

**Theology IV -- Ecclesiology**  
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Although ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church) has not received the attention of other doctrines in the church's history like christology and soteriology, ecumenical dialogues reveal its central role in God's program for restoration to the fallen world. For this reason the nature of the Church remains a stubborn point of division among the chief confessions of christendom. Perhaps more than any other *loci* of theology, ecclesiology is built upon the foundation of all the other doctrines and will be deficient without proper attention to christology, theology proper, pneumatology, soteriology, anthropology, hamartiology, bibliology, eschatology and even angelology.

**1. The meaning of the term *ekklēsia*.**

The word *ekklēsia* (Gr *evkk1h1si*, a<sup>1</sup>) which is translated "church" means "a called out body." In secular Greek, *ekklēsia* was used in a non-technical sense for an "assembly" or "congregation." In the LXX *ekklēsia* translated the Hebrew word *lhq* (*qahal*), which also had this non-technical meaning of "assembly" or "gathering" (e.g., Gen 49:6; 1 Kings 12:23; Num 22:14) (K. Schmidt, "evkk1h1si, a," *TDNT*, 3:514-527). The NT brings a new technical meaning to the term in three ways:

1a. *Ekklēsia* can designate an assembly of Christians in a particular locality (Acts 8:1; 11:22; Rev 2-3).

2a. *Ekklēsia* can refer to the Universal Church on earth. This is the totality of professing Christendom without reference to locality (Acts 12:1; 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; 1 Cor 12:28).

3a. *Ekklēsia* can refer specifically to the Body of Christ (Eph 1:22; Col 1:18; 24). This body is composed of true believers in the present age who have been baptized with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13) and are possessors of eternal life in Christ (John 3:36).

**2. The relations of the *ekklēsia*.**

1a. The relationship of the universal and local church.

There is one universal *ekklēsia* that manifests itself in different localities (e.g., 1 Cor 1:2). The universal church is not the sum of the local churches as the body of Christ cannot be divided into 'churches' or bodies. Rather, the universal church functions as our spirit does in our body. Our spirit is manifest and made available to others by means of our bodies. The universal church thus is prior in some sense to the local church. This relationship of the local and universal church is demonstrated in the function of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The following evidence from the NT shows that baptism and the Lord's Supper were primarily ordinances of the universal church that were carried out in local churches.

1b. The NT reveals no need of re-baptism when those already baptized moved among local churches.

2b. Baptism identifies one with Christ's body in the universal sense (Ro 6:3 ff.; see section on baptism below)

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<sup>1</sup> Original language fonts for this course pack are BibleWorks Hebrew and Greek. They can be acquired from the following website: <http://www.bibleworks.com/fonts.html>

3b. The Lord's supper is partaken of freely without regard for local church affiliation. See Acts 20:7 where Paul breaks bread in Troas though Antioch was his "home" church.

2a. The church as Christ's body (Sacramental theology; cf. Stuart G. Hall, "The Early Idea of the Church," in *The First Christian Theologians: An Introduction to the Theology in the Early Church*, edited by G. R. Evans. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004): 41-57; Mark Saucy, "Evangelicals, Catholics and Orthodox Together: Is the Church the Extension of the Incarnation?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 [2000]: 193-212).

Within Sacramental theology (e.g., Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy) the nature of the church as Christ's body attains ontological status. Joined with her head, Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, the church and Christ constitute the *totus Christus* (the whole Christ). Incarnational categories are often used among sacramentalists to express this relationship of the church to her Head so that the church is understood to be the post-ascension continuation of the incarnation of the divine Logos. In this disposition the *ekklēsia* thus joins with Christ in mediating salvation to humanity. The church's sacraments are the means of transmitting and receiving grace for salvation. Following are the reasons asserted by Protestants why the church's relationship to her Lord must be one of union and communion, but not one of identity.

1b. The *ekklēsia* only preaches Christ, never the *ekklēsia* (e.g., Acts 8:5; 18:5; 28:23).  
The *ekklēsia* confesses Christ's name, not its own (e.g., Mark 13:13). The foundation of the *ekklēsia* is not the *ekklēsia*, but her faith in Christ.

2b. The *ekklēsia* is never the object of faith.  
In the NT only God or Christ are the proper objects of saving faith (e.g., Ro 10:11, 13; Mark 11:22).

3b. The *ekklēsia* is not the object of rejection determining one's damnation.  
Rejection of the Holy Spirit, not the *ekklēsia*, is the one unpardonable sin (Mark 3:29 and pars.).

4b. The *ekklēsia* is never presented as granting or giving faith to believers.  
Faith is a gift of God (Phil 1:28-29; Eph 2:8-9).

5b. The *ekklēsia* is never the subject of salvific action.  
While the church has a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18), it never "reconciles," "redeems," or "propitiates."  
1 Cor 4:15 establishes the christocentric measure by which the church's fatherhood or motherhood of believers must be understood.

6b. The *ekklēsia* is composed of members who are not yet fully perfect and sinless (Gal 4:19).  
Merging the church with Christ in a relationship of identity compromises Christ's own freedom.

7b. The *ekklēsia* is subject to Christ and must obey him (Eph 1:22).  
Christ, not the *ekklēsia*, has all authority (Matt 28:19).

8b. The *ekklēsia* is not the direct successor of Christ's ministry; the Holy Spirit is (John 16:7).

9b. Neither the Holy Spirit nor the Kingdom of God can be subordinated to the *ekklēsia* in terms of *totus Christus*.

The Holy Spirit is the Church's maker (1 Cor 12:13), guide (Acts 8:29, 39; 10:19; 11:12), oracle revealing the future (John 16:13) and judge (Acts 5:3 ff.). He is not sent by the Church as He was sent by Christ; neither does He glorify the church as he glorifies Christ. Nor does the NT reveal the church as the present form of the Kingdom of God. As Schnackenburg has said, "God reign has no organization and goes through no process; it does not embrace the just and sinners, it is in no sense dependent upon earthly and human factors. It is not 'built up' by men and thus brought to its goal. All of this can be said of the church in its earthly form (Rudolf Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and Kingdom*, [Nelson, 1963], 233-234).

10b. The relationship of Christ and the *ekklēsia* is typified by the multi-subject union of marriage, not the single subject union of the incarnation (Eph 5:30-32).

11b. Exegesis of 1 Cor 12:27 ("...you are Christ's body") indicates a metaphorical intention by Paul, not an ontological one.

1c. The variety of the images for the Church.

Minear in his book, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Westminster, 1960, 268-269) has catalogued more than 80 images of the church in the NT.

2c. The variability of the body image itself.

Paul uses the concept of the body to teach a variety of truths for different occasions. In Romans and Corinthians, a local gathering composes the entire body, but in Ephesians and Colossians, Christ the head is distinguished from his body

3c. The contextual referent of the body image.

The most direct referent for the believer's relationship to Christ's body seems to be His physical body to which the believer is united by covenant (Ro 7:4; 1 Cor 11:27). The key to understanding the body image is the representational or incorporative element in the context of the apostle's own understanding of "being in Christ."

4c. The function of the body image in Paul's thought.

Paul uses the body image in accord with the occasional nature of his writings. To the Romans and Corinthians the body is used as an exhortation to depict the internal relations of the local church. To the Ephesians and Colossians the image teaches the believers relationship to Christ, the Body's Head. In both cases the message is focused inwardly on internal church issues, which is different from the use the image takes in sacramental theology, where the body mediates salvation outwardly to the world.

3a. The visible and invisible church.

The distinction of the church as visible (i.e., institutional) and invisible (i.e., spiritual) was a product of the Protestant reformation's reaction to Catholicism of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Although the NT does allow for the idea of there being unbelievers in a church (e.g., 1 John 2:18-19; Acts 8:13-23; 2 Cor 13:5), the categories of 'visible' or 'invisible' however, are not germane to the biblical use of *ekklēsia*. Historically, the practice of infant baptism played a key role in this

confusion of the biblical usage of the term *ekklēsia*, by making membership in the church no longer tied to living, saving faith.

### **3. The Nature of the Church.**

The nature of the church or the essential character or qualities that determine what it is, is seen in the NT in both direct statements and metaphorical images. In Church's history the biblical data is systematized under the category of the "marks of the church.

#### 1a. Direct statements.

##### 1b. The church is a divine assembly.

The triune God is behind the beginning, history, and destiny of the church (see Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* [Moody, 1972], 19-22). The church has a distinct relationship with each member of the trinity.

1c. The members of the church are the elect of God (Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:2; Ro 8:29-30; Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* [Eerdmans, 1996], 73-91).

2c. The members of the church share in the person and work of Christ (Ferguson, *Church of Christ*, 91-102).

As the eternal purpose of God is made clear and demonstrated in the person and work of Christ, so the church finds its identity in him. His presence through the Holy Spirit unites all of His people and dominates every facet of their lives (Ro 6:6; 8:17; Col 2:12).

3c. The members of the church share in Christ through the Holy Spirit (Ferguson, *Church of Christ*, 103-114).

The Holy Spirit is the comforter whom Christ promised to send his disciples in John 14:16-20. All of the members of the church have a common partaking of the Spirit (2 Cor 13:14; Phil 2:1). The Spirit is the agent of Christ in the church. He energizes all of the members' activities through the bestowal of gifts (1 Cor 12:7ff.) and his own sovereign power (1 Cor 2:4).

##### 2b. A responding assembly.

As the NT shows the church to be the product of divine initiative, it is also pictured as an assembly of those who have responded to the divine Convener. This is seen in the way members of the church are addressed in the NT.

1c. Believers (Acts 2:44; 1 Thess 1:7).

2c. Disciples (John 8:31; Acts 6:1).

3c. Christians (Acts 11:26).

4c. Brethren (Eph 6:23; Ro 8:29).

3b. The Church as sacrament (Sacramental Theology).

The central formulation of the second Vatican Council (Roman Catholicism) defines the church as “sacrament—as it were” (Latin: *uti sacramentum*). With the formulation is meant that the church is a “sign and instrument of communion with God and unity among humans” (*Lumen gentium*, 1.1). This statement makes clear why ecclesiology was intricately involved in the soteriological questions of the Reformers and why ecclesiology continues to be an important point of contention separating the various traditions of Christendom. Basically the issue is: What is the Church’s role in human justification?

1c. The position of sacramental theology (Roman Catholics and Orthodox).

The church is sanctified in such a way so that it becomes the subject of sanctifying acts.

2c. The position of Protestantism.

The church is always the object of grace, never the subject of it. The church’s instrumentality in salvation extends to preaching the Word that awakens faith and modeling and nurturing the soul’s transformation according to the inspired Word.

2a. Images of the Church.

Biblical metaphors of the church provide another rich source of teaching concerning the nature of the church. Although the number of such metaphors is great in the NT, several appear particularly prominently.

1b. The body (Col 1:18; Eph 1:22ff.; 1 Cor 12:12-31; Eph 4:15; see also Ferguson, *The Church of Christ*, 91-103).

2b. The temple (Eph 2:19-20; 1 Pet 2:5-6; 1 Cor 6:19; Ferguson, *Church of Christ*, 124-128).

The temple image also raises the question of the identity of the church’s “rock” in Matt 16:18.

View 1: The rock is Christ (cf. 1 Cor 3:11).

View 2: The rock is Peter’s confession.

View 3: The rock is Peter

### **Peter and the Keys of the Kingdom**

(Matt 16:19; 18:18) (adapted from Gerry Breshears' *Ecclesiology Syllabus*, 2006).

The figure is first that of the steward (Isa. 22:22 with 22:15), where the keys are a sign of the authority of office which enables him to regulate the affairs of the household. Luke 11:52 along with Matt. 18:18, John 20:23 help us see that this includes the power of entrance and exclusion to the kingdom. We see this happening in Acts 15:10.

### **Binding & Loosing**

The Rabbis used the term to speak of laying down Halakah, rules of conduct. Theirs is a teaching function, specifically of making halakhic pronouncements which are "binding" on the people of God. Binding and loosing are technical terms denoting the authority to lay down binding rules or loosing by declaring exemption from them (Robert Mounce, *Matthew*[Hendrickson, 1991]). This power of teaching authoritatively comes into the arena of conduct and discipline in Matt. 18:18. The church can determine its customs, membership (including excommunication) based on the commands of her Lord.

The objects of binding and loosing are things before people as indicated by the neuter pronouns. In rabbinic usage things (rules, prohibitions, etc.) are bound onto people. Peter is given the right to declare what is or is not the will of God and a similar right is exercised by the church in the context of ruling on the conduct of her members (France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* [Zondervan Academie, 1989], 247-248). The keys that Peter received represent the authority to determine what kind of conduct is worthy of those who live under the rule of God. Decisions made by the leadership of the church carry with them a divine sanction.

"Peter accomplishes this binding by proclaiming a gospel that has already been given and by making personal application on that basis (e.g., Simon Magus). Whatever he binds or looses will have been bound or loosed, so long as he adheres to that divinely disclosed gospel. He has no direct pipeline to heaven, still less do his decisions force heaven to comply; but he may be authoritative in binding and loosing because heaven has acted first (Acts 18:9-10)." Peter will loose (permit and administer) the Gentiles' admission to the church.

3b. The priesthood (1 Pet 2:9; cf. Heb 10:19-21; Ferguson, *Church of Christ*, 220-226).

4b. The bride (Eph 5:25; 1 Thess 4:17).

5b. The flock (1 Pet 5:2; John 10:4; Ferguson, *Church of Christ*, 122-123).

6b. The vine (John 15:2-4; Ferguson, *Church of Christ*, 121).

7b. The family (1 John 3:1; Eph 2:19; John 3:16; John 1:12; Col 1:2; Ro 16:1; Ferguson, *Church of Christ*, 114-120; and recently, Joseph Hellerman, *When the Church was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community*[B & H, 2009]).

3a. The classic marks of the church: One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Church. (adapted from G. Breshears' *Ecclesiology* syllabus).

1b. One – Jesus Formed only One Church. What is its Unity?

2b. Holy – Set Apart to God, Conformed to His Character

3b. Catholic – No Local or Temporal Limitations

4b. Apostolic – Founded on the Apostles

5b. Protestant Reformers' Marks of the Church.

**4. The Mission and Ministry of the Church.**

1a. One Fundamental or Multiple Missions/Purposes?

When the subject of the mission or purpose of the church comes up, many suggestions may be put forth—and all with Scriptural backing! Consider the three purposes usually offered:

**Worship**—John Piper has argued worship is the fundamental purpose of the church in the world: “Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more” (*Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* [revised ed.; Baker 2010], 15).

**Edification**—Eph 4:13, that “we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

**Evangelism**—Matt 28:19-20. Great Commissions conclude each Gospel: Mark 16:15ff.; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21).

In the midst of these options, we are often apt to think of the church in terms of *several purposes*. Sometimes they are stated as those that are concerned with *our being* and *our doing*. Biblical cases can be made for all of these concerns. But the problem is that often when the purpose of the church is viewed in multiplicity, competing forces evolve creating internal debilitating struggles which hinder the church from accomplishing anything. What is needed is one unified mission. All of these aspects of church life must be viewed as serving one great purpose.

Illustration: it is much like an army.

2a. The Fundamental Mission of the Church.

1b. The Glory of God.

As all of God’s works exist finally to magnify his perfections, we cannot propose anything more fundamental for the church’s purpose than the answer of the 24 elders in Rev 4 and Paul to the Ephesians—“to glorify God.”

Rev 4:11—“Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.” (Cf. Also Eph 1:6, 12, 14).

Eph 3:21—" . . . to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever."

2b. The Meaning of God's Glory in the Church.

The implications of this are clear for the life of the church. The church, like all of God's works, is to be a reflection of God to all who see it. The church, therefore, *must be God-like* (cf. 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:24) if it would fulfill its divine purpose.

3a. The Historical Purpose.

Once the fundamental mission of the church as glorifying God is described as being God-like, the picture for the church's mission in history follows the same pattern. What is God like in the world? How does God relate to the world? These and similar questions encompass the church's mission in history.

1b. The Glory of God in This World.

When we look at the Scriptures in relation to God's attitude toward the world we notice several truths.

1c. God loves the world.

Out of his nature as love (1 John 4:8), flows God's love for the world (John 3:16).

2c. God seeks the world.

The love of God is no passive emotion. Rather, it is demonstrated in actively seeking the lost. Since the first divine interrogative in Gen 3:9, when God calls out to Adam, Where are you?, He is active in reclaiming the hearts of his human creatures. He is the shepherd who leaves the 99 and goes after the one missing (Matt 18:12).

3c. God gave himself for the world.

In the person of his Son, God revealed himself to the world (John 1:18). This revelation included the nature of the divine love as self-giving for the good of the object of love. Paul's hymn to Christ in Phil 2:5-11 shows this characteristic not just of Christ, but also God himself. Verse 6 needs to be understood not merely as "although he was in the form of God...", but also as "*because* he was in the form of God..." (See Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God* [Eerdmans, 2009], 10).

2b. The Glory of God in the Church in the World.

When we now ask what does it mean for the church to glorify God in its present existence in history, the answer is obvious. If the church would reveal the nature of God, if it would be God-like in its existence here on earth, *it must give itself in love for the world.*

1c. The Relation of the Church to Christ.

The church as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27) retains the same ultimate mission in the world as Christ. Markus Barth makes the point clear commenting on Eph 3:21: "*The existence and manifestation of God's glory in the church is and remains dependent upon glorification of God through the Son.*" "*If He is God's glory in person, then the church is the lighthouse which serves to radiate His light*" (*Ephesians I*, [ABC; Doubleday, 1974], 376). As giving himself in love for the world was the ultimate mission of Christ, so in its own way does the church fulfill its purpose in giving itself in love for the world. Of course the church does not give itself to the world the same way as Christ—for vicarious sacrifice for sin—but in deed and attendant proclamation of Christ the church witnesses to and fulfills the mission of Christ in the world.

2c. The Commission of Christ to the Church.

As noted above, each Gospel concludes with a call for the disciples to bear witness to the good news of God in Christ. And while in each of these this commission finds its end in some kind of proclamation, the example of Jesus himself showed that preaching does not comprise the sole activity of the church. Jesus, the sent one, came as a witness in *word and deed* (cf. Matt 4:17; 9:35). We will develop the point further below, but for now it is important to understand that a fundamentally *evangelistic mission* does not mean one that only preaches or proclaims. At this point we should probably say that proclamation would be the end goal, but loving deeds were often the means Jesus himself used to ground his proclamation. The same will be true for the church as it conducts its mission.

3c. Summary and Conclusion.

1d. We are not left in the world to bide our time until the rapture; we are not left here simply to become more Christ-like in our personal sanctification. That could take place in an instant with the appearing of Christ. We are left here to be witnesses of Christ, to radiate the glory of God in Him to the ends of the earth.

2d. The mission of the church is thus, simply stated, to glorify God by radiating His nature in the world. When we ask what that nature is, it is the nature of Christ, Who is God sent to this world, to exist in this world, and toward this world, that the whole world may know of Him.

4a. The Means of Fulfilling This Mission: Ministry of the Church.

How does the church accomplish this mission? It is often with this question that we get hung up. We would not presume to set forth the total means whereby this mission is accomplished. We can only set forth what seems to us to be some underlying principles revealed in the Word.

1b. The Mission of the Church Involves the Total life of the Church

The accomplishment of this mission involves the total life of the church. It cannot be accomplished if this mission is seen as belonging only to the so-called missionaries or evangelists. The mission of the church belongs to the entire church just as the mission of an army belongs to the entire army. As soon as the training corps, or the quartermaster corps loses sight of the mission of the army, just that soon will it lose its own mission and therefore its purpose for existence. Likewise, unless every ministry of the church of Christ is oriented toward the fundamental mission of the church, it begins to lose its purpose, and will eventually hinder rather than benefit the church. If teaching is done only for the ultimate goal of knowledge, it will eventually stagnate the church. If fellowship or body-life is pursued with only the mission of accomplishing *koinonia*, such fellowship will deteriorate into dead cliquishness.

*"What we have said of the Church applies also to the individual members of the Church . . . No individual Christian can be any better or holier than the Church. There is no member of the Church that can leave to "the Church" or to some Board of Missions or Department of Evangelism all contact with the world. No member of Christ's living body can enjoy quiet partnership with the Head without participating in the building and growing that is willed and inspired by the Head. Each one of the saints in Ephesus is addressed in this epistle. Written "to the saints," it deals with "each one of us" (1:1; 4:7); the saints are higher respected than an amorphous mass, an ideal collection, or a plantlike organism. The Gospel of peace which Christ preached to those near and far, and the Church's life and witness to the world are either a concern of each and all Church members - or they are saboteurs of the perfect work of God and dead members of a body that is destined to live. Either they are made light and let their light shine (5:8), or they are obstructers and deniers of their own salvation. No one of them can*

walk as a "beloved child" and as a "child of the light" (5:1, 8) unless he is a "spotless child of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" and a "shining light in the world" (Phil. 2:15). "You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world . . . that they give glory to your Father Who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:13-16). In all these statements the saints are saints and children of God only if they stand, walk, and serve in the world to the enlightenment and salvation of those who do not yet believe" (Markus Barth, *The Broken Wall* [Chicago: Judson, 1959], 142-43)

## 2b. The Mission of the Church Involves Our Being and Doing

### 1c. Our Being—the Church's ministry to itself.

Not only must the mission of the church involve the total life of the church, but it must also involve both our being and doing. Again, at this point, division sometimes occurs between the tasks of edification and the task of evangelism. But if the mission is properly understood, there can be no conflict. Edification is part of evangelism. If the church would act as Christ in the world, it must also be as Christ. It is significant that the apostle does not simply say in Eph 1:12 that we are to say a praise of God's glory, but we are "to be" a praise of His glory. God is glorified by our being. The church during this age must be as God desired his people in the Old Testament when he sought, "that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise, and for glory . . ." (Jer 13:11).

Paul in Ephesians 5:8 says, "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord . . ." It is not in opposition to evangelism that we be concerned with being conformed to the image of Christ. *It is in the service of evangelism.* But if our goal is Christ-likeness, then missions to the world will be our objective even as it was His. And so the fulfillment of the mission of the church involves being as well as doing.

### 1d. Internal Ministry: Worship

The interface of the church's being and its doing in the world is demonstrated in the church's worship. It is not that the church has a service to perform toward God and another to perform to the world. The greatest sacrifice that the church can offer to God in worship is the giving of ourselves to the ministry of the glory of God in the world. In the language of Temple service the apostle Paul in Romans 12:1 calls for the presentation of our total being as a sacrifice of worship to God. The writer of Hebrews speaks of our good works as sacrifices to God (Hebrews 13:16). Peter also makes our ministry as New Testament priests clear when he says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a Holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). This does not, of course, rule out the gathering of the church to worship in praise and prayer; it is simply to say that such worship must not be set against the fundamental mission of the church in the world, but must be seen as a part of it.

### 2d. Internal Ministry: Edification.

Toward itself, the church must grow and develop its members in the life of faith (Eph 4:16; Jude 20; 1 Cor 14:26). This edification of the church is associated in the Bible with the mutual exhortation and comfort of believer to believer.

It is important to note that this fellowship among believers is not an end in itself. The church is built up so that it may be strong to accomplish the mission of radiating God to the world (John 13:35). Scripture delineates two means by which the early Christians were built up.

1e. Personal edification: Jude 20—edify yourselves in the word. This would reflect the Hebrew practice of meditation and prayer upon Scripture as the means of transforming the heart of the believer.

2e. Public meetings of different kinds: Eph 4:11-16; 1 Cor 14:26 & 1 Thess 5:11 all speak to the effect that growth of the body happens through the contribution of all members. They also make clear that the primary audience of the church's gatherings was *the church*, not the unbelieving world. Unbelievers of course were present at the gatherings of the church (1 Cor 14:22-25), but the intent of the meeting was the building up of the body of Christ.

The importance of the church community to the early Christians is highlighted particularly in the resources Jewish believers would have lost in their confession of Christ and eventual expulsion from the synagogue. Burtchaell notes the cost of following Christ for a Jew

*One lost all public standing in one's hereditary society, all welfare benefits, all recourse to a judiciary for the protection and enforcement of rights and debts, all means of sending taxes and tithes to Jerusalem, all access to marital arrangements... One lost any facility for obtaining or authenticating official documents, the amenities of ritual purification, bathing and water supply, hospitality and succor when sick or journeying, political advocacy or clout in the face of municipal or imperial power (Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church*, 281).*

3d. Internal Ministry: Purification (Saucy, *Church in God's Program*, 199-122).

The ministry of the church toward itself also includes purification. The church is to be holy and without blemish (Eph 5:25-27) if it is to be healthy and capable of fulfilling its calling. Scripture outlines four means of the church's purification:

1e. The blood of Christ (Eph 5:26f.).

2e. The discipline of the Father (John 15:2; Heb12:10; 1 Cor 11:32).

3e. Self-discipline (1 Cor 11:28; 2 Cor 7:1; 1 John 3:3).

4e. Church discipline: The *what* and the *how*.

1). What sins were disciplined publicly by the church?

Answer: repentance, disorderliness (2 Thess 3:6); not working, gross sin (1 Cor 5:1ff.); division and false teaching (1 Tim 1:19f.).

Rationale for publicly disciplining these sins?

2). The manner of discipline: personal and corporate.

*Personal:* the personal context for church discipline is *love* and *humility* (Gal 6:1, 2), in that it ultimately aims at the good of all involved—good for the sinner, good for the church. It is good for the sinner in correction from debilitating sin and restoration to the body. It is good for the body in that it protects the collective reputation of the church before the world, and as Paul tells Timothy, to motivate by means of warning (1 Tim 5:20).

*Corporate:* Matt 18:15-17 describes *4 stages* of corporate discipline.

1. Personal confrontation for repentance, verse 15.

2. Wider circle of confrontation for repentance, verse 16.

3. Church body marshaled to also confront for repentance, verse 17a.

4. If repentance is still not forthcoming, the church body is informed of the status of the unrepentant to be treated as an unbeliever, verse 17b.

2c. Our Doing—the Church’s Ministry to the World.

Again in the question of doing, there is possible conflict. Verbal proclamation is often set against the doing of life as the basic meaning of “evangelism.” According to the Scriptures both are involved in the evangelistic mission of the church.

1d. The examples of Jesus and the early church: John 13:35; 17:21-23; Matt 5:16; 1 Pet 2:12; Acts 2:44-46; 4:33ff.

2d. Illustration: Evangelism is like the 2 components of a spear.

3d. Evidence from church history.

The effectiveness of the life of the church in radiating God's glory is evident in the following statements by students of the early church and its witness.

"The practical application of charity was probably the most potent single cause of Christian success. The pagan comment 'See how these Christians love one another' (reported by Tertullian) was not irony. Christian charity expressed itself in care for the poor, for widows and orphans, in visits to brethren in prison or condemned to the living death of labour in the mines, and in social action in time of calamity like famine, earthquake, pestilence, or war" (Chadwick, Henry, *The Early Church* [Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc.], p. 56).

"What we have found in the New Testament remains true in the second and third centuries. Hospitality expresses itself as a charitable caring for the physical needs of Christians and, increasingly, of non-Christians. And it functions to bind the Church together locally and ecumenically. The evidence now to be examined also suggests that the Church's hospitality became increasingly institutionalized and was administered to a large degree by the bishops. It also implies that hospitality began to function in an apologetic fashion towards the outside world . . . . The example of Christian community life was probably more persuasive to unbelievers than the proclamation of the Christian message. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that at one level the Church grew rapidly more because its common life acted as a magnet attracting people than because the Christians were effective in their public preaching" (Rowan A. Greer. *Broken Lights and Mended Lives* [University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986], pp. 122-123).

"Of far greater significance than the mission of the peripatetic preacher or the monk [who replaced the itinerant preacher as missionary from the fourth century onward] was the *conduct* of early Christians, the 'language of love' on their lips and in their lives. . . . In the final analysis it was not the miracles of itinerant evangelists and wandering monks that impressed the populace—miracle workers were a familiar phenomenon in the ancient world—but the exemplary lives of ordinary Christians" (David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* [Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1992], 191).

"One way only will command respect and have power to persuade: and that is the Church's manner of being, the way she is, as she lives by the renewing power of Christ, for all to feel and see. I firmly believe that without knowing it, this is what the world is waiting for." --closing lines from Hendrik Kraemer's *Why Christianity of all Religions?* (London: Lutterworth, 1962).

For other sources on the evangelistic effect of the practical life of the early believers, see also Adolph Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962, vol. 1 of the 1908 edition], 147-198; 366-368; Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970], 178-193), and studies on the history of the diaconate.

4d. The Church and Social/Political Issues: Living in God's Two Kingdoms.

As we have seen earlier in our discussion of eschatology (see eschatology course pack, section 9. "The Kingdom of God and the Church in the Present Age," p. 43), the mission of the church in the present age interfaces with the biblical doctrines of the Holy Spirit and the kingdom of God. Both of these doctrines also point to a fundamentally evangelistic ministry of the church in the present age to *call out and prepare those who will be the co-rulers with Christ in the age coming after his return*. But, as noted there, this evangelistic mission is accomplished in Scripture by means of the church's entire life and proclamation together. Thus, the church's presence in the world is marked not only in preaching, but in the practice of the forgiven life that provides preaching a credible platform (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). David VanDrunen's *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical View for Christianity and Culture* [Crossway, 2010], provides the following helpful table comparing the two domains Christians and the church occupy in the present age.

<i>Common Kingdom</i>	<i>Redemptive Kingdom</i>
<b>Covenant:</b> Noah (Gen 9:5-6)	Abraham (Gen 12:3),
<b>Subjects:</b> All people - <i>cultural</i> elements in common	Believers only; <i>religious</i> life separate from culture,
<b>Institutions:</b> Family; Education; Government; Work and Business; Arts,	Church
<b>Calling:</b> Promote peace, prosperity, punish evil, praise good,	Make disciples of Jesus Christ
<b>Means:</b> Coercive force: legislation and ultimately, the "sword"	Holy Spirit = presence of the Kingdom of God,
<b>Ethic:</b> Justice; "Eye for an Eye"; Retribution	Forgiveness, Reconciliation, & Restoration,
<b>Destiny:</b> Passing away, temporal	Eternal; literally, "heaven on earth"

According to this scheme, while the church may support the calling of the institutions of the Common Kingdom, it would ultimately be for the service of its own calling, which is to make disciples. Political and social action by the church would be similar to the actions of Israel in exile in Babylon recorded in Jer 29:6-7: *seek the welfare of the city*, and, adding the NT's Great Commission, *for the goal of winning the city*.

5a. Conclusion on the Mission of the Church in History.

The church exists for the glory of God. It exists with His nature toward the world as evidenced in His revelation in Christ. In short, it exists to live the life of Christ toward the world, or perhaps better, to allow the life of Christ to be lived through it by the indwelling presence of God, the Holy Spirit. As it is God's purpose for this age to make Himself known to all peoples, the ultimate mission of the church can be nothing less.

**5. The Organization and Government of the Church.**

1a. The fact of organization.

That the early Church had definite forms of organization is visible in NT (Hans Conzelmann, *The History of Primitive Christianity* [Abingdon, 1973], 53ff.)

1b. They had designated leaders:

Elders (also called bishops and pastors) (Phil 1:1; 1 Pet 5:1).

Deacons and Deaconesses (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:10-11).

2b. They had means of selecting their leaders (Act 6:5-6).

3b. They had definite religious forms (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Cor 11:23-26).

4b. They had a systematic collection for the saints (1 Cor 16:1-2).

5b. They had order in worship (1 Cor 14:40).

6b. They had membership rolls (1 Tim 5:9).

7b. They had standards of behavior for their members (Acts 15:28; 1 Cor 5:13).

2a. The problem of a normative pattern of church government.

The question of whether the NT prescribes a normative pattern for church government will determine how authoritative we consider the NT's statements about it. The view that the NT does not establish a normative pattern is asserted, for example, by:

Donald G. Miller, who says, "No particular structure of church life is divinely ordained." He goes on to say, "any form . . . which the Holy Spirit can inhabit and to which He may impart the life of Christ, must be accepted as valid for the church. As all forms of life adapt themselves to their environment, so does the life of Christ by His Spirit in the church" (*The Nature and Mission of the Church* [Richmond: John Knox, 1957] p. 82).

Similarly W. D. Davies: "The Church in the New Testament can assume many forms, and is not limited to any one particular form which is peculiarly the expression of its very being" (*A Normative Pattern of Church Life in the New Testament: Fact or Fancy?* [London: James Clark, 1952] p. 14).

If there is no normative pattern, then the NT represents a historically contextualized description of the early church's practice and we are free to use other criteria such as culture, practicality, etc., on the issue as well.

1b. The principal arguments against a normative pattern and a response.

1c. Christ didn't give any form for the church.

Reply: The Church was not in existence at the time of Christ. Also He promised to give additional truth through the Holy Spirit.

2c. The NT gives evidence of different church governmental structures.

Reply: While there are differences, these can be accounted for by the developing nature of the church. E.g. we do not find elders in Jerusalem until Acts 11:30. If the seven in Acts are early deacons, then we have deacons before elders (at least in the record). But apostles were functioning as elders in Jerusalem.

There are differences, but no contradictions. Thus, as the church developed, there came to be a uniform pattern.

Illustration: church planting model of Ukrainian Baptists:

3c. Church forms were related to cultures in which they existed. This view is particularly being espoused by certain missions-church growth advocates. Charles Kraft in *Christianity in Culture* (Orbis, 1979) espouses what he terms dynamic-equivalence churches. By this he seeks to find the meaning of a certain form in a given society and then find the form with the same meaning in a different society. Thus the two forms may not necessarily be the same. Regarding church government he says,

*“Because New Testament churches appointed bishops, elders, and deacons does not mean that churches today must label their leaders by these terms or expect them to lead in the same (rather dictatorial) ways that were appropriate for those leaders in their society. These were simply some of the types of leadership appropriate to the various cultures and subcultures of the areas spoken of in the New Testament.*

*“We see, in fact, not a single, once-for-all leadership pattern (of forms) set down in the pages of the New Testament. We see, rather, a series of experiments with cultural appropriateness ranging from a communal approach (Acts 2:42-47) to, apparently, leadership by a council of 'apostles and elders' (Acts 15:4, 6, 22), to the more highly structured patterns in the pastoral epistles. In each case the pattern developed in response to the felt needs of the members of the culture and subculture in which the particular local church operated” (Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, pp. 322-23).*

Reply: Our reply will be seen in the reasons for seeing a normative pattern.

2b. The argument for a normative pattern.

1c. A basic pattern is evident.

When one considers all of the evidence there is not as much diversity of structure as claimed. Moreover, there are no contradictions. That is, there are no forms that cannot be integrated into a total unified pattern. e.g. We do not have some churches led by a monarchical bishop and others led by deacons.

2c. The form of a thing relates to its essence.

The nature of the church demands certain limitations to its form.

e.g. The structure of church meetings relates to the nature of the church. e.g. body-life must have certain forms for it to function.

e.g. An infallibly inspired leader (e.g. Moses) would make a difference in the form of government.

Thus, when we consider the nature of the church and the nature of church members, it says something about the form of government demanded for the church.

3c. The NT offices were not essentially derived from culture: Church and Synagogue?

It is common to see the NT elders and bishops as simply carryovers of these positions in the Jewish and Greek cultures. Especially is this true of elders. Over each synagogue there was a board of elders. It is therefore argued that the church just took over this same organization. This would argue for a culturally conditioned structure. On closer examination, however, it is clear that while the formal names of elder and bishop were used, the nature of the elder and bishop in the church bears little resemblance to the actual function of these in their respective cultures.

*"This synagogue organization has some points in common with that of the early Christian communities, and these were probably taken over into Christianity, but the differences were so great that it is impossible to say that one organization comes from the other. Whether we regard its connection with the pagan confraternities on the one hand, or with the Jewish synagogues on the other, it may be said that the organization of the Christian communities proceeded by a path peculiar to themselves. Starting from the simplest forms of combination they framed their ministry to serve their own needs in accordance with what they saw was best fitted for their own peculiar work" (Thomas Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries* [Doran, 1925], 131-32,153).*

*"Familiar forms of synagogue and Pharisaic order were no doubt before the eyes of the first Christians. But their community based on the great commission to preach the Gospel and to live according to it in the most inward of all societies, was something new and distinctive, so that for the fulfillment of its mission new offices had to be created, or to develop out of the matter itself" (Beyer, *TDNT*, 2: 619).*

*"Of all the patterns of community organization which were available to the early church (the civic contexts, the voluntary associations, the family and the Jewish synagogues), the one which could be most easily modified so as to be appropriate to the context of the Christian community was that of the family. The metaphor of the family was directly applied to the church, and many of its relationships were*

*described in terms of brother/sister and father/child. Paul does occasionally refer to himself as a father, but also as a brother.*

*“The metaphor of a father is useful to Paul in that it highlights the nature of his concern and love for a congregation. Significantly he does not apply it to himself, however, in an exclusive way. He is also aware that there are connotations of authority which are associated with fatherhood, but his earnest endeavour is that these need never be applied [1 Cor. 4:14-21]. More commonly Paul describes himself as a brother to his fellow believers, thus drawing attention away from any sense of seniority. For somebody from a different natural family to be associated with another as a brother was not lightly done in Graeco-Roman contexts.*

*“In each of these aspects of church organization it emerges that Paul was calling those in Christian communities to make the necessary and deep-seated adjustments from their cultural background. The nature of the church required a pattern of organization which could not immediately be transferred from the culture of the day. Paul’s unflinching criticism of some of the churches to which he was writing was that they were being inappropriately drawn to such models” (Clark, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* [Eerdmans, 2000], 251).*

Conclusion: The NT does present us with a basic pattern of church structure, which relates to the very nature of the church. This is only a fundamental pattern with much freedom. e.g. Sunday School committees, etc.

### 3a. Historical models of Church government

There are three basic models of church government that are practiced throughout the church today. Following are the proposed biblical, theological and historical foundations to these views.

1b. Episcopalian—rule by bishops (Gk ἐπίσκοποι, *episkopoi*). The power to select leaders in the church, like other bishops, priests and deacons, is held by bishops.

1c. The pattern.

### 2c. Evidence and rebuttal:

1). Monarchical bishops appear in the church as early as the middle of the second century in the works of Ignatius of Antioch (*Epistle to the Ephesians*, 4; *Epistle to the Smyrneans*, 8; Cyprian of Carthage (*Epistles*, 59.14) and Clement of Alexandria (*The Instructor*, 1.6).

Answer:

1. Monarchical bishops were the outgrowth of an immature answer to the heresy of Gnosticism, which threatened the early church. In Scripture the answer to heresy is not appeal to an authoritative person, but an authoritative truth (Gospel) and Scripture (2 Pet 3:2).

2. The *Didache*, a work of the late *first* century advocates a more congregationally centered organization: “select your own bishops and deacons...” (*Didache* 15.1). After his own study of the church at Philippi, Andrew Selby concludes “the church at Philippi went nearly one hundred years without establishing a monarchical episcopacy...” Selby concludes, it imperative to “recognize the difficulty—perhaps the impossibility—of proving from history apostolic warrant for their position.” (Selby, “Bishops, Elders, and Deacons in the Philippian Church: Evidence of Plurality from Paul and Polycarp,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 39 [2012], 94). Beyer notes similarly: “In Syria and Asia Minor at the beginning of the 2nd century the college of bishops which had originally led the churches had disappeared, being replaced by the monarchical bishop.” (Beyer, *TDNT*, 2:620).

3. The NT does not separate the office of bishop from elder or presbyter, so that the church’s officers are bishop, presbyter and deacon. Jerome in the 5<sup>th</sup> century admits this saying that in NT times there had been no difference between presbyters and bishops and that the church had been governed by the presbyters as a body. Through Satan’s schemes, however, division entered the body of Christ, and so, “it was decreed in the whole church that one of the presbyters should be chosen to preside over the others, and that the whole responsibility for the Church should revolve on him, so that the seeds of schism should be removed” (Jerome, *Epistle to Titus*, 1.1, 5).

2). The role of James in the church of Jerusalem models that of a monarchical bishop.

Answer:

1. James’ function is more that of a presiding officer, or spokesman, rather than one with authority over the others. He is not mentioned in Acts 15:4, nor is he mentioned in the final result of the council (Acts 15:22; 16:4).

2. James’ prominence is likely attributed to the strength of his reputation in the early church for personal holiness (James the Just) and his closeness to Jesus (Gal 1:19).

3). The function of Timothy and Titus in oversight of the apostolic churches is that of monarchical bishops.

Answer:

1. Timothy and Titus had no titles.

2. Scripture makes no provision for them to pass on their ministry of oversight indicating that theirs was a unique mission associated with their relationship to the apostle Paul. Thus, it is probably better to say they were the personal representatives of Paul.

2b. Presbyterian—rule by elders (Gk—*presbuteroi*, *presbuteroi*). Representative bodies have control over local churches.

1c. The pattern.

2c. Evidence and rebuttal.

The council of the apostolic church that was convened in Jerusalem (Acts 15) is usually cited as evidence for a presbyterian form of government. However, there are important arguments against this council as advocating ecclesiastical bodies outside of the local church as having authority over the local church.

Answer:

- 1). The council was requested by a local church (Antioch). The initiative came from the local level, not from an ecclesiastical body above the local church.
- 2). The presence of the apostles in Jerusalem was the basis of the authority of the council. The NT evidence is that every church answered to its founder (Gal 1:11; 2:14; 4:12-20; 2 Cor 10-12). Jerusalem was where the church's founders were (J. T. Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church* [Cambridge University Press, 1992], 329).
- 3). Paul did not go to the council as one inferior to those sitting in the council, but as an equal.

3b. Congregational—rule by the congregation. Each local church is autonomous and answers only to the authority of Christ.

1c. The pattern:

2c. Evidence.

There is substantial evidence in the NT to argue for the locus of authority in a local church to rest with the body of believers itself.

- 1). *Every member* has the “ministry” of reconciliation, 2 Cor 5:18. The Great Commission is the responsibility of *every member* of the Church.
- 2). “Ministry” belongs to *every member*, not leadership, Eph 4:11-12. Leaders prepare *the saints* for the “ministry”.

- 3). The church was responsible for the selection of its leaders in Acts 6:6. The standards to which leaders must attain are tested by *every member* of the church, 1 Tim 3ff.; Titus 1:9ff. Even in the selection of the replacement for Judas, the nomination of the two candidates came from the gathered group of believers (Acts 1:15, 23).
- 4). Church discipline ultimately rests in the hands of *every member* of the church, Matt 18:15-17. Pastors and elders may lead in such matters, but the final word in discipline was given to the church. We also note the prominence of “you” (pl.) as in “you all” in the instructions Paul gives about a case of discipline in 1 Cor 5:2, 7, 12, and 13.
- 5). *Every member* is responsible for the church’s order and doctrine. “Examine everything carefully” (1 Thess 5:21) was not addressed to just the leaders in Thessalonica, but to the whole body. So also the command to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1) was given to the entire church, not just the leaders. A negative expression of this is the churches of the last days that will “accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires” (2 Tim 4:3). The church’s teachers are accumulated *by the church*, not appointed from outside the church.
- 6). *Every member* has a ministry of oversight, literally “bishops,” (Gk *επισκοπου/ντεj, episkopountes*) in the church, Heb 12:15.
- 7). *Every member* is called to some kind of ministry of teaching the Word of Christ in the church, Col 3:16.

### 3c. Conclusion.

*"Each congregation represented the whole Church of God in its own area; its offices had sufficient commission when they had its appointment. The bishops or elders are local ministers . . . Like the synagogues, the churches are democratic in character and apparently autonomous. Unity is expressed in the practical help of one part of the Body for another" (Johnston, *The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament*, [Cambridge UP, 1943], 96).*

### 4c. Application within local churches: *Symbiosis of hierarchical and non-hierarchical patterns.*

For all of the non-hierarchical and seemingly *democratic* elements just noted, the new covenant nature of the Church does not mean the elimination of a *hierarchical* pattern in the Church’s authority. The church has ordered ministries and is not anarchy. The fact of the hierarchical pattern of authority is seen in the following ways.

- 1). The existence and ministry of servant-leaders in the church order: Bishop/elder/pastor ministry and Deaconate (e.g., Phil 1:1; 1 Pet 5:2).
- 2). The church body is called to submit to their leaders (Heb 13:17).
- 3). Elder/bishop/pastors will give an account to God for their service to Christ’s church (Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:4).
- 4). There is a more authoritative teaching of the Word done by the church’s servant-leaders than by the average church members. Elders/pastors/bishops have particular qualifications in teaching the Gospel (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9).

The interface of the non-hierarchical and hierarchical elements of authority in the Church and its relation to the concept of ordination is found in the notion of the *servant-leader*. Leaders of the Church do possess the authority to lead and so they should *lead*. However, their leadership is one that is founded upon service. It is the quality of the leader's service of the Gospel to the members of a local church that is the base of his authority (Matt 20:25-28; Luke 22:25). There is, therefore, a *symbiotic* dynamic within a local church's government. The congregation submits to the leaders and in some sense the leaders submit to the congregation.

The pattern:

4b. Summary.

Burtchaell's words draw the sharp contrast between the church we see in the NT and that which appeared in the years later.

*“Put most schematically, the church of the NT and the church of the “Apostolic Fathers” appear to embody, respectively, charismatic and official traditions of leadership that are characterized by associated contrasts: lay vs. clerical; congregational vs. hierarchical; voluntary vs. professional” (Burtchaell, From Synagogue to Church, 274).*

4a. Membership in the church of Jesus Christ.

At moment of salvation believers become members of the Body of Christ, or the universal Church (1 Cor 12:13). This makes believers “members of one another” (Eph 4:25; Ro 12:5) and provides for their mutual fellowship. In the NT the fellowship of believers in one locale provided for their mutual sharing of spiritual gifts and common service in the local church. Submission to the Lord Jesus as the head of the Body through exercise of spiritual gifts and service of the Gospel constituted membership in the early church.

The outward expression of this membership was baptism. Baptism was an initiatory rite through which the subject of baptism expressed their desire to unite with Christ and those of his Body. Baptism is not salvific in the same way as faith, but it represented an integral link in the NT chain of salvation: Repent—Believe—Be baptized. Spiritual rebirth is the only prerequisite for membership in the body of Christ, but as F. F. Bruce notes, “the idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not entertained in the NT” (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* [NICNT; Eerdmans, 1988], 77).

“Baptism is not just an individual transaction. It is not just an act of personal salvation. It is a community or social act. One is now made a part of God’s people. The Spirit places the person in the one body. Having the one Spirit is the means of sharing in the one body” (Ferguson, *Church of Christ*, 191-192).

5a. The Ministers of the Church.

1b. The identity of the ministers of the Church.

As already noted above (biblical evidence for congregational-style of church government) the ministry of the church belongs to every member. The *ministry* (Gr. *diakoni*, a service, ministry) of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18) by means of the Holy Spirit’s inspired *witness* (Acts 1:8) in addition to the other functions of testing doctrine (1 Thess 5:21; 1 John 4:1), choosing leaders (Acts 6, 14), teaching (Col 3:16), disciplining (Matt 18:17) all point to every member of the body of Christ as a *minister*. Paul reiterates this proposition when he says that the church’s leaders are those who equip the church’s members for *ministry* (*diakoni*, a Eph 4:11-12). Biblically, then, “minister” is the language used for *all in the church*, but especially for those *who are not* “leaders” –i.e., the pastor-teachers (Eph 4:11c) who would be, more precisely, those who “equip” the “ministers.”

2b. The empowerment of the ministers of the Church.

The Holy Spirit is the possession of each member of the Church. All partake in the life of the Spirit. The person of the Spirit constitutes the Church as the *identity* and *power source* of the Church’s members. This is clear from the new covenant identity of the Church’s members as bearers of the New Covenant Spirit. The beginning of the Church at Pentecost in Acts 2 is intrinsically related to the new Age of the Spirit the prophets of Israel had hoped for (Joel 2:28ff. = Acts 2:17-21). Similar well-known prophecies of the Spirit in the era of the New Covenant are found in Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26-27. The NT writers had a variety of means of expressing the new reality of the Spirit that the inauguration of the New Covenant meant.

1c. The presence of the Spirit as a new *dominating principle* for the believer—contrasted with the old dominating principle of *flesh* (Rom 8:4-9, the identity of *old man*). The Christian life is a new *slavery* (Rom 6:18-19) to righteousness, grace, and mercy empowered by the Holy Spirit.

2c. “Walk in the Spirit.” (Gal 5:16). *Peripateo*, *w* (*peripateō*) as “conduct yourself, behave or live.”

3c. Vessels of the Spirit. Parallel with John 4:14, a fountain of water springing up to eternal life; and John 7:37-39 (out of innermost being flows rivers of living water = HS, cf. v. 39)

4c. “Filled with the Spirit.” (Eph 5:18-22). Filled by means of the Spirit (Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* [Zondervan, 1996], 375). In Luke-Acts “filled with the Spirit and...” formula is associated with (1) experiential effects: Luke 1:15-16, 41-42, 67; Acts 2:4 4:31; 13:9-10; and (2) character: Act 6:3, 5; 11:24; 13:52).

5c. Bearers of the Spirit’s “Fruit.” (Gal 5:22-23). Aspects of the one mark of the Spirit’s presence—love (Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 13).

6c. “Spirit/-ual.” (John 3:6; cf. 1 Cor 2:13, 15). In 1 Corinthians Paul is not describing the spiritual capacities within human beings (as the terms are used in Stoic and Gnostic teachings), but those whose lives are governed by “the Spirit who is from God,” (1 Cor 2:12). By contrast, “in 1 Cor 2:13... the term *psychikos*, (soul, embodied life) stands in contrast to *that which is* animated and motivated by God’s

Spirit” (Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Eerdmans, 2000], 267). A “spiritual” person is someone who has been born of the Spirit (John 3:5-8).

7c. “Baptized with the Spirit.” In Acts the Spirit poured out at Pentecost is referred to as the “gift” (2:38) the “promise” (1:4; 2:33; 2:39), and the “baptism” with the Spirit (cf. 11:16). In Gal 3:27 baptism with the Spirit unites the believer with Christ as the fundamental condition of a new covenant believer. Being saved, or belonging to Christ, means having the Spirit in Rom 8:9.

8c. “Gifted” of the Spirit. The entire gift of salvation and eternal life is termed a *ca, risma* (*charisma*, Ro 6:23 cf. Ro 5:15). All of the other *charisms* or *charismata* are related to this one and depend upon it (Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Baker, 2003), 576). The spiritual gifts are manifestations of the life of the Spirit which is eternal life, that is, the operation of the grace of salvation in the Christian life. “[*spiritual gift*] denotes the result of [*charis*] viewed as an action....” (Conzelmann, *TDNT*, 9:403). Viewed from another angle—their effect—spiritual gifts have been understood not as new *spiritual capacities* of the believer, but as the *ministry* where Spirit-endowed believers serve (Ken Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts?* [Kregel, 2006], 177-193).

Stevens and Hatch summarize the picture of ministry in the early church:

“With the lordship of Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and dawning of the end/last days (Acts 2:17), the whole church according to Scripture, is the true ministerium, a community of prophets, priests, and princes or princesses, serving God through Jesus in the power of the Spirit seven days a week. All are clergy in the sense of being appointed by God to service and dignified as God’s inheritance. All have a share in the power and blessing of the age of the Spirit. All are laity in the sense of having their identity rooted in the people of God. All give ministry. All receive ministry. That is the constitution of the church” (R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days* [Eerdmans, 1999], 38-39).

“In those early days . . . . The Christian was in a sense which has often since been rather a satire than a metaphor, a ‘member of Christ,’ a ‘king and priest unto God.’ The distinctions which Paul makes between Christians are based not upon office, but upon varieties of spiritual power. They are caused by the diversity of the operations of the Holy Spirit. They are consequently personal and individual. They do not mark off class from class, but one Christian from another. Some of these spiritual powers are distinguished from others by a greater visible and outward effect: but they are all the same in kind. The gift of ruling is not different in kind from the gift of healing. The expression ‘he that ruleth’ is coordinate with ‘he that exhorteth,’ ‘he that giveth,’ ‘he that showeth mercy.’ Of one or the other of these gifts every Christian was a partaker. There was a vivid sense, which in later time was necessarily weakened, that every form of the manifestation of the religious life is a gift of God -- a charisma or direct operation of the Divine Spirit upon the soul. Now while this sense of the diffusion of spiritual gifts was so vivid, it was impossible that there should be the same sense of distinction between officers and non-officers which afterwards came to exist” (Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches* [Rivingtons, 1881], 119).

### 3b. The Church at Work: Sacred and Secular *Ministry*?

The identity and Holy Spirit empowerment of all the church’s members as *ministers* raises another issue that continues to hinder the church in the fulfillment of its mission. It is the way in which categories of “spiritual or sacred” and “secular” are subtly applied to different vocations and work the members of the church perform. Sacred work is often that which is specifically circumscribed as “working for God.” Sacred vocations earn a living as “ministers,” like pastors, full-time Christian workers and missionaries. Certain recognition is given to

these sacred callings in the rite of ordination as the church “commissions” them into service. These are “those called” – the clergy. Other vocations are known as “secular” with the attending judgment that they are somehow less in God’s view. They are the laity.

1c. Clergy—Laity divide: a brief history.

*Scripture and the Early Patristic Church:* Despite the OT resistance to compartmentalizing life into sacred and secular categories (Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 156). The OT priesthood as a mediating class in the people of God together with the Temple cult provided early Gentile Christians a means of separating sacred and secular in ways unfamiliar to Scripture. The process of de- and re-judaization discussed earlier in the eschatology course pack allowed the introduction of Greek categories of higher and lower spirituality as Davies notes,

*“A double morality arose: a higher morality for life out of the world and lower one for life in. The affirmation of all like as sacred, which has generally characterized the Synagogue, was ignored—and the Christian world became divided into clerical and lay people, secular and sacred institutions, holy persons and holy things being set over and against unholy things. The wholeness of life that Judaism has stressed was lost...”* W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land* [University of California, 1974], 387-88; cited in Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 156, n. 24).

*Reformation:* An important advance against the (Gentilized) church’s view of sacred and secular vocation in the church was the work of Martin Luther in the Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In his sermons and other teachings, Luther gave important voice to the notion of God’s calling for all forms of work (e.g., “Sermon on Psalm 147”; cf. the best secondary work by Gustav Wingren, *Luther on Vocation* [Wipf & Stock, 2004]). Nevertheless, it is still prevalent for Christians to divide vocations as “more spiritual” and “less spiritual” along the sacred-secular type of divide fostered in the early patristic period of the church. Greg Ogden considers this residual as the “unfinished business” of the Reformation (Greg Ogden, *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* [rev. ed.; Zondervan, 2003]).

2c. Clergy—Laity divide: consequences for “the other 100,000 hours” (an essay by Chris R. Armstrong (*In Trust* [Spring 2013], 20-23, entitled for the amount of time most will spend active in their vocations).

1d. Impoverished understanding of shepherding. The verbal form of word translated “equip” (*katarti*, zw *katartidzw*) in Eph 4:12 includes the ideas of restoration, mending (nets, Matt 4:21; Mark 1:19), adjusting, making complete, bringing into a fit condition (BDAG, 526). The work of the body’s leaders is in this sense then *to create a spiritually healthy atmosphere where the church’s members (ministers) are built up into their true human identity in Christ to serve the church and the world.* Yet, most shepherding by the church does not address the issues where the majority of the flock lives. Consider the words of one businessman about his experiences in church:

*“In almost thirty years of my professional career, my church has never once suggested that there be any type of accounting of my on-the-job ministry to others. My church has never once offered to improve those skills which could make me a better minister, nor has it ever asked if I needed any kind of support in what I was doing. There has never been an enquiry into the types of ethical decisions I must face, or whether I seek to communicate my faith to my co-workers. I have never been in a congregation where there was any type of public affirmation of a ministry in my career. In short, I must conclude that my church doesn’t have the least interest whether or how I minister in my daily work”* (W. Diehl, *Christianity and Real Life* [Fortress, 1976], v-vi).

2d. “Ministry” becomes that which is performed only in specific church contexts.

*Few business people...think of themselves a full-time ministers in the marketplace. Fewer still are encouraged in this by their churches. Hardly any one gets commissioned to their service in the world except foreign missionaries. It is a heretical state of affairs. Christians in the first century would have found such a state of affairs anachronistic – a throw-back to the situation before Christ came when only a few in Israel knew the Lord, when only one tribe was named as priests, when only a select few heard the call of God on their lives (Stevens, *The Other Six Days*, 39).*

3d. The believers’ life in the Spirit becomes reduced to specific “Christian” or “church” ministries. The charismatic nature of all the Church’s members (see above pt. 2b) means that Christ lives his life in his people by the Spirit (Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit* [Wipf & Stock, 2001], 114). Further, the holistic nature of the believer’s new covenant life in the Spirit also means that notions of “spiritual gifts” or “fruit of the Spirit” should not be limited to the ministry of the Church to itself. The members of the Church do not exist in the world only in the presence of other believers. Similarly it would be unduly narrow to think that the Spirit’s “rivers of living water” (John 7:37-39) cease flowing through the believer once they leave church services. In the world, at their work, believers in Christ remain bearers of the new covenant Spirit. The following points contribute to this thesis.

1e. Natural capacities or faculties are included in the “living sacrifice” the believer is called to present to God (Rom 12:1-2). Work, therefore should encompass “the full expression of the worker’s faculties, . . . and [be] the medium in which he offers himself to God.” Then, “work is not, primarily, a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do” (Dorothy Sayers, “Why Work?” in *Creed or Chaos?* [Sophia, 1974], 73). A “worker is called to serve God in his profession or trade—not outside it” (Sayers, 78).

2e. Volf (*Work in the Spirit*, 122) asserts, “charisms (Spirit gifts) include more than ecclesiastical activities.” Evangelist, hospitality and giving are often marshaled as illustrations here (see also the list provided by Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts?* 177-191). Some include the gifts of Mark 16:17-18 (casting out demons and other miracles) as having a context in the marketplace (Ed Silvano, *Anointed for Business* [Regal, 2002], 34; cf. also C. Peter Wagner, *The Church in the Workplace* [Regal, 2006]).

3e. The eschatological age of the new covenant as the age of the Spirit opens the possibility that Spirit enhanced work which was sporadic and exceptional in the old covenant, e.g., Bezalel and David (Ex. 31:2-3; 1 Chron. 28:11-12) is the inheritance of all believers (Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 122).

4d. The church’s ministry to the world is impoverished. When ministry is reduced to that which takes place at church by the “equippers” (clergy) for the laity’s church activities, a vital and potent avenue of impact in the world is missed and the church becomes self-absorbed.

*"But in actual practice the laity are the clientele of the ordained. They are [assumed to be] people who need to be nurtured and assisted into a spiritual mode at worship, a social and ecclesiastical mode, and ushered toward heaven in the mode of a flock. The result is a church*

*that is mostly self-absorbed with its own activity... If the church manages to break out of self-absorption and move outward toward the world, it usually does so with counseling and health efforts. These are very laudable measures, but alas little or nothing is left for...the arena of secular occupations. Yet this is precisely where the most unique gifts lie among the laity. If the church is to look outward toward the world, then this unique gift must be given a place of honor and articulated in the church." (Armand Larive, *After Sunday: A Theology of Work* [Continuum, 2004).*

*God's people can, as agents of His redemptive plan, transform business, stripping it of selfish ambition and pursuing instead what's best for their neighbors. Through business, God's people can harness mankind's creativity, and with it nurture His creation, developing products that make the world more satisfying. Through the economic power of commerce, Christians can make the world safer and healthier. The members of Christ's Church, distributed in offices around the world, can transform greed into good stewardship, showing the world that business has a biblical responsibility to create new wealth and provide a fair return to investors (Matthew 25:14-28). But, with an eye toward the consummation of Christ's kingdom, we also create wealth in order to create new and satisfying jobs, which offer hope (and perhaps a glimpse) of a coming world where there is no poverty (Richard Doster, "The Kingdom Work of the Corporate World," *By Faith* 11 [2006]).*

5d. Impoverished theology of work. Categorizing work as "sacred" or "secular" denies the *intrinsic value of work* for human beings in the image of God. God has revealed himself as a worker by the deeds of his own hands and the creation of an image that is called to work (Gen 1:28; 2:15). One of the by products of the sacred-secular divide has been the subtle message to believers that certain kinds of work matter more to God than others. Consider the results of this survey reported by Alistair McKenzie:

*There were certain categories of people who really struggled to see that their work mattered from God's perspective at all... [yet] people who are involved in more direct, person-to-person, service kind of jobs feel that their work counts from God's perspective. Social workers, doctors, nurses, teachers, [and to some extent parents who are working at home devoting time to their families]—somehow the church affirms that their work is ministry... [Others struggle to make a connection including] factory workers, manufacturers, many business people and those involved in commercial or industrial work—those who feel somewhat removed from meeting people at their particular point of need... A similar struggle is experienced by people who are involved in primarily technical jobs, where they are [utilizing] practical skills rather than being in direct contact with other people" (<http://www.reality.org.nz/articles/38/38-mckenzie.html>)*

6d. Additional Resources.

In addition to those already cited, good sources for theology of work and the holistic ministry vocation of all believers include: [theologyofwork.org](http://theologyofwork.org); Timothy Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (Dutton, 2012); David H. Jensen, *Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work* (Westminster, 2006); John C. Knapp, *How the Church Fails Business People (And What Can Be Done About It)* (Eerdmans, 2011); Paul Rude, *Significant Work: Discover the Extraordinary Worth of What You Do Everyday* (Everyday Significance, 2013).

4b. The ethos of the ministers of the Church.

1c. Ministry of a servant, not a master.

For all ministers in the church Jesus Christ provides the pattern of ministry. Jesus demonstrated that ministry for the one seeking the glory of God in Christ is the ministry of a servant (Matt 20:25-28; Mark 10:45). Following are foundational principles of biblical minister.

1e. A servant *ministers through service, not position.*

2e. A servant ministers *for the good of others.*

*The servant-leader is servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For such it will be a later choice to serve--after leadership is established. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? (Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* [Paulist, 1977], 13-14).*

3e. A servant ministers by example.

Jesus warns us to beware of those who do not practice what they preach (Matt 23:13). Similarly, Paul exhorts his churches to be his imitators because he is following Christ (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17).

6a. The Ordered Ministries of the Church Gathered (towards itself).

1b. The Gifts of Eph 4:11—apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers.

1c. Apostles: “Apostle” is a broad term in the NT meaning “a sent one,” a “messenger.”

Ἀπόστολος (*apostolos*) is primarily used for the twelve disciples or Paul as those who had been commissioned directly by Jesus himself to proclaim the Gospel (e.g., Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor 9:1; Gal 1:16). Others in the NT who received their commissioning from the church are also called apostles as, for example, Barnabas (Acts 14:14; and probably James (1 Cor 15:5; Gal 1:19).

2c. Prophets: The ministry of the prophet was to speak forth a message from God by the power of the Holy Spirit. The revelation included both foretelling and forth-telling, i.e., calling an audience to heed an already existing prophecy, with emphasis on the latter. As Dunn notes, prophecy is direct communication from God by means of the prophet. It is not the delivery of a previously prepared sermon. It is not a word that can be summoned to order, or a skill that can be learned. It is a spontaneous utterance given in words to the prophet to be delivered as it is given (1 Cor 14:30; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, [Eerdmans, 1997], 228ff.)

3c. Evangelists: Seldom referred to in the NT (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim 4:5; Eph 4:11). Evangelists seem to be those who proclaimed the Gospel much like traveling missionaries.

4c. Pastor-Teacher: In Eph 4:11, the teacher (διδάσκων) is grammatically joined to pastor (ποιμαίνει) which seems to signify the importance of feeding the flock for the shepherd/pastor. The separation of the pastor-teacher from the prophet is this list of gifts to the church indicates that the pastor's ministry of teaching the revelation was different from the prophet's ministry that delivered it. From the earliest record of the church the pastor-teacher office was kept separate from the teacher/pastor (A. von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* I-II [4<sup>th</sup> ed. Leipzig, 1924], 348). In the NT the aim of teaching was ethical impact in the student more than the acquisition of knowledge and information (see 1 Cor 8:1). Teaching that did not aim at the will of the student to produce good works in the life of the student was not teaching in the biblical sense (1 Tim 1:5; Titus 2:14).

*"The primary purpose of education in Bible times was to train the whole person for lifelong, obedient service in the knowledge of God"* (Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* [Eerdmans, 1989], 78).

2b. The Office of the Elder/Pastor/Bishop (cf. Saucy, *Church in God's Program*, 140-153).

1c. The number of Elders.

1d. The NT evidence.

Every time the word elder or bishop is used in relation to a church it is plural.

Acts 14:23, ". . . they . . . appointed elders for them in every church . . ." (Note plural elders, sing. church).

Titus 1:5 - appoint elders in every city.

Acts 20:17 - And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. There was one church in Ephesus as the first letter to the churches of Revelation shows. This also indicates that the angel of the churches cannot be a reference to a single pastor of the church.

Phil 1:1 - Paul writes to the church "including the overseers and deacons."

James 5:14 - The sick were to call for the elders. This indicates that an individual was related to a number of elders.

1 Tim 5:17 - Let the elders who rule well . . . Timothy was ministering in Ephesus.

1 Pet 5:1 - Therefore, I exhort the elders among you . . . (This letter is, however, going to more than one location.)

2d. The reasons for the plurality of church leaders:

The reasons are not stated directly in Scripture. Yet it seems that many reasons can be given when the nature of man and the ministry of the church is considered.

1e. The sinfulness of man

What Calvin says of political leaders may also be said of the church: ". . . men's fault or failing causes it to be safer and more bearable for a number to exercise government, so that they may help one another; and, if one asserts himself unfairly, there may be a number of censors and masters to restrain his willfulness" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, XX, 8; cf. IV, iii, 15; IV, iv, 10-11).

2e. The incomplete knowledge of God's revelation.

Because no one has a perfect knowledge of the revelation of the Lord through the Spirit, there is better opportunity to know the truth of God's revelation and His will through several individuals praying and thinking together than through one individual.

3e. The ability to have a completely rounded, edifying ministry.

All people minister through their own personality which is shaped by their background, temperament, prejudice, etc. No individual is capable of giving a fully rounded ministry of the Word. Each has a particular emphasis. Thus, for the church to receive a completely rounded and full ministry of the Word, it must be taught through several gifted individuals.

In reality, the ministry of the Church is that of Christ through the Spirit and this is better expressed through a plurality than through a dominant individual. Girard writes,

". . . the church is to be the expression of the personality of Jesus Christ, not the expression of the personality of any man. No single member of the body is to be allowed to leave his personal imprint on all the church's life and work. The church is to be dominated by the Spirit of Christ flowing through many lives. The disunity of the church can be traced, in part, to the practice of elevating strong men, their dynamic personal ministries or their special interpretation of the gospel, to a place in the church above the gospel itself" (*Brethren Hang Together* [Zondervan, 1979], 208).

4e. The responsibility of the leadership of the church is shared. When the church rests upon one man's leadership, the success or failure of the work rests upon him. In the case of success, it presents temptations to pride and authoritarianism. In the case of failure, there is temptation to despair.

2c. The function of elders.

1d. The elder has the general oversight of the church.

Seen in the name overseer - episkopos.

The ministry of the elder may be summed up in three general areas:

1e. Leadership. 1 Tim 5:17, literally stand before.  
1 Thess 5:12 Heb 13:7, 17, 24, literally to lead or guide  
1 Tim 3:5 - care of forethought and interest.

The kind of care is indicated by the use of this same word in the story of the good Samaritan. He is said to have taken care of the wounded man and asked the innkeeper to do the same (Luke 10:34-35).

2e. Pastoral care. The leadership and administrative oversight is closely related to the concept of the shepherd. The word "overseer" - *episkopos* - indicates more than simply a director or manager. In Greek the *episkopos* (ἐπι, σκοπος) is a "watcher," "protector," "patron," and his activity (*episkopeo*) is "a gracious looking down upon the one protected and in care for him" (Beyer, *TDNT*, II, 609).

The model is Christ who is the Shepherd and Bishop or overseer of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25).

The ministry of the shepherd is seen in Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians elders - Acts 20:28  
v. 28, guarding, cf. v. 31, watching  
v. 31, admonishing  
vv. 33-35, giving of life for the sheep,  
cf. Jn. 10:12-13 - the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

3e. Instruction. This is involved in the previous two concepts, special attention is given to the necessity of teaching by the elder-pastors of the church. The only reference to function in the qualifications is "apt to teach", 1 Tim 3:2; cf. Titus 1:9  
Eph 4:11 - title is pastor-teacher.  
1 Tim. 5:17; cf. Acts 6:4

This emphasis upon teaching is only natural because the Word is the mind of the Head of the Church. It is His will. We simply seek to convey His will to the people.

3c. The authority of the elders

1d. The evidence of authority. Elders are worthy of honor, esteem.  
1 Thess 5:12-13 People are told to submit to their leaders.

Heb 13:17 Have position of ruling. 1 Tim. 5:17, "rule well"

2d. What kind of rule or authority do they have?

The authority of the elders rests in their ministry of service to the church. They lead by example and ministry and thus earn following by the church. Ordination is the recognition by the body of this earned authority. See the appendix, "The Nature and Practice of Ordination in the Church of Jesus Christ," at the end of this course pack.

*". . . the task of the ministry is to live out Christ in the Church and to be pioneers of the Christian life for the sake of the Church. But this is done only in order to enable the Church in its turn to live that life. . . ."*

*If the question is asked 'From where does the ministry derive its authority?', the answer seems to be that it gains its authority from the fact that it is the missionary, apostolic spearhead of the Church . . . . The task of the ministry is always to be the pioneer in Christian living, in worship, in evangelism, in care for the flock" (Hanson, *Pioneer Ministry*, 109).*

The church is called upon to submit to such leaders for its own good. "When a congregation deems a man trustworthy (by right of his relation to the qualities of Titus and Timothy) it is logical that he be trusted. A man who is leading the way in the development of Christian maturity should be allowed to lead the way in the development of Christian maturity (in the congregation)" (James Fleming, "Authority in the Church," Unpublished paper, p. 13).

4c. The question of women and the elder's office.

***Excursus: The Order Between Man and Woman in Christ***

Mark Saucy

**1. Preliminary Concerns.**

The identity and status of men and women in the church for the western world is a question asked against a larger cultural discussion that has been going on in earnest for the last 50 years. Given this active social context it is important to establish the Bible's teaching in a couple of preliminary matters.

A. Gender a tool for righteousness.

Our gender, like all resources given to us by God, is divinely intended to serve the fundamental human callings found in Israel's *Shema*—You must love the LORD your God with your whole mind, your whole being, and all your strength (Deut 6:4-5). Jesus himself argued that adding the love of neighbor to the *shema* was the sum of Israel's torah (Mark 12:28-34 and pars.). Loving God and loving others is the fundamental instruction of God to his human creations and very likely the center of all God's revelation in Scripture – see Kim Haut Tan, "The Shema in Early Christianity," *Tyndale Bulletin* 59/2 (2008): 181-206). Given our gendered condition as created from the hand of God, God intended that our gender also serve us to love him and to love others. To the first, our love of God is to be gendered—men loving God as men and women loving God as women. To the second, the love of the neighbor, gender is meant to serve our counterpart in love to build and support them into the fullness of their gendered existence before God. In other words, men are called to support and serve women so that they can better realize the fullness of womanhood before God. And, women are called to support and serve men to better realize the fullness of manhood before God. Above all, our gender is not a resource given by God we are to use to serve ourselves.

B. Subordination as a gift we give to those over us.

Scripture calls every one of us to be in subordinated relationships (citizens to civil authorities, church to leadership, children to parents, employee to boss, etc.). Jesus' demand that his follower "deny himself" (Luke 9:23) is a particularly trenchant expression of this fundamental posture for the believer. Occasionally the hierarchy of authority one finds oneself in will *require* subordination, even to "perverse" authority (1 Pet 2:18). But how does one submit or subordinate oneself? Scripture addresses the one under authority to "submit themselves" to those over them, but those standing above are not adjured to submit their subordinates. Subordination is spoken of in Scripture as a freely-offered *gift* to the one in authority, but the call for this behavior and the willing motive behind it is empowered by something other than the compulsion of the hierarchical structure.

C. Subordination from a position of real power, not the compulsion of a victim.

Peter's first epistle particularly highlights the subordinated life of God's people. The historical conditions of persecution naturally raised the topic. How could Peter exhort his hearers to be subject to the authorities, even those that persecuted them? He gives the answer in 1 Pet 2:13-17 and it applies to believers under persecution, employees in their work, children to their parents and on. Peter says that when one is fully convinced that all of her needs are covered and supplied in the lavish love of God for them, then there is real power to order oneself under the authority of those in this world (hear the message by D. Edward Morsey on this text, "What To Do with Such Power," sermon for 4/14/13, at <http://www.nowspouting.com/granadaheightsfriendschurch/media.php?pageID=5>).

**2. The meaning of order between man and woman.**

A. The fundamental and profound differences between men and women are God-ordained and significant beyond reproductive functions. Men and women are not interchangeable physically or psychologically.

B. God has assigned normative functional roles to both man and woman according to their physiological and psychological differences. Functional roles establish and protect the differences of the sexes.

C. The functional role of the woman is that of nurturer and care-giver. She gives support, input and cooperation to the man in fulfillment of his functional role as he is to do for her. Her genius is in the creation of an environment where the productivity of other members of the church/family may be maximized.

D. The functional role of the man is that of loving leader, in that as Christ loved the church to consider her good over his and to be responsible for her salvation and righteousness, so the man leads the woman bearing before God the primary responsibility for the condition of the God-ordained institutions of human society, i.e., the church and family.

E. The functional roles subsist as a mutual submission between the man and the woman according to Christ's model with his church (Eph 5:23-26; Phil 2:3-5). Mutual submission is not contradictory to functional social roles or order. As one would never deny Christ leadership in delegation and direction in the church (Eph 1:22) as part of his submissive service for the good of the church, so godly leadership for the good of the family/church is part of the man's submissive service to the woman. It is noteworthy that mutual submission does not obliterate functional roles between slaves and masters and children and parents in the same scriptural context of Ephesians (5:21; cf. 6:1,5). It is special pleading to say it does so between husbands and wives.

F. Denial of the functional roles impoverishes the church concerning biblical notions of manhood and womanhood. It impoverishes the concept of God's fatherhood to his people and the leadership of Christ to his church.

### 3. On the order of creation.

A. It is the *prima facie* teaching of the NT that the creation account of Genesis one and two substantiates an ontological equality AND a functional order between the sexes (1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:13). In this teaching the NT unites with the OT which asserts the origin of functional roles as part of the original creation (Gen 2) and not the human fall into sin (Gen 3).

1. Genesis one shows the ontological equality of males and females within the hierarchy of God, humankind, and the rest of creation (Gen 1:26-28). As human beings males and females relate to God and rule the creation equally.

2. Genesis two and three show the order between man and woman established from created differences, not the result of sin.

a. The woman originated from the man, not vice versa. Cf. 1 Cor 11:8 where Paul uses this very point to contend for an order. 1 Tim 2:13 notes that the man was created first.

b. The woman was made for the man's sake, not vice versa (cf. 1 Cor 11:9). She was the "helper" suitable for him; he was not the helper suitable for her (Gen 2:18). This is not to assert that "helper" is an inferior role; only that it is a different one. Scripture uses the same word for God as our "helper".

c. The man names the woman (Gen 2:23).

d. God speaks only to the man when addressing the couple (Gen 3:9).

e. Satan, the perverter of God's ways, speaks first to the woman (Gen 3:1).

d. Though the woman sinned first, it is the sin of the man which the NT considers as having universal consequence (Ro 5:12, 14).

e. It was the man's sin which opened the couple's eyes (Gen 3:7).

f. Where each party is cursed as the consequence of sin indicates a divine judgment as to the primary and normative role each was designed to fulfill by God. The woman was to feel sin's effects in her relationships (Gen 3:16) while the man would feel sin's effects in work and labor (Gen 3:17-19)

B. The NT never teaches that the church's position in Christ erases functional social roles. Gal 3:28 does not teach the obliteration of functional roles, but the obliteration of sinfully-construed and artificially supposed ontological barriers to access God.

1. From the context of Gal 3:28 it is clear Paul is addressing the soteriological issue of access to God. Those in each of the categories listed (Greek, slave and female) faced spiritual discrimination in Paul's day. In the first century slaves, women, and Gentiles were wrongly thought to be less than human in their ability to come to God.

2. It is clear from the vocabulary "male" and "female" (ἀρσῆν, ἡ/ἡ) that Paul is speaking according to the hierarchy established in Genesis one (i.e., relationship to God and creation), which also uses the terms "male" and "female" (LXX, Gen 1:27). Paul's use of the words "man" and "woman" in all other passages that assert social roles (ἀνὴρ, ἡ γυνή, , e.g., 1 Cor 11, 1 Tim 2) similarly reflects the vocabulary of Genesis two and three which addresses the hierarchical relationship between the man and the woman.

3. For Paul to assert the eradication of social roles because of the church's position in Christ in Gal 3:28 would be contradictory to the social roles he does assert for those in Christ like the subordination of



## 5. On the treatment of women by Jesus and Paul

While it is certainly true that Jesus and Paul transcended their society's unrighteous bias against women, the contention that this warrants a complete functional equality is difficult to sustain.

A. None of the twelve disciples were women and there is no biblical indication of a woman occupying the office of pastor, bishop or elder (seeing these as different nomenclature for the highest of the ordered ministries in the church). It is likely, however, that women did occupy the office of deacon. Other instances claimed for women occupying authoritative offices (apostle [Ro 16:7, Junia], or apostolic "co-workers" like Timothy [Phil 4:1-2, Euodia & Syntyche]) assume either (1) a *technical meaning* when a general usage also exists in NT (apostle); or (2) *equality of ministry function* when a variety of ministry functions is possible ("co-worker").

B. The previous point (A) is significant given the fact that both Jesus and Paul were not willing to compromise with pagan or Jewish culture for the sake of the integrity of the Gospel. If, as is often claimed by those opposed to complementarianism (i.e., functional differences between men and women) Jesus and Paul were so radical in their treatment of women, we must ask why they nevertheless everywhere stop short of giving women leadership positions completely equal to men?

1. One might claim that full equality was just too much for the patriarchal Jewish societies in which they lived and operated. But one may just as easily assert the opposite that in the Gospel Jesus and Paul liberated the divinely created order of the sexes from unrighteous tradition and bias that had denied women equal status before God, that their behavior in this is in fact normative and perfectly restores the ideal revealed in Genesis 1-3.

2. One might also argue that full equality was impossible in the culture because of the Greco-Roman mystery religions, which were egalitarian. Paul and Jesus would have needed to distance Christianity from the corrupted egalitarianism in these religions. But such an explanation amounts to so much special pleading because (1) this could just as well be an argument why it would be easy for Paul to allow women to the highest office--doing so he would not have been counter-cultural. (2) Jesus and Paul are not afraid of using forms that were also present in false religions. Baptism is a case in point; both Judaism and Greco-Roman mystery religions practiced baptism. Jesus and Paul, however, do not consider baptism as an inappropriate Christian form because of this reason. They just redefine it and practice it in Christian terms.

## 6. On other roles exercised by women.

It is often claimed by egalitarians that the occasional instances of women functioning in leadership roles (e.g., judges and prophetesses) in Scripture give permission for complete functional equality in the church. While the small sampling offered in Scripture of such women may indeed be attributed to chauvinistic cultural constraints, the state of affairs that Scripture does reflect may just as well argue the other way and constitute proof that women in leadership is the aberrant, the exception, and not the divinely intended norm. Such would seem to be the teaching of a verse like Is 3:12 where the divinely inspired prophet rebukes the perverse state of God's people noting as evidence of their apostasy that they have allowed children to oppress them and women to rule them.

A. The prophetic office differs from the teaching office. Prophecy is a spontaneous revelation from the Lord wherein the prophet themselves have a more passive role. The teacher however is more personally active with the content of the message. In the OT the priest was where the people went for authoritative instruction and interpretation of Scripture (Mal 2:6-7), and while women were prophets, they were never priests. The NT continues the same pattern. Women were prophetesses but they were not allowed into the highest teaching office of the church.

B. It can be universally demonstrated that the few women who prophesied did so with a demeanor and posture that supported male leadership: either their ministry was only to women (Miriam), or it was private and individual (Deborah and Huldah), or it gave priority to a man (Deborah). Even the NT prophetesses were required by Paul to express male leadership through wearing of some kind of covering on their heads while they prophesied (1 Cor 11:6-10).

## 7. On spiritual gifts

It is often asserted that functional roles for men and women quench the use of Spirit-given gifts of teaching and leading from better than one-half of the church, thus impoverishing Christ's body and hindering it from ministering to its fullest potential.

A. For this argument to be compelling it would have to be shown that there are specific gifts of "teaching men" or "leading men" which women are in fact being denied to express.

B. In fact spiritual gifts of teaching and leading are open to women in specific contexts, some of which seem to include men. While the pastoral epistles expressly deny women the authoritative teaching associated with the highest spiritual office of pastor, elder, bishop, less authoritative teaching appears to be open to women (Acts 11:4; 18:26; 1 Cor 14:26; Col 3:16; Heb 5:12).

C. The charge of handicapping the body of Christ because of chauvinistic functional roles is in fact tuned back upon those seeking the *elimination* of functional roles. Because of the way the Bible connects the different functions of the sexes to the created differences inherent to manhood and womanhood, (1) functional roles serve to protect the created differences of the sexes, and (2) functional roles provide for ministry that is joined with the deepest nature of the person. More powerful and more fruitful ministry results when the creation functions according to its identity: men ministering as men, women ministering as women.

## 8. Select bibliography of monographs on men and women in ministry:

A. Egalitarian sources: Gilbert Bilezekian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985); C. Boomsma, *Male and Female, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992); Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); Alver Mickelsen, ed. *Women, Authority and the Bible* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity, 1986); Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *Gender and Grace* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity, 1989); Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (SNTSMS 58; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Sarah Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003); Elaine Storkey, *Origins of Difference: The Gender Debate Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); John G. Stackhouse, *Finally Feminist: A Pragmatic Christian Understanding of Gender* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); and other sources at <http://www.cbeinternational.org/>.

B. Complementarian sources: Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*, (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1980); Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979); James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); Mary Kassian, *Women, Creation and the Fall*, (Westchester: Crossway, 1990); Andreas J. Kostenberger, T. Schreiner and H. Baldwin, eds., *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); Werner Neuer, *Man and Woman in Christian Perspective*, (Wheaton, Crossway, 1991); J. Piper and W. Grudem, eds. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004); Robert Saucy and Judith TenElshof eds., *Women and Men in Ministry* (Chicago: Moody, 2001); and other sources at <http://www.cbmw.org/>.

### 3b. The Office of the Deacon/Deaconess.

1c. Duties - The evidence, although scanty in the NT, indicates that the office of deacon was primarily concerned with material ministries of the church, specifically distribution of relief to the poor.

2c. No spiritual oversight was given to deacons. They were always under the elders. They may have subordinate oversight. Cf. Acts 6. They were in charge of the material ministry under the apostles.

3c. Probably included women - i.e. deaconesses.

4b. The choice of officers. The examples below point to Acts 6

2 Cor. 8:19 - Those traveling with the apostles to aid in the collection were "appointed by the churches." The same word as in Acts 14:23 (χειροτονε, w [cheirotoneō]).

Acts 20:28 - Paul refers to Ephesian elders as placed in position of leadership by the Spirit. No reference to appointment by himself.

Acts 14:23 - χειροτονε, w (cheirotoneō) etymological meaning - "elected by raising hands," but can also mean simply "appoint, install."

Titus 1:5 - καταστη, shj, (from καθισθη, mi, kathistēmi) - appoint - same word as used in Acts 6:3 "put in charge."

## 6. The Ordinances of the Church.

At the heart of the Church's expression of its identity in Christ are the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Although clearly commanded for the Church by Christ himself, the history of these two ordinance in the Church is replete with conflict over their meaning and proper mode of expression. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are usually termed "sacraments" from the Latin word *sacramentum* which the western church used to translate the NT Greek μυστήριον (*mysterion*, Eph 5:32; 1 Tim 3:16; Rev 1:20). From its connection to the Greek, the sacraments came to mean those things having a secret or mysterious significance, signs of spiritual realities.

1a. Christian baptism (cf. O. S. Brooks, *The Drama of Decision: Baptism in the New Testament* [Hendrickson, 1987]; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* [Eerdmans, 1973]; Saucy, *Church in God's Program*; Ferguson, *Church of Christ*).

1b. Commanded by Christ (Matt 28:19-20)

2b. Practiced by the early church (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36-38; 9:18; 10:47; 16:14-15, 33; 18:8; 19:5).

3b. The meaning of baptism.

1c. Identification with Christ.

The practice of Christian baptism was to be done in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38). The language used here was the terminology of business and had the idea of ownership, of being put into someone's account. Baptism, therefore, is the outward expression of one's complete identification with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection which provided remission of sins (Heb 10:22; Acts 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11; Ro 6:4; Col 2:12).

2c. Identification with Christ's church.

The identification with Christ through baptism also identifies one with Christ's church (Acts 2:41). In baptism the commitment to a local body of believers is publicly announced and affirmed. There is an acknowledgement of commitment to one another for worship of God and fulfillment of the Church's

mission together. Before our conversion in various ways we were identified with the world or another religious system, in baptism we publicly break those former associations and identify ourselves anew as a disciple of Jesus Christ and member of his church.

4b. The effects of baptism.

Throughout church history there have been three major views as to the effects of baptism in the life of the believer.

1c. Symbolism.

A strong reaction to the sacramentalism of the Catholic Church among some anabaptistic churches of the Reformation ended up stripping the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper of any efficacy whatsoever. Baptism was only an outward symbol of the inner effects wrought by faith alone.

2c. Life strengthening: the effects of faith and obedience.

In the NT baptism is part of the response to the preaching of the Gospel which also included repentance and belief. "Repent, believe, and be baptized" is the NT's *chain of salvation*. The effects or blessings of baptism are linked closely with the effects of living faith (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12; 1 Pet 3:21). The union with God by faith is demonstrated and so strengthened in us by baptism. The personal assurance that one is accepted before God on the basis of outright forgiveness and not performance is deepened as the whole person rehearses and reenacts the drama of dying to the world and rising to Christ (Ro 6:3-11). This is why we are immersed in water, because the drama and sensory experience of baptism addresses and affects part of our heart at a deeper level than the mind and cognition. Public actions have the psychological effect of deepening one's commitment to something. The more deeply one believes or is committed to the truths of the Gospel that baptism portrays, the more fully God's gracious favor in forgiveness and union with the believer is experienced in life. Thus as all acts of obedience baptism is a means to a deeper working of God's grace in us. The more deeply we believe, the more deeply God's response of grace to us is received with all its attending effects of joy, peace, and love.

3c. Baptismal regeneration (doctrine of *ex opere operato*).

The close chronological positioning of saving faith and baptism in the NT's chain of salvation has given rise to the error of baptismal regeneration (Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and some Protestants) where the rite of baptism marks the point where one receives salvation's benefits (forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, regeneration). In the Roman Church, the rite of baptism itself works these benefits *ex opere operato*; literally, "from the work done," whereby Catholic priests have power to bestow grace through the sacraments regardless of the faith disposition of those who participate (in the case of infants). However, faith is a precondition, but not the cause of grace.

Even though baptism and faith are but the inside and outside of the same reality, baptism and faith do not have the same significance for salvation. Baptismal regeneration is contrary to the NT at several points.

1d. The biblical presentation of the efficacy of baptism differs from the presentation of the efficacy of faith. Faith is always integral in any discussion of the efficacy of baptism. The opposite is not true, however, for passages that discuss the efficacy of faith (Act 15:9; Gal 3:1-5, 26-27; 2:20; Eph 3:17; 5:25-26; Col 2:11-12; Ro 6:1ff.; 10:9-10; Eph 5:25-26). There are more than 150 instances in the New Testament where faith alone with no mention of baptism is the necessary response for salvation.

2d. The asymmetrical relationship between faith and baptism is also to be noted when in the function of the chain of salvation "whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16), but nowhere does Scripture say, "Whoever is not *baptized* will be condemned." Instead

it is only a failure to believe that condemns as verse 16 continues, "...but he who has *disbelieved* shall be condemned." Jesus himself emphatically states such is the case only with belief: "whoever does not *believe* has already been condemned" (John 3:18).

3d. Baptism is not necessary like faith in the early Christian proclamation. Baptism is part of the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20), but Jesus' own preaching was only "repent and believe"--no mention of baptism, not even John's (Mark 1:15), and the evangelists' summaries of Jesus' preaching likewise only mention repentance and belief (e.g., Matt 4:17). Paul summarizes his ministry to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 without a word of baptism, but as only proclaiming "repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). This parallels the account of his commissioning he gives later in Acts 26:18, where he is to sent to minister and witness "to those who have been sanctified by faith in [Christ]"—again no mention of baptism. Peter's first sermon in Acts two mentions baptism, yes, but what do we make of the second sermon in Acts three (3:16-19) where the call is only for repentance and belief?

4d. Reception of the Spirit is a matter of faith, not baptism or any other human rite (Gal 3:1-5). In Acts 10:43 Peter's message to Cornelius was that faith alone brings forgiveness. Two verses later Cornelius receives the Holy Spirit, the mark of salvation, and *then* still later in verse 48 he is baptized making it clear that salvation and the Spirit do not come from baptism. The next chapter has Peter back in Jerusalem recounting what took place and again he makes the point that Cornelius received the Spirit and cleansing and "life" after believing (Acts 11:17, 18). Nothing about baptism. Later at the Jerusalem council of Acts 15, Peter gives the same testimony that the Gentiles' hearts were cleansed and they received the Spirit *by faith* (Acts 15:8-9).

5d. Baptismal regeneration confuses faith with its benefits. The heart of the Gospel call is to deny yourself and take up the lordship of Jesus in your life (Luke 9:23 and pars.). This call on the believer's life extends to every claim Jesus makes on his followers including loving and forgiving others (John 13:34; Matt 18:35). Here is the point at which baptism also enters the believer's relationship to his Lord. Namely, one can no more pretend to be a follower of Christ and reject his invitation to baptism any more than one can reject the Lord's call to forgive or his command to love. Like love and forgiveness, receiving baptism demonstrates the presence of a new born heart. It is an expression of obedience and submission to Jesus' lordship that obtains from *an already saved person*. However, the *evangelium* forbids us to confuse our acts of love or forgiveness or our participation in baptism with that faith which gave us Christ in the first place. We are not accepted by God, declared righteous, or placed into Christ on the basis of our works of love or forgiveness. Similarly we cannot allow the performance of any ritual to join faith as equal condition of salvation.

6d. The religion of the new covenant is one of inwardness of the heart and divine grace. Requirement of any outward form or ritual for salvation violates the spirit of the new covenant and the movement of salvation history from the time of preparation/immaturity (Old Covenant) to maturity in Christ.

7d. Historically baptismal regeneration developed with sacramentalism in the early post-apostolic church. G. Lampe notes the course of development.

*"...in the post-apostolic writers there is a tendency for the grandeur of the NT theory of Baptism to begin to fade; it ceases in some degree to find its focus and center in the saving work of Christ, and the spiritual gifts bestowed in it begin to be thought of in isolation from the focal point of the Atonement, in which they ought to co-inhere. In particular, the seal of the Spirit,*

*received in Baptism, begins to be conceived in quasi-magical terms as a mark impressed upon the soul by the due performance of the baptismal ceremonial, a stamp whose purpose is to safeguard the recipient from the hostile powers of the Devil, and preserve him in soul and body unharmed for the enjoyment of immortality” (G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* [SPCK, 1967], 150).*

5b. The subjects of baptism.

1c. Believer baptism.

Every instance of baptism in the NT was the result of living faith as a response to the call of the Gospel.

2c. The issue of infant baptism.

In spite of the near universal recognition that baptism in the NT was the baptism based upon confession of faith, the practice of baptism infants has a long tradition in the history of the church (since the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century [Ferguson, *Church of Christ*, 196]). There are usually four biblical-exegetical arguments offered for this practice. Karl Barth’s critique of this practice is still considered among the best (K. Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism* [SCM, 1948) together with the debate between Aland and Jeremias (K. Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* [Westminster, 1963]—con; J. Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries* [Westminster, 1960]; *The Origins of Infant Baptism; A Further Study and Reply to Kurt Aland* [A. R. Allenson, 1963]—pro). See also the discussion of this topic in Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* and Ferguson, *Church of Christ*, 195-201).

1d. Household baptism and the solidarity of the family. It is argued here that the baptism of entire households, which we do see in the NT (Acts 16:33; 18:8; 2 Tim 1:16; 4:19), surely had infants in its number.

Observations:

2d. Jesus and children. Jesus’ relationship with small children who were brought to him, particularly his statements concerning their faith and their place in the Kingdom (Mark 10:13-16; Matt 19:13-15; Matt 18:3ff.; and Luke 8:15-17. If children and infants are in the Kingdom, why not give them the sign of it?

Observations:

3d. Proselyte baptism and the Church. There are ancient records of Jewish proselyte baptism that included young children. The Jewish background of Christianity is thought to argue here for including young children (infants) in the practice of Christian baptism.

Observations:

4d. The covenant, circumcision and baptism. This argument was made popular by the Reformers of the Protestant Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It argues an essential unity in the biblical record of God's dealing with humanity. There is great continuity between the old and new covenants and between the people of God in the OT (Israel) and NT (Church).

Observations:

5d. The origin of infant baptism in the church (Everett Ferguson, "Inscriptions and the Origin of Infant Baptism," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 30 [1979]: 37-46; and D. F. Wright, "The Origin of Infant Baptism—Child Believers' Baptism?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 40 [1987]: 1-23).

The four biblical-exegetical arguments for infant baptism above have been marshaled to a case that is founded best on predominant church tradition as Lutheran theologian Ellingsen says, "Ultimately those who advocate infant baptism can make their best appeal to the predominance of the practice throughout the church's history" (Mark Ellingsen, *Doctrine and Word: Theology in the Pulpit* [John Knox, 1983], 144; cited by Stanley Grenz, *A Theology for the Community of God* [Broadman & Holman, 1994], 528).

6b. The mode of baptism.

The particular mode of Christian baptism unfortunately has been a dividing point of fellowship for some people. Three lines of thought indicate the normal mode of early Christian baptism was by immersion.

1c. The meaning of the word.

The Greek word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*) means to dip, immerse, or submerge.

2c. Biblical examples.

Evidence from the biblical examples of baptism point to baptism by immersion: the baptism of John (Mark 1:9-10; John 3:23); the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:38-39).

3c. The witness of history.

The unanimous testimony of ancient history reveals that immersion was the normal mode of baptism in the early church. The earliest reference to baptism outside of the NT, the *Didache* (ca 100 AD), instructs that triple baptism be performed in living water, and if that is not possible, in cold water, and finally, if necessary in warm water. If none of these are available, pouring water three times on the head would suffice.

7b. Relevant Questions.

1c. How soon should a convert be baptized?

2c. Who should perform baptism?

3c. Where should baptisms be held?

4c. Should baptism ever be repeated?

2a. The Lord's Supper.

This ordinance is known by various names. The Lord's Supper is the terminology Paul uses in 1 Cor 11:20 while the term 'communion' comes from 1 Cor 10:16. More liturgical denominations use the term 'eucharist' which comes from the Greek *eucvcariv, stw* (*eucharisto*), 'to give thanks.' In this context it describes the giving of thanks that took place prior to partaking of the elements (Matt 26:27; 1 Cor 11:24). In ancient times 'eucharist' was the most widely used expression for this sacrament. The NT also uses 'breaking bread' (Acts 2:42; 20:7) and the 'Lord's table' (1 Cor 10:21) as names for the Lord's Supper.

1b. Inaugurated by Christ.

Each of the first three gospels record the origin of this ordinance at the last supper (Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20). Paul also mentions the origins of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:23-26).

2b. Early Christian practice.

From its beginning, the early church remembered the Lord in this sacrament (1 Cor 11:23; Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11) probably as a part of a common *agape* meal. The Agape meal seen in 1 Corinthians gradually disappears, however. It is present in Ignatius (*Smyrneans* 8), but absent in Justin Martyr. By the time of Cyprian the Eucharist was separate from the *agape* which survived occasionally as a "charity supper."

3b. The meaning of the Lord's Supper.

1c. A remembrance of Christ (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:14-25).

The Lord's Supper as a remembrance of Christ is best understood in light of its OT context where remembering something was more profound than an intellectual activity. Rather it involved a full experiential rehearsal of the events remembered. It was a remembering that encompassed the will, emotions and intellect—a placing of oneself into presence of the events and persons remembered. See how Moses calls a generation of Israel "to remember" events they had not personally experienced (Deut 4; cf. Victor Hamilton, "rkz," *NIDOTTE* [Zondervan, 1997], 4:1100-1106; Horton Davies, *Bread of Life Cup of Joy* [Eerdmans, 1993]; Ferguson, *Church of Christ*, 252-253).

1d. A remembrance of his death.

2d. A present fellowship with the resurrected Christ. There are four views as to how the living Christ fellowships with his people during the Lord's Supper.

1e. A real presence of the body and blood of Christ by means of a transformation of the elements (transubstantiation—Roman Catholic and Orthodox). This view accompanied the early development of the Lord's Supper in the church on several levels (cf. John Reumann, *The Supper of the Lord* [Fortress, 1984]; Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments: History and Theology* [Fortress, 1976]).

1f. The giving of thanks over the elements in the pattern of Jesus at the Last Supper moved in the direction of saying thanks over offerings. It changed to be "consecrate" as in saying a prayer of thanks over offerings, or even to the offering of sacrifices (G. Kretschmar, "Abendmahl," *TRE* [Walter de Gruyter, 1996], 1:69-73). Tertullian still speaks of the elements in the language of type, representation, likeness, the bread as a "figure of the body". Yet by Irenaeus, while still having no ontological change, the elements "receive the Word of Christ and become the eucharist, the body of Christ..." (*Adv Haer.* 5. 2, 3).

2f. The evolution of the "priest" terminology begins at the end of the 2nd century and follows the sacrificial tone of the Eucharist. As pagan and Jewish priests offered sacrifices, so did Christian priests. The priest, standing in Christ's stead, imitated Christ and offered the body and blood in sacrifice.

3f. The cultic *mysterion* moves from the NT sense of the Greek word to the Latin *sacramentum* where it connotes an increasing sense of awe and even remoteness.

4f. The *remembrance* of Christ (Christ-anamnesis) becomes important as an imitation of the drama of salvation where the bread and wine laid on the table signified the body of the Lord Jesus laid out and ready for offering in sacrifice. Seeing the mystery (of the sacrifice) became more prominent in the East than West.

2e. A real presence of Christ without transformation of the elements (consubstantiation—Lutheran).

3e. A spiritual presence of Christ in the elements with an emphasis on remembering Christ's death (Zwinglian-Reformed).

4e. A spiritual presence of Christ in the elements with an emphasis on the blessing of redemption, i.e., a fellowship with the living Christ (Calvin-Reformed view).

3d. Anticipation of Christ's return (Mark 14:25; cf. Matt 26:29; Luke 22:16-18; 1 Cor 11:26).

2c. A fellowship of believers (1 Cor 10:17; 11:20-21).

4b. The efficacy of the Lord's Supper.

As all of God's actions toward his people, the Lord's Supper is a table set before God's people for their blessing. As with baptism the blessings of the Lord's Supper are related to the blessings of faith (John 6:54). The presentation of the living Christ through the elements nourishes the believer in the blessings that Christ conveys to his people. The NT relates two specific blessings enjoyed by God's children in the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus (Jer 31:31-34; Ezekiel 26:25-27)

1c. The gift of forgiveness.

2c. The gift of the Holy Spirit.

5b. The participants of the Lord's Supper.

1c. Examined believers (1 Cor 11:28).

*“Paul speaks of eating and drinking ‘in an unworthy manner’ (1 Cor 11:27). This is very different from being worthy of taking the supper. No one is worthy of God's grace; that's why it is grace. No one is worthy of what God has done in Christ, and likewise no one is worthy of the Lord's supper or any other spiritual activity. One comes to the table because of being spiritually needy. That realization assures a worthy manner of partaking, of receiving the continuing fellowship and blessing of the Lord” (Ferguson, Church of Christ, 256).*

2c. Assembled believers (e.g. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16).

6b. The mode.

The administration of the Lord's Supper according to the biblical examples includes:

- Prayer over the elements
- Distribution of the bread and cup to all
- Recollection of the words of the Lord during the last supper
- Eating and drinking the elements by all participants.

7b. The elements.

The emphasis of Scripture is not on the nature of the bread or the wine, but on their symbolic significance.

## **7. The Worship of the Church.**

In addition to the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the worship of the Church is an important reflection of the Church's identity. In worship the Church reiterates and rehearses the great truths of God's work towards itself and the world

1a. The definition of worship.

As the Scriptures nowhere explicitly offer a definition of worship, the meaning of biblical worship must be determined from two sources: biblical terminology for worship and biblical examples of worship.

1b. Biblical terms for worship.

1c. *hxy* (*shachah*): This is the principle Hebrew word translated "worship." It means literally to bow down or prostrate oneself (Ps 29:2; 95:6, 96:9; 97:7).

2c. *proskune, w* (*proskuneō*): This is the principle Greek word for worship. It means to pay reverence or homage, to make obeisance (John 4:21-24).

3c. *se, bw* (*sebō*): To revere, stressing the feeling of awe (Matt 15:9; Acts 16:14).

4c. *seba, zomai* (*sebazomai*): to honor religiously (Ro 1:25).

5c. *latreu, w* (*latreuō*): to serve, to render religious service (Ro 12:1).

6c. *leitourgi, a* (*leitourgia*): religious service (Ro 15:16), used commonly in the NT with *qrhskei, a* (*thrēskeia*) for Jewish temple service (Luke 1:23; Heb 9:21; 10:11; *thrēskeia*—Act 26:5).

2b. Biblical acts of worship.

Observations of the biblical examples of worship (for example heavenly worship of Rev 4-5) have led to the following variety of definitions:

*“Worship is an active response to God whereby we declare his worth” (Allen and Borrer, *Worship: Rediscovering the Missing Jewel* [Multnomah, 1982], 16).*

*“To worship God is to ascribe to Him supreme worth, for He alone is worthy” (Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* [Eerdmans, 1974], 10).*

*“Worship is a rehearsal of who God is and what He has done, and gives expression to the relationship which exists between God and His people” (Robert Webber, *Common Roots: A Call to Evangelical Maturity* [Zondervan, 1978], 78).*

2a. The biblical pattern of worship.

1b. The object of worship. The only proper content for true worship is the Triune God (Matt 4:10; John 4:22; Exodus 20:3-5).

2b. The manner of worship. Jesus gives the manner of biblical worship in John 4:24 when he told the Samaritan woman at the well, “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

1c. To worship in Spirit. As God is life-giving Spirit, true worship can only take place when one is in fellowship with the life-giving Spirit and is vitalized and motivated by Him (Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program*, 169). Cf. Phil 3:3.

2c. To worship in truth. Worship “in truth” as Jesus says in John 4:24 is not so much the idea of truth versus error which is of course implied here, but it is the idea of truth as reality and finality in Christ.

*“True worship thus takes place only in Christ, for in Him one is in the supernatural life of the Spirit and the truth (Saucy, *Church in God’s Program*, 169).*

3b. The content of worship. Biblical worship is rooted in the character and works of God.

1c. The character of God. Worship in the Bible is modeled as worship of God for who He is. He is the only God, the highest, the Lord God, the heavenly King, the Almighty God and Father, the Holy One.

2c. The works of God. Three acts of God are highlighted in biblical worship: creation, redemption and covenantal relationship.

1d. Creation. In Rev 4:11, the elders worship God because all things exist and were created by his will.

2d. Redemption. In Rev 5:12, the myriads of angels worship the Lamb that was slain. In the OT Israel is commanded to worship God because He redeemed them from Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm (Deut 5:15).

3d. Covenantal relationship. In Rev 5:9, worship is ascribed to God because of the relationship God has established with His people. All believers are related to God through the new covenant and are his priesthood, nation and possession (1 Pet 2:9).

4b. The form of worship: two principles.

1c. The first principle of any particular form of worship is that God is most interested in the faith behind the person's worship than the particular form of their worship (Ps 51:16-17; Heb 11:6).

2c. The lack of NT scripture stipulating a particular form of worship plus the inward nature of the new covenant as the provenance of the Holy Spirit suggest there is a freedom of form allowed in Scripture within a particular culture and should express:

1d. The nature of the Church as a body and priesthood.

2d. The nature of the believer as a wholistic being of mind, will and emotion.

3d. The orderliness of God himself (1 Cor 14:40).

## Addendum #1: The Nature and Practice of Ordination in the Church of Jesus Christ

Mark Saucy

### 1. Laying on of hands in the Bible: one or multiple meanings?

The occasions in the OT and the NT where the laying of hands is practiced together with apparent meaning of the act.

#### A. Old Testament Instances of Laying on Hands

1. In offering: Lev 3:1-2, 8, 13; 4:4; Num 8:12. Israelites presenting a peace or sin offering were to lay their hands upon the animal to identify themselves with the animal being offered. The identification of a mediator in general is expressed in the imagery of laying on hands in Job 9:33 where the mediator is noted as “an umpire” who can lay his hands upon both parties in a conflict.

2. In ordination or setting apart for a special office and leadership: Lev 8:14, 22; Num 8:12. Setting apart the Aaronic priesthood or the Levites as a priestly tribe of Israel is accompanied with the laying on of hands. Moses laid his hands upon Joshua to symbolize his assumption of the leadership of the nation of Israel. *Moses did not give Joshua the Holy Spirit* at the time of the laying on of his hands. According to Numbers 27:18 Joshua had already received the Holy Spirit *before* his ordination. “So the LORD said to Moses, ‘take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him.’” Ordination thus signified reception of a special commission with special authority.

3. In blessing: Gen 48:14. Jacob lays his hands upon the heads of his grandsons to impart a benefit or blessing. God is said to ‘lay his hand upon’ the head of David as a sign of blessing (Ps 139:5). This marks an important point to remember: human blessings in themselves have no power to effect beyond what the Lord himself wishes to effect. In this *blessings have the same efficacy as prayer: they are an appeal to God for success.*

4. In passing judgment: Lev 24:14. At the trial of a blasphemer, each witness was to lay his hand upon the head of the one to be executed as a sign of agreement with the verdict.

#### B. New Testament Instances of Laying on Hands

1. In blessing: Matt 19:15; Mark 10:16. Jesus laid his hands upon the children to bless them.

2. In healing: Matt 9:18; Mark 6:5 (Jesus); Acts 5:12; 28:8 (apostles). Healing occurred in instances of physical healing. However, healing was not always done through laying on of hands. Thus, the action of the hands did not convey healing power. The power to heal was personal power of the healer.

3. In ordination: Acts 6:6; 13:1-3. In two instances laying on of hands clearly means a separation for special ministry and service to the church. In the case of Acts 6, the apostles lay hands upon those selected by the church to serve in their midst. In chapter 13, the teachers and prophets of Antioch lay hands upon Paul and Barnabas because they were selected by the Holy Spirit for the gospel ministry.

4. In special spiritual gifts: Acts 8:17-20; 19:6; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6. The Samaritans and the disciples of John received the Holy Spirit accompanied with the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Acts 8, 19). Timothy appears to have received a special gift of the Spirit with the laying on of Paul’s and the presbyters’ hands. Three reasons are usually offered as to why these occasions should be considered *special* instances and not normative for understanding the efficacy of laying on hands to receive gifts of the Holy Spirit today: (1) the uniqueness of the *apostles’* commission in the ministry of the early church; (2) the absence of a normative pattern in the association of gifts of the Spirit and laying on hands; and (3) specific grammatical issues in the 1 and 2 Timothy texts.

(1). The uniqueness of the apostles’ commission in the ministry of the early church.

The Twelve (together with Paul) were promised that they would be fully equipped and empowered for their task as Jesus’ witnesses to uniquely found his Church (John 14:12, 18, 23, 25-26; 16:12-14). The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost marked the beginning of their function in this capacity to establish the Gospel throughout the world according to the pattern of Acts 1:8 (Jerusalem and Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth). The first twelve chapters of Acts offer extensive testimony to their functioning in this role of founders of the Church. Because of their close association with the supremely authoritative

Christ and their obvious possession of charismatic power, the apostles were clearly the Holy Spirit's unique (i.e., unrepeatable) agents of the gospel of Christ.

The absence of succession language or any procedure for replacing the apostles points to the uniqueness of their ministry in the NT. None of the terms found in later Church Tradition for the succession of the apostolic authority through ordination (*diadoche*, *diadochos*, *diadechesthai*) is found in the NT. Once the number of the 12 was replenished after Judas' apostasy (Acts 1), there is no replacement of the apostles after their deaths. For example, James' execution did not spark a movement to fill his place in the apostolic ranks.

Finally, the closing of the canon implies special status for apostles' relationship to Jesus over all others. The apostles' place as the unique interpreters of Jesus and founders of his Church were recognized by the earliest members of Christ's church despite some mistaken tendencies to describe both the apostles' testimony and Holy Church Tradition as "word of God" and "inspired" (Gk. *theopneustos*, 2 Tim 3:16).<sup>2</sup>

(2). The absence of a normative pattern in the association of gifts and laying on hands.

In two of the clearest NT instances of ordination there is no mention of the laying on of hands imparting special gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6 and 13:1-3). The subjects of ordination in Acts 6 were men already "full of the Spirit" (v. 5) before their ordination to serve. Jesus' own appointment and commissioning of his disciples does not mention his laying hands on the disciples. Neither was laying on of hands part of the disciples' reception of the Holy Spirit by the prophetic act recorded in John 20 or at Pentecost in Acts 2. The house of Cornelius in Acts 10 received the Holy Spirit without the laying on of hands (or even baptism). After the disciple's own commission, the common element to all of the instances where reception of the Holy Spirit is connected to the laying on of hands appears to be, therefore, the presence of Jesus' apostles functioning according to their commission to found the Church. Even here, however, the pattern of their laying on hands releasing the Holy Spirit is not universally attested in the NT.

(3). Specific grammatical issues in the 1 and 2 Timothy texts.

The final case for ordination in this category is connected to Paul's words to Timothy that he not neglect the gift that was given "through [Greek, *dia*] prophecy with [Greek *meta*] the laying on of the hands of the elders" (1 Tim 4:14). In a similar statement in 2 Tim 1:6, Paul also speaks of Timothy's gift having come "through" [Greek *dia*] the laying on of the apostle's hands. The use of the preposition *dia* "through" in these verses follows two patterns attested elsewhere in the NT: (1) *dia* can be synonymous with *meta*—"with the laying on of hands (1 Tim 4:14), or "through the laying on of hands (2 Tim 1:6) the meaning is the same; laying on hands has some relation to spiritual effects; (2) *dia* has a *range of meanings* governing the relationship of two things that can vary in degree from actual means, to agency, to attendant circumstances. This means that *dia* does not necessarily mean that one thing *causes* another thing. In 1 Tim 4:14 prophecy was not strictly the *cause* of Timothy's gift. Rather prophecy, as elsewhere in the Bible, was a circumstance that *accompanied* or that was associated with God's act. Prophecy *announces and confirms* what God does or will do, and it in itself is not the direct cause of an action. So, in 1 Tim 1:18 it is "according to the prophecies" that Timothy should be courageous and fight the good fight.<sup>3</sup> When taken together it is best to see 1 Tim 4:14 as saying that Timothy's spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit was attended by prophecy and the laying on of hands, not that prophecy or the laying on of hands *caused* his gift to come to him. NT scholar William Mounce summarizes the intent of the text: "Paul is encouraging Timothy to make use of the gifts he possesses, gifts, made evident at his commissioning into ministry, a commission that was accompanied by prophecy and by the ritual of laying on of hands."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> It is significant that while Scripture uses the quality of *theopneustos* for itself alone as God's word (2 Tim 3:16), John Damascus, the first true systematician of the eastern Church, considers the decree of the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451) also to be "*theopneustos*" (*De Haeresibus* L, 6. PG 94, 744 AB). Orthodox writers also regularly extend the category "word of God" to other elements of Holy Tradition besides Scripture.

<sup>3</sup> Other examples of the meaning of *dia* as "accompanying circumstances" rather than direct cause are: 2 Cor 2:4—Paul wrote the Corinthians "*dia* many tears"(tears accompanied his writing; they did not cause his writing); Ro 8:25—we hope "*dia* perseverance"(perseverance accompanies hope; it does not cause it). See the standard Greek-English lexicon by Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, p. 180, for a more detailed explanation of this meaning of *dia*.

<sup>4</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* WBC (Dallas: Word, 2000), 262.

C. Conclusions.

Two preliminary conclusions appear evident from the biblical data regarding laying on hands.

1. The different occasions where laying on of hands was used do not allow for one overall basic meaning for this action. For example, laying on hands as a spiritual act of *identification* or *union* cannot be sustained in all occasions, especially in the OT occasion of passing judgment (Lev 24:14). Even the laying of hands for blessing or benediction is not identification in the way that laying hands on a sacrificial animal identified the one bringing the offering with the animal being offered.

2. After the special case of the apostles' laying on of hands is understood in the NT context, two options appear possible for the meaning of ordination: (1) *identification* between the ordained and those ordaining is possible as local churches *recognize* the Spirit's call and gifting for ministry and *authorize* the use of such gifts of leadership in their midst; and (2) ordination is an *act of blessing or benediction* – an enacted prayer for fruitful ministry. Both identification and blessing do not appear to be mutually exclusive. In other words ordination could signify identification in some sense *and* blessing. In what sense we may take identification as the meaning in ordination is the subject of the next section.

**2. Laying on of hands in ordination: an enacted prayer of blessing or the establishment of a mystical union or “identification,” or both?**

A. Historical sideline: the effect of Church Tradition on the meaning of ordination.

Two post-apostolic developments regarding the meaning of ordination are avoided by denominations that place Scripture as the sole authority for faith and practice of the Christian life. They include (1) notions of *succession*, whereby authority of the ordained is derived hierarchically, that is from “above” in a highly developed system supposedly originating in the apostles; and (2) notions that ordination bestows a spiritual power that in some way permanently *changes the person* ordained.<sup>5</sup> Both of these ideas are admitted by those denominations that embrace them to be developments that are not found explicitly in the NT nor in the earliest extant documents of the post-apostolic church.<sup>6</sup> They are seen in these denominations, however, as legitimate *developments* of Holy Church Tradition by the Spirit-led Church.

B. Exegetical/theological presuppositions for ordination.

Numerous theological and biblical considerations about authority and leadership in the Church of Jesus Christ appear to be relevant to the nature and meaning of ordination. They will show: (1) that the *Gospel itself* (as the word of the Church's Lord) is the supreme authority in the church and the sole subject of the biblical concept of succession. The *Gospel* is what is passed on generation to generation; it's progress by whatever means, ordained people or not ordained, is the primary concern of the NT writings. (2) They also show the Gospel authority and ministry as fundamentally the *possession of the whole body of Christ* (local or universal), not a privileged class or priesthood that derives its authority from someplace *outside* a local body of believers. (3) Finally, they show that while ordination does entail a partnership between church and ordained, any highly nuanced sense of spiritual identification in the meaning of ordination is *alien to the NT*.

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<sup>5</sup> Within Roman Catholicism the *potestas sacra* (holy power) of ordination resides in the person of the priest and enables him to effect the change of the elements of the Eucharist into the blood and body of Jesus Christ. Reception of the *potestas sacra* leaves a permanent spiritual imprint or sign upon the priest. After receiving the sign in ordination the priest is forever a member of the clergy.

<sup>6</sup> The earliest post-apostolic description of ordination understands it as an act of *benediction* (Tertullian, *de Baptismo* 8). Only after the third century do we begin to see the development of a sacramental understanding of ordination. Hippolytus in the *Apostolic Tradition* 35.34 describes the epiclesis of ordination as when ‘the Spirit of high-priesthood’ falls on the bishop. Other similar statements begin to appear at this time in Cyprian and Gregory of Nyssa. Augustine refused to see priests as a special class of mediator (*Contra Ep Parmeniani* II.8, 15, 16). One church historian summarizes the situation saying: “It appears that prior to the fourth century there was no suspect of the HS being imparted with the laying on of hands” (Everett Ferguson, “Jewish and Christian Ordination,” *Harvard Theological Review* 56 [1963], 11). A Roman Catholic scholar who traces the development of the meaning of ordination in the Tradition, and who also admits development alien to the NT and the earliest post-apostolic sources is Edward Schillebeeckx in his study, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

1. The Kingdom and Covenant nature of the Church.

The progress of God's kingdom and covenant program as it is progressively revealed in Scripture marks a critical point of orientation for any practice in the Church of Jesus Christ. The Church stands at a unique place in God's unfolding plan with a new *spiritual nature and empowerment* in the Holy Spirit that was unknown in prior ages. All practices of the Church must be appropriate to the Church's new nature, including ordination. Two features of the new covenant nature of the Church have bearing on the question of ordination and authority in the Church.

a. Within the new covenant life of the Church, the Holy Spirit's power is spread more intensely among *all believers*, not just to certain ones (priests, prophets, kings, temple artisans) as in the OT. The outpouring of the Spirit to the deepest part of every believer that was promised by the prophets became reality in the Church. NT writers cite the OT prophecies as having fulfillment in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that occurred at Pentecost (E.g. Acts 2:17-21 citing Joel 2:28ff.). Every follower of Jesus now experiences what remained in the OT righteous as only a mystery and a hope -- rebirth with the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-6) with a new heart. The prophet Jeremiah described the coming age of the Church as the time when God's law would be "within them on their heart"... when "they shall all know" Him (Jer 31:33).

b. The personal experience of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit not only means there is a new power and knowledge of God available to every believer, it also means a *new access to God* for every believer. OT models of mediated leadership are canceled as holiness moves from the outwardness of the Temple system to the inwardness of the individual heart. Jesus made it clear that purity and defilement were no longer defined externally, but internally: "there is nothing outside the man which going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man" (Mark 7:15). Thus, there is no longer a class of priests that mediates fellowship between God and His people. *Every believer* in Christ now fulfills the priestly functions of witness (2 Cor 5:20), sacrifice (Ro 12:1), and intercession (James 5:14, Ro 10:1) because of direct access to the Father through Jesus Christ (Heb 4:14-16).

2. Authority in the Body of Christ.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on every member of the Church advances the picture of authority we have in the NT over that in the OT. There is now a certain *non-hierarchical* element added to the authority structure of the Church. Whereas in the OT leadership was appointed and functioned in a consistent "top down" model direct from Yahweh the King, in the NT there is an additional "bottom up" component whereby the Lord of the Church expresses his will through every believer who has His Spirit. The new nature of authority in the Church is qualified or expressed in three ways.

a. Ultimate or final authority in the Church is found in Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church. As head of the Church (Eph 3:21) His word in the Gospel is the infallible rule and authority for Church doctrine and practice. All, whether angel or apostle (Gal 1:8-9), or human tradition (Matt 15:3ff., Mark 7:8-9; Col 2:8) submit to the authority of the Lord's Word. Beyond those first authorized to communicate the Lord's Word, the apostles, the NT shows little interest in the human means to the Gospel's progress. It is the Gospel that runs, goes forth, spreads, and progresses into new territory as Paul tells the Philippians (Philippians chapter 1). Even the unsavory motives of other preachers do not matter so long as the Gospel is preached (Phil 1:18).

It is in this priority of the Gospel that ordination finds its place in the NT. Although there is much ministry of the Gospel taking place in the early church, there is very little mention of ordination. In light of the advance of the Gospel it is not mentioned who ordained the deacons, bishops, and other ministers Paul greets in his letters. Who ordained the founders of the churches at Rome, at Colossae, etc? What is the ordination status of Apollos, of Aquila and Priscilla? Who ordained Archippus to his ministry (Col 4:17)? We do not know. Similarly when the challenge of false gospels arises in the churches, ordination is never a factor of the apostle's argument. Paul confronts his opponents on the substance of their false proclamation of Christ, not on the source of their ordination. Here we note that even apostles can be challenged in their faithfulness to the Gospel as we see Paul confronts Peter in Antioch over just this issue (Gal 2:11ff.). Similarly, Timothy's only recourse in the face of false teachers is to "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2). There is no institutional body, person or church to which he must appeal for intervention or help. The main concern and authority everywhere is the *Gospel*. This is what explains all the Scriptural ideas of authoritative *succession* that remain confined to the Gospel itself. The *Gospel* is

what is “passed down” and received generation to generation (2 Tim 2:2; 1Thess 2:13), not ordination or anything else.

b. The Gospel and the Holy Spirit is the possession of every member of the Church, thus the NT grants a certain qualified access for *every member* of the church to the Church’s authority structure. This is evident in the following ways:

- 1). *Every member* has the “ministry” of reconciliation, 2 Cor 5:18. The Great Commission is the responsibility of *every member* of the Church.
- 2). “Ministry” belongs to *every member*, not leadership, Eph 4:11-12. Leaders prepare *the saints* for the “ministry”.
- 3). The church was responsible for the selection of its leaders in Acts 6:6. The standards to which leaders must attain are tested by *every member* of the church, 1 Tim 3ff.; Titus 1:9ff. Even in the selection of the replacement for Judas, the nomination of the two candidates came from the gathered group of believers (Acts 1:15, 23).
- 4). Church discipline ultimately rests in the hands of *every member* of the church, Matt 18:15-17. Pastors and elders may lead in such matters, but the final word in discipline was given to the church. We also note the prominence of “you” (pl.) as in “you all” in the instructions Paul gives about a case of discipline in 1 Cor 5:2, 7, 12, and 13.
- 5). *Every member* is responsible for the church’s order and doctrine. “Examine everything carefully” (1 Thess 5:21) was not addressed to just the leaders in Thessalonica, but to the whole body. So also the command to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1) was given to the entire church, not just the leaders. A negative expression of this is the churches of the last days that will “accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires” (2 Tim 4:3). The church’s teachers are accumulated *by the church*, not appointed from outside the church.
- 6). *Every member* has a ministry of oversight, literally “bishops,” (Gk, *evpiskopou/ntej, episkopountes*) in the church, Heb 12:15.
- 7). *Every member* is called to some kind of ministry of teaching the Word of Christ in the church, Col 3:16.

c. For all of the non-hierarchical and seemingly *democratic* elements just noted, the new covenant nature of the Church does not mean the elimination of a *hierarchical* pattern in the Church’s authority. The church has ordered ministries and is not anarchy. The fact of the hierarchical pattern of authority is seen in the following ways.

- 1). The existence and ministry of servant-leaders in the church order: Bishop/elder/pastor ministry and Diaconate (e.g, Phil 1:1; 1 Pet 5:2).
- 2). The church body is called to submit to their leaders (Heb 13:17).
- 3). Elder/bishop/pastors will give an account to God for their service to Christ’s church (Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:4).
- 4). There is a more authoritative teaching of the Word done by the church’s servant-leaders than by the average church members. Elders/pastors/bishops have particular qualifications in teaching the Gospel (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9).

d. The interface of the non-hierarchical and hierarchical elements of authority in the Church and its relation to the concept of ordination is found in the notion of the *servant-leader*. Leaders of the Church do possess the authority to lead and so they should *lead*. However, their leadership is one that is founded upon service. It is the quality of the leader’s service of the Gospel to the members of a local church that

is the base of his authority (Matt 20:25-28; Luke 22:25). There is, therefore, a *symbiotic* dynamic within a local church's government. The congregation submits to the leaders and in some sense the leaders submit to the congregation. For ordination this means that significant participation of those who are called to submit themselves to the leader is absolute. *The meaning of ordination profoundly revolves around a recognition or affirmation by a local church body of Christ's appointment of a person to minister in their midst based upon the prior demonstration of that ministry in the local congregation. After the appointment of Christ, it is the local body of believers that technically ordains to ministry as it publicly recognizes Christ's gift to the church and publicly acknowledging the right of the ordained person to exercise that spiritual authority in their midst.*

e. Institutions or persons above local churches?

As noted above (see 2a), the final authority of the Gospel in the NT overshadows the authority of any person, local church, and institution -- even the apostles themselves. There do, however, seem to be lines of authority between local churches and their founders. That is the apostolic tone of Paul's letters (Gal 1:11; 2:14; 4:12-20; 2 Cor 10-12), whereby his spiritual fathering and mothering gives him a platform to receive reports about these churches (e.g., 1 Cor 1:11) and to counsel them accordingly. This same dynamic appears to define the role of the church of Jerusalem in the council proceedings recorded in Acts 15. Rather than an example of a local church or institution above all other local churches, the primacy of this local body should be seen in light of the *primacy of the apostles*, who had founded this church and *were still present in it*. It was because the apostles were in Jerusalem that Paul sought unity with them in his preaching of Christ (Gal 2:2). It is also the reason presumed why the church at Antioch initiated and sought unity with Jerusalem in the question of the Gentiles and the Law. Yet even in this first-position as the home of the apostles, there is the "scantiest institutional authority" governing the missional development of the church from Jerusalem, as one scholar notes.<sup>7</sup> As we saw earlier, the NT records extensive ministry going on in the churches of the Roman Empire, but it does not trace any lines of ordination extending out from Jerusalem. Of first importance is thrusting the Gospel out to the "uttermost parts of the earth." The institutional means to that movement appear to be quite secondary. In the NT the operating categories of ministry are "lay", "congregational" and "voluntary". It is only through the development of later Church Tradition that the Gospel ministry is restricted to operate under the new and alien categories of "clerical", "hierarchical", and "professional."<sup>8</sup>

The tendency for the patristic church Tradition to develop according to the cultural and social patterns present in the Roman Empire is well documented in patristic studies. In the question of church government, it appears that institutional hierarchies of the Roman Empire provided the "top-down" patterns followed in the polity of the Roman and Orthodox traditions down to the very titles of ministers and ministries.<sup>9</sup> In countries formerly governed by the extremely hierarchical pattern of the Soviet Union, the patristic experience should give caution to us so that such patterns not influence the government of the Church of Jesus Christ.

3. The Identifications or Unions of the Believer.

The understanding of ordination as a local church's public recognition of gifting and the public acknowledgement of the right to minister as a servant leader in their midst entails the further questions of the efficacy of the actual ordination ceremony, or more specifically, the act of laying on hands. Two questions may be posed. (1) Does the act of laying on hands entail a spiritual effect? And (2) if it does then what is the nature of the spiritual effect? Many argue the act of laying on hands itself actually *creates* a unique spiritual bond or union that was not there before so that two independent people (the ordained and the ordainer) form a kind of indivisible unity in the spiritual world -- unified in relationship to certain characteristics and qualities whereby the spiritual world looks on one as it does the other and relates to one as it does to the other. In addition to what Scripture reveals about the nature of the Church and the Church's authority structure noted above, the nature of the believer's different identities will help us move toward an answer. There are two different basic levels of new identity for the believer and the Church.

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<sup>7</sup> Arnold Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Succession in the first Two Century of the Church* (London, Lutterworth, 1953), 11-34.

<sup>8</sup> J. T. Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church* (Cambridge, 1992), 274.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990).

a. Identification with Christ.

The primary union or identification of the believer is with Jesus Christ. Being “joined to” Christ (Ro 7:4), or “united to Christ” (Ro 6:5) are just two of the many ways the apostle Paul describes the believer’s new condition of being “in Christ.”<sup>10</sup> An important metaphor of this union is the body image. The church is Christ’s body (1 Cor 12:27), which is united together under his headship (Col 1:18). His Spirit is what forms the body and supplies each member’s vital relationship to the Head (1 Cor 12:13).

b. Identification with Christ’s body, the Church.

Flowing out of the believer’s participation with Christ and membership in his body is the believer’s membership one to another. Christians are “members one of another” by means of their common identity to Christ (Ro 12:5; Eph 4:25). The identification believers have to each other is because of their common participation in Christ (Heb 3:14), his promises (Eph 3:6, his nature (2 Pet 1:4), the Gospel (1 Cor 9:23), God’s household (Eph 2:19), and the Holy Spirit (Heb 6:4).

c. Relations within the believers basic identity in Christ: Does ordination create a spiritual union between the ordained and the church that ordains?

The basic identifications of the believer call for caution to not overstate the nature of the relationship between the ordained and the church that ordains him. *While there is no doubt that some idea of representation or partnership is present between the congregation that recognizes and receives the leadership of the person it ordains,<sup>11</sup> the notion of a marriage unit or exact identity of church and leaders is unwarranted* for the following reasons.

i). *There is no explicit mandate from Scripture to say that the ordained and the ordaining church are united as in marriage, or that the spiritual world views them as identical.* There is no “one flesh” or “one body” terminology anywhere in Scripture used in the context of ordination. “Marriage” is not a biblical metaphor for the relationships of ordination. Strong claims for identification in ordination are typically implied from the occasions of laying on hands during sacrifice in the OT, and a particular understanding of “participating in the sins of others” from 1 Tim 5:22. However, as noted above the meaning of identification that is proper to the sacrifice cannot be carried unilaterally to all occurrences of laying on of hands in the Bible, laying on hands in judgment of capital crimes being the clearest case in point to the contrary (Lev 24:14). The meaning of 1 Tim 5:22 will be addressed below, but regardless to what extent one takes the warning there, notions of identity and union on any plane cannot occlude or subvert *the primary identification the believer shares with Christ.* In Scripture even the marriage union is subordinated to the believer’s personal relationship and identity with Christ (Matt 10:35-36; 1 Cor 7:39). There is no more fundamental bond than that which believers share with Christ, and that which *through Him* they share equally with all others in Christ’s body. It is *with Christ* where all discussion of identity for the believer begins.

ii). *The believer’s primary union with Christ is the context for understanding Paul’s warning to Timothy in 1 Tim 5:22 (“Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thus share the sins of others...”).* Even assuming the case that a believer or church fully inherits the sins of one they wrongly ordain, the judgment for sins for the believer always takes place according to the believer’s position *in Christ.* Sins of the believer, great or small, shared or not, do have consequences in bringing “loss” (1 Cor 3:15), but so long as true belief continues *the believer’s union with Christ*

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<sup>10</sup> There are more than 164 references in Paul’s letters to the believer’s identity “in Christ.” The idea is further emphasized through his “with Christ” expressions. Paul employs fourteen different compound words with the sun- (with-) prefix. See for examples Galatians 2:19 – crucified with Christ; Col 2:12 – buried with Christ; Col 3:1 – raise up with Christ; etc.

<sup>11</sup> The notion of representation is not best attested from seeing the “angels” of the churches in Revelation chapters two and three as the *ordained pastors* of these churches. Two initial observations point us in this direction. First, there is no other occasion in Scripture where pastors are called “angels”. Neither does addressing pastors as “angels” pass into the earliest post-apostolic church writings, not to mention that today “angel” is not a title for pastors known in our churches. If “angel” is a biblical title for pastors, why then do we not speak that way today? Second, in every other occasion in the book of Revelation “angel” is a literal “angel”, a ministering *spirit*. The burden of proof for saying otherwise in Revelation two and three remains entirely with those making such claims.

assures the holiness necessary for eternal salvation (1 Cor 1:30). So while there may be a certain emotional impact of potentially sharing in the sins of another, it must still be remembered that those sins also, even if fully inherited, were paid for by Christ's sacrifice.<sup>12</sup>

iii). This highlights the role of *the believer's own faith* as the primary ground of their relationship to Christ. It is the consistent teaching of Scripture that all people will answer for their own deeds committed in this life, not the deeds of others according to the words of Ezekiel 18:20: "The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself" (see also Ro 2:6; 14:12; Rev 20:13). Note in this verse that even the unity or identification of the family bond does not mean a sharing of sins. Fathers' sins do not come to the sons and vice-versa.

iv). Nevertheless, Paul's warning to Timothy is not to be dismissed, and such is not the intent of the previous analysis. The intent here is to provide a context for seeing Paul's warning regarding ordination as *something other than a complete identity* between the ordained and the one who ordains. For the reasons cited above it seems preferable to understand 1 Tim 5:22 as warning that those who hastily ordain *bear a certain responsibility* for the quality of the ministry of the one they ordain, which is in fact how some versions translate this verse, if the verse makes a connection between with ordination and sharing sins at all.<sup>13</sup> Thus, while there is some responsibility for the sins of the other, the one who sins will still answer directly for his own sins. This is the case with the other union that ordination is sometimes compared to - the union of marriage. Nowhere does Scripture say that that the spiritual world sees the sins of the husband, for example, as placed to the wife's account (and vice-versa), that they are identical in this regard. She will no doubt join in suffering the consequences for her husband's sins because of the nature of the marriage bond they share, but "the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself" as Ezekiel says (Ezek 18:20). So there are other ways that sins of others may be *shared*. A church that ordains a sinner will reap the consequences to itself in the deficient quality of the ministry and service it receives. The church that took Diotrephes as leader no doubt suffered from his "love of the first place" (3 John 9), yet there is no indication that they are guilty of his arrogance in the same way that he is.

d. On whether *anything* is created or effected with the laying on of hands in ordination. If it is difficult to say based upon Scripture that a "marriage" between church and ordained takes place, do particular gestures, laying on hands in this case, have *any* impact in the spiritual world? In general it needs to be noted that assigning power to a specific gesture performed by special people is alien to the spirit of the New Testament. Rather than *create* something in the spiritual world, gestures in the NT Church served a *confirmatory* role as they do in the case of baptism. In Scripture, faith is what brings spiritual benefits and results. This is why Abraham is the father of all believers (Gen 15:6; Ro 4:5). Even in the case of the OT sacrifices one cannot say that there was no reconciliation with God *before* hands were laid upon the sacrificial animal, because the *inner disposition of faith* of the person is always the immediate cause of spiritual blessing.<sup>14</sup> Belief in a transfer of spiritual powers or gifts through the laying on of hands was a creation of the 4<sup>th</sup> century church and connected with the rise of sacramental theology. It remains to this day in the Catholic Church's dogma of the sacraments working *ex opera operato*; literally, "from the work done," whereby Catholic priests have power to bestow grace through the sacraments regardless of the faith disposition of those who participate. But such a minimizing of faith is counter to the message of the New Covenant. According to Church historian Everett Ferguson, the sacramental understanding of

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<sup>12</sup> This is not an "easy believe-ism" or "cheap grace" whereby one merely professes belief and lives free of Christ's moral command. Genuine belief and reception of God's grace wrestles with sin and is not content to live in sin. Titus 2:11-12: for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.

<sup>13</sup> Many versions separate the command against hasty ordination from the exhortation to keeping oneself pure of others sins as in the New King James Version: Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

<sup>14</sup> A. Oepke states this is true not only for the OT, but the rabbinic and Qumran corpus of literature as well ("βαπτισμα," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel [Eerdmans, 1964ff.], 1:536).

ordination was not the understanding of the NT or the earliest church fathers because for them “the basic idea in early Christian ordination was not of creating a substitute or transferring authority, but conferring a blessing and petitioning for the divine favor.”<sup>15</sup> In all likelihood Luke’s description of Paul and Barnabas’ ordination in Acts 14:26 is the best way to understand its meaning and efficacy: “From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been *commended to the grace of God* for the work which they had fulfilled.” Ordination is an appeal for God’s grace in the ministry of the ordained person.

Then does this mean nothing transpires in the spiritual world during the prayer of commendation or ordination? Clearly not, for prayer *profoundly* effects the spiritual world. It “moves the hand that moves the world” as the saying goes, and this is no little effect. But beyond this, when the laying on of hands is seen as a kind of enacted prayer it is also an expression of the unity of the body of Christ. When one member of the body intercedes for another, there is unity, there is representation, there is a bond expressed. *But this is true for every act of prayer.* Biblically, there is no call to “sacerdotalize” or make the prayers at the time of ordination any more mystical or potent by the addition of fasting or a specific gesture. All this leads to is further entangled speculation about all the necessary conditions for gestures to be fully efficacious, who has enough spiritual power to effect such changes, who does not, etc. *Such speculations have no basis in Scripture.* Faith is the only condition for the Almighty to act. He is not manipulated with material things and human gestures. Believers of the New Covenant find all sufficiency in the grace of Christ through faith.

### C. Conclusion.

Based upon the fundamental authority structure of the Church as the New Covenant people of God, ordination is a ceremony by which a congregation *recognizes* giftedness for leadership and *authorizes* the ordained to exercise those gifts in their midst. The laying on of hands is an *enacted prayer* commending the ordained person to the Lord of the Church for the necessary grace to faithfully serve the body that called him.

## 3. The practice of laying on hands for ordination in the local church.

Based upon the meaning of ordination and the significance of laying on hands stated above, a final section of more practical questions is offered to demonstrate the practical effect of this understanding of ordination. This section will offer brief and specific answers for very concrete situations related to ordination in the local church and larger denominational structures.

### A. Who can be ordained?

Since ordination fundamentally means a local church’s recognition and commissioning into ministry of one of its own, the scope of those able to be ordained is larger than only the bishops, pastors and elders (taking these terms as all signifying the one office responsible for spiritual oversight of a local church). Besides the cases of Acts 6:6 and 13:1-3, which indicate that deacons and missionaries were ordained, the possession of the ministry by every member of the church means that *ordination should not support any division of the body according to clergy and laity.* Such divisions are biblically unfounded because every member of the body is a minister and priest of the Gospel (1 Pet 2:9; Eph 4:12).

Furthermore, when ordination is understood simply as recognition and appointment to ministry by a local body the scope of ministries open to it widens considerably. A local body is free to appoint/ordain to any of its ministries provided the church body is confident the candidate is spiritually gifted and of necessary character to perform the ministry in their midst. For example, there does not appear to be a biblical reason why a church cannot “ordain” one of its members to lead the children’s ministry or the choir. If 1 Tim 3:8ff. is taken to refer to deacons and deaconesses, which is preferable, then women could be ordained up to the point of the diaconate. Scripture forbids ordination of women to the elder/bishop/pastor role (1 Tim 2:12-15). For this office those eligible for ordination are men who meet the qualities of character and service to the church as given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. For the office of the deacon candidates meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8ff.

### B. Who “ordains” a person to ministry?

In other words, who has the authority to ordain? Because the ministry of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit is the possession of every believer, *it is the local church through their recognized leaders that has the authority to commission its members to authoritative ministry on their behalf.* The local body ultimately calls a candidate out, tests

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<sup>15</sup> E. Ferguson, “Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination,” *Studies in Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson, (NY: Garland, 1993), 148.

the service and character of the candidate and publicly recognizes the candidate's giftedness in the ordination ceremony commissioning them into service.

C. What might the ordination process look like according to the symbiotic model of hierarchical and non-hierarchical authority structure of the Church?

Given the examples of ordination found in Scripture, together with the New Covenant nature of and authority structure of the Body of Christ, the following steps might be used.

1. The initiative for ordination comes from the local church as it detects the Spirit's giftedness within its own context. Given the symbiotic model of leadership, a local church's council of elder-bishop-pastors, as those already appointed by the church for spiritual leadership, should take the lead of this process in proposing candidates based upon their observations of the candidate's ministry and character.
2. The elder-bishop-pastors of the church present their observations regarding a candidate to the candidate and to the church for testing and ultimate confirmation.
3. The candidate and the church should seek the Lord's will through prayer. Fasting was also practiced in the NT for this purpose (Acts 13:1-3).
4. After a sufficient time to determine the Lord's calling and equipping for service, the church's elders give the church an opportunity to voice its feelings regarding the character and ministry of the candidate against the standards set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 (in the case of candidates for the office of elder/bishop/pastor).
5. If the church affirms the candidate's quality of character and service, then preparations should be made to publicly appoint the candidate to service by means of an ordination ceremony.

D. During the ordination ceremony, who should lay their hands upon the person to be ordained?

Since it is finally the local church body that ordains its people into ministry, any number of representatives can be designated to lay hands on behalf of the congregation. While Scripture nowhere specifies that only previously ordained people may lay on hands, the hierarchical and non-hierarchical elements of the church's authority structure make it understandable why the local church's recognized (i.e., ordained) council of spiritual leaders (i.e., the presbytery) are the ones we see laying on hands in Scripture besides the apostles (1 Tim 4:14 and Acts 13:1-3). For the sake of propriety and order it is reasonable therefore for a body's recognized (ordained) leaders to represent them in the ceremony of ordination, lay hands on the candidate, and pray for the Lord's blessing on behalf of the membership of the church body.

It would seem permissible also for a local church through its ordained leadership to invite others to participate in the ordination ceremony as honored guests, but their status remains *as representatives of the church*. There is no thought here that "spiritually higher" people belonging to hierarchical structures above a local church are necessary to make the ordination effective or even "more effective." The prophets and teachers of Antioch who ordained Paul and Barnabas were not spiritually "higher" than Paul or Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas are listed in Acts 13:1 as *equal* members of their number. Ordination is a public statement of a relationship that exists *between a congregation and its ordained servant-leader*. It is not a ceremony that joins the ordained person to a universal caste of clergy, which stands above local churches. Authority in the Church is located in the Gospel itself, which means authority for leadership in the Church is given "from below" in the congregation where the leadership is to be exercised. It is not granted by structures "above" or external to a local church. These are ideas of succession of power and authority that are alien to the NT and are to be avoided.

E. Is laying on of hands a "necessary" feature of ordination?

Ordination as signified by the laying on of hands was never a command for the church like baptism and the Lord's Supper. However, laying on of hands was a tradition the apostolic church followed, and therefore, it is also commended for the ordination ceremony today provided there are not cultural issues that do not commend it. In either case, there is nothing "magical" or uniquely "spiritual" that takes place in this gesture itself. It is a visible demonstration that a congregation commends the ordained person to God for grace to perform the ministry worthily. It also demonstrates the congregation's assent to submit to the ordained person within the authority structure of the church that is outlined above. The prayer of ordination has the same effect as any prayer to God with or without the gesture of laying on hands. However, as we are both physical and spiritual in our nature, a physical expression of the spiritual is appropriate and such expressions are visible in Scripture.

F. Is ordination for life?

Since the relationship that is confirmed in ordination exists primarily between the ordained and the church that ordains, this is a question for the local church to decide. There is nothing in Scripture that says a church's appointment to ministry lasts for life. Quite simply if a local church has the authority to ordain *it also has the authority to withdraw ordination* if an ordained leader should at some time change ministries or fail to meet the necessary qualities of character and service to continue ministry. In the case of the elder/bishop/pastor a local church need not continue to suffer under the authority of one who no longer is "above reproach" and has lost the church's respect and submission. Likewise nothing in 1 Tim 5:22 indicates that a church must *continue* to reap the negative consequences of a poor choice for ordination.

G. Is there a special spiritual relationship between those who lay on hands and the one who receives it?

While there may be personal and emotional ties between different people because of their history together, those who lay on their hands for ordination *do it on behalf of the congregation that ordains*, not because they have special powers to effect change in the spiritual world. Their relationship with the ordained, therefore, is not different than that of the congregation that ordains. Their own prayers are just as efficacious as the prayers of the rest of God's people on that occasion.

H. How is the ordained pastor related to the church that ordained him?

The ordination ceremony is the recognition of a particular relationship a congregation has to one it has accepted as its spiritual leader. The congregation therefore indicates publicly that it accepts the ordained to lead them and represent them in their collective ministry of the Gospel. This means the congregation acknowledges that it will submit to the leader and support the leader in all matters required by the Gospel. According to Heb 13:17 ordination also means that the church commits to partner with the leader *for his joy* in their mutual ministry.

I. How is the ordained person related to other churches?

Several issues are raised by this question.

1). Because the authority of ordination is always centered in the local church that grants it, a person ordained by one church does not automatically have rights of authority over other churches. Each local body decides who will have authority over it. There is nothing in Scripture that calls for the Catholic and Orthodox teaching that laying on hands enables one to automatically lead other congregations without their approval. Authority in a local church is the local church's own affair under the standards of the Gospel.

2). It is conceivable that should a person ordained to a ministry in one local church need to change churches for some reason, a letter could be given commending him and his ministry to the receiving church. Such a letter would not mean automatic right to minister in the same capacity in the new church, but it would give valuable evidence for the new church to consider in its own assessment of the person's qualification for ministry in their midst. Ministry and authority in the new church is decided solely by the new church.

3). Within the primacy of the local church's authority over its own ministry under the Gospel, it is nevertheless important that a local church recognize its relationship to the universal body of Christ. Because local churches are members of a larger body of confessing churches it is appropriate for a local church to invite the larger community of churches to participate and advise in its own ordination process. This could be facilitated by inviting leaders of other local churches to participate in a candidate's doctrinal examination and the ordination ceremony itself.

J. How is the ordained person related to the denomination?

Denominations are representatives of the larger body of Christ to a local body. As such the ordained servant-leader's relationship of a local body to denominational structures is the same as the local church he represents. According to the authority structure stipulated in the NT, there is no authoritative body outside a local church that has the right to dictate the internal affairs of the local church *without that church's permission*. Churches through their leaders have the authority to invite those outside for counsel and advice in any situation and the denominational resources could function well in this capacity. But all of this remains the initiative of the local church. Denominational structures are essentially *voluntary* associations of local churches wishing to unite for more effective ministry and demonstration of unity of the Gospel in the world. Denominational leaders work at the behest of local churches to facilitate this voluntary association through resourcing and communication among the local churches. In the concrete situation of ordination it is appropriate for local churches to invite denominational representatives to

participate and advise in the ordination process and to provide commending letters to other churches when ordained leaders of one church move to other churches.

#### Conclusion.

Hebrews 6:2 is a final reference to laying on hands which seems apt to summarize and conclude the findings of this study. In a context of exhortation to move to maturity in the Christian faith “laying on of hands”, probably in connection to baptism, is listed as the elementary and foundational teachings that the Christian must progress beyond. The point here is that while laying on of hands does display profound spiritual realities, its meaning and practice is also *simple*. It is both profound and simple like the faith and repentance that gives us access to God through Christ. The author reminds us that *the realities of the New Covenant, which Hebrews preaches by name more than any other NT book, must not be allowed to become “complicated” or encumbered with alien philosophies and human traditions.* For the author’s immediate audience the threat was to return to the time of immaturity when human mediators and ceremony stood between the people and their God and the obedience of faith was tightly scripted in the Temple system. Since then that threat has been augmented by other models of authority having more in common with human thought than Scripture. For the Hebrews and us both days are over. A new day has dawned with the advent of the final mediator Jesus Christ, who poured out his Spirit in the heart of every believer releasing God’s grace and granting freedom from the scripts of special ceremonies, gestures and words. Living faith is now expressed from a Law fixed in our hearts, and fellowship with God by faith is now *simple, direct* and *profound* to all who believe. Getting this message of good news out to the world is the writer of Hebrew’s highest concern. It must be ours as well. May God give us grace that our traditions of laying on hands in ordination follow the simplicity of the Faith of Jesus Christ reflected in Luke’s description of ordination in Acts 14:26: From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been *commended to the grace of God* for the work which they had fulfilled.”