luke 4:36; 7:14; John 11:43)
 - f. the saying “Truly , truly I say to you” seems to go beyond the messenger formula “thus says Yahweh”. It establishes Jesus as one with unique authority from God.
(Matt 5:22,28,32,34,39,44 etc.)
4. The Nature of Prophecy as the Testimony of Jesus
- a. Jesus is not only the eschatological prophet but the subject of prophecy
 - b. this is expressly stated: “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19:10)
 - c. it was the Spirit of Christ who was active in the Old Testament prophets.
(1 Peter 1:10-11)
 - d. the Old Testament prophets prophesied concerning the Messiah.
(2 Sam 7:1-16; Isa 9:1-7; 11:1-11; Mic 5:2-5; Zech 3:8-9; 9:9-10; Luke 1:70; 24:25-27; 44-47 etc.)
 - e. the proper or ultimate subject or realisation of *all* Old Testament prophecy is the Messiah (Acts 13:27, 40; 24:14; 26:22)
 - f. the total witness of the New Testament record is explicitly to Jesus.
 - (i) the proclamation of John the Baptist.
(Matt 1:11-12; Mark 1:6-8; Luke 3:15-17; John 3:29-34)
 - (ii) the Gospel record.
(Matt 1:1; Mark 1:1; Luke ; John 20:30-31)
 - (iii) the preaching of the apostles.
(Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; 2:22ff; 3:1ff etc; 1 Cor 1:6; 2:1; 2 Thess 1:10; 1 Pet 5:1; 1 John 1:1-3; Rev 1:2, 2:9)
 - (iv) the ministry of all believers.
(Acts 2:17-21; Rev 2:13, 12:10-11, 19:40)
 - g. this helps explain the place of prophecy in the New Testament

5. The Scope and Prominence of Prophecy in the New Testament

a. prophecy in the books of the New Testament

(1) the Synoptic Gospels

- a. the main material here deals with the person of Jesus (see before)
- b. Matthew seems to describe the disciples as prophets (10:4; 13:17; 23:29,34)
- c. prophets receive a commission (5:12; 10:4)
- d. false prophets are known by their fruit (7:15- 23 cf. Luke 6:43 –44)
- e. Luke sets the coming of Jesus in a prophetic environment (1:41,67; 2:25f,36)

(2) the Johannine Literature

- a. John's Gospel and the three Johannine letters show a disinterest in church order but they emphasise the work of the Paraclete/Holy Spirit, all of which are part of a prophetic environment
- b. allusions to prophetic activity occur in the letters (1 John 2:20,27; 4:1 –3)
- c. Revelation claims to be a prophetic book (1:3; 22:7,10,18,19)
- d. it is cast as predictive (1:1; 2:16; 3:11; 22:6,7,12,20)
- e. John the Seer insists on the final authority of his words (1:3; 21:5; 22:6,18 –19)
- f. prophets appear as a group throughout the book (10:7; 11:18; 16:6; 18:20,24; 22: 6,9)
- g. the testimony borne by all Christians to Jesus (1:7; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11 etc.) is prophecy (19:10)

(3) Acts

- a. the new dispensation of the Spirit means that all believers are given the gift of prophecy (2:17 –18,38; 4:31; 10:46; 19:6)
- b. prophets functioned in different cities (11:27 –28; 13:1; 21:10)
- c. prophets foretell (11:28; 20:23- 25), declare judgement (21:11; 28:25 –28), exhort and strengthen (11:23; 13:15 –16;15:32; 16:40), give guidance (13:1 –2; 16:6 – 7)

(4) Pauline Epistles

- a. Paul's call and commissioning is set in terms similar to that of Old Testament prophets
- b. he is set apart by God before his birth (Gal 1:15 cf. Isa 49:1; Jer 14)

- c. he is linked with prophets (Acts 13:1ff)
 - d. like the Old Testament prophets he is a servant of Christ (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; ; Phil 1:1 cf. 2 Ki 9:7; Jer 7:25; 26:5; Ezek 9:11; Zech 1:6 etc.)
 - e. he claims visions and revelations (1 Cor 14:6,18; 2 Cor 12:1 – 10; Gal 2:2)
 - f. he speaks in the place of Christ (1 Cor 7:10; 14:37)
 - g. 1 Corinthians 12 –14 contains extensive material on the nature and use of prophecy
 - h. prophets and prophetic activity are a part of the Pauline churches (Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; 1 Tim 1:8; 4:14)
- b. the New Testament contains the names of a number of prophets (Acts 11:28; 13:1 – 4; 15:32; 21:10 – 11)
 - c. other prophetic activity is described (Acts 11:27; 21:4; 1 Cor 12:28,29; 14:27,29)
 - d. the scope of prophecy may reflect degrees of prophetic inspiration
 - (1) the spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:10). This is operative in the lives of all believers.
 - (2) the charismatic gift of prophecy (Acts 2:18; Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:10)
 - (3) the office of a prophet. This represents the highest degree of prophetic inspiration. Those named above and in the gift lists (below) operated in this ministry.
 - (4) the inspiration of scripture (1 Tim 3:15 –16; 2 Pet 1:19 –21; Rev 22: 18- 19). This degree of revelation is unique and unrepeatable.
 - e. the place of prophecy in the gift lists is consistently second to apostles (1 Cor 12:28- 29; Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11). In other places it ranks first (Rom 12:6; 1 Pet 4:11). Paul expressly commends prophecy as the most important charismatic gift (1 Cor 14:1).
 - f. prophets are foundational to the church (Eph 2:20)
 - g. females engage in prophetic activity (Luke 2:36; Acts 2:17 –18; 21:9; 1 Cor 11:5; Rev 2:20)

7. Prophecy and Revelation

- a. revelation of the mystery of Christ is constitutive of prophecy (Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 14:6,26,30; 2 Cor 12:1,17; Gal 1:12; Rev 1:1)

- b. this is supernatural in character, that is, divine self – communication
(Matt 11:25,27; 16:17; 1 Cor 2:10; Gal 1:16; Eph 3:5; Phil 3:15)
- c. this revelation is a participation in the life of God; God becomes present to the prophet as an object within their self awareness. Insight is thereby granted from God’s perspective.
- d. revelation leads to inspiration, or, more accurately, “expiration”. The prophet breathes out words in the Spirit.
(Luke 1:41f, 67; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31 etc.)
- e. revelation with expiration in words constitutes prophecy
- f. the content of revelation could be either foretelling or forthtelling

8. The Person of the Prophet

- a. a prophet will be someone with a divine commission from Christ
(Acts 13:1ff; Eph 4:11)
- b. the life of the prophet is subsumed into the plan of God.
 - (1) the prophet can speak in the Spirit (1 Cor 14:2; Rev 1:10) or the Spirit can speak in the prophet (1 Cor 12:4-11)
 - (2) this is because Christ lives in Christians through the Spirit (Rom 8:10-11) and Christians live in Christ through the Spirit (1 Cor 12:12-13)
 - (3) this means a mutual interpenetration, a perichoretic coinherence without coalescence.
 - (4) the prophet and the Spirit are both (distinct) subjects of the prophetic message. Cf. the implications of first person singular language in prophecy e.g Rev 1:7-8, 17-20; 16:15; 21:5-8; 22:7, 12-14, 18-20
 - (5) as the prophet is taken up into the trinitarian fellowship, their word, which sums up their person –in- relation to God, effects the divine plan from a position interior to this reality.
- c. a prophet will receive divine revelation about the church
(Eph 3:1 –5)
- d. a prophet will have a strong sense of the immediacy of God’s presence
(1 Cor 14:24- 25; Eph 2:6; 3:10; Col 3:1; cf. Isa 45:14; Zech 8:23)
- e. a prophet will be constrained to speak God’s word.
(Jer 1:4-10; 20:9; Ezek 3:16-18; Amos 3:7-8; Rom 15:18-19; 2 Cor 5:14; Col 1:25; 2 Tim 4:17)
- f. a prophet will have courage to obey God.
(2 Sam 12:7; 1 Kings 20:20:35f; Isa 22:15-19; Amos 7:12ff; Acts 4:13, 19-20; 31:18:9-10; Heb 11:32-33; Rev 2:13 etc)
- g. a prophet will intercede for the recipients of the message.
(Gen 18:22ff; Exod 32:7-14; 1 Sam 7:8-9; 2 Chron 32:30; Jer 14:21-22; 18:20; Dan 9; Amos 7:1-6; Rom 9:1-2; 10:1; Rev 5:8)

h. prophets will possess

- (1) a zeal for church purity (John 17:15- 17; 1 Cor 6:9 –11; Gal 5:22 –25)
- (2) a deep sensitivity to evil and a capacity to identify, define and hate unrighteousness (Rom 12:9; Heb 1:9)
- (2) a keen understanding of the dangers of false teaching (Matt 7:15; 24:11,24; Gal 1:9; 2 Cor 11:12 – 15)
- (3) an inherent dependence on God's Word to validate the prophet's message (Luke 4:17 –19; 1 Cor 15:3- 4; 2 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 4:11)
- (4) a concern for the spiritual success of God's kingdom and a sharing in the feelings of God (Matt 21: 11- 13; 23:37; Luke 13:34; John 2:14 –17; Acts 20: 17- 31)

i. prophets are agonizingly aware of the difference between what is and what could or should be (bisoiation). It is this eschatological tension, or participation in the crucifixion and resurrection in the Spirit, which generates both the word of judgement and fulfillment

j. a prophet is called to lead a mature life of self – control (1 Cor 14:32, 33; Matt 7: 15 –23)

9. The Forms of Prophecy

- a. a wide variety of prophet expressions occur in the New Testament
- b. prophets predict the future (Acts 11:28; 20:23 –25; 21: 4 –11; 27:22)
- c. prophets declare judgement (Acts 13:9ff ; 28:25- 28)
- d. they use symbolic actions (Acts 21:11)
- e. prophets exhort and strengthen the disciples (Acts 11:23; 13:15 –16; 15:32; 16:40)
- f. they give guidance and direction (Acts 13:1 –2; 16: 6- 7)
- g. they experience visions (Acts 8:26; 9:10; 10:3, 10 -16; 16:9f; 22:17- 18; 23:11; 26:19; 1 Cor 14:6, 8; 2 Cor 112: 1 –10; Gal 2:2; Rev)
- h. prophets have angelic visitations (Acts10:7- 22; 11:13; 27:23; Rev 1:1; 10:9; 17:7,15; 19:9; 21:15; 22:1,6)

10. The Effect of Prophecy

a. the purpose of prophecy is to:

- (1) convey revelation (Acts 11:27- 30; 13:1 –2; 1 Cor 14:24,25,30,31; Rev 1:10- 11; 4:1-2; 17:3; 21:10)
- (2) build up the community of faith (Acts 15:32; 1 Cor 14:3,5,17)
- (3) encourage believers (Acts 15:32; 1 Cor 14:3, 31)
- (4) comfort the church (Acts 15:32; 1 Cor 14:3)

b. this may be the result of :

- (1) conviction (1 Cor 14:24; John 4:14ff)
- (2) prediction (Matt 16:21; 24:1ff; Acts 11:27)
- (3) instruction (1 Cor 14:31)
- (4) direction (Acts 13:1 –4; 1 Tim 1:18)

c. this can be summed up in terms of the maturing of the church in life and ministry (Eph 4:9 –16)

11. The Spirit is the spirit of prophecy.

a. the possibility and the power of prophecy is in the witness of the Holy Spirit to Jesus.

b. he inspired the Old Testament prophets.

(Num 11:24-29; 1 Sam 10:9; Isa 42:1; Mic 3:8; 2 Pet 1:20 etc.)

c. he inspired John the Baptist.

(Luke 1:15)

d. he inspired the apostles.

(Acts 1:8; 2:4; 4:8, 31; etc. 1 Cor 1:5; 1 Thess 1:5; 2:13; Rev 1:3,10; 22:7,10,18,19 etc)

e. he inspires other Christian leaders.

(Acts 6:3,5,8; 5:55; 11:24)

f. he inspires all Christians

(Acts 2:17-21; 4:31; 10:44-46; 19:6-7; 1 Cor 12:3,14; Eph 5:19 etc.)

g. the Spirit does this as the ‘other Jesus’

(1) he leads into the truth of Christ.

(John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13)

(2) he convinces the world of the true identity of Jesus.

(John 16:7-11)

(3) he glorifies Jesus.

(John 16:12-15)

(4) he imparts the power of his testimony to the disciples of Christ.

(John 15:26-27)

12. Restrictions on Prophecy

a. since the prophet claims divine authority for his/her message, the testing of prophecy is important

b. this is explicitly required of the whole church
(1 Cor 14:29)

c. there is also a special charismatic gift of “discernment of spirits” (1 Cor 12:10). Context makes it clear that testing prophecy is in mind (1 Cor 14:12,14,32).

d. the life and character of the prophet need to be examined
(Matt 7:15 –23; 2 Pet 2:1- 3; Rev 2:20)

e. the content of the message must be tested

(1) is it biblical?

(2) is it centred on the gospel of Christ? (1 Cor 12:3)

(3) is it loving? (1 Cor 13)

(4) is it for community benefit? (1 Cor 12:7; 14:4,12)

12. Prophet – Teachers

a. definitionally, teaching and prophecy are distinct. The former is exposition of revelation given in scripture, the latter the utterance of personal and spontaneous revelation.

b. in practice the ministries of prophet and teacher often overlap

c. both ministries are charismatically inspired
(1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11 –12)

d. both address the mind by means of intelligent communication
(1 Cor 14:31)

e. both could draw on the scriptures; e.g. the book of Revelation

4. Evangelists

1. What does “evangelist” mean?

- a. the verb *evangelidzo* appears fifty one times in the New Testament , it means to announce good news or glad tidings.
- b. the noun *evangelion* means the gospel or the good message. It occurs 71 times in the New Testament.
- c. the good news is the saving message of Christ, with special focus on his death and resurrection
(Mark 1:1; Matt 24:14; Acts 15:7;16:25; 20:24; 1 Cor 15:1 –3; Gal 2: 2 –7; Eph 2:17 Rev 14:6; etc.)
- d. the Greek word *evangelistes* appears in the New Testament only three times (Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5), it means a person who announces the good news

2. Christ the Evangelist

- a. Jesus consistently preached the Gospel
(Matt 11:5; Luke 1:19; 2:10; 8:1; 16:16; Eph 2:17)
- b. he does this in fulfillment of scripture
(Isa 40:9; 41:27; 52:9)
- c. the content of the good news can be summarised
(Luke 4:18 –21)
- d. Jesus himself is the content of the message
- e. by the Spirit he imparts a share in his life and so evangelistic ministry

3. A Typical Evangelist: Philip

- a. Philip is full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom
(Acts 6:3)
- b. he is sent out to preach to those beyond the church
(Acts 8:5,26,40)
- c. he preaches Christ
(Acts 8:5,35)
- d. signs and wonders accompany his ministry
(Acts 8:6 – 7,13)
- e. he baptizes his converts
(Acts 8:12)

5. Pastors

1. The Meaning of “Pastor”

- a. the English word is derived from a Latin term that means to take care of sheep
- b. the Greek word for “pastor” (*poimen*) appears only in Ephesians 4:11
- c. one possible explanation of this is that this text is better translated “pastor –teachers”. In this case pastoring is qualified by the office of teaching.
- d. this may fit the qualification of eldership in terms of ability to teach (1 Tim 3:2)
- e. the verb *poimaino* “to act as a shepherd” occurs in Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28)
- f. the same verb is used by Peter when he tells elders/overseers to shepherd the flock in their charge (1 Pet 5:2)
- g. this is suggestive that pastors and elders are the same persons (see later)

2. Old Testament Images of Shepherd Leaders

- a. Joshua is shepherd – captain of God’s people (Num 27:1`5 –25)
- b. Jeremiah is a pastor – prophet (Jer 17:16)
- c. Cyrus is called “my shepherd” because of his role in restoring Israel (Isa 44:28; 45:1)
- d. leaders in general were called “shepherds” (Ezek 22:23 –31; 34:1- 10; Nah 3:18; Zech 11:3,4,8,15- 17)

3. Jesus is the Pattern Shepherd

- a. in the Old Testament God is the shepherd of Israel (Ps 23:1; 68:7; Isa 40:9 –11; Jer 23:1ff; 31:10; Ezek 34:31; Zech 13:7)
- b. the Davidic Messiah will shepherd Israel (Jer 23:4ff; Ezek 34:23; Zech 13:7)
- c. in the New Testament Jesus is the good shepherd (John 10:10) the great shepherd (Heb 13:20); the shepherd and guardian of our souls (1 Pet 2:25)
- d. he is the complete shepherd because:
 - (1) he knows the sheep by name (John 10:3,14,15)

- (2) he is heeded by the sheep (John 10:3,27)
- (3) he leads the sheep (John 10:3 –4, 27)
- (4) the sheep follow him (John 10:4 –50)
- (5) he feeds the sheep (John 10:9)
- (6) he gives life to the sheep (John 10:10,28)
- (7) he gives his life for the sheep (John 10:11,15,17 –18, Matt 26:31)
- (8) he protects the sheep (John 10:12- 13, 28 –29)
- (9) he unites the sheep (John 10:16)
- (10) he enlarges the flock (John 10:16)
- (11) he goes after lost sheep (Luke 15: - 7)
- (12) he is the eschatological judge (Matt 25:31 –46)

4. Pastors in the New Testament

(For further details see the section on elders)

- a. apostles do pastoral work
(John 21:15 –19; 1 Peter 5:1- 5)
- b. much of the tenor of Paul's letters is pastoral
(cf. 1,2 Timothy, Titus)
- c. pastors (if elders) were also teachers
(Eph 4:11; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:1 –5)
- d. pastors are to safeguard apostolic truth
(Acts 20:28 –31; Titus 1:9 –11)
- e. pastors are to be examples of life and doctrine
(Titus 2:7- 8)
- f. pastors are to embody the life of the good shepherd
(John 10:1- 16; 1Pet 2:25; 5:2 –4)

6. Teachers

1. The Nature of Teaching

- a. the terminology of teaching and preaching overlaps in the New Testament

- (1) in parallel passages (Matt 4:23; Mark 1:39; Luke 4:44)

(2) *didasko* (to teach) can be used in a comprehensive sense for Jesus preaching (Mark 1:21f; 4:1f; 8:31; 11:17; Mt 5:2; 21:23 etc.)

(3) in Acts (4:2; 5:42; 15:35; 28:31)

(4) in Paul (Col 1:28)

b. the gospel includes both *kerygma* (preaching) and *didache* (teaching)

c. a teacher is one who instructs by way of exposition and explanation

d. this involves not just the impartation of information but instruction on how to live a life pleasing to God (Deut 11:19; 20:18) by doing his will (Deut 4:1; Ps 143:10)

2. Christ the Teacher

a. of the 59 uses of *didaskolos* in the New Testament 41 of these refer to Jesus; 29 as direct address

b. Jesus conformed to some of the teaching practices of his day

(1) he accepted the title of teacher n.b. *Rabbi* (Mark 9:5; 11:21; John 1:38; 20:16)

(2) he taught in the synagogues

(3) his teaching was scripture based (Luke 4:16 ff; Matt 5:21ff; 15:3ff etc.)

(4) he settled questions of law (Luke 12:13f) and doctrine (Mark 12:18ff)

(5) his dress (Mark 14:36)

(6) he gathered students around him (Matt 11:2ff; John 1:35)

(7) he was supported by those who gathered to him (Luke 8:3; John 4:8; 13:29)

c. Jesus stood apart from the contemporary rabbinical tradition

(1) he accepted the title of prophet and prophesied (Matt 24:1ff etc.)

(2) he spoke with personal authority: "I say unto you" (Matt 5:21ff; John 3:2)

(3) he spoke with great authority (Matt 7:29; Mark 1:22,27; John 7:46 etc)

(4) he demanded a response to his own person

(5) after the resurrection the title of teacher is no longer adequate

d. Jesus used a variety of teaching methods – question, parable, hyperbole, pun, riddle, paradox, proverb, irony, metaphor etc.

(Matt 7:3 –6, 13 –14; 13:3,10ff; 22:20; Mark 4:2; Luke 15:1ff; 20:44 etc.)

- e. Jesus presents not so much a system of right doctrine but life principles which call people to a relationship with God
(Matt 18:15- 20; 19:1- 12; John 15:9 –17 etc.)
- f. the source of Jesus teaching authority is his relationship with the Father
(John 7:16; 8:28; 12:48 –50)
- g. he taught in the power of the Holy Spirit
(Luke 4:18 –19)
- h. those who follow him are apprentices rather than students
- i. his final commission is to transmit his teaching
(Matt 28:18 –20)

3. The Gospels and Teaching

- a. the Gospels themselves are teaching/preaching documents
- b. in Matthew 23:8 –12 Jesus issues a three – fold prohibition in relation to teaching
- c. the elevation of a teaching class (proto - rabbinite) seems to be the issue
- d. all disciples are able to teach (Matt 5:19; 10:24- 25; 28:20; LUKE 6:40)

4. The Teaching Office in the New Testament

- a. the ministry of Christ the teacher continues in the church
(Acts 1:1- 2; Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28 -29)
- b. prophets and teachers are resident in Antioch (Acts 13:1). This presumably refers to “prophet – teachers”, as Luke nowhere else refers to a separate class of teachers.
- c. the use of “teacher” in 1 Corinthians is set in an intentional three fold order that may be designed to subordinate the local teachers, who are divisive (1:10 –13) to apostles and prophets
- d. the use of the single article in Ephesians 4:11 implies “pastor –teacher” (that is, teaching elder or overseer?)
- e. Galatians 6:6 refers to the practice of teaching, but not to a teaching group
- f. James 3:1 speaks of the dangers of teaching, but may be a caution applicable to all instruction
- g. the situation represented above seems similar in the Apostolic Fathers
(Did 11:10 – 11; 13:1- 2; 15:1 –2; Shepherd. Sim. 9:15: 4 etc.)
- h. the early church appears not to have encouraged a distinct class of teachers because:
 - (1) Jesus remained the unique teacher

(2) the gift of the Spirit meant that all Christians could in principle teach

(3) there was no elite priestly class in the early church

5. Diversity in Teaching

a. apostles taught

(1) the twelve preach and teach in homes and in the temple (Acts 2:42; 4:2,18; 5:21,28,42)

(2) Paul teaches and preaches (Acts 18:11; 20:20; 21:21,28; 28:31; Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 4:17; 15:1; 2 Cor 11:7; Gal 1:1,15; 2 Thess 2:15; 2 Tim 1:11 etc.)

b. prophets taught

(1) it is very difficult to demarcate prophecy from teaching

(2) though the authority base may differ, revelation from tradition, both prophets and teachers convey intelligible communication to the hearer; all may learn from prophecy (1 Cor 12:4:1)

(3) both used tradition and relied on the Spirit

(4) false prophets are often equated with false teachers (2 Pet 2:1; Rev 2:20). In the Apostolic Fathers prophets do the teaching (Did 11:10; 13:1- 2).

(5) in general, prophets are more inspirational than logical, and focus on the particular rather than the whole.

c. overseers taught

(1) this is one of the qualifications of an overseer (1Tim 3:2)

(2) the overseer must be able to refute false doctrine (Tit 1:9)

(3) pastor – teachers do their shepherding through teaching, whereas other teachers may be more content centred

d. elders taught

(1) it is implied that some elders (only) taught (1 Tim 5:17)

(2) this does not imply that elders infrequently taught

e. deacons taught

(1) Paul calls his co – workers *diakonoi* who do not “peddle or falsify the word of God” (2 Cor 2:7; 4:2)

(2) Timothy is called a *diakonos* and is told to teach (1 Tim 4:6,11,16)

(3) this was a function of deacons in the post apostolic period (Ignatius, *Phild* 11:1)

f. women taught

(1) this follows if they were apostles (Rom 16:7 and prophets (1 Cor 11:5)

(2) as “church workers” teaching would have been involved (Rom 16:1,6,12; Phil 4:3)

(3) a specific case is given in Acts 18:24ff

(4) older women are to teach the younger (Tit 2:3)

g. church members taught

(1) unnamed Christians taught in Antioch (Acts 15:25)

(2) this seems to be assumed by Paul (Rom 12:7; 15:14; Col 3:16)

(3) James’ admonition is general (James 3:1)

(4) Problems may have arisen in the more established church scene because many were teaching (1 Tim 3:1; 2 Tim 2:14ff; 3:1ff; Tit 3:10ff)

6. The Content of Christian Teaching

a. the exposition of Old Testament texts in the light of the coming of Jesus as Messiah

(1) the apostolic preaching in Acts is grounded in the Old Testament (Acts 13:16–41 etc.)

(2) in his letters Paul quotes the Old Testament 93 times, with many other allusions

b. the handing down and application of Jesus’ teaching to the life of the church

(1) the church possesses a normative “tradition” or “traditions” (1 Cor 11:2; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6)

(2) this is to be “handed on” and “received” (1 Cor 11:23; 15:1,3; Gal 1:9; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thess 3:6)

(3) these traditions are to be maintained or upheld (1 Cor 11:2; 15:1; 2 Thess 2:15)

(4) teaching based on these traditions is “sound doctrine” (1 Tim 1:10; 2 Tim 4:3; Tit 1:9; 2:1. Cf. 1 Tim 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; Tit 2:2)

(5) the epistle of James seems based on the ethical teaching of Jesus (James 5: 2- 3 applies Matt 6:19etc.)

c. practical instruction on everyday problems and church life

(1) much of the Pauline epistles are given over to solving church problems e.g. 1 Corinthians

(2) some of this material was formalised into “household codes” (Eph 5:22–6:9; Col 3:18–4:1; Tit 2:1–10; 1 Pet 2:13– 3:7)

7. Teaching Method

a. the new Testament evidence suggests that teaching was an interactive process

b. in various places in Acts Paul argues in the synagogues

(17:2,17; 18:4,19;19:8)

- c. the key term *dialogesthai* can mean simply “speak”, but has as its primary meaning” to conduct a discussion”
- d. this suits the synagogue context, where education was carried out in discussion rather than preaching
- e. Luke also uses this word of Paul’s preaching –teaching with Gentiles (Acts 17:17; 19:9), his discussion with Christians (20:7,9) and his personal defence (24:25)
- f. in the last two examples the word *homilein* is used in proximity with *dialogesthai* so that they appear as synonyms (20:11; 24:26)
- g. the “homily” seems to have been an ongoing discussion and persuasive argument conducted with serious intent and instruction in a friendly way cf. Luke 24:14- 15

7. Eldership

1. Introduction

- a. this is a matter of considerable debate amongst scholars and difference in the church at large
- b. there are three major schools of thought
 - (1) that Christian elders are simply senior, respected believing men who because of their age and spiritual maturity are looked to for leadership
 - (2) that elders are office bearers who either govern or teach the Christian community
 - (3) that elders are to be equated with overseers (*episkopoi*) and understood as pastor – teachers and/or presidents of the eucharist at the local assembly
- c. the approach taken below is to work through this issue in terms of historical development with particular attention being paid to the socio –cultural dimensions of the ancient world

2. The Major Terms

- a. the Greek term *episkopos* means “one who supervises”
 - (1) it is found in Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 3:1- 2; Tit 1:7; 1 Pet 5:2
 - (2) it relates to oversight or administration; translated in older English versions as “bishop” and in many later ones as “overseer”
 - (3) the background of the word is Gentile, such as the president of a local society
- b. the Greek term *presbuteros* means an older person, senior or elder
- c. it is found of Christian elders in Acts 14:23; 20:17,18; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:1,2,17 –19; Tit 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Pet 5:
- d. it was used of the elders in the Jewish synagogue and the Sanhedrin (Matt 5:22; 10:17; 16:21; 21:23; 26:3,47,57,59; 27:1,3,12,20,41; Acts 4:5- 8; 6:12; 18:8; 23:14; 24:1; 25:15 etc.)
- e. some of the issues relating to “pastors” have already been considered above

3. The Elders in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism

1. The Elders in Ancient Israel

- a. the Hebrew word *zagen* translated “elder” is derived from a word meaning “beard”
- b. of the 176 uses in the Old Testament about a third refer to seniority alone
- c. in the most common uses elders appear as recognised representatives, of Moses (Num 11:16), of tribes (Deut 31:38 etc.), of their city (Josh 10:4 etc.), of a nation (Num 22:4,7)
- d. they act on behalf of others or decide for them in political or religious matters (Ex 3:16; 4:29;12:21; 1 Sam 8:4 etc.)
- e. the word never appears in the singular of an office holder. “The elders” is a collective title.
- f. such groups of elders were not sharply delineated nor formally appointed as office bearers. Recognition as an elder was an informally conferred status that came with age and maturity and on the grounds of respect.
- g. Old Testament eldership is a matter of honour rather than power, it is based on existing relationships rather than election or ordination

2. The Elders in Early Judaism

- a. in early sources the Jewish ruling council in Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin, is called “the council of elders”
- b. by the first century A.D. the term elder was restricted to lay members of the council, in distinction to the priests and scribes (Matt 16:21; Mark 11:27, 14:43 etc)
- c. the Sanhedrin elders were a group of communal leaders who gained their position by venerability; especially through being well versed in the Law
- d. that had no role in the temple or office in the synagogue
- e. the elders of the local Jewish community often led in prayer or took readings, but had no official ministerial function. This was taken by the *archisunagogos* whose role was to supervise the congregation at worship.
- f. “elder” denoted not so much office as prestige

4. The Elders in Graeco – Roman Society

- a. leaders owed their position in society to the power of their family, and their position in their family to their relative seniority
- b. they were not often called *hoi presbuteroi*, where this is used it refers to leaders within one’s own family, clan or acquaintance
- c. recognition is based on respect

5. The Elders in the Book of Acts

- a. the early Christians met in houses (*kata oikon*)
(Acts 2:46; 5:42 cf. 4:31; 8:3; 12:12; 17:5; 20:7ff; 20:20; 21:16; 28:30)
- b. the reference to “so and so and his house” fits part of this pattern
(Acts 16:15, 31- 34; 18:8)
- c. if the earliest Christians met in homes they also had leaders provided by the household structure

- d. these would have been well to do people who acted as the patrons of households as established by social custom
- e. this meant that where women were already the heads of households, as in the case of being widowed or divorced, they would be free to exercise leadership
- f. no vocabulary is used for the leaders of the house –churches in Jerusalem and Judaea
- g. Luke introduces Christian elders without comment
(Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2ff; 20:17)
- h. the first use of the term *presbuteroi* indicates age as a primary category (Acts 2:17)
- i. the references to elders in Acts 11:30; 15:2ff; 21:18 correspond closely to Jewish usage
- j. they function as a communal council representing the church in their locality; not as office bearers
- k. Acts 13:1 describes the leaders of the church in Antioch. What is described are “teachers inspired by the Holy Spirit”. These people are not described as elders but could have functioned as such.
- l. no doubt by this stage the church in Antioch consisted of a number of house –churches; it assembled , like the church in Jerusalem *kata oikon*
- m. what evidence we have of the leaders in Acts 13 indicates people of social standing; this is clear of Manaen, Barnabas was propertied (Acts 4:37), Paul was a Roman citizen
- n. the expression *kata ten ousan ekklesian* suggests the whole church (cf. 1 Cor 1:2). It is likely those named were leaders in houses and formed the leadership of the church in Antioch when it came together.
- o. the appointment of elders on the first missionary journey (Acts 14:23) is not incompatible with the charismatic forms of leadership in the Pauline churches. Nothing in the text suggests that the elders were office bearers, rather than a communal leadership in the city that needed to be put in place when the original house – churches had multiplied. (This would have reproduced the style of leadership in the church of Antioch.)
- p. the appointment occurs through “the laying on of hands’ (*cheipotonein*). This seems to be the impartation of a blessing, accompanied by prayer for God’s grace cf. Acts 13:3. Like other elders these people had emerged rather than been appointed, and were recognized in virtue of their seniority, status and contribution to the church. The apostles repeated what had happened to them as they were entrusted with the work of God (cf. Acts 20:32)
- q. the only other reference to elders is in Acts 20:17. These men had been made *episkopoi* (Acts 20:28) over the flock. There is debate over whether the offices of elder and bishop/overseer are here equated. Some argue that *episkopein* can be used non – technically about oversight of a task or group of people. This seems to be the case in Hebrews 12:15. If so, Paul is simply charging a group of senior men with the responsibility of general leadership over the Christian community.
- r. the majority opinion is that elders and bishops/overseers are equated.
- s. an alternative explanation can be developed from the Pauline literature and will be argued below. What this means in practice cannot however be established from this text. In any case there is no evidence in Acts that the elders took the dominant role when the local church met together, in the manner of present day “ministers”.

6. The Early Paulines

- a. this includes all the letters traditionally attributed to Paul, with the exception of the Pastoral Epistles (1, 2 Timothy, Titus)
- b. no one is called “elder” in these letters
- c. most, if not all, of these congregations were house – churches
- d. the head of such a household would naturally be recognised in the culture of the time as having oversight of the new church. A combination of social standing, close association with the apostle who founded the church and sought his assistance, and being one of the first converts would assure this.
- e. the table at which prayers were said and the Lord’s Supper celebrated was the table of the household head, who naturally had a part to play.
- f. the household head, and president of the assembly, could have been a woman (Acts 12:12; 16:14 – 15,40; Rom 16:1f; Col 4:15; 1 Cor 1:11?)
- g. at this stage, there was no need for specialised language to do with leadership – there is no apostle speaking into the group from the outside and no other leaders
- h. in 1 Thessalonians Paul refers to those “who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and who admonish you”. These are leaders who preside and admonish; but nothing suggests an exclusive function. Paul’s use of the *proistanai* “have charge over” is a verbal form of the noun *prostates*, which means “patron”. An informal brotherly relation seems to be in mind. Cf Romans 12:8.
- i. in 1 Corinthians 16:15 –18 the apostle appeals for respect to be shown to heads of certain households. Other house church leaders can be identified for Corinth (1 Cor 1:14- 16; Rom 16:23; Acts 18:1ff,8).
- j. the terms “bishops/overseers and deacons” appear without introduction in Philippians 1:1
- k. these seem to be recognised and permanent leaders
- l. the *episkopoi* are best thought of as heads of home churches and the *diakonoi* as those who assisted them in the care of church members. One piece of later evidence to support this is the qualification of hospitality for the role of bishop (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:8).
- m. the church at Philippi had been in existence for about ten years when Paul wrote this letter. Over that time we may assume that the number of people meeting in the atrium of the house had increased, with a corresponding need for a division of labour. It was practical to be able to recognise and distinguish the householder by a general title such as “overseer”.
- n. no one however would think of calling such a person an “elder”, for these were not singular office holders but members of a collective group who together represented a wider community. With the death of the apostle (pending?) and the threat of factionalism the linking of separate house – churches by “elders” would emerge in a natural way.
- o. in the early stages of the evangelisation of the Roman Empire Paul writes into the churches in terms of his “work”, rather than one preoccupied with church order. He thinks of people as fellow workers, brothers and servants of God, rather than as elders of the community.

7. The Pastorals

- a. the Pastorals are not an attempt to lay down a normative structure of ecclesiastical offices, but focus in the practical implications of the gospel and its teaching in the absence of the personal presence of apostles. Tradition rather than office is the focus, it is fitness of the person that is the focus, not set roles.
- b. the situation in the Pastorals shows great concern not to attract adverse publicity in the midst of a hostile and alien society This may partly explain the greater attention to church order and the comments on the role of women.
- c. the context however remains that of the house – church (1 Tim 3:15; 2 Tim 2:20; Tit 1:7). The structure of the congregation is modelled on that of the household, Christians relate to one another as members of households.
- d. by this stage of the growth of the church, the need for clear lines of authority had emerged
- e. the interpretation of this material varies
- f. if Titus is the earliest of the Pastorals (the least developed ecclesiology), the first relevant passage is Titus 1:5 – 9
- g. this speaks of the appointment of elders *kata polin*, “in all the cities”
- h. one position holds to the following (h. – s.). From the book of Acts and Paul’s earlier writings the following emerges. When the church met *kata oikon* the heads of households gave leadership to it (1 Cor 16:15). These were those who acted as *episkopoi* (Phil 1:1). When these men met together or were considered together *kata ekklesian* they were known as *hoi presbuteroi* (Acts 14:23). In Titus 1:5 *kata polin* is used with *presbuteroi* but immediately goes on to speak of *ho episkopos* (singular). What may be going on is the elevation of one of the *presbuteroi* to be *episkopos* at city level - *kata polin*. The title *presbuteroi* would still apply to *episkopoi* when considered collectively, just as it had for the household *episkopoi*. Both *kata oikon* and *kata polin* the individual leader is *ho episkopos*. Viewed together across cities the several leaders are *hoi presbuteroi*.
- i. Titus did not need to appoint leaders of the various house churches as they had been there from the beginning, but the *monepiskopos* is a new appointment
- j. this also explains 1 Tim 3:1; aspiring to the office of an elder would be inappropriate as such persons are recognised. Bishops however in the church at the city level are those who stand out amongst the house –church leaders. There could be only one bishop in a house church, but several of these in a city made up the eldership of the city.
- k. in 1 Timothy 3:1 –3 “the overseer” is mentioned without reference to elders. Leadership in the wider church is related to the leadership of his own house (1 Tim 3:4 – 5). The list of qualities are those which would have been pre - requisite for house church leadership.
- l. the overseer has proved himself at the household level and is now called to a larger house (2 Tim 2:20) to steward (Tit 1:7)
- m. when overseers are viewed as a class they are “the elders” (1 Tim 5:17). These could either be household bishops or the city overseers whose introduction the Pastorals are concerned with.
- n. 1 Timothy 5:17 could be read as applying to a distinction between teaching and ruling elders
- o. alternatively, the word *malista* , instead of being translated “especially” may explain the first part of the verse. In that case it means “that is to say” or “I mean”cf. 2 Tim 4:13 etc. Thus only one group of people are referred to.
- p. it may be the household *episkopoi* that are in mind or the new *monepiskopos* , whose

introduction the Pastorals seem concerned with

- q. since the passage likely refers to the stipend paid to “well presiding elders” the new post of *episkopos kata polin* is probably in mind. (It is unlikely that the well to do patrons of the house – churches needed to, or would receive, money from their clients.)
- r. this post may have been a full time job, the double honour being not just obedience but financial support
- s. like Timothy and Titus before him, the new overseer is to do the work previously done by the apostle; teaching the truth and safeguarding the church from error
- t. alternatively, the singular use of *episkopos* is a generic reference, belonging to the traditional code cited (Cf. the singular uses in 1 Tim 5:1; 5:9)
- u. Titus 1:5 does not refer to the appointment of “overseers” but “elders”, and the expression “appoint elders in every city” does not mean “appoint one of the elders in every city to be the *the* elder i.e. overseer for that city”
- v. if elders and overseers are equated in Acts 20:17,28, the former terms emphasises status and the latter function, this is likely the case in Titus 1:5- 7
- w. it seems the situation in Titus parallels that in Acts 14:23 where Paul and Barnabas do not appoint elders until their return visit.
- x. a group of senior people is emerging in leadership, some whom are active in teaching whilst others are not
- y. Titus has the task of formalising what is happening because of the rise of heresy (Tit 1:9)

8. Other New Testament Writings

- a. 1 Peter 1:1 – 5 speaks of elders who are responsible for the “flock” (*poimnion*); they give oversight (*episkopein*) (cf. Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11)
- b. it is likely particular elders had charge of a particular house - church, while for certain purposes they met in council
- c. age seems to have been an important factor in their status
- d. if the author is not the apostle Peter then the situation may be that of the post – apostolic generation; the elders are the town – overseers (as in Titus 1:5 – 9) and one of their number addresses them
- e. elders are to be called for the sick in James 5:14. They may be the leaders of various house – churches who assemble to minister to a serious life threat; they all live in the same town. No liturgical or specific teaching duties are mentioned.
- f. The book of Revelation pictures 24 elders around the throne of God (4:4 etc.) These may be angelic or human personages. It is possible that the worship of heaven is seen as reflecting that of earth; as the elders sat with the overseer at the eucharist so elders surround God in heaven.
- g. the Johannine letters are unique in that the author of 2 and 3 John introduces himself as “the elder”. This appears to be a title for a single person without parallel in the New Testament and rare in the Greek literature of the period.
- h. a range of explanations have been offered for this exception. It is either a title or a claim to convey authoritative tradition. The possibility is that “the elect lady” is his own church and Diotrephes, Gaius and Demetrius are household leaders. In this case the “*monepiskopos*” adopts the title to identify with those to whom he is writing, who, like in 1 Peter, are elders.

- i. if this is the case then the situation envisaged by the Pastorals has been effected. If not, then the usage is an exception and may be overlooked.

9. Summary of Development of Church Leadership in the New Testament

- a. the three stages are *kata oikon* (house), *kata ekklesian*(church), *kata polin* (town)
- b. the apostle is active in the first stage, the number of believers and households are small, and the house leaders are called (in some places), *episkopoi*
- c. in the second phase, believers and house churches multiply, when the leaders act collectively they are called *presbuteroi*
- d. in the third stage, the apostle is absent and disunity and dissent is present, *episkopos* refers to the leader of a group of house – churches in a town
- e. *episkopoi* and *presbuteroi* are flexible in meaning over time. *Episkopos* refers first to the leader of a house church, then to the leader of a town church. *hoi presbuteroi* first refers to house church leaders acting corporately, later to those in the town church who are not the bishop or overseer. This is consistent with the non - technical nature of “elder” as an honourific term rather than a title of position.

10. Eldership in the Early Post – Apostolic Writings

- a. 1 Clement is usually dated to 96 A.D. written from Rome to Corinth concerning a revolt of the congregation against the elders.
- b. Clement writes to restore order by the reinstatement of older community leaders
- c. there is no mention of a single bishop in charge of the church

- d. this could be due to the fact that a bishop has centralized his power in the church with the support of the majority of the congregation
- e. Clement sides with the well to do elders whose influence has been marginalised; he feels, in accord with social custom, that they have been dishonoured
- f. Ignatius of Antioch writes his letters around 110A.D. to churches in Asia, and to the bishop of Smyrna, on his way to Rome
- g. his are the first Christian documents to name overseer and elders together in a way that clearly distinguishes them
- h. he repeatedly calls for obedience to the overseer, the elders and the deacons, yet makes clear the overseer's supremacy
- i. his vigorous tone suggests others may not have shared this position
- j. Ignatius relates the bishop to God the Father and the elders to the apostles. His chief concern is the unity of the church, which he believes is preserved by being in tune with the bishop. The bishop appears as the leader of the community responsible for the care of widows, meetings, business etc.
- k. bishops are pastor – teachers; their presence also legitimates the eucharist
- l. elders sit with the bishop at communion and up the front with him

- m. the Shepherd of Hermas has been variously dated from the middle of the second century to shortly after the New Testament writings
- n. he associates together apostles, bishops, teachers and deacons
- o. there is no evidence of a single overseer. “The elders at the head of the church” seem to be a group of house church leaders like that found in the earlier letters of the New Testament, people who exercised hospitality.
- p. the *Didache* was authored around the end of the first century
- q. it refers to travelling prophets and teachers, who are also called apostles; the appointment of bishops and deacons is directed
- r. it is unlikely that any group of house – churches would have lacked leadership of this sort. It may be that the *Didache* is addressed to a number of churches in different situations, in which case it would correspond to the situation of the Pastorals. The deacons are therefore the assistants of the bishops in the various towns.

11. Some Conclusions about Patterns of Ministry

- a. eldership refers in scripture not to office or title but to those who in virtue of their age and wisdom were representatives of their community
- b. they are leaders of families, hosts of churches, patrons of the weaker believers
- c. this is a different sort of authority from the *charismata* ; it does not however exclude elders form this sort of ministry
- d. recognition of ministry, whatever the sort, depends on its value in building up the church
- e. opposition between *charisma* and office could come from two directions. Those unwilling to

accept the teaching of the leader might claim personal inspiration, or the leader might claim a monopoly of inspiration, provoking others to protest that they also shared in the Spirit.

12. Qualifications for Eldership

(Most of the discussions on this topic assume the identification of the elders with the bishop/overseer. Although the above discussion suggests that this is not always valid, it is reasonable to assume that the qualities required for the position of *monepiskopos* were no different in kind than those expected of an elder.)

- a. character e.g. gentle, holy, disciplined, honest, loving, good, sincere
(1 Tim 3: 2 – 3; Tit 1:7- 8)
- b. reputation: blameless, good repute with outsiders
(1 Tim 3:2,7; Tit 1:6)
- c. giftedness: ability to teach
(1 Tim 3:2; 5:17; Tit 1:9)
- d. domestic: one wife (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:6); obedient children(1 Tim 3:4- 5; Tit 1:6); manage household well (1 Tim 3:4; Tit 1:6)
- e. spirituality: submissive to God (1 Tim 3:6); committed to scriptural truth (Tit 1:9); faith (James 5:14)

8. Deacons

1. The Greek Terms and their Usage

- a. the majority view is that the terms *diakonia* and *diakonos* draw their meaning from the verb *diakonein* which means primarily “to wait at table”
- b. this holds that this humble and despised activity concerned with practical needs gave its character to Christian ministry in the New Testament because of the example of Jesus
- c. there are clear examples of the non – theological use of the term for serving at tables in the New Testament
(Mark 1:31; Luke 10:40; John 2:5,9)
- d. in the more general sense of serving or service there are also many examples
(Matt 22:13; 25:54; 1 Cor 16:15 etc.)
- e. another position is that the terms in the New testament mean “trusted representative” or “agent” rather than “table waiter”
- f. Paul, for example, in referring to himself and Apollos as “servants” is making clear that his authority comes from God (1 Cor 3:5 cf. Col 1:23,25). This is why the false apostles claim to be “servants of Christ”; it is a bid to establish their credentials.
- g. taking up the collection to Jerusalem is a *diakonia* not as an act of charity but because Paul is a trusted representative (Rom 15:25; 2 Cor 9:1)
- h. other references can be adduced to confirm this position
(Col 4:7,17; Philem 13)
- i. persons who are involved in these acts are those who offer a significant assistance to the work

of the gospel

2. Jesus as the Model Deacon

- a. at his baptism (Matt 3:13- 17; Mark 1:10 –11; Luke 4:21- 22) Jesus receives the Father’s approbation in the form of the commission of the Servant of the Lord (Isa 42:1)
- b. at the commencement of his ministry Jesus adopts a form of Messiahship which is that of service
(Matt 4:1 –11; Luke 4:1- 13)
- c. Jesus enjoins the idea of *diakonia* upon his disciples in the context of rejecting privilege and power
(Matt 23:8- 12; Mark 10:42 – 44; Luke 22:25 –27)
- d. that Jesus exemplifies servanthood is also made clear in John’s Gospel
(John 12:26; 13:1 –20)
- e. “the leader must be one who serves” (Luke 22:26). This excludes hierarchy and authoritarianism in the life of the church.

3. Varieties of Service

- a. the New Testament is clear that all ministries are varieties of service
- b. in 1 Corinthians 12:5 Paul argues that all significant activity for the building up of the body of Christ is a grace –gift (*charismaton*), or service (*diakonion*) or work (*energmaton*)
- c. in Ephesians 4:11 –12 the gifts that the ascended Christ brings to the church result in the whole of the people of God being equipped for works of service (*diakonia*)
- d. in 1 Peter 4:10 –11 there is a distinction between those who speak God’s word and those who render service (*diakonein*)
- e. this distinction does not imply mutual exclusion, as in 4:10 those who have received a grace – gift (*charisma*) are to use it for ministering (*diakonountes*)
- f. in Acts 6:1- 6 the apostles keep to the ministry (*diakonia*) of the word, and the servers minister (*diakonein*) at table
- g. a whole range of activities designed for the good of the church are described by the *diakon* word group: the collection for the poor on Jerusalem (Rom 15:25; 2 Cor 8:19,20; 9:1,12,12); apostolic ministry (Rom 11:13; 2 Cor 4:1; 6:3); preaching the gospel (2 Cor 5:18; 11:8); church oversight (1 Cor 16:15)
- h. Paul can nevertheless speak of the gift of service (*diakonia*) (Rom 12:7) and its equivalent, the gift of helping (*antilempseis*) (1 Cor 12:28)

4. Deacons as Office Bearers

- a. a large range of people are called diakonos: Jesus (Rom 15:8); Paul (2 Cor 11:23; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23,25); other Christian leaders (Rom 16:1; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7; 4:7; 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Tim 4:6)
- b. these do not seem to designate a fixed office, but nevertheless indicate an association between leading men and women in the church and *diakonoi*
- c. the origin of an official diaconate has traditionally been found in Acts 6:1 – 6. The seven in this passage are not however called deacons, further references to them in Acts show roles beyond the traditional diaconate. The passage is none the less important in revealing an early division between the ministry of the word and practical service (cf. 1 Pet 4:10 –11).

- d. in Romans 16:1 Phoebe is called “a deacon of the church in Cenchrae”. Later in the verse she is noted as a “*prostasis* of many and of myself as well”. This term is used of male church leaders elsewhere (1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4- 5; 5:17). It likely indicates that Phoebe was the head of the home in which the church met and its patron.
- e. Philippians 1:1 partners “bishops and deacons”. These seem to be two well - known positions with differentiated functions. This evidence is compatible with understanding deacons as assistants of the leaders of home – churches.
- f. in I Timothy 3:8- 13 the office of deacon comes into clear focus. That the overseer is mentioned first, and his qualifications are greater than those of the deacon, suggests that they were the overseer’s assistants.

5. The Functions of Deacons

- a. the evidence suggests that the *diakonos* assisted the overseer in whatever business he had; this explains why there is considerable overlap between the qualifications of the two offices
- b. some have argued that deacons were preachers and teachers. Philip and Stephen proclaimed the gospel, Paul associates the term with his preaching (2 Cor 2:7; 4:2; 11:7 –8 etc.). The work of ministry is connected with teaching in the Pastorals (1 Tim 4:6; 11; 2 Tim 4:5); the deacon must hold the mystery of the faith in a good conscience (1 Tim 3:9,13).
- c. against this, the Pauline evidence has nothing to do with the office of deacon. It is probable that deacons taught from time to time, rather than this was their main function.
- d. in the post – apostolic age deacons took on liturgical roles in the distribution of the eucharist and a range of practical services to meet the needs of the Christian community

6. Qualifications for Deacons

- a. character e.g., disciplined, honest, sober, blameless
(1 Tim 3:8,10,11)
- b. domestic: one wife (1 Tim 3:12); manage household well (1 Tim 3:12, 15)
- c. spirituality: hold the faith with a good conscience (1 Tim 3:9,13)

7. Women Deacons?

- a. this is compatible with the role of Phoebe in Romans 16:1
- b. the meaning of 1 Timothy 3:11 is debated
- c. those who take it to refer to the wives of deacons argue:
 - (1) that a separate verse would not need to be added if Timothy and the church at Ephesus already knew of women deacons
 - (2) a verse referring to the wives of deacons in the middle of a list of their qualifications would be appropriate
- d. those who see it as a reference to female officers not:
 - (1) there is no reference to the qualities of the bishop’s wife
 - (2) the absence of the definite article, “the” wives
 - (3) the use of the adverb *hosautos*, “likewise”, implies a parallel and distinct group to the male deacons

9. The Selection of Ministers in the New Testament

1. Introduction

- a. it is possible to distinguish three grounds by which an authority may be legitimated
- b. rational grounds involve legal authority
- c. traditional grounds depend on what has been passed down
- d. charismatic grounds depend on personal properties
- e. these types of authority may overlap

2. Charismatic Legitimation

- a. Jesus exemplifies this: he is called by God and empowered by the Spirit, he leads a radical lifestyle, he is committed to overthrowing the old order, he is not formally legitimised by anyone
- b. the twelve apostles are called by Jesus, they are empowered by the Spirit (Acts 1:2,5,8; 2:1- 4 etc.), they do not seek legitimation
- c. Paul likewise claims to be directly called by God/Christ (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 15:8; Gal 1:1,16); he possesses supernatural gifts (Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 14:18; 2 Cor 12: 1- 7,12); he lives a celibate life (1 Cor 7:7; 9:5) and a radical lifestyle (1 Cor 9:12; 2 Cor 12: 14 –17 etc.), he does not need to be legitimated by the twelve (Gal 1:17)
- d. it is never expected that any apostle need to be ordained or legitimated by any other mortal
- e. this appears true of the prophets and teachers , they are recognised (1 Cor 12:1- 3; 14:29,37, 1 John 4:3) but not legitimated by the community; their authority comes from their charismatic endowment

3. Traditional Legitimation

1. Elders

- a. elders are not legitimated by tradition alone: they are empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28) and chosen from a larger group of older men (Acts 14:23)
- b. traditional legitimation is present, as elders are esteemed older people in the community
- c. the instillation of elders by the laying on of hands implies recognition and blessing (see later)

2. Elders and Deacons

- a. bishops as patrons, first of house –churches and then of a church in the city, were people of social standing
- b. deacons likewise were respected heads of homes, who supported the bishop
- c. this involves (in both cases) traditional legitimation
- d. as such, there was no need for ordination
- e. this is confirmed by the lack of such a rite in the post –apostolic documents relating to this subject (*Didache*, 1 Clement, Ignatius)
- f. the charismatic endowment of deacons and bishops (cf. Rom 12:7 – 8?) affirms that all leadership is based on *charisma*

4. Sacral (Religious)/ Rational Legitimation

- a. examples of rational legitimation appear in the personal commendations of Paul concerning his

helpers (Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 16:10; Col 4:10)

- b. other Christian leaders carried letters of commendation from Jerusalem (2 Cor 3:1 –3)
 - c. there is no suggestion in the New Testament that a purely institutional legitimation validates a person's ministry apart from charismatic legitimation
5. The Laying on of Hands and Ordination
- a. the appointment of the seven in Acts 6:1- 6 is the first mention of the laying on of hands
 - b. these individuals already possessed charismatic endowment (Acts 6:3)
 - c. the community publicly sets apart these men for a particular ministry, they are community delegates
 - d. the Old Testament background appears to be the appointment of judges, elders and officers to act as communal leaders in the place of Moses (Ex 18:13ff; Num 11:10ff; Deut 1:9ff)
 - e. Joshua is appointed by the laying on of hands (Num 27:19 –23) to succeed Moses
 - f. the seven therefore do work which the twelve are unable to perform
 - g. Acts 13:1 –3, the sending out of Barnabas and Saul, has a significant background in the consecration of the Levites (Num 8:5ff)
 - h. the term for worship in the church in Acts 13 (*leitourgein*) is used in the L.X.X. of the cultic service of priest and Levite
 - i. in both passages God commands people to be set “apart” for a particular “work”
-
- j. in Numbers 8:10 all the people lay their hands on the Levites who are substitutes for the first born of Israel (Num 3:40ff). The Levites are representatives of the people.
 - k. Luke is then making it clear, that unlike earlier missionary endeavours conducted by scattered individuals in Acts, Barnabas and Saul are representatives of the whole church
 - l. Barnabas and Saul are already recognised charismatic leaders in the church in Antioch (Acts 9:17; 11: 24 –26)
 - m. the Spirit had already marked them out for missionary service (Acts 13:3) and then sent them out for missionary service (Acts 13:4)
 - n. Acts 14:23 is best seen as the impartation of a blessing accompanied by prayer for God's grace. These people, as elders in the community, had emerged, and were now entrusted to God's work.
 - o. 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6 both speak of hands being laid on Timothy and allude to a *charisma* that needs constant encouragement
 - p. 1 Timothy 4:14 mentions elders because in context Paul is concerned with church order, in 2 Timothy 1:6 Paul is more focussed on Timothy personally
 - q. Timothy has been chosen by prophetic utterance (1 Tim 1:18; 4:14) cf. Acts 13: 1- 3
 - r. Subsequent to this, through the laying on of hands by Paul and the elders, the *charisma* for the new task was given cf. Acts 8:17; 9: 17 –18; 19:6; Rom 1:11
 - s. no title is given to Timothy in the Pastorals, so this event is not ordination to an office
 - t. 1 Timothy 5:22 however does seem to be the commissioning of elders
 - u. all passages refer to commissioning to a particular task, rather than to an office as such

6. The Evolution of Ordination

- a. increasing institutionalisation in the second century led to a decrease in charismatic legitimation
- b. by the process of sacralisation, special power was invested in an office as such, communicated by the laying on of hands in ordination
- c. the “clergy” came to have a special status that other believers did not (“laity”), this was increasingly put in sacerdotal (priestly) terms, so that they formed a class of holy persons
- d. the Protestant Reformation rejected sacralisation in its sacerdotal form, but tended to carry it over into the ministry of the Word. Hierarchical distinctions in the church were usually unaffected.

7. The Appointment of Church Officers Today

- a. the notion of “office” is much less important in the New Testament than in most of church history
- b. apostles seem to relate to the church as a whole, not through special officers
 - (1) letters are sent direct to churches
 - (2) Jesus’ letters to the Seven Churches are not directed to a formal leadership
- c. the ultimate authority in discipline rests with the whole church (Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:4)
- d. cases of appointment in the early church appear to involve the whole (Acts 1:23; 6:3)
- e. congregational consultation and consent is possible and necessary in the case of elders (Acts 14:23) and bishops (Tit 1:5)
- f. this has the advantage of establishing congregational accountability
- g. the actual process of how this was done is not recorded in scripture, but consensus and the role of the *charismata* seem essential

C. Models of Ministry

1. Implications of New Testament Patterns for Forms of Ministry Today

1. Basic Principles

- a. the basic gift is Christ, who is not bound to any human channel
- b. the universal priesthood of all believers (Rom 5:8; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 4:14 –16) is established by the common gift of Christ (John 4:10; 2 Cor 9:15) and the universal outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2:17)
- c. participation of the whole community is an important New Testament value (Acts 4:32; 15:22; Rom 12; 1 Cor 12 etc.)
- d. those in positions of authority must be servants of all (Mark 9:35; 10:43; Luke 22:26 John 13:1ff etc.)
- e. there is a need for order (1 Cor 14:40); though this order may be constituted charismatically
- f. the interaction between and within the churches of the New Testament is relational in nature

2. The Nature of the New Testament Evidence

- a. the material is overwhelmingly descriptive and narrational rather than didactic and prescriptive
- b. there is no single pattern of ministry across the entire New Testament period
- c. at the end of the New Testament period the church appears to be moving in the direction of a monarchical government
- d. this does not however exclude the role of elders as recognised and valued community representatives, nor the charismatic dimension of the church
- e. bishops and elders differ only in terms of the area over which they exercise responsibility
- f. the principles discussed above would suggest that church government may take different forms depending on the cultural and social characteristics at the time
- g. the principle of one person caring for many, whether at the household level or the town, can be traced back to the New Testament. Such persons however always consulted collegially, and today's pastors, priests, bishops or ministers should do likewise.

3. The Role of Women

- a. women appear to have occupied a prominent part in the life of the first house – churches
- b. this was in accordance with what was permissible in the social situation of the time and the state of development of the early church
- c. the same principles applied to a different social situation, where the church was suspected of being subversive, would mitigate against the ongoing role of women in public leadership of the community of faith
- d. there is therefore no evidence that women ever became “*monepiskopoi*”, or elders in the second century situation where presbyters were bishop’s deputies
- e. this was compatible with the higher value of the spread of the gospel

2. Models of Ministry Today

1. Episcopalianism

- a. this is a hierarchical form of government found, for example, in the Roman Catholic Church, Anglicanism and the Orthodox Churches
- b. its name is derived for *episkopos* meaning “bishop”
- c. in this form of rule the bishop is set over a diocese made up of parishes whose local clergy are priests. (The principle applies for archbishops and the bishop of Rome, the Pope.)
- d. deacons are also recognised, giving the classical “three –fold ministry”
- e. the bishop alone has the right or ordain, for bishops are seen as the successors of the apostles. Theories differ as to how this is to be understood.
- f. Episcopalianism do not all claim that this system is found in the New Testament, but argue that it was providentially instituted by God and has served the church well for most of its existence
- g. the major weakness of this form of government is the lack of the lack of checks and balances on the bishop
- h. the interaction between bishop and parish can also be very external

2. Presbyterianism

- a. presbyterianism consists of rule by elders, it is found , for example, in the Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Churches
- b. the elders are seen to be the most important office in the New Testament, elders are equated with bishops and remained after the death of the apostles
- c. in this system the pastor is one of the elders
- d. elders are elected by the congregation and are eligible to attend a court of session
- e. there is an ascending series of sessions which have governing authority over the local church
- f. the final say in matters of church policy rests not with the local congregation but with the General Assembly or Synod
- g. this pattern often distinguishes between teaching and ruling elders (1Tim 5:17); a teaching elder is a minister called to exercise oversight in a local congregation, this focuses on preaching, administering the sacraments and church discipline
- h. ordination is through an eldership, but to the whole church
- i. ruling elders are also ordained and assist in the government of the church and the exercise of discipline
- j. presbyterians regard the development of the monarchical episcopacy as a deviation from the divine intention. It is a break away from the corporate ministry of the church.
- k. the advantage of a governing body greater than the local congregation is that it manifests the unity of the whole body of Christ, expresses gifts available to the whole church and is able to save the local congregation from error
- l. these strengths can however be weaknesses. Sessions become isolated from the needs of local congregations and national leadership takes the body of the church into error.

3. Congregational

- a. these are groups of Christians who emphasise the autonomy of the local congregation, for example, Baptists, Brethren, Churches of Christ, Assemblies of God
- b. there are a variety of forms of congregationalism, but all insist that there is no person or group with rights over the local congregation
- c. one such form is single elder/pastor government
 - (1) in this system the pastor is seen as the only elder in the congregation, he is elected by the congregation; this is generally not seen in terms of “ordination”
 - (2) deacons are chosen by the congregation to assist the pastor and serve under him
 - (3) the board of deacons may be simply advisory, and important decisions are brought before the whole congregation
 - (4) one argument for this pattern is that plurality of eldership is only required when a congregation exceeds a certain size
 - (5) the weakest dimension of this system is the same as that for the episcopal model, excessive power is concentrated in the hands of an individual or excessive demands are laid upon them
- (6) in practice the deacons may however function together with the pastor as a group of elders
- d. plural local elders
 - (1) the elders govern the church or have authority to rule over it
 - (2) the “pastor” is one of the elders. He does not have authority over them, nor is he one of their employees
 - (3) his role is distinct as he is in full - time paid employment for teaching and pastoring
 - (4) delegation may flow from the elder board to the pastor in terms of the scope of decision making
 - (5) the major need of this system is to ensure that the elders remain responsible to the congregation; this may involve terms of tenure, election of elders, votes in congregational meetings over major issues and so on

e. community decision making

- (1) in this model there is no order of distinction between different members of the church whatsoever
- (2) everything must be brought before the local church meeting
- (3) the strength of this approach is that it recognises the ability of the Holy Spirit to speak through all believers
- (4) the weakness of this pattern is that it can degenerate into unguided personalised argument

3. “Para – Church” Ministries

- a. this contemporary expression is used to designate ministries which are perceived to operate “beside”(para) the local church or denomination
- b. such ministries tend to be specialised in their focus, e.g. in relation to children, youth, prisons, overseas mission
- c. they are best thought of by analogy to “the work” as it appears in the Pauline epistles
- d. “the work” (see before) is not geographically focussed in the same way as the local church, the focal point is the ministry rather than community. It is made up of a specialist group of people of common interest who work together. (Sociologically the distinction is made between a modality and a sodality.)
- e. “para –church” ministries tend to be pioneering in character in a way that is less possible for a settled church
- f. “para –church” ministries and local church/denominations should not be viewed as competitors but function in mutually supportive ways, like “the work” and the churches in the New Testament
- g. “para –church” ministries can be considered in many cases to be apostolic teams made up of itinerant gospel focussed giftings

SECTION 3: SACRAMENTS AND ORDINANCES

A. Terminology and General Considerations

1. The Meaning of “ Sacrament “

- a. In Eastern theology the rites of the Christian church were called a *mysterion*. This is based on a Greek word found in several places in the New Testament (Eph 3: 2 – 3 etc.)
- b. The Latin speaking western church translated *mysterion* as *sacramentum*, a term derived from an oath taken as a pledge of fidelity and obedience to a superior officer upon enlistment in an army.
- c. The word “ sacrament “ is therefore not inappropriate, but it is never used of sacred rites in the New Testament, where the *mysterion* is always Christ in the gospel (Romans 16:25; Eph 3: 2 – 3; Col 1: 26 – 27).
- d. There is then no intrinsic relationship between the terms *mysterion*, *sacramentum* and the rites of the church.
- e. In the history of the church, especially in its western expression, the term “ sacrament “ became embedded in a ecclesiastical – soteriological complex with a range of associations which could not be supported by the Bible.
- f. Most significantly, the efficacy of the sacraments depended primarily upon the dispensing agent, so that the faith of the recipient became a secondary issue.

2. The Notion of “ Ordinance”

- a. The Reformers, whilst abandoning or modifying the theology of the sacraments, retained sacramental language and some ideas which were unacceptable to the more radical elements of the Reformation.
- b. The term “ ordinance “ came to be favoured. Derived from the verb “ to ordain “, it is simply a practice that Christ has ordained.
- c. Ordinances, as acts of commitment, are signs of personal obedience. They are means for us to declare our loyalty to Jesus as Lord.
- d. Rather than being divine acts, they are basically human, occasions when the participants can bear witness to the spiritual truths conveyed by the rite.

3. The “Sacramental Principle”

- a. The basic concept is that created things function under divine grace as the vehicle of spiritual reality.
- b. This principle is essential to the notion of general revelation (Ps 19, Rom 1:18ff etc.). In some sense, all created reality must bear witness to the Creator.
- c. Humanity, as the pinnacle of the created order, and so essentially different from God, **and** bearers of the image of God, must be the ultimate sacrament.
- d. Human society is full of sacramental features; these range from the giving of a ring in marriage, to title deeds, meals as a means of fellowship and football colours. Something is symbolically conveyed which reaches beyond the merely physical.
- e. Religion is characterised by the symbolic. For example, special dress, postures of prayer, sacred meals and rites. These are all attempts to reach or communicate transcendent or ultimate reality.

- f. Each of the major covenantal acts in the Old Testament is accompanied by a physical means of communication: the tree of life, the rainbow, circumcision, the Passover Feast, the stone tablets, the ark of the covenant and so on.
- g. These physical realities are not arbitrary nor self – initiated but ordained by God.
- h. They do not work automatically nor in some magical way. When they become idols they do not cease to be signs appointed by the covenant God, but become signs of judgement (Jer 7; Mic 3:11 –12).

4. Christ the Sacrament / One Ordained by the Father

- a. The incarnation resolves the implicit dualism in the “ sacrament “/ “ ordinance “ debate.
- b. Jesus is at one and the same time, and to a perfect degree, both the complete divine and gracious initiative and the free act of human responsiveness and obedience to the Father.
- c. The unity of the two natures in Christ is the basis and the reality of the possibility of sacraments or ordinances. The affirmation of this union prevents a polarisation between the material and the spiritual. The flesh of the Word prohibits a world denying Docetism that leads to insularity, withdrawal and the abandoning of spheres of life to the demonic. On the other hand, since the Word is more than flesh, not everything in the created sphere can be unambiguously affirmed. Compromise with the “worldly”, that is, sinful, must be rejected.
- d. Jesus is the reality of all that is communicated in general revelation. He is the ontological Word of God who has always been communicating the nature of the Father through the things that God has made through him (John 1:1ff; 1 Cor 8:6; Heb 1:1ff etc.).
- e. The physical signs of the Old Testament prefigure the New Covenant reality that comes in Christ (tree of life). True life is found in him (John 14:6), the taking away of final judgement (rainbow) is accomplished by his cross (1 Peter 18ff), his body sloughed off in death is the antitype of circumcision (Col 2:11- 12), the Passover finds its fulfillment in his passion.(1 Cor 5:7) etc.
- f. Whilst there is continuity and fulfillment between the sacramental principle, the Old Testament types and the person of Jesus, there is also discontinuity. Christ is not on the same plane as any of the other media of divine revelation. In him alone the sign (flesh etc.) and the thing signified (spiritual truth) are one.
- g. Jesus as the last Adam (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:45) and the last one (Rev 1:17; 2: 8; 22:13)is the full and final revelation of God, all that pertains to him is eschatological. This explains why there can be no further sacraments or ordinances after those established by Christ, and that these, that is, baptism and the Lord’s Supper (see below), fulfil and so replace the entire sacral system of the Old Testament.

5. The Nature of Sacraments / Ordinances

1. Sacraments/ Ordinances as Visible Words.

- a. Both audible words and visible signs are gracious acts and therefore not essentially dissimilar in nature.
- b. It is then possible to consider sacraments/ordinances as visible words.
- c. From the beginning however God has always used his spoken word to interpret the meaning of the physical world, including those things that he has specifically ordained. Material realities are not self - explanatory.

- d. Word and sacrament are not however two separate avenues to God. The power and gifts of Word and sacrament are the same, the difference is not in substance but in form. The essential unity of Word proclaimed and sacramental deed enacted is derived from the essential unity of Word and deed in Jesus Christ.

2. Sacraments/ Ordinances as Signs and Seals of Promise

- a. All sacraments / ordinances are related to an antecedent promise of God.
- b. Their power does not originate in either the faith of the recipient or the operation of a performance, but to the fact that God has established a connection between them as signs and that to which they point (signify).
- c. As such they are, in the graciousness of God, “effective signs” or “seals “ (Rom 4:11). They confirm and guarantee to faith the promise of God.
- d. Faith expresses itself in the enactment of these God – ordained rites, and it is this relational element which is pleasing to God (Heb 11:6).
- e. The initiative belongs with God the Father, who is the origin of the promises, they are realised in the life of Christ, revelation of these realities comes only by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.
- f. Sacraments and ordinances are therefore not primarily objective nor subjective but a place of personal connection with the trinity.
- g. This bypasses the classical debate between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism as to where the emphasis is to lie in the impartation or reception of “sacramental grace”, in the deed done by the priest who possesses special powers of consecration, or in the faith/ psychological state of the receiver.

6. Sacraments/ Ordinances of the Gospel

- a. Since all the promises of God are realised in Christ (2 Cor 1: 21 –22), all that God has ever pledged sacramentally is now expressed in the good news of Christ.
- b. Sacraments / ordinances cannot therefore be separated from the gospel. They are visible and tangible expressions of what is conveyed audibly in proclamation. Their only difference from the spoken gospel is their form.
- c. The Word preached and spoken has a priority, it interprets the signs of God and explains their meaning for us. Without this form of the Word the sacraments / ordinances lack a meaning context.
- d. Sacraments / ordinances stir up faith not by pointing to themselves, either in some magical way or as an expression of commitment, but by pointing to Jesus who is the content of the promises.
- e. In this way the sacraments are means, rather than containers, of grace.

7. The Gospel and the Number of Sacraments / Ordinances

- a. There has been much debate over the number of sacraments / ordinances. The Roman Catholic church adheres to seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, confession / reconciliation, holy communion, ordination, marriage, and the anointing of the sick (last rites).
- b. The Reformers and Protestants generally have limited the number of ordinances to two, baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

- c. Some Protestant groups have included other rites, particularly footwashing.
- d. Given the principle expressed above however, there is an essential connection between baptism and the Lord's Supper and the gospel which is not found in the other acts. They alone express the central saving events of the life of Christ, his death and resurrection. (It is clear that Jesus did not institute footwashing as a rite to be repeated in the regular life of the church; his practice symbolised service, and this is directed to one another rather than to God.)
- e. It is clear from the New Testament that both of these rituals were performed in the early church (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:41; 8:36; 10:47 – 48; 1 Cor 11:17 –34).

8. Baptism

1. Vocabulary

- a. The basic Greek verb is *bapto*, which means “dip in or under”, also “dye”. It is used rarely in the New Testament and always with its literal sense, as in Luke 16:24. It never means “baptize”.
- b. The form *baptidzo* in different constructions is what is used in the New Testament for “baptize”. It has senses of “immerse, sink, drown, bathe, go under, sink into”. The range of meanings suits diverse signification.
- c. The noun for baptism is *baptisma*, which occurs only in the New Testament, only in the singular, and only for baptism. The term is not restricted to the external act but can encompass spiritual realities, such as the Spirit and the cross as well as water.
- d. An associated term is *baptismos*, this is found outside the New Testament, in plural as well as singular, and seems to refer to the simple act of washing.
- e. *Baptistes*, is a descriptive nickname for John “the Baptist”.

2. Background

1. Washings in the Old Testament

- a. Ritual washings are mentioned in a number of places in the Old Testament (Lev 8, 16:23 –24; 17:15 –16; 22:6 –7; Num 8, 19). These were seen to somehow cleanse away defilement.
- b. A more overtly moral or spiritual cleansing from sin is spoken of in a number of other contexts (Ps 51:7; Isa 1:6; Ezek 36:25; Zech 13:1)

2. Jewish Proselyte Baptism

- a. Full immersion was required after circumcision of ex -Gentiles (but not for their children). This was considered a symbol of cleansing. Furthermore, it was a witness to the reality of conversion.
- b. There is doubt however as to whether these practices preceded the New Testament period.

3. Sectarian Washings

- a. A range of washings were practiced by the Essene community. These were linked to entry into the covenant community. Pharisaical practices are mentioned in the Gospels (Mark 7)
- b. The teachings of Qumran (Essenes) may provide a link to John the Baptist, as both see the End as near.

4. The Baptism of John

- a. John appears in the wilderness as a precursor of Messiah, he is cast as an eschatological prophet (Mark 1:2ff; Isa 40:3- 4).

- b. The baptism of John points to the coming of the one who will not baptize symbolically but with the Spirit of God (Mark 1:7 –8) and will bring fiery judgement (Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16 cf. Isa 4:2 –5; Joel 3:1- 6; Mal 4:1).
 - c. This sets a judgement context in which repentance is imperative (Matt 3:2, 7ff.).
 - d. This was a warning that Jewish people had no automatic entry into the kingdom of God.
 - e. The other element of John’s preaching, forgiveness (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3), is best seen in terms of prophetic symbolism. His baptism pointed towards and held out the promise of eschatological pardon, but was unable to convey that which the Messiah would bring.
3. The Baptism of Jesus
- a. Jesus comes willingly to submit to the baptism of John (Matt 3:13; Mark 1:9; Luke 3:20).
 - b. This was not on account of his own personal sin but to “fulfil all righteousness” (Matt 3:14-15).
 - c. This is because the Messiah must share the fate of his people, he companies with sinners according to the will of God.
 - d. It is at this point of obedience that Jesus becomes fully aware of his identity as Son and Messiah. This is conveyed to him by the voice of the Father and the gift of the Spirit.
 - e. The voice from heaven conveys his Father’s approval (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).
 - f. It is based on a conflation of two Messianic passages, Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. The theme joining the two texts is Messiah’s inheritance of the nations.
 - g. It is for this reason that Jesus is anointed for service by the empowering gift of the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1: 32 cf. Acts 10:38). Thus he is launched on his public ministry. Only through the Spirit can he return universal obedience to the Father. This takes up God’s promise to Abraham (Gen 12:3) and has numerous biblical connections.
 - h. The direction to the cross, the destiny of the Isaianic Servant of the Lord is unmistakable. The new creation will come in through Jesus embrace of the eschatological judgement proclaimed first by John, and then, after his baptism, by himself.
 - i. In his later ministry, Jesus could refer to the cross as a cup and a baptism which he must undergo to bring in the kingdom of God (Mark 10:38 –39; Luke 12:50). This is a baptism of judgement which he must undergo for the sins of the world.
 - j. The connection between the baptism of Jesus and Christian baptism is strongly debated. Those who deny any link observe that the writers of the New Testament do not bring the two into relation. It is argued that this is because Jesus is baptized as Messiah, his baptism is uniquely tied to his ministry vocation. Christian baptism however relates to the total redemptive action of the life of Jesus, which was only set in motion by his baptism in the Jordan. There are points of connection however. Messiah is representative of all humanity in his baptism. We are sons of God (Gal 3:26f.) and receive the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38ff etc.) in the context of our baptism. Christian baptism, like the baptism of Jesus, launches us into a life of free obedience to fulfill the purposes of God (Matt 28:19 –20).
4. Baptism in the New Testament documents
- 1. Acts
 - a. Pentecost: the promise of baptism with the Holy Spirit opens Acts (1:5). This is fulfilled at Pentecost (2:1ff). This however does not negate the need for water baptism (2:37f; 41). Forgiveness and entry into the church (2:41) are profited.

- b. Samaria: Samaritan converts are baptized (8:12) “in the name of Jesus” (8:16). This however is not linked with baptism with the Holy Spirit.
 - c. The Ethiopian Eunuch: Philip must have preached baptism to the eunuch as he asks for it (8:36). They both descend into the water, but no mention is made of the Spirit (v.38).
 - d. Saul: Ananias is sent to Saul in his blinded state that he might see and be filled with the Spirit (9:3ff., 10ff., 17). After receiving his sight he arises and is baptized (v.18). In Paul’s own account Ananias told him: “Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (22:16).
 - e. Cornelius: the Holy Spirit falls on the first gentile converts as they hear Peter’s preaching of the gospel so that they speak in tongues and praise God (10:44 –46). They are subsequently baptized as a group (v.48). Peter later links this to John’s prophecy about the Holy Spirit baptism of Jesus (11:16).
 - f. Philippi: this records the baptism of Lydia and the jailer (16:15,33). In each case households were baptized. In the jailer’s situation those in the house seemed to have been instructed by Paul (v.31f.).
 - g. Ephesus: many believed and were baptized in Corinth (18:19). Later Paul found a group of disciples who had not heard of the holy Spirit nor received Christian baptism (19:2 –3). He explained to them about Jesus, they were then baptized in his name (v.5). After prayer and the laying on of hands they “spoke with tongues and prophesied” (v.6).
2. Paul
- a. Romans: Romans 6: 3 – 4 associates baptism with the death and resurrection of Christ; his people die and rise in and with him. The issue is growing in holiness.
 - b. 1 Corinthians: in 1:13 –17 baptism is linked to the cross by implication. It also appears to be a sign of unity. Paul does not regard baptizing as his responsibility. 6:11 speaks of being “washed”, this may be an allusion to baptism as signifying the cleansing from sin. Israel was baptized into Moses (10:2ff); this however did not protect them from judgement for sin. Christians too must avoid idolatry. In 12: 12- 13 Paul teaches that in or by the Spirit we were all baptized into the one body, the church. The Spirit and baptism are closely related here. 1 Corinthians 15:29 contains a reference to baptism for the dead. The main point is the validity of the Christian hope, Paul does not comment on the practice.
 - c. Galatians: baptism functions as an initiation rite which is open to all people. To be baptized is to have “put on Christ” (3:27), so that we are all sons of God through faith (not through the law).
 - d. Ephesians: unity is again connected with baptism, in 4:5. Whilst there may be diversity of gifts baptism is one and the same for all Christians. “The washing of water with the word” (5:26) may refer to the speaking of the gospel in the context of baptism as the outer sign of the beginning of a way (life) of cleansing.
 - e. In Colossians 2:11 –13 Paul relates baptism to circumcision. Inner circumcision (the putting off of the body of flesh) and baptism (burial with Christ, whose death is a spiritual circumcision) are brought into close relation.
 - f. Titus 3:5 speaks of “the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit”. What is in focus here is the beginning of a holy life.

3. Hebrews:

- a. 6:2 refers to “baptisms”. These may be general washings, but the context indicates Christian baptism. The plural may refer to different baptisms, John’s, water baptism, baptism in the Spirit. The main point is that a foundation like baptism cannot be laid, destroyed and laid again.
- b. 10:22 alludes to baptism as linking inner and outer action. The washing of our bodies in water has a spiritual counterpart in the cleansing of our hearts by faith.

4. Other Epistles

- a. 1 Peter 3:21 compares baptism with the ark of Noah. Both involve saving water. This involves an inner appeal for a good conscience through the saving action of the resurrection.
- b. 1 John 5:6 – 8 refers to three witnesses, “the Spirit , the water and the blood”. This may be an allusion to baptism of water and Spirit, with the baptism of Jesus as his death and passion also referred to?

5. Summary

- a. The death and resurrection of Jesus set the key pattern for Christian baptism as a death and new life experience.
- b. Entry into the life of the church is associated with baptism.
- c. The gift of the Spirit is linked with baptism.
- d. Sonship is associated with baptism.
- e. Washing is a metaphor linked to baptism.

5. Baptism “in/into the name”

- a. Matthew records the command of Jesus to “baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19)
- b. The book of Acts characteristically records baptism “in/into the name of (the Lord) Jesus (2:38; 8:16; 9:15; 10:48; 19:5).
- c. The meaning of baptism “in/into the name” has been debated. Where the background is seen as primarily Greek, the setting is compared to the deposit of money into an account identified by the bearer’s name. This brings the meaning of appropriation to, submission to, dedication to and belonging to the one named, that is, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- d. If the background is Hebrew/Aramaic there are several analogies. The first, from slavery, would set a person in a definite relation to God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit become to the baptized what their name signifies. The second, from sacrifice, would make the baptized over to/ for the sake of God. The last, circumcision “in the name of”, would imply the obligation of venerating. Overall, baptism grounds the relation between the triune God and the baptized, which the latter has to affirm and express through their confession to the God in whose name they are baptized.
- e. The Acts formula for baptism focuses on the person of Jesus. It may have been that the name of Jesus was both invoked by the candidate and called over them (James 2:7). Baptism related the believer to the person of the crucified and risen redeemer. This would seem to be associated with prayer (Acts 22:16), quite possibly for forgiveness (Acts 2:38cf. Rom 10:10).

6. The Theology of Baptism: A Baptist Position

- a. Baptism is a point of union with Christ in his death and resurrection. The use of the aorist tense in Romans 6:1- 11 points to this.
- b. Belief and baptism are often tied together e.g. Acts 9:18 –19; 22:16. Baptism is an act of faith and commitment. Baptism is a completion of faith.
- c. Baptism is an act of faith and testimony, a public indication of one’s commitment to Christ.
- d. It is a powerful form of proclamation. It sets forth what Christ has done by testifying to a believer’s participation in his death and resurrection.
- e. Baptism is a symbol and not a sign, for there is an intrinsic connection with what it conveys, death and resurrection.

7. The Theology of Baptism: A Reformed Position

- a. Baptism is a covenantal sign established by God to confirm his promises. It is a declaration of what God has done.
- b. The emphasis is not on the one being baptized but on the name of the one into whom they are baptized.
- c. Baptism in the name of the Father directs us to his eternal electing grace and the call of adoption: “you are my beloved son...”. It is entry into the sphere of divine calling.
- d. Baptism in the name of the Son directs us to his death and resurrection as the true baptism in which the sinful humanity is destroyed and the new humanity is created. The primary witness is to a past and objective event. It appeals to us “be reconciled to God”.
- e. Baptism in the name of the Holy Spirit directs us to the power of the Spirit to internalise the work of Christ in sanctification (Acts 2:38; 1 Cor 12:13). The regeneration signified by the baptism of water is the work of the Holy Spirit.

8. The Mode of Baptism: A Baptist Position

- a. Full immersion is the only valid form of baptism because this corresponds to the meaning of the Greek *baptizo* : “ to plunge “, “immerse “, or “ dip “.
- b. It was immersion that was commanded by Jesus.
- c. The New Testament is clear that baptisms were by immersion (Matt 3:6; Mark 1:9f., Acts 8:38).
- d. The symbolism of dying and rising with Christ (Rom 6:4) is only adequately conveyed by immersion.
- e. The practice of pouring (affusion) did not begin until the second century.

9. The Mode of Baptism: A Non - Baptist Position

- a. Arguments for sprinkling or pouring include The use of other symbols, like sprinkling and washing to do with salvation in the New Testament (Titus 3:5; Heb 10:25; 1 Pet 1:2 etc.).
- b. Practical issues of application due to numbers or climate.
- c. Accepting that while the symbol of immersion may be preferable it is only a sign to faith and not the reality itself (cf. Unleavened bread and wine). To argue otherwise is ritualistic.
- d. The earliest pictorial representations of baptisms in pools, rivers etc. show affusion. That is, the site of the baptism does not determine the mode.

10. The Subjects of Baptism: A Baptist Position

- a. The only proper recipients of baptism are believing adults because the only explicit examples of baptism in the Bible are of people who have personally responded to the gospel.
- b. It is a sign of the conscious beginning of a saving relationship with God.
- c. Faith relates to promise, where there is no faith the application of water is meaningless. No one can enter the kingdom of God, of which baptism is a sign, without faith.
- d. There is no evidence of subjects other than adults until late in the second century.

11. Arguments that infants are proper recipients of baptism include:

- a. The New Testament neither forbids nor commands the baptism of infants cf. Which is the sabbath day.
- b. The possibility that the household baptisms of Acts included infants (Acts 10:24; 16:15, 31 – 34; 18:18; 1 Cor 1:16). This is consistent with notions of headship and solidarity in the ancient world.
- c. That the electing purpose of God reaches out to include the children of believers in the covenant. This is argued by analogy with circumcision in the Old Testament (Col 2:12) and the nature of justification by grace alone. Salvation is primarily an objective affair.
- d. Faith is needed for baptism to be effective, but this may come after the ritual. Baptism is a mirror to Christ before it is a mirror to personal faith and commitment.
- e. It is the reality of infant baptism which calls its recipients as they develop in the sphere of grace to repentance and faith.
- f. The priority given to the personal faith of the recipient diminishes the eschatological dimension of the sacrament, it points to the time when faith will give way to sight.
- g. No – one can claim a right to be baptized because of a certain level of spiritual qualification.

12. Baptism and Salvation

- a. Roman Catholics insist on the necessity of baptism for salvation. It is the means of regeneration. This view however ignores the role of faith in the death and resurrection of Christ.
- b. Some Protestant groups point to Mark 16:16 as evidence that baptism is essential for salvation. The text, whose authenticity is disputed, does not however teach that *without* baptism a person is not saved.
- c. John 3:5 “ Unless a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God” has been taken to imply the necessity of baptism for salvation. There are however a variety of interpretations of the meaning of “water” in this text. A reference to Christian baptism seems anachronistic.
- d. Titus 3:5 “the washing and regeneration of the Holy Spirit” is another disputed text. The Spirit may be the one who effects regeneration in a general context in which spiritual cleansing occurs that is wider than water baptism.
- e. These views effectively deny that salvation is by grace alone through faith. Examples in the New Testament make it plain that faith is sufficient for salvation (Luke 23:43, Acts 8; 10; Apollos etc.).

9. The Lord's Supper

1. Vocabulary

- a. One common term is "Holy Communion". This is based on 1 Corinthians 10:16 "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?" The key term here is *koinonia* which can also be translated as "sharing" or "fellowship" or "participation".
- b. The expression "the Lord's Supper" is derived from 1 Corinthians 11:20. "When you meet together it is not the Lord's Supper which you eat."
- c. "The breaking of bread" is found in Acts 2:42 where it probably refers to the Lord's Supper. "To break bread" is used of the Supper in Acts 2:46; 20:7,11; 27:35; 1 Corinthians 10:16.
- d. "The Eucharist" comes from the Greek word which means "thanksgiving". It is based on the giving of thanks which is an integral part of the communion celebration. The verb is found in Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17,19; 1 Corinthians 11:24.
- e. "Mass" is a non – biblical term used by Roman Catholics. It comes from the Latin *missio* used to dismiss those who were not yet full members of the church prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

2. Background

1. Old Testament Feasts and Meals

- a. The peace offering was a sacred meal of fellowship (Lev 3; 7:11- 34). The meal was joyously eaten in the presence of God.
- b. The Passover (Exod 12) was a remembrance of deliverance at the cost of the firstborn of Egypt. Israel's first born were redeemed through the turning aside of judgement by the application of blood.
- c. The use of bitter herbs was a reminder of oppression, and the haste of the meal pointed forward to release.
- d. In the theology of the Old Testament the participants in the meal were taken back to the event of the Exodus (Ex 13:8; 14; Deut 5:3; 6:20 ff; 16:3). Each generation is brought into the power of this unique and nation shaping event.
- e. Covenant meals (Gen 26:30; 31:54; Ex 24; 2 Sam 3:20) involved a pledge of loyalty to God and fellowship in his presence.
- f. There is an anticipation of a future (Isa 25:6; 65:13) eschatological banquet; which later became associated with Messiah.

2. The Passover in Jesus' Time

- a. The Synoptic Gospels indicate that the Last Supper was a Passover meal (Matt 26:17; Mark 14:1,12,16f., Luke 22:15).
- b. The feast of Unleavened Bread overlapped with Passover in the month of Nisan. All leaven was removed on 13 Nisan and kept out of the house until 21 Nisan. The Passover was celebrated on 15 Nisan.
- c. The meal was held at sundown at the beginning of the festival day. People slaughtered their own lambs earlier in the day (different date). Priests took the fat and blood and offered them in sacrifice.

- d. Passover was primarily a remembrance feast of deliverance from Egypt. It also became an occasion for looking forward to the future redemption which would come with the advent of Messiah.
 - e. The meal included four cups of wine and a recitation of the Passover narrative (*haggadah*). Thanks was given over the bread, the third cup of wine was the cup of blessing, the fourth cup also had grace spoken over it.
 - f. The main difference between the account of the Last Supper and the Passover is the absence of the lamb. Jesus is the true Lamb of God.
3. The Meals of the Qumran Sect
- a. This group held communal meals.
 - b. Grace was said for bread and wine by a priest.
 - c. A time is envisaged when Messiah will celebrate the meal with the people. This provides a formal parallel with the eschatological expectation associated with the Lord's Supper.
4. Pagan Cultic Meals
- a. There is no basis for believing that the institution of the Lord's Supper had anything to do with pagan rituals.
 - b. It is conceivable however that the interpretation and practice, not origin and meaning, of the Lord's Supper was influenced by cultic practices (cf. 1 Cor 10:21).
 - c. The one place where there seems a parallel (1 Cor 10) already has points of contact with the Old Testament for the Jewish altar (Ezek 44:16; Mal 1:7,12 L.X.X.).
3. The Words of Institution and New Testament Teaching on the Lord's Supper
- a. The order of the words and their contact differs between the Gospels and from Paul's account in 1 Corinthians 11. (This will not be discussed here.)
 - b. "This is my body given for you/ many". The copula ("is") would be lacking in the original Aramaic. The reference to "many" alludes to the suffering Servant of Isa 53. The giving up of the life of Jesus is the means by which he will have communion with his people (John 6).
 - c. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you/many." The new covenant will be established by the death of Jesus. This evokes connections with the covenant meals of the Old Testament and the Passover Lamb. The sacrifice of Jesus would be the creation of a new people of God. The background of Gethsemane corresponds to the bread of affliction and the cup of bitterness in the Passover meal. This action is real and not symbolic.
 - d. "Do this in remembrance of me". This is a command for us (plural) to keep repeating the action in question. Roman Catholics interpret the verb "to do" in terms of the offering of a sacrifice. Whilst the word is used in this senses in the Old Testament (L.X.X.) it can bear this meaning only if the object is a sacrifice, this is not the case here. (The object is an action (neuter) and not the bread (masculine).) The word "remembrance" (*anamnesis* 1 Cor 11:24f) echoes Exodus 12:14 which institutes the Passover as a "memorial day". "Remembrance" reactualises what is remembered. We are as if there, rather than the reverse. The dominant action is God to humanity, not humanity to God. The doing of the action stimulates God's memory and his acts of memory are synonymous with his acts of intervention. The "of me", combined with the above, implies fresh communion with Christ. Acts of mental recall are involved but the action cannot be captured in the mental realm, one enters sacred space – time. The covenant commemoration is not solely divine nor solely human but a partnership.

- e. “You proclaim the Lord’s death ” (1 Cor 11:26). The direction of the proclamation could be to God or to humans. The Roman Catholic church interprets it as a sacrificial presentation to God. More likely what is meant is the proclamation of the gospel in the form of the sacrament. As kerygmatic the Lord’s Supper involves re – presenting in word and action the redemptive events, so that the participants are related to them in a dynamic way.
- f. “Until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). The eucharist is an anticipation of the fulfillment of the kingdom of God and the Messianic banquet (cf. Matt 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:20). This means that the Lord’s Supper is an eschatological reality.

4. The Practice of the Lord’s Supper in the New Testament

- a. In Acts 2:42 – 46 we have a two – fold description of the inauguration of new converts into the life of the church and its regular daily activities. This includes teaching, prayer, fellowship, a common meal and the Lord’s Supper (the “breaking of bread”). The new element here is not that the sacred meal is set in the context of an ordinary dinner, but the note of joyous celebration. This would seem to be due to the joy of salvation (Acts 16:34) the presence of the risen Lord (cf Luke 24:41) and the gift of the Spirit (Acts 13:52).
- b. Acts 20:7 –12 records a meeting on the first day of the week at which the breaking of bread took place. This also is set in the context of a shared meal at which teaching took place.
- c. From the general comments of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:17 –34 we can assume that the Supper was celebrated at regular intervals and not as an annual commemoration.
- d. That the contribution to the church in Jerusalem was to be set aside each Sunday (1 Cor 16) implies that the eucharist was a weekly event (at least).
- e. The disorder at the Supper in Corinth indicates that it was a shared meal. Social distinctions which would normally apply in terms of the quality and quantity of food consumed were being imported into the Lord’s Supper.
- f. Jude 12 makes reference to “your love feasts”. 2 Peter 2:13. Which is likely dependent on Jude, makes allusion to this as well. In Smyrnaens 8:2 Ignatius in the early second century speaks of the “love feast” in a way which would suggest the Lord’s Supper. Until later in the second century, when the church meal and the strictly sacramental part of the meal were separated, the Lord’s Supper was celebrated within the context of a common meal of fellowship and love.
- g. There is nothing in the New Testament texts to suggest that the rite could be conducted only by a special class of holy persons.

5. The Nature of the Presence of Christ

1. The Roman Catholic Position: Transubstantiation

- a. The words of institution are taken literally.
- b. In an act of new creation the substance of the bread and the wine become the substance of the historical body and blood of Christ.
- c. The outward appearance, the “accidents”, of the bread and the wine remain the same.
- d. Christ, through the words of institution spoken by the priest, is objectively present in the elements.
- e. The mass is an atoning sacrifice which can only be performed by the priest. This is one with the sacrifice of the cross.

2. The Lutheran Position: Consubstantiation

- a. The words of institution are also taken literally. Luther insists that the texts do not say “become” so that transubstantiation is excluded.
- b. Luther taught that the elements do not “become” the body and blood of Christ but the body and blood are “in”, “with” (Latin: *con*) and “under” the bread and the wine. Christ is objectively present in the elements. This was known as consubstantiation.
- c. Luther thought that this was possible because the human nature of Christ was everywhere present (ubiquitous) after the ascension.
- d. As this is a function of the rule of God realised to faith, it is especially true in relation to the Lord’s Supper where Christ has promised to be present.
- e. This does not involve a sacrifice, as Christ’s death is final, but a miracle like the incarnation.

3. The Zwinglian Position: No Special Presence

- a. The words of institution are to be taken metaphorically or symbolically.
- b. Christ is present in no different way than from other times. He is present spiritually.
- c. The elements are “bare signs”.
- d. His presence is to be located in the community of believers and in the faith of the individual.
- e. Our personal remembrance is the key to the efficacy of the Supper.

4. The Reformed Position: Christ Present in the Spirit

- a. The body of Christ remains in heaven, this is a function of the reality of his humanity.
- b. The Roman Catholic view is rejected because it materialises and depersonalises Christ.
- c. An alternative view needs to be developed which does not contradict the nature of a sacrament.
- d. The Zwinglian view is rejected as being subjective and one sided.
- e. Christ is objectively present in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. This is however realised only by faith union.
- f. The bond which links the heavenly Christ and his people on earth is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit lifts us up to where Christ is, he is the bond of our participation in Christ.
- g. This is an eschatological action which by the inconceivable power of the Holy Spirit unites heaven and earth.

5. Participants and Worthy Reception

- a. There is general agreement that those who have been baptized are the normal participants in the Supper.
- b. For some churches this will be restricted to adult membership. In other cases those who have been baptized as infants will be admitted.
- c. The New Testament does not however put a bar on the reception in any particular instance. This would have been practically impossible in the context of a shared meal.
- d. Abuse of the Supper leads to it being turned into a sign of judgement (1 Cor 11:27 – 30).

- e. The cause of this is not mystical but lack of due regard for other believers.
- f. The solution to this is not abstinence from partaking but self examination.

6. The Lord's Supper and Salvation

1. The Lord's Supper is not essential to salvation. It operates within an already existing saving relationship.
2. If the Lord's Supper is thought of as a covenant meal it impacts both sides of the covenant relationship in terms of mutual promises and obligations:
 - a. God is stirred up in terms of his own gospel promises to do good to his people in forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life.
 - b. The human participants pledge their covenant loyalty and obedience and are confirmed in their faith by the witness of the Spirit to God's grace in Christ.

7. Summary and Conclusions

- a. Unlike the rite of baptism, the Lord's Supper is a repeated event in the life of the church. As such it is an act affirming our continuance in the faith.
- b. The presence of the bread and the wine are vivid reminders from God to the reality of the redemption effected through Jesus' passion and death (Matt 26:28). The Lord's Supper is a visible proclamation (gospel) of the efficacy of the saving work of Christ (1 Cor 11:26).
- c. In taking the eucharist we actually share in the life of Christ by faith (Matt 26:26; 1 Cor 10:16). The repeated words "this is my body", "this is my blood", really mean "this is myself" Jesus is powerfully present to each successive generation of believers through the Spirit (John 14:3,28).
- d. The Lord's Supper is a pledge of a share in Jesus eternal destiny. He associates himself and his heavenly greatness with the disciples in their present condition of waiting for the eschatological transformation.
- e. Through the Supper believers are actually and progressively incorporated into the life of Christ by faith in a union of being.
- f. In the Supper God re-presents the saving life of Jesus and believers are called to present themselves gladly to God as living sacrifices.
- g. The Lord's Supper is a family meal rather than an individualistic event. The eschatological community of God's people is gathered around Christ as head and celebrates in an anticipatory way the joy of heaven (Matt 26:29).
- h. The unity of all believers is signified by the common loaf in which they partake. All share in the one saving life of Christ. Communion with one another in love is expressed and strengthened in the breaking of bread.
- i. The form of remembrance is not a simple mental and intellectual exercise of recollection, if we remember Christ it is not because he is absent, but because God has not forgotten us. God is remembering us in enabling us to remember him. This is what the sacrament / ordinance of the gospel proclaims.
- j. If the communion is a covenant act then it is neither predominantly divine (Roman Catholicism) nor predominantly human (Protestantism) but a partnership.

