

1305 Church, Mission and Ministry Term 2 Week 5- 6 Ministry Gifts

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

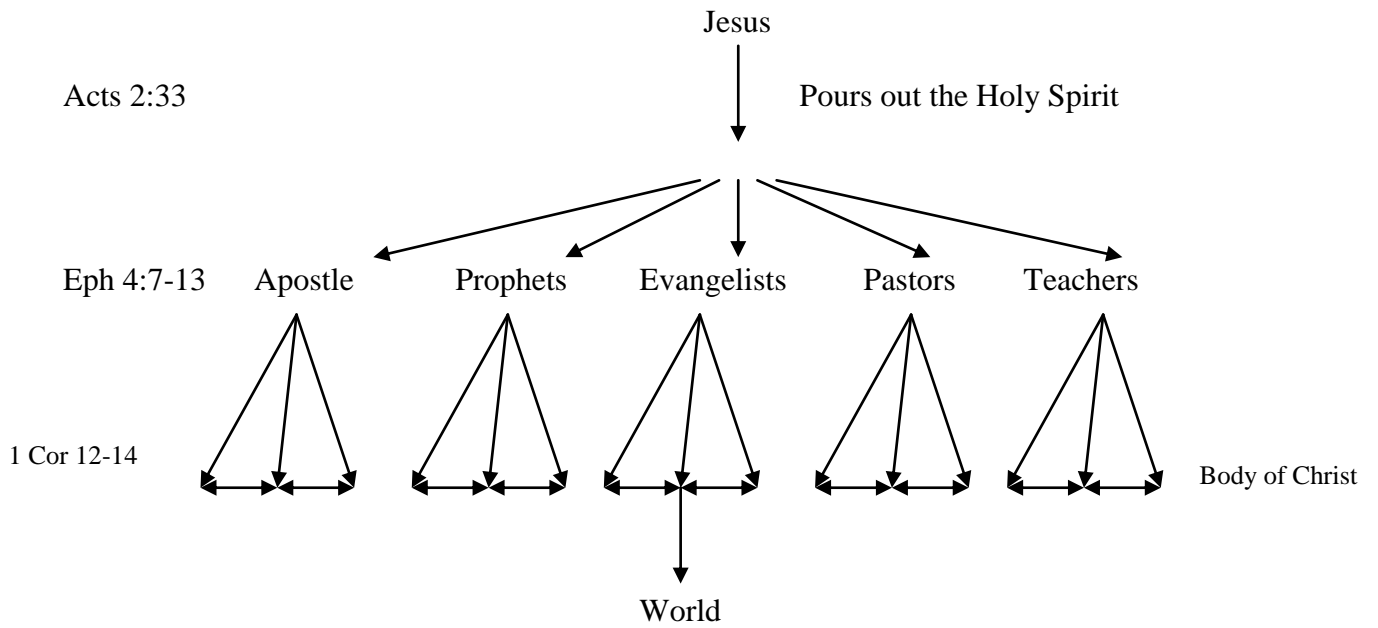
3. Office or Charism?

- 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 he 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 (Acts 10:7- 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 Cenchræ”. 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 legitimated 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

Interchange JOHN YATES

The Discipline We Need

1. Introduction

‘Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened’ (1 Cor. 5:7a) There exists a diversity of opinion in ecclesiology as to how the expressions ‘marks of the Church’, ‘notes of the Church’ and ‘attributes of the Church’ should be used In this paper it will be accepted that the notes of the Church are four in number as outlined in the Nicene Creed viz. ‘We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church’. These notes are the things which are essential to the Church’s very nature, to be the Church means to be ‘one holy catholic and apostolic’. Each of these aspects the Church’s nature can however be interpreted in various ways, hence the seemingly irreconcilable differences between the various denominations. It is possible however to talk about the Church, in a rather less complicated way. Whereas the ‘notes of the Church’ possess a certain apriority there must be manifestations of the Church’s essential nature which are the sort of things which show us where the Church is. The great majority of theologians accept that two of the manifestations of the Church are the preaching of the Word of God and the proper administration of the sacraments. Some branches of Reformed theology however have insisted upon a third mark, the faithful exercise of Church discipline. To attempt a theological justification for this claim extends beyond the scope of this paper, but that discipline could be considered an essential sign of the people of God seriously raises the question of its role in the Church today.

1. H. Kung, *The Church*, tr. R. and R. Ockenden, London: Search, 1969, pp. 263-269 uses ‘marks’ and ‘attributes’ interchangeably, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* EL. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (eds), Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 1974, p. 982 identifies ‘marks’ with ‘notes’, but G.C. Berkouwer, *The Church*, tr. I.E. Davison, pp. 11-17 distinguishes between ‘attributes’, ‘marks’ and ‘notes’ and makes his ‘marks’ different from those of the other authors.

2. I shall resist giving these a technical name to avoid adding to the confusion in this area.

3. These two are named in Article XIX of the Anglican Articles of Religion. The Homily for Whitsunday however extols three notes or marks, whereby the church is known, one of which is ‘the right use of ecclesiastical discipline’. The doctrine of this homily however cannot be treated as authoritative at all points. See E.C.S. Gibson, *The Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England*, London: Methuen, 1902, pp. 726-728.

4. L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, London: Banner of Truth, 1958, pp 599-601.

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In the traditional Protestant denominations at any rate discipline has almost disappeared. Long ago John Calvin warned: ‘Those, I say, who trust that churches can long stand without this bond of discipline are mistaken, unless, indeed, we can with impunity dispense with a help which the Lord foresaw would be necessary. And indeed, the greatness of the necessity will be better perceived by its manifold uses’. In this discussion I will briefly trace the basis and function of Church discipline and conclude with a short assessment of the validity of Calvin’s prediction.

2. The New Testament Foundation

For a Christian, the ultimate basis for any practice is the express command of Christ. We are familiar with this reference point in the case of both evangelism and the sacraments, but the same appeal can be made for Church discipline. The usual way of describing this is in terms of ‘the power of the keys’. Matthew tells us that Jesus said to Peter, ‘I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’ (Matthew 16:19. cf. Matt. 18:18; John 20:23)

Commentators generally understand the reference to ‘binding’ and ‘loosing’ against a rabbinical background. In rabbinical usage ‘binding’ and ‘loosing’ usually signify interpretative decisions of prohibition and permission about moral or ceremonial matters, but they can also signify

condemnation and acquittal in disciplining members of the synagogue who disobey such interpretative decisions.’ In the New Testament itself references to exclusion from the synagogue can be found in Luke 6:22 and John 9:22. Given this background there can be little doubt that Jesus empowered the first community of believers with a certain authority in determining the boundaries of its membership.

The apostolic Church seems to have exercised this discipline regularly. Paul refers to ‘taking note’ of people who create difficulties in the congregation (Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14), and the usual advice for handling such people is to separate them out from the Christian assembly (1 Corinthians 5:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; Titus 3:11; 2 John 10). The range of offences covered is quite wide, from incest (1 Corinthians 5:7) to idleness (2 Thessalonians 3:11), and includes false doctrine (Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10; 2 John 10). The milieu in which such discipline was exercised was governed by an appeal to the authority of the recognised ministry, both apostolic eg. 1 Corinthians 4:15, 21; 2 Corinthians 10:5-6; 12:19-13:10, and local eg. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5. The locus classicus for such practices is Matthew 18:15-20. Here Jesus sets out a clear-cut approach for dealing with sin in the midst of the people of God.

5. J Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian’s Religion*, MacDonald: McDill, n.d., 4. 12, 4.

6. All quotations of the Bible are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

7. See, for example, R.H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982, pp 335, 368-369; L.L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971, p. 850.

8. E Buchsel, *deo*, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, tr. and ed. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, vol 2, 1964, pp. 60-61.

9. For a useful survey of some of the biblical material see A.T. Hanson, *The Church of the Servant*, London: S.C.M., 1962, pp. 61-67.

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1. The first level involves private admonition only. ‘If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone’. The category of transgression dealt with here is best thought of as ‘private’, but although Jesus refers specifically to a sin committed against oneself (‘you’) the principle can be applied to any sinful action, attitude or belief to which a Christian brother has privileged access. Such knowledge imposes an immediate moral responsibility upon the informed believer, so that he must use every means in his power to bring his brother to repentance. Not to act in such matters is itself a sin.

2. The second level of action which Jesus recommends is ‘to take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by two or three witnesses’. This action is essentially the same as the first, excepting that the presence of witnesses fulfils the O.T. laws about evidence (Deuteronomy 19:15). This means that if such action fails, it may move to a public level

3. The third step is to involve the assembled congregation, ‘tell it to the church’. Gauging by the evidence of the epistles what we have here is something more than the mere giving of information. Paul delivers the following advice to Timothy and Titus: ‘Never admit any charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear (1 Timothy 5:20). ‘As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him’ Titus 3:10. This process clearly involves a warning about the serious consequences of sin and the urgency of repentance. If this fails only one step remains.

4. ‘If he refuses to listen to the Church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector.’ As the righteous Jews of Jesus time hated and despised Gentiles and Jewish collaborators it seems that he is counselling a complete break in social contact with offenders. That is to say such a person is to be cut off from Christian fellowship, or, in perhaps more familiar terms, excommunicated. The process of exclusion from the believing community has O.T. precedent (Ezra 10:8) and represents the extreme limit of discipline on a Church member. Such a move is not to be entertained lightly, as can be judged from the sober and intensely strong language of 1 Corinthians 5:1-12 That Paul goes

much further than mere disbarment from participation in Church activities comes out most clearly in 1 Corinthians 5:13b where he cites Deuteronomy 17:7 'Drive out the wicked person from among you'. What is

10. I am here assuming the universalisable nature of fundamental ethical principles.

11. Calvin, Institutes, 4. 12, 3 argues that this first level of action is to be omitted altogether in the case of public offences already known of by the Christian community.

12. The sequence of steps at this point becomes complicated in the case of private sins involving public individuals. For example. In a situation known to me a parishioner found his minister in bed with someone other than his wife. Given the dynamics of a case like this, where the normal ordering of authority has become blurred, it would seem most appropriate to move immediately to this second level of action.

13. So, C.K. Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, London: A. and C. Black, 1971, pp. 120-132., G.D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, pp. 194-214.

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advocated here is definitely stronger than mere verbal admonition, even if physical coercion is not in question!

There are no biblical grounds however for regarding excommunication as either a punishment or a sign of final damnation. Strictly speaking the Church never punishes her erring members, even if expulsion must be regarded as a form of censure. To expel someone from the Church is not to expunge them from the number of the elect, as the return of the Corinthian sinner shows (2 Corinthians 5:5ff) Final judgement is in the hands of God alone, so that no human power can pass an irreversible spiritual decree. It is best to see the nature of the act of excommunication as declarative rather than judicial, the proclamation that the sins of someone are 'bound' is a correlation of the gospel and not the passing of a sentence! If the authority of the Church in matters of belief and conduct is based on the Gospel itself, then its proclamation can never be a closed judgement, otherwise that of which it speaks would be separated from its root in God's grace and mercy.

Prima facie the example of Ananias and Sapphira may seem to contradict this. There are a number of reasons however for believing that this example does not provide an exception. In the first place it has been suggested by O'Donovan that the early chapters of Acts are not typical of the Church's powers but archetypal, 'displaying in the sharpest possible profile the lineaments of the Pentecostal authority which must undergird, though less explicitly, the life of the church throughout' What O'Donovan means is that the power of God was at work in the Early Church in a particularly intense way, which we have no reason to necessarily expect to be at work in other times.

Secondly, it is possible to interpret this event in the light of Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians that a notable sinner should be delivered 'to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 5:5Cf; 1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Corinthians 11:30; James 5:20; 1 John 5:16). The simplest way of understanding this text is that premature death as a result of punishment for sin somehow ensures such a believers' salvation! On the negative side, it seems that there are no obvious moral or theological grounds for disallowing the discipline of excommunication. If however the Church is to practice this, positive persuasive reasons must be provided to move our consciences beyond mere acquiescence to action.

14. J. White and K. Blue, Healing the Wounded, Leicester: I.V.P., 1985, pp. 99-100 tie this to 'the power of the keys' and the operation of effective spiritual authority. That is, the word of the Church is enforced by the power of the Spirit.

15. Barrett, Corinthians, p. 125 makes this identification. Cf. P.E. Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962, pp. 63-65. Even if the identification is denied, so, Fee, Corinthians, p. 212, V. Furnish, 2 Corinthians, N.Y.: Garden City, 1984, pp. 160-168, it is still clear from the exegesis of the passage that a return to fellowship was possible.

16. In other words it makes known the way things are and does not cause them to be the case.

17. O'Donovan, *Resurrection and the Moral Order*, London: I.V.P., 1986, p. 177.

18. It is recognised here that this is not the only possible interpretation of this passage. See Fee, *Corinthians*, pp. 208-213 for a full discussion.

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3. The Theology and Necessity of Discipline

In discussing the necessity for ecclesiastical discipline G.C. Berkouwer says:

‘discipline has everything to do with the visibility of the Church, which is the light of the world, the sign of God’s mercy in the world, and the witness of the restoration of grace’ In other words, for the Church to be seen as the Church there must be discipline. This is to emphasise the supernatural side of the Christian community. Other writers lay greater stress on the fact that the Church is a human institution with inevitable limitations and weaknesses. As Friedberg says: ‘no religious community can hope to enforce its regulations which does not possess and if necessary use the power of excluding members who persistently refuse obedience to them’!^o This pragmatic approach is more or less self-evident, but falls outside the stress on the subject found in the NT.

There are a number of clear reasons for exercising Church discipline. The highest conceivable reason for exercising Christian discipline is to protect the name of God. The name of God comes into open disrepute whenever those who call themselves Christian lead shameful lives. God’s holiness appears to be compromised when the Church refuses to act against people whose behaviour is considered by outsiders to contradict what they understand to be the ethical principles of the Christian faith. Kuiper is correct in saying:

As the welfare of the individual member is a means to the end of the welfare of the church as a body, so the welfare of that body is a means to the glorification of its Head. And that is a way of saying that the church which neglects discipline is not only destroying its own glory but also shows a serious disregard of the glory of Christ. The faithful exercise of discipline is in very deed a mark of the true church. The church which is not deeply concerned about the honour of Christ simply is no church of His. On the other hand, passionate love for Christ and a consequent consuming zeal for His glory will impel the true church to be faithful in discipline.

A second patently obvious reason for discipline is, as Paul puts it: ‘a little leaven leavens the whole lump’ (1 Corinthians 5:6), in other words, ‘bad company ruins good morals’ (1 Corinthians 15:33). The moral climate of a community is a dynamic affair, and tolerance of sin can only lead to increasing moral compromise. Empirical holiness requires standards. It is as Barth says of the Church:

The grace of sanctification, and therefore of Jesus Christ generally, is surely alien to it if it does not try to counteract the continual menace and process of a profanation of that which is holy by its own human and therefore unholy hands; if it does not resist to the best of its ability and conscience.

19. Berkouwer, *The Church*, p. 377.

20. E. Friedberg, “Excommunication”, in *The New Schaff — Herzog Religious Encyclopaedia*. Grand Rapids: Baker, vol. 4, 1950, p. 237.

21. R.B. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, London: Banner of Truth, 1967, p. 310.

Even in a culture as secular as contemporary Australia, the truth of Kuiper’s words have been borne out by the repeated comments of non-believers as to what they understand to be the leniency of the Church discipline handed out to erring American televangelists.

22. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, tr. and ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, Vol III, 4, 19, p.709. White and Blue, *Healing*, pp. 64-66 add another dimension to this by suggesting that tolerance of wickedness itself, and the gossip and division it brings within the Church makes discipline essential.

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In other words because the Church is holy it must live as holy, a pre-requisite for this is godly discipline.

The same principle applies in the case of doctrine. The truth to which the Church witnesses is revealed and not discovered, it therefore carries with it a demand for obedience and faith. The Church must exercise authority to protect the apostolic deposit from erosion and contamination, and only a community which practices discipline can effectively transmit that which it has received. This action is directed towards making the gospel perspicuous in its public life i.e. discipline is directed towards ensuring that the Word of God can be truly declared. In this sense therefore, if the Church is to maintain its existence as a closely knit community of faith, Christian freedom can never be absolute. Those who will not conform to the gospel do not belong to the Church. A third motivation for discipline, sometimes called 'the teleology of discipline', is the aim of reclaiming a sinner. 'If any one refuses to obey what we say in this letter, note that man, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. (2 Thessalonians 3:14). The aim of Church discipline can never be the destruction of the offender but always his salvation. A persistent temptation is to employ discipline as a device to get rid of 'trouble makers' from the Church. This is not only antithetical to Jesus' own words in Matthew 18:15 but contradicts the entire atmosphere of the N.T. with its commitment to reconciliation. We are taught to restore sinners in a 'spirit of humility' (Galatians 6:1). Justice without mercy is a contradiction in a Church which has the command: 'Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful' (Luke 6:36) Discipline must be exercised not in a spirit of condemnation but in a spirit of expectation. It is not the legalistic application of a set of rules which is at stake but the welfare of a human being. Properly understood ecclesiastical discipline must be an affair of the Spirit of God.

It is for this reason that considerable stress has been laid on the public nature of reconciliation. Article 33 of the Anglican Articles of Religion for example makes it plain that once a person has repented of their sin they must be openly reconciled to the Church, just as they were publicly renounced. The Patristic

23. It is perhaps useful at this point to recall that holiness and love must meet in the Church in the same way as they meet in God. It can only be described as a situation of gross mis- comprehension when a Christian minister in a large Australian city publicly replied to a call to discipline an active homosexual member of his congregation with the words: 'whatever he is in his personal life, we love him'.

24. This is a particular emphasis of Roman Catholic theologians. See A. Dulles, *A Church to Believe In*, N.Y.: Crossroads, 1984, p. 63. Cf J. Macquarie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, London S.C.M. 2nd ed., 1977, p. 483.

25. In the midst of a row in a Church in which I once served, the minister terminated the discussion with the exclamation: 'You are excommunicated'. The hitherto troublesome parishioner quickly found another place in which to worship.

26. This stands against all authoritarianism. Watchman Nee, for example, *The Body of Christ: A Reality*, N.Y.: Christian Fellowship, p. 48 says: 'If you are at odds with them (church leaders) you will also be at odds with God'. Terms like 'covering' and 'umbrella' are often used to teach a form of subjugation with a veneer of godliness but which is in principle legalistic.

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Church made the nature of the reception quite clear by including the laying- on-of-hands as part of its ceremony of re-admission to communion. Excessive harshness in the matter of conditions for reconciliation, could only produce, as Calvin puts it: 'either great hypocrisy or very great despair'. Most writers on Church discipline do not seem to go beyond the range of considerations offered above. Oliver O'Donovan's recent writing in the area of Christian ethics has opened up a theological framework for excommunication which is rather more profound than other analyses. He understands excommunication to be a public act which is a demonstration of the final separation of truth from falsehood on which the Kingdom of God is founded. It points to a gulf which must exist eschatologically between one who has refused God's Word and the redeemed community which lives by it.

Such a sign enables the Church to express itself unmistakably when it announces the gospel, to overcome the ambiguities which cling inescapably to its message if it cannot repudiate unbelief and impenitence when it meets them

Even in its penultimate judgment the New Testament Church understands itself to be making final judgment visible. In this way its public life is protected against erosion by the ambiguities in the midst of which it lives, and continues to be shaped by the gospel which is God's last word about man's ambiguous relation to created good.

In other words, if the Church is to maintain its identity as the eschatological community it must draw limits of a visible kind between itself and this present evil age. If it does not do this it cannot stand at one and the same time as a sign of God's salvation and judgement. If the 'powers of the age to come' (Hebrews 6:5) are really constitutive of her life, then the Church, to be true to her own inner being must live as if she is more than just a part of this world.

It is perhaps at this point that serious questions will be raised as to the scope of Church discipline. In the first place it needs to be remarked that nothing in Scripture itself can be taken to militate against the regular practice of discipline. In some circles it has been popular to interpret the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43) in such a way as to exclude discipline. All action with respect to the faith of others must be exercised by God while we wait for the last judgment. But even a superficial reading of this parable makes it clear that the field in question is not the Church but the world. Good and evil alike dwell in the world until the last day.

Hans Kung is surely correct when he says that: 'the essential norm for judging a situation is not some viewpoint of ecclesiastical politics, but the gospel itself'. The sign of divine judgement can only be executed in response to a refusal to obey God's Word, and not to a refusal of what the Church may

27. For an historical treatment see: D.S.Schaff, 'Discipline (Christian)', in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1911, vol. 4. pp. 715-720.

28. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4. 12, 8.

29. O'Donovan, *Resurrection*, p. 177, 178

30. See on this Kuiper, *Glorious Body*, pp. 306-307.

31. So, W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, pp. 74-75

32. H. Kung, *The Church Maintained in Truth*, London: S.C.M., 1979, p. 64.

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have ordered. The situation is more ambiguous where a sustained theological argument at some remove from the biblical text seems to require a certain conclusion. That is to say, where something is only implicit in the Bible. John White and Ken Blue advance a useful rule of thumb: 'We are to train one another in godliness through corrective action at the point where one or more of these (sins) becomes evident in a way which hampers mutual fellowship'. That there will be many very difficult cases cannot be denied, but this can never be a sufficient reason to negate the whole matter of biblically-based discipline.

4. The Decline and Recovery of Discipline

Historically, the decline of a biblically based discipline in the European Churches can be traced back to the alliance between Church and State which began under Constantine and culminated in the Theodosian Code (435 AD). This formalised the relationship between Church and State in such a way that ecclesiastical offences fell under civil law. Considerable confusion about the respective roles of the state and the Church in the punishment of offenders against Church order continued throughout the Middle Ages. These problems continued into the Reformation era and necessarily obscured the spiritual and eschatological character of true Christian discipline. The enforcement of discipline by excommunication had been so abused by Popes, bishops and priests that by the time of the English Reformation it had fallen into disuse. This placed the laity in a situation of intolerance to it. Despite serious attempts by the Reformed Churches to draw up new codes for spiritual correction by the late seventeenth century John Owen described the situation like this: 'it is so come

to pass, that let men never be so notorious and flagitiously wicked, until they become pests of the earth, yet are they esteemed to belong to the church of Christ; and not only so, but it is considered little less than schism to forbid them communion of the church in all its sacred privileges'. Even more seriously the rise and influence of rationalism undercut the very theological premises upon which an understanding of discipline was based. Subsequent to the Reformation the divided state of the Church made the maintenance of discipline extraordinarily difficult. Someone disciplined in his own denomination could easily transfer to another.

33. O'Donovan, *Resurrection*, pp. 174-175 gives as examples that of a layman celebrating Holy Communion or a bishop ordaining a woman before the Church had authorised it (O'Donovan is an Anglican). Other examples which come to mind might be dancing on a Sunday (for certain Sabbatarian groups) or marrying a non-believer.

34. An appropriate example here might be the prohibition of Christians from involvement in active euthanasia, which seems to be required by the way human life is treated throughout the Bible. (The Roman Catholic Church has been known to excommunicate its members involved in abortion counselling centres).

35. *White and Blue, Healing*, p. 108

36. 'Theodosian Code' in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. E.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 1361.

37. See, *The Tutorial Prayer Book*, C. Neil and J.M. Willoughby (eds), London: Harrison, 1912, p. 474.

38. John Owen, *The True Nature of a Gospel Church and Its Government*, vol. 16, *The Works of John Owen*, 1689, reprinted; London: Banner of Truth, p.11.

39. A recent example of this occurred when a youth worker who was suspended from active ministry for a year because of fornication was immediately invited to take up a post at a nearby assembly of another denomination. A reasonable response in situations like this would be for the first church to approach the other to explain how they saw their original course of action as being in the best interests of the sinner. What is at stake here is not expedience but sanctification.

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Pressures against effective ecclesiastical discipline have not diminished but intensified in our day. In the first place there is a widespread 'lack of nerve' in the Church, and many Church leaders stand in a situation of positive fear with respect to congregational numbers. The spirit of 'democracy' which is so owned by Western culture is irritated by any suggestion of the penal exercise of authority. Individualism is rampant within the Church in such a form that Christian freedom can be identified with the sole sufficiency of one's own judgement. Many Christians still think in terms of a division between the sacred and the secular, and consider that there is no area of their 'private lives' over which the Church has the right to discipline. Secretly or openly Christian leaders are fearful of the sort of adverse publicity which is generated when the Church takes public action which contradicts accepted social standards of morality. In various 'Bible-believing' churches the need for discipline is given tacit recognition, but in practice there is a tendency to rely almost wholly on the effect of the exposition of the Scripture from the pulpit and the sensitivities of the conscience of Church members. This itself can be interpreted as a capitulation to the spirit of the age. Calvin's prediction has become more true than he could have ever realised.

However difficult the application of the principles discussed in this paper may be the consequences of avoiding the question seem too large to allow the situation to continue in its present state. It is possible for the Church to become unrecognisable because of the absence of truly spiritual discipline, that is, the progressive accumulation of errors, both moral and doctrinal, obscures the content and hinders the proclamation of the gospel of grace. This means that the practice of discipline is not peripheral to the life of God's people but is a defence against the weakening of the foundation of the gospel itself.

It is not easy to find a way forward in this matter, or, more accurately, a way out of a situation that has already so sharply declined. In the first place any return to a true exercise of discipline would

seem to have to be rooted in a return to the power and purpose of the gospel itself. The body of Christ in this world is always *simul iustus et peccator* (at the same time justified and sinful), but it is only when the dynamic of justification is properly appreciated that sin can be adequately dealt with. That is, the experience of forgiveness is the best surety against a lack of Church discipline. When forgiveness and real repentance are evoked by the preaching of the whole counsel of God a climate is created where discipline must be seen as complementary and not contradictory to the Church's true (holy) character. Along these lines it is to be expected that the parodies associated with discipline in the popular Christian mind, such as intolerance, harshness and lack of love can be avoided as the mind is reshaped by a full proclamation of Christian truth. This implies that effective disciplinary action must be firmly rooted in the shared consciousness of the congregation. Where misunderstanding or false sympathy dwell discipline can only lead to misrepresentation and division. It is

40. See J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit*, tr. M. Kohl, London: S.C.M., 1977, p. 308.

41. I am aware of a situation where for this reason the head pastor allows de facto Christian couples to worship freely in the Church over which he presides despite the protestations of junior clergy.

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as a community of the faith that the body of Christ must discipline its members. This places heavy responsibility not only upon the eldership of a congregation but upon every member of the Church to act as a guardian of God's truth. The whole body of Christ is responsible for the whole body. It is appropriate to end this discussion with a few practical suggestions as to how the Church today might administer discipline more effectively.

When a Christian becomes aware of what he believes is a serious fault in a fellow member of the congregation he should privately discuss the matter with the individual concerned, as far as possible avoiding the need to relate the matter to others. If his entreaty is ignored or denied then it is imperative to raise the issue with someone in a recognised position of authority (pastor, elder, deacon, church warden, etc). A meeting should be arranged between the putative offender, the authoritative figure, the informing Christian and witnesses to the actions under review. If the leader is satisfied of the truth of the charge but the sinner refuses to accept counselling or in any other way to change their position, then, to ensure fairness on both sides, all those involved to this stage should meet with the recognised oversight body of the church, eg. pastor and elders. If this group is satisfied that the offence is real and deserving of excommunication and the offender continues to be intransigent then the matter must be taken to 'the Church'.

It is quite clear from 1 Corinthians 5:4, 'when you are assembled', that the sentence of excommunication must be passed in a time of corporate public worship. It is only under conditions such as these that the body of Christ can own in any meaningful way the action of discipline. A problem obviously arises in situations of very large congregations where the majority of worshippers are unknown to the offender, or where there are multiple services of worship. In this case 'the Church' should be understood as that group of people most acquainted with and likely to be affected by the offender's transgression — either one of the services of worship, or a house group to which the individual belongs. The sinner should be invited to attend, not to defend themselves, as the time for this is over, but to be made aware of the seriousness of their actions, to hear the proclamation of the Word of God concerning their stand and to know that they are still receiving the prayers of the saints. Their failure to attend should not substantially alter the procedure to be followed. A sermon on church discipline would provide an appropriate context for the individual to be named, to be charged with their offence publicly and to be delivered in prayer to the mercy of the Lord with a view to repentance. It should be made clear to all assembled that this is not a sentence

42. This principle, I believe, is vitiated in Anglican circles by the need to refer to the diocesan bishop and his tribunal. Roland Allen described a situation in China at the turn of the century whose

difficulties encompass this point: 'the church in which the offender lives feels little or no responsibility and the man is not excommunicated by the majority. Consequently the act has little effect. It does not come home to the offender; it does not come home to the church. A man can afford to present a stubborn front to the fulminations of a (church leader). He cannot so treat excommunication of his neighbours . . . What he needs is the public censure of the majority of his fellow churchmen'. R. Allen, *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours*, London: World Dominion, 1912, pp. 160-161.

43. For a full discussion see White and Blue, *Healing*, and J. White, *Eros Defiled*, Leicester: I.V.P., 1978, pp. 146-166.

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of condemnation but one of excommunication. Kindness remains appropriate, but sympathy is not. The congregation must be charged to avoid all social intercourse with this individual, in practical terms they must be treated as living as an enemy of Christ. Conversation should as far as possible be restricted to loving admonition for them to return to God. They are to be denied access to the sacraments.

The question remains as to how someone may return to fellowship. In some way the individual must persuade the leaders of the church that they are truly repentant. This would involve confession, seeking forgiveness, a change of lifestyle and perhaps appropriate restitution. At this point the eldership may re-admit them unconditionally to fellowship, or set out a series of conditions to safeguard there-entry of the person into full church life. These would be protective measures both for the Christian community and for the individual. They may relate to leadership positions, fraternizing with the opposite sex, attending a particular home group and so on. Should such measures be put in place they would continue at the elders' discretion. At all points judgementalism must be avoided and the stress laid upon the forgiving character of God revealed in Christ.

In conclusion I suspect that a matter such as this cannot be properly addressed without a much deeper recognition of the fact that one of the notes of the Church is holiness. It is only against this background that the Church is given holiness to start with, and that the profound implications of: 'You must be holy for I am holy (1 Peter 1:1b), can be worked out. Perhaps the best one can hope for in this 'time between the times' is a sort of creative tension that avoids the extremes of authoritarianism and the laissez-faire. Such a tension is true to the eschatological character of the body of Christ and drives us back to ever increasing dependence upon the Spirit of God without which we are certain to succumb to our own prejudices.