

CAPTAINS AND COURTS

(A BIBLICAL DEFENSE OF EPISCOPAL GOVERNMENT)

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INTRODUCTION

I'm often asked such questions as, "Why does your church have bishops?" Or, "Why do you have organization beyond the local church called synods [dioceses]?" These questions are good ones, the obvious answer being, "We have bishops and synods first and foremost because the Bible teaches this system of government. Yet, many times, folks in churches with bishops aren't forthcoming with a Biblical defense for why they have the kind of government that they do, even in such a basic area. They are often silent in spite of the simple fact that bishops and synods have been in the Church from its earliest days, as I shall demonstrate from Holy Scripture. They are part of one of the three truly ancient churches who have historic bishops: Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy. Yet, they often don't appreciate the rich Scriptural foundation for their position. As a matter of fact, they are often made to feel by their evangelical brethren of other persuasions that the Episcopal structure of government is not Biblical, and therefore a Scripturally inferior system. Nothing could be further from the truth.

By way of personal background, I must confess that I was one of those people who thought that the Episcopal structure was unsupported by Scripture. I was a defender of the so-called elder rule approach, meaning no one presbyter (elder) was governmentally above another elder. And then, in the mid 1980s, I began doing research on the Biblical covenant, what would later become a book and many other studies. Little did I know at the outset of my work that it would force me to change church affiliation. For, I discovered in the course of study that there are not only courts in the Church but that there are also what I call captains, one of the Biblical concepts behind the office of bishop. The following study is a summary of what I agonizingly had to face as I engaged Holy Scripture. I will present a Biblical basis for a captains and courts system, starting with an explanation of my methodology. I then develop the basis of New Testament from the Old Testament, isolating four basic principles of polity. Next, I examine the same principles in the New Testament. At last, I present a study of the three basic offices of Deacon, Presbyter, and Bishop. Finally, I do some comparing and contrasting with other systems, on the one hand demonstrating that hierarchy is inescapable in one form or another, and on the other hand, showing the advantage of a hierarchical-yet-representative for of Church government.

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Chapter One

Where Do We Begin?

Most serious Christians would venture to say that the issue of Church polity like any area should be first approached with the Bible as the ultimate authority. Agreed. My methodology in this study will be to use Holy Scripture, the Church's law book, the final authority of faith and life. I will not use Church history as a primary authority, although there is a place for historical studies, particularly since they unanimously point to an Episcopal form of government. From the First Century, key disciples of the Apostles, such as Ignatius (A.D. 50-120) and Irenaeus (A.D.150), speak of the Episcopal structure as the system of government handed down by the Apostles. This form of government was not challenged in Eastern or Western Churches until the Sixteenth Century, meaning the Bible was consistently applied pretty much the same way when it came to polity in East and West. Such a fact should not be thought of as a minor observation, considering how few issues in the history of Church of which this could be said, not even the very doctrine of salvation. This confirming historical fact should not be taken lightly. We should remember that Biblical Christianity is not traditionless. Scripture produced its own traditions, and so the Scriptural traditions are invaluable in all studies of the church. But first, we must approach the issue of Church government with the final authority, the Word of God, leading us to a basic interpretative question.

Where do we begin in the Bible? Do we start with the New Testament and only the New Testament? And, if we are agreed that Church polity is a New Testament issue only, then where do we begin even in this part of scripture: the Gospels, the Epistles, Acts, or the Book of Revelation? Already we begin to face certain problems. Some would say that a group of people called a Session, even though this word is not mentioned in the Bible, ran the New Testament local churches, pointing to the plural use of the word Elder in certain references (Acts 14; James 5). But then others would note places where the churches clearly had one Presbyter to whom the rest of a particular local congregation was responsible, indicated by the giving of the Book of Revelation to one representative in local churches Revelation 2:lff.). The "angel," or more accurately from the Greek, "messenger," was human, historically called a Bishop. This would mean that oversight of a Church was not given to a Board, Session, Consistory, or Presbytery. As we begin to see already, there is

development even within the pages of the New Testament regarding our subject. And if we start with only the New Testament, we will not receive a complete picture, and certainly not the answers to the questions that these various portions of the New Testament raise.

So, where do we start in the Bible if not the New Testament? I believe the correct method of interpretation in any area is to begin where God does, at the beginning, meaning the Old Testament. But, I know that this raises questions, so allow me to explain why our method of interpretation (hermeneutics) is from the front to the back of the Bible and not the back to the front.

Whole Bible Hermeneutics

First, the Scriptures have a fulfillment character to them, everything in Scripture fulfilling what precedes it in the text. Very simply put: the New Testament fulfills the Old Testament. How? The New Testament builds on the Old Testament through Christ. He said that He did not do away with or abolish the Old Testament, rather, He fulfilled everything in it (Matthew 5:17-19). The Greek word for fulfill does not mean static maintenance. It conveys the idea of bring to completion or fullest possible expression. This fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New Testament requires that the Old Testament be understood first in order to know what is fulfilled in the New Testament. God revealed Scripture from beginning to end, making the Old Testament the foundation to all; it is the beginning and should be studied from the beginning. God does not expect the Bible to be approached apart from the foundation, requiring us to start where He does if we truly take His Word seriously. If God says something first, then this needs to be first considered, taking an ordered priority over everything that follows.

For example, when I was a child, my mother would often say to me, "Son, I want to tell you a couple of things, first . . . then second, I want you to . . ." I know for certain that she would have been upset with me if I had left out either the first or second instruction. If she had said, "But, second what I'm about to tell you nullifies the first," I would have thought, "Then why tell me the first point at all." This is the issue. God preserves the Old Testament because the New Testament builds on it.

Further, the fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New Testament implies that the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament is like an acorn to a tree. Everything in the New Testament, including the Church (Acts 7:38), is found in seed

or seedling form in the Old Testament. Stephen casually mentions the "Church [ekklesia in Greek] in the wilderness," referring to the nation of Israel. Neither he nor Luke stop to explain. They assume that the reader realizes a covenantally organic¹ relationship between Old and New such that no explanation is needed.

Therefore, in our study of the Ecclesiastical government of the New Testament, we shall begin with the Ecclesiastical government of the Old Testament. If the New fulfills the Old, then we cannot accurately understand the New apart from the Old. And, if the New Testament fulfills the Old, an organic relationship exists that requires us to examine the seed form of Ecclesiastical government in the Old Testament. This organic relationship between Old Testament and New Testament implies the next hermeneutical point, the progressive character of the Bible.

Second, because there is a fulfillment relationship between Old and New Testaments, Scripture is progressive. It has a sameness about it from the Old Testament to the New Testament while at the time developing critical changes. Its sameness reflects a historic progression; its difference indicates a processional development through the direct work of the Holy Spirit. This historical and processional sense of progress in Scripture is best understood in and through the Incarnation of Christ. He is in one sense a product of the Old Covenant, being born of man and therefore historical. He also comes from eternity, Heaven; He is God, becoming man through the impregnation of a virgin by the Holy Spirit. He is distinct from any man who had ever lived: Very God of Very God and Very Man of

¹ Geerhardus Vos, Biblical Theology (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth Trust, 1948). I realize that the word organic has been badly abused by the pagan mind to advocate cyclical and evolutionary views of history. Even so, the Bible uses a covenantal organic model to explain the Church's oneness to Christ: He is the vine and the people of God are the branches (John 15). Thus, even though misused, we should not allow the superstitions of paganism to make us so superstitious as to abandon an originally Biblical concept. Nevertheless, a few words of clarification are necessary so as to prevent misunderstanding. The word organic is used in the covenantal sense that Vos applies it in his important work on Biblical theology. This word is used carefully to mean covenantal unity, not destroying Creator/creature distinctions. It is not intended to avoid the importance of death, for even in the organic, there must be death before life. Biblical organicism requires total death, however, unlike any pagan use of the term. Hence, I will make use of a Biblical and covenantal organicism to explain the union between Old and New Testaments.

Very Man. He bears the old in the new explaining why the changes in the New Testament are not something totally new and always bear the markings of the old.

The Scriptures reflect the same historical and processional aspects. They are historical. There may be and are changes to be sure, but the changes do not destroy the foundations of the Old Testament. If they do, then the character of Holy Scripture so radically changes that it means God Himself has changed. This was the issue with the early Church heretic, Marcion, who argued that the Old Testament was so abrogated that it was to be excluded from the canon of Scripture. The early Church fathers opposed him, maintaining in one of their more famous statements, "The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed." The differences from the Old to the New do not appear out of nowhere. They progress from within the old structures to something new. Yet, the differences are so profoundly produced by the Holy Spirit that the Old Covenant structures have to be transformed, even though they are not done away. They are likened to wineskins containing the new wine, Jesus Christ. They are broken but not thrown away. They are transfigured into the new skin, Christ Himself. Thus, the old is recast in the new, meaning the traces of the old are still there but in the new form of the old structure.

For example, Israel itself is an example of how the progressive development is historic, growing out of the old, and yet processional, becoming something new. It was predominantly a Jewish nation prior to Christ. They had always been told that their "Israelness" was not in blood, being commanded to be circumcised in heart (Deuteronomy 6). They were reminded of this repeatedly through Christ, who told them that their father was the devil and not Abraham (John 8). After Christ's death, they were told that they were no longer the true Israel of God. They were ethnic Israel (Romans 9:1ff.). They were no longer true covenantal Israel; they had broken the covenant and later in history would be included again. In the interim, another took their place, being called the New Israel of God, which is the Church (Galatians 6:16). As Israel was called the Church in the wilderness, the Church is called the Israel of God in the New Covenant. In this situation, the Old Testament structure, Covenantal Israel, continues but it moves forward in a transformed sense: Covenantal Israel of the Old Testament, which was primarily Jewish, becomes the New Covenantal Israel, primarily Gentile including the Jews. The progress of the New Testament is in terms of this changed Old Testament structure. So it is with everything in the Old Testament, even the ecclesiastical polity of the Old Testament.

Thus, our approach to the study of ecclesiastical polity should begin with the Old Testament, from the front of the Bible to the back, where we find all of the foundational structures of the old confirmed and coming to full bloom in the New Testament. One of these structures is the hierarchy of the royal priesthood of the Old Testament. It sets the stage for New Testament Church government, as we shall see.

Chapter Two

Old Testament Royal Priesthood

Moses' father-in-law (Jethro) said to him (Moses), "The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers [captains in the King James Version] of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace" (Exodus 18:18-23; see also, Deuteronomy 1:9-18).

The structure behind the structure of New Testament Church polity is the royal priesthood of the Old Testament, the nation of Israel as a whole. The corporate body is a priesthood (Exodus 19:6), meaning the priesthood of all believers is not strictly speaking of a New Testament concept. The Old Testament organization of this priesthood is provided by Jethro. Who was Jethro? He was himself called importantly, "The priest of Midian" (Exodus 3: 1). The question is, "To what priesthood did Jethro belong? He was not a Levite and the Aaronic priesthood had not been established. There is only one other priesthood within the Biblical framework to which he could have belonged, the Melchizedekal priesthood (Genesis 14:18). This is significant for the New Testament because the Apostle Paul says that Christ was a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:21). Since He was, Jesus pulls forward the Melchizedekal priesthood structure of Jethro to the New Testament Royal priesthood. The same priestly order described by Jethro to Moses

is applied in the New Testament.

Some, however, have suggested that the Exodus 18 passage is only a civil organization², not to be applied to the Church in any sense to establish hierarchy among the presbyterate. But, the key is that Jethro was a priest of Melchizedek, providing a priestly as well as civil structuring. It is interesting that most modern New Testament scholars virtually fall over themselves to emphasize the priestly character of the Melchizedekkal ministry through Christ, almost totally neglecting the kingly ramifications of this great priesthood. Yet, when the actual Melchizedekkal order is considered in the Exodus 18 passage, suddenly the priestly character is left out. Jethro's counsel, however, is kingly and priestly, meaning both institutional spheres will bear out the same kind of pattern. Indeed they should without confusing the two. I think the Bible calls for parallel patterns of government in the civil and the ecclesiastical as a double witness to society. For now, I only mention the dual priestly and civil paradigm counseled by Jethro but Scripture mentions the Melchizedekkal priesthood in other places.

Let us not forget in further support of the priestly and kingly aspects of the Melchizedekkal order that the New Testament Church is called a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9), the royal having to do with a kingly emphasis and the priesthood concerning a priestly aspect of the Church. Peter assumes the same Melchizedekkal configuration of the Church, meaning Christians are made priests and kings through the work of Christ. Moreover, Peter confirms that the order of Melchizedek is the priestly model for the New Testament.

Thus, the Melchizedekkal priesthood transcends the priesthoods of the Old Testament, ordering and structuring them, and Christ applies this same priesthood in the New Covenant, requiring us to consider the seminal concepts of Exodus 18 for any study of New Testament Ecclesiastical (As well as Civil) government. Since our concerns are with the Church or priestly applications, we will not extend Jethro's instruction beyond the Church in this study. For now, however, Jethro's hierarchical-

² Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Independents have denied the application of Jethro's counsel to the Church on this basis. Geddes MacGregor, a Presbyterian, argues for a hierarchy among presbyters, nevertheless, on the basis of Biblical warrant. He would not oppose Jethro's model as being applicable to the Church, maintaining that Episcopacy and Presbyterianism are not mutually exclusive: Corpus Christi (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), pp. 197-226.

yet-representative system of government should be examined, isolating several points by beginning with their original context.

The context of Jethro's advice is an over-burdened leader, Moses, in the midst of a nation with many pastoral and judicial needs. He cannot do everything. He cannot hear all of the problems of his people. Jethro warns him, "The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out" (Exodus 18:17-18). He is concerned that neither the leader nor the people wear each other out, perhaps what is popularly called, "burn out." What he calls for to prevent the burn out required a massive number of captains, an incredibly decentralized system of hierarchy. One Jewish commentator has estimated that Jethro's system, given the size of the nation at the time, would have had six hundred captains over thousands, six thousand captains over hundreds, twelve thousand captains over fifties, and sixty thousand captains over tens.³ Jethro prevented a bureaucracy with the great number of captains by keeping the leadership base from being too small, while at the same time allowing for a clearly defined hierarchy. His number of captains would also force new blood into the system as the quota would need to be filled when some captains were replaced for because of retirement and so forth. With this many captains, there would bound to be a healthy turn over, keeping the system from becoming stagnant. Thus, Jethro provides an ingenious solution to the burn-out problem that can be developed under essentially four principles.

Pastoral Hierarchy

First, Jethro advises Moses to set up a hierarchical organization that is pastoral, by setting up captains over smaller (tens) to larger units (fifties, hundreds, and thousands). The King James uses the word captain, whereas other translations have the word ruler. The original Hebrew (sar) means to rule over, referring to religious or political officers (Ezra 8:24; Judges 5:15). The translation captain is interesting because it conveys the idea of military structure, which seems to best fit the idea of Jethro's model. This captain, although organized in a military-like hierarchy, was pastoral in function.

These pastoral captains are representative leaders, extending the presence of God and His people. They represent God

³ Chumash with Targum Onkelos. Haphtaroth and Rashi's Commentary, translated by Rabbi A. M. Silbermann (Jerusalem: Published by the Silbermann Family), p.95.

at each level, reminding the people that God is with the lowest to the highest person and the smallest as well as the largest group. As these captains are woven all through society, so God is with His people at every point. They receive this empowerment to represent the presence of the Lord through the ordination of Moses (Deuteronomy 1:13), the laying on of hands (Deuteronomy 34:9); authority is given by God and not the people. No one is allowed to be a captain who has not been duly authorized, making the ordination process linear and historical. These captains should not even be removed, if necessary, by the people but only by their superiors (or equals), who ordained them.

The captains also represent the people before Moses. They serve as comforters. They are selected from among their equals to be made captains, not to rule but to serve. They are ordained to meet the needs of the people under their charge. They are to offer counsel of all types and to hear problems that may or may not be of an adjudicable nature, but that are definitely of a nature that individuals cannot work them out among themselves. The captains are fewer in number at the top of the hierarchy and greater in number at the bottom. The ones over greater numbers deal more and more with captains only. Yet, every person is part of a smaller unit, meaning all have direct access to a captain who is personal and familiar to them.

As part of the pastoral aspect, we see the principle of the identifiable leader who is near and yet distinct. He imparts the vision of Moses at a lower and practical level. The captain himself does not interfere with nor is he necessary for access to God. He does, however, convey the ministry of Moses to the people and they learn Moses' teaching through him. Perhaps this explains why every organization must have an identifiable leader. People receive mixed signals if a confederation leads or if the captains are working at cross purposes with Moses. Thus, the hierarchy prescribed by Jethro is first pastoral; pastors are chosen first and then their courts are next established.

Legal

Second, the hierarchy is legal, each unit under a captain functioning as a court. Hopefully people will allow the pastoral function of their captains to lead them into greater conformity to Christ. The spirit of scripture is that the people of God should avoid legal disputes, because they are provoked to resolve their problems at the altar/table (communion) before situations move into the juridical (Matthew 5:23-26). But sometimes, preferably not very often, the people of God require the availability of a legal process where the pastor serves as a judge in matters, helping to resolve conflicts between parties.

The pastoral role of the captain is not always enough to resolve problems. Concerns become conflicts and differences become disputes. More than the pastoral is needed because man is sinful and self-deceived. People need objective rulings sometimes to come to their senses, to solve their problems, or generally to arrive at workable solutions. As such, they turn their captain into a judge who must make an official judgment, requiring a complete judicial process that has become known in history as due process.

How does the legal process of Jethro work? In principle, the concept of presence that is so much a part of the pastoral appears in another dimension, the judicial. Just as the captain pastorally represented the presence of the Lord, so he and the court under him judicially represent the justice of God. When the captain/judge makes a ruling, Moses says, "The judgment is God's" (Deuteronomy 1:17). The captain over his court stands for the Lord in his decisions, bringing God's standards to bear. He is not to show partiality or be prejudiced for this reason (Deuteronomy 1:17). The effect is supposed to be sanctifying. The people of God are reminded of judgment both in the here and now that they might be better prepared for the judgment of the distant and far away, the great and final Judgment Day. At the end of history, God directly judges all people. In the course of history, He provides representative captains and courts who function on His behalf to prepare the people of God for the judgment at the end of time. To this end, He instructs His courts how to operate as His agent.

The legal process of the Bible reflects the justice of God by upholding His standard of righteousness, the Law of God. It also images God by showing impartiality which means remaining objective. It must be "removed" just as God is totally objective to the situation: distinct and being not bound up in prejudices, yet this does not mean that He is not near or present; He is the perfection of being objective. Impartiality, however, does not mean neutral. Judges and their courts are to presume innocence. The Biblical system is a society in covenant with God, not implying that every person is converted or obedient but meaning the culture is legally declared right with God. On this basis, all people in the Biblical society are supposed to be legally innocent until proven guilty. The captains and courts are to presume innocence because their tendency is to presume guilt, and to assume it because of accusation. Isn't this what happens all the time? We hear that someone has done something wrong and our natural inclination is to think, "I know he is guilty," and not to doubt the guilt. Thus, Biblical objectivity, calls for means that will be most likely to prevent impartiality: witnesses, juries, and courts of appeal.

Multiple witnesses are part of the Biblical mandate for courts (Deuteronomy 19:15). They have to be twofold or threefold in number because one person may lie, misinterpret what he has seen, or simply not remember. Multiple witnesses increase the possibility of the judge and the court being removed from the situation, bringing greater objectivity.

Juries involve the court in the decision making process. They in effect are a double witness to the judge or captain. Initially and certainly at the lower levels of the hierarchy juries were not needed. The captain simply made a decision. Later in Old Testament Biblical history, however, the basis of a jury system was developed. The laity helped make the decision under the oversight of the captain (II Chronicles 19:8).

Courts of appeal offer further objectivity to the system by adding checks and balances to decisions. Some problems may turn into legal disputes as opposed to simple differences or personal counsel. If they cannot be resolved at one level, they can be appealed to the next; no one person or group has absolute authority. They also move from the bottom-up as opposed to the top down, preventing a bureaucracy. But, they are worked through individual captains, preventing anarchy.

Even though not preferred, disputes among God's people are not altogether bad. They are allowed by God to provide the congregation opportunity to face some sense of judgment early in life, before the end of their lives or all of time comes. They are permitted critical moments to sanctify and become more like Christ. When they do, they need courts as well as captains, a legal as well as a pastoral system.

Symmetrical

Third, Jethro's hierarchy is symmetrical. Each level is a microcosm of the next, creating a symmetry among the units: each has a group with a captain in charge. What happens at one level happens in principle at all levels. So what?

* First, a symmetrical system prevents elitism. No one can rightfully say that he (she) is not part of Israel because he is not part of one of the larger groupings. Everyone is part of the larger. And more importantly, all of the groupings function in principle the same way. The higher grouping of a thousand people does not work different from the one that only has ten.

* Second, a symmetrical hierarchy prevents exclusivism. The microcosmic principle means that the smaller units are just as much a part of the "Church in the wilderness" as the larger ones. Being in a smaller cell does not mean a person is any less a part

of the priesthood of all believers. Indeed, the captains who are all elected and ordained by the same process and same standards are more accessible at the lower levels. The opposite is also true. The captains of larger groupings can also be accessible. No one therefore is excluded from the hierarchy at any level, especially in the smaller groupings. Being a member of a larger unit does not infer a greater membership because the larger is made up of the smaller.

* Third, a symmetrical hierarchy creates true localism, meaning the lower levels of the system truly represent the nation as a whole, guaranteeing that one level is not inferior to the other. A person does not have a greater voice because he is in the larger group. In fact, the larger voice is in the smaller group, virtually forcing the people to function more intensely at the smaller unit level, a built in motivation for a grass-roots system.

Thus, the symmetry of the system with each level being organized the same is absolutely necessary to prevent a multitude of organizational sins. Most often as we shall see when we compare various Ecclesiastical systems, the lack of symmetry causes a breakdown precisely where one level starts to operate on a different principle from the others. The only way to prevent this is to maintain a captains/courts balance from top to bottom; or, perhaps it would be better to say, "From bottom to top."

Participatory

Four, the hierarchy is designed to be participatory. Every individual is a priest of God in the royal or general sense. He (she) has personal responsibility to a captain and court. He (she) is to use his (her) talents and gifts to serve the larger body by functioning within the smaller unit. If the individuals do not function within their personal cell, their particular smaller group risks functioning. Then the whole body can be placed in jeopardy. Any group, therefore, is able to participate as a group only to the degree that the individuals become involved. The system demands lively participation not passive spectatorship.

We should not fail to see, however, that participation is based on the priesthood of all believers in the Old Testament. Everyone in Israel was a member of it, even the Levitical priesthood as a sub-group (priesthood) within the larger nation, meaning its organization is imprinted on all other structures of

the nation: what is true of the larger is true of the smaller.⁴ Thus, each person was allowed to participate in certain activities because he (she) was a priest of God in the royal sense.

What are royal priesthood activities? We have already seen some of the aspects. Laymen could rise to be captains and serve a pastoral function. Remember, Jethro's captains over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens demanded a multitude of captains. The layman was given many opportunities to work into some kind of responsible leadership through this.

Also, any member of Israel could be a witness, testifying in a legal context. They could even serve on what were precursors to juries. In regard to the preservation of the royal priesthood, they had special mechanisms in their society. These practices were priestly in character. The primary responsibility of the priest was to guard the holiness of the Lord. Adam and Eve were asked to guard (shamar) the garden, a Hebrew word that is later used to describe the guarding responsibilities of the Aaronic priesthood (cf. Genesis 2:15 and Leviticus 8:35). Certain laws protected the larger royal priesthood of Israel, but especially the Messianic line that was to come from the priesthood. For example, the blood avenger laws allowed the nearest of kin to avenge his family member's murder by killing the murderer. This law protected the family line and in close connection with it was the kinsman redeemer law where the nearest of kin could marry the spouse of his deceased brother, who was without heir, preventing the man's family line from dying off.

Thus, the royal priesthood was obligated to participate in society because of the Law of God, the Ten Commandments. They were bound by God's Law, which even though stated in the negative, placed a requirement to protect the life and possessions of their neighbor. For example, they had responsibility for their possessions. They were not allowed to let their animals roam around, endangering the lives of the community. Laws such as this one forced participation, until that is, they no longer believed in the Law of God. Then they became inactive and passive, not caring what happened to their neighbor. Such was the case in the story of the Good Samaritan

⁴ As a matter of fact, the royal priesthood establishes the other priesthoods. It does not nullify them such that to take them away is tantamount to the removal of the royal priesthood. Nor on the other hand does the presence of the royal priesthood negate the existence of or conflict with the other (special) priesthoods; they only exist to serve and minister to the larger.

that Jesus told (Luke 10:30-37) .

Finally, every member of the royal priesthood of Israel was allowed to participate in the sacrifices, even being permitted to eat a sacrifice with the priest and his household. For example, one of the sacrifices is called the peace offering, representing restored fellowship with God and the covenant community. After sacrificing the animal, the person and his family got to eat with the priest and his family the remains of the sacrifice. Once again, as long as Israel obeyed God and sacrificed for their sins, they participated in society.

In each of these actions, the key is the priesthood of all believers. As long as Israel viewed itself as a priesthood, they participated in the life of the community. When they failed to act as the royal priesthood, they became passive. They did not participate. And when they became passive, the Jethro hierarchy began to shut down. The people did not deal with the problems because they did not offer sacrifices and obey God's Law. Thus, Jethro's counsel to Moses required faithfulness for it to work, especially active participation in the system. One can have the greatest system in the world but if he doesn't involve himself, the system will not work.

In summary, the four principles of hierarchy of the royal priesthood are foundational for every aspect of life in the "Church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38), as we have already seen. Here is the link to the New Covenant Church. The royal priesthood of all believers carries forward to the New Covenant through the Melchizedekkal priesthood that Christ applies to the Church. Jethro's counsel forms the background as we move from the Old to the New.

Chapter Three

New Testament Royal Priesthood: Hierarchy

And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, "This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat." But He answered and said to them, "You give them something to Eat." And they said to Him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?" But He said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they found out they said, "Five, and two fish." Then He commanded to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and fifties. And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among them all. So they ate and were all filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men (Mark 6:34-44).

When we come to the New Testament, we find a royal priesthood that is hierarchical, virtually identical to Jethro's. Consider the passage at the beginning of this chapter. The context and details parallel Moses' situation in the wilderness.

Christ calls the disciples out into the wilderness, a "deserted place" (Mark 6:31, 35). When the crowd becomes hungry, He feeds them as God did in the Old Testament, bringing quail for the Israelites in the desert. He gives them fish, but we must keep in mind that the quail provided in the wilderness were "flesh from the sea" (Numbers 11:31), since the birds were brought in over the sea. Both groups were fed from the sea.

Christ, however, addresses the disciples, who are the twelve analogous to the twelve tribes of Israel. He distributes through the twelve. The parallel is too coincidental. The twelve disciples are the replacements of the twelve tribes. Out of them will come the new "tribes," churches. Christ gives in such

abundance that twelve baskets "full of fragments and fish" are left over (Mark 6:43). Why twelve baskets of leftovers? For whom are these leftovers provided? This food has to be provision for others to come at a later date, the Gentiles under the twelvefold leadership of the Apostles. The reference has to refer to a shift in inheritance. What belonged to the tribal system of the Old Testament will be transferred to the Apostolic system of the New Testament. They are used to provide new food divided proportionately among the groups. Thus, the disciples were the first level of captains in the hierarchy of Jesus, representing a new hierarchy to come based on the organizational structure of the Old Testament, Jethro's.

The Exodus Eighteen Structure

Christ breaks down the hierarchy into Jethro size groups. He places disciples in some kind of hierarchy over the others. He commands the disciples to have the crowd sit down and organizes them in ranks, a common grouping for meals. Perhaps there is some reference to the military grouping of Israel by the number of loaves used to feed the crowd, five (Mark 6:38), as well as the number of representative heads of households mentioned, five thousand men (husbands). Israel marched in military array five abreast.⁵ They walked into war with this kind of structure. They were organized as a military force. Jesus may have intended for this concept to be recalled in the minds of the disciples. He may have been indicating something else. Whatever the significance, it is another interesting coincidence about the passage. If Jesus is using the number of loaves to point back to the military structure, He is only using it as an allusion to another Old Testament system of organizing.

For certain, however, Jesus commanded the disciples to arrange the people in groups of hundreds and fifties (6:40). He didn't give the disciples the option. He was deliberate in His structure. He apparently had a model in mind to which He wanted the disciples to comply. Does His organizational structure look familiar? It should, because Jesus organizes His followers in the same numerical hierarchy as the structure the Old Testament royal priesthood. Why? Remember, Jethro was a Melchizedekal priest. He counseled Moses according to his priesthood. Since Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek and not Aaron, He establishes the same organizational hierarchy. The similarity is quite glaring.

⁵ James Jordan, The Sociology of the Church (Tyler, Texas: Geneva Ministries, 1986), pp. 214-217.

We should not fail to see another level, probably the lowest level of the hierarchy. When the text says that five thousand men were fed, it indicates a numbering system by households. This would make sense. Israel applied the sacrament of circumcision by households, each male member representing the female, and each male head of the household representing the whole household. The same household numbering system carries into the New Testament. Christ fed five thousand men, households. But, after the death of Christ, Luke records conversions by heads of households, particularly male heads of household, in the same manner as documented by Mark's Gospel. Luke says,

“Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of men came to about five thousand” (Acts 4:1-4).

What this means is that the organizational system is the same after the death of Christ, and the feeding of the five thousand is a prophetic anticipation of the New Testament structure. Luke's method of recording by household also implies that the household was the smallest organizational unity in the hierarchy. We should not overlook this aspect of the lowest level of the system either in Christ's feeding of the five thousand households or in the conversion of the five thousand families in Jerusalem. Once again we see a remarkable parallel to the organizational structure of the hierarchy of the Old Testament and the hierarchy of the New Testament.

The Kind of Hierarchy

What does the hierarchy of Christ mean? Did it mean that individuals had to come through the disciples and others in the hierarchy to get to Christ? No, people came directly to Christ with their problems. Later in the Gospel of Mark, parents bring their children to Christ for a blessing. The disciples “rebuked those who brought them” (Mark 10: 13). No apparent reason is given, except that the disciples stood between the parents with their children and Christ. And Christ did not approve. Why did they think that they should forbid the children? Perhaps they thought that the structure set up by Christ at an earlier point was to be utilized to prevent people from having direct access to Christ. Jesus makes clear to them

that the hierarchy was not for this purpose. He says to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter.' And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:14-16). By using the child as an analogy of how people are to come to Christ, He was in effect saying that anyone had and has direct access to Him. The hierarchy of the royal priesthood is not to prevent this kind of immediate and direct approach to God.

Rather, the earlier situation of the feeding of the five thousand tells us exactly how the hierarchy is to be used. It is a pastoral setting. The organization that Jesus provides is for the pastoral oversight of the administration of needs among the people. They are hungry and in need of food. The disciples function diaconally by distributing what Christ provides. They carry the provision to the various people.

Christ's hierarchy has sacramental ramifications. The food that Christ provides is analogous to the manna in the wilderness of the Old Testament. In John's Gospel, the feeding is explicitly compared to the wilderness feeding of the manna. Immediately following the miracle of the feeding, which has the same important details as Mark's account, John says,

Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:30-33).

The apostle Paul calls the food in the wilderness, "spiritual food," Christ Himself (1 Corinthians 10:1-3). Thus, there can be no mistake. The feeding of the five thousand was a picture of a greater and truer sacramental food, the Lord's Supper at a later point. As the disciples helped in the distribution of the food in the feeding of the five thousand, so they would also help distribute sacramental food of the Church. When Christ ascended into heaven, He sat down at the right hand of God. From that point forward, He needed others to administrate and distribute His sacraments. If He needed assistants to help distribute before He ascended, how much more afterwards? Did this mean that man could not come directly to Christ? No, man would be able to come directly to Jesus for salvation. He would be able to talk

directly to Christ through prayer. He would be able to walk into God's temple. He would be able to come forward and kneel at the communion table. The Holy of Holies would no longer be blocked to the common man. The Cross gave man more access than he had ever had before. But this didn't mean that there would not be some kind of hierarchy for the distribution of the sacraments. As a matter of fact, it is the same structure as the Old Testament, except that the tribal system was changed, being replaced by the disciples.

The replacement of the tribal system has to do with the administration of the kingdom under apostles and other officers, making Jesus' hierarchy of a governmental nature. From a practical point of view, Jesus needed the disciples to function on His behalf in the feeding of the five thousand. On other occasions, He sent the disciples out two-by-two. He also commissioned the seventy for a comparable task. He was thereby setting up a structure that would come into full effect when He ascended into heaven. The Jethro organization served a similar function to Him as it did to Moses, except Christ was at the top and not Moses. When Jesus ascended into heaven, leaving the disciples, like Moses, on earth and in charge of a large body, the international Church, the twelve required a hierarchy to help them in the oversight of the Church. We see this at a number of places in the Book of Acts. The conflict of the widows, where Deacons were ordained, enabled the Apostles to continue in prayer and the ministry of the Word. The Jerusalem Council, where a dispute affected the Church all over the world, put the Jethro system into a court setting.

Thus, Jesus' hierarchy extended the Jethro organization into the New Covenant, transforming the old tribal system, a family controlled hierarchy, into an apostolic structure. It was not to prevent personal access to Christ in any way. It did, however, set up a pastoral, sacramental, and governmental hierarchy, facilitating the administration of His kingdom. Jesus provided through this system for the pastoral needs of His sheep to be met on the largest scale ever in His kingdom. He ordained the oversight of thousands of communion tables all over the world. He also established that the officers of His Church would oversee His ministry on the earth governmentally.

As we are hopefully provoked to examine the New Testament hierarchy with this Melchizedekkal background, we shall see that all of the principles of Church Government are therefore similar to the government of the Old Testament. We do discover, however, greater development in the hierarchy of the New Testament because after all, Christ came in history, bringing His intense presence to the people of God in a way that it had not been before. And, the people of God were no longer a nation but nations, an

international priesthood. Therefore, using the Jethro model that is confirmed and continued by Christ in the feeding of the five thousand, let us examine the same basic four aspects of the Old Testament hierarchy in the New Testament.

Chapter Four

New Testament Royal Priesthood: Pastoral

And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” Therefore, when Paul and Barnabus had not small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabus and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. . . . Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said. . . . Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabus and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me: . . . I judge that we should not trouble those among the Gentiles who are turning to God. . . .” Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabus. (Acts 15:1-22)

The functioning government of the New Testament Church has what Jethro called captains. Here they are designated Apostles, Elders, and deacons, who are not expressly mentioned although they were surely part of the meeting. They are clearly arranged in some sort of hierarchy. There are Apostles and Elders.

There is also James, who was not an Apostle according to the standards required of the replacement for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:21-22). He was called an apostle (Galatians 1:19), but he was not a primary apostle; he did not meet the qualifications. He had not traveled with the Lord for years of His ministry, nor had he directly been called by Christ, as Saul was on the Damascus road. He was a Presbyter with some kind of special appointment as a secondary Apostle. He was not like any normal Presbyter (From the Greek, presbuteros translated elder). He was distinct from the others. He presided over the Jerusalem Council, over Apostles and Elders. He does not act like a simple moderator. He listened for a consensus, but He speaks to the issue, something which is not allowed in standard non-Episcopal settings without stepping down and handing the chair to someone else. There is no indication from the text that he did such a thing. Furthermore, he virtually makes the final decision for the entire body on the basis of a general

consensus (Acts 15:19). He represented the whole body; this is the point. A moderator only moderates. He is not the embodiment of the whole. James was. He allowed some sort of democratic process, but he went beyond this by personally drafting the letter to the churches and in commissioning specific individuals. He was no moderator in any normal, modern sense of the word. He was chief overseer, the Presiding Bishop of the first General Council of the Church.

Moreover, after the Jerusalem Council, James continues to function as a first among equals Presbyter over the rest of the Jerusalem Church, what later came to be called a Presbyter/Bishop. He was what has come to be called a standing presiding Presbyter, a bishop. He was not simply the moderator for meetings. He was a functioning overseer of other Apostles and Presbyters. When the Apostle Paul goes up to Jerusalem, he seeks out “James and the elders” (Acts 21:18). Why doesn’t the text simply say that Paul went to see the “presbytery of Jerusalem”? It doesn’t because he didn’t. The text specifically says, “He went to James and the other Presbyters.” This is different from saying, “He went to the presbytery.” He went to one man, a captain, as well as a larger group of advice. Yes, other “presbyters were present.” They came as the wider court, which we will examine in the next chapter. But James is somehow different to such an extent that attention is specifically called to him apart from the group. He was the one to whom Paul was going to see. Why?

The Apostle Paul was going to James and the other Presbyters for pastoral advice. The second trip to Jerusalem was not for a trial or a court of the Church; actually, he would be tried by a secular court. Paul had said that he was going “bound in the Spirit, not knowing what to expect” (Acts 20:22). He only knew that trials would begin even if they were not the official trials of the Church (Acts 20:23). He needed counsel. So, he went to James and the others. He met in a pastoral setting with them. But James stands out as a pastor to pastors, an Episcopal role. James was a Presbyter with oversight over a larger sphere, including other Presbyters, which is confirmed by the way the letters to the churches in Revelation are addressed to “angels” (Revelation 2:1ff), being historically interpreted as bishops; the letters were not addressed to groups but to individuals. Thus, James had this role in Jerusalem as is apparent from the text.

At a later point, I will present a more extensive defense of the Episcopacy. For now, this will suffice to combine with the other obvious aspects of the New Testament structure (Apostles, Elders, and Deacons) to establish that Acts 15 and 21 present a hierarchy of captains, to use Jethro’s terminology. We should initially see, however, that this hierarchy was pastoral, consisting of pastors to pastors.

Representation and Presence

The members of the Ecclesiastical ministry of the Church were representatives of Christ's ministry. They were elected and ordained in a similar manner to the process described by Jethro. "The pastoral office implies a clearly definable distinction between laity (general ministry) and clergy (ordained ministry). The difference is based not on supposed moral superiority or political expediency but upon the inward call of God to representative service, outwardly confirmed by the whole church in ordination."⁶

The pastors of Acts 15 are not an empty kind of representative: they are filled with the Living Christ through the Holy Spirit, possessing the presence of Jesus, which is one of the cardinal principles of Christianity manifested in the Sacraments and their ministry. The ministers of the New Testament extend the presence of the ministry of the Living Christ to the Church, similar to the way that the captains of Jethro's system did. But the ministers of the New Testament have a greater manifestation of presence because the presence given to them is that of Christ Himself, as the larger context of the Book of Acts indicates. When Saul persecuted the Church, the Living Christ appeared to him saying, "Why do you persecute Me. . . I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:4-5). Saul was killing Christians, yet Christ said that his actions were tantamount to His own death. The Church on earth was an Incarnation of the Living Christ through the Holy Spirit. This Incarnation should be understood under the same mysterious explanation of the Trinity itself. As the Persons of the Godhead are distinct but not separate, the Church is distinct but not separate from Christ. Christ's Incarnation on the earth is unique; He was born of a virgin and lived a sinless life. Yet, the Church is united to His Humanity and should not be viewed as separate. Remember, Christ didn't see the Church as separate when He said to the future apostle, "Why do you persecute Me?"

Christian ministry is the ministry of Christ because it begins with Christ's ministry. Jesus prayed, "As thou has sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). A moving analogy here begins to unfold between incarnation and apostolicity, between God's engagement in the world in Christ and our engagement in the world as ambassadors for Christ. As Christ is sent by the Father into the alienated world, so are his ministers sent into the darkened world by the Son. Listen to the analogy echo: 'For their sake I now consecrate Myself, that they too may be consecrated by

⁶ Thomas C. Oden, Pastoral Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 53.

the truth' (John 17:19). As Jesus is stranger in the world, so will the apostles be strangers. Jesus then prays, 'that they may all be one' as He is one, and 'that the world may believe' (John 17:21). There is a stunning congruity in all this. The apostolic mission is sent from God into the world and is therefore not finally explainable in terms of the world's criteria, yet it is sent in service to the real world to proclaim the healing word, that the world may believe and be saved."⁷

The apostles are sent with the promise, "Lo, I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). They are given the pledge of Christ's presence, meaning their ministry is His ministry. Their pastoral ministry was to present Christ to the world. He was called the Good Shepherd and they along with the future leaders of the Church are called "shepherds" (I Peter 5:2). The ministry of the Church is the ministry of Christ and His presence to the people of God, which has two sides to it that parallel the two natures of Christ. As Christ is Divine and Human and the pastoral ministry of the Church conveys the presence of Christ, the minister is leader and servant. He is an authority representing the Living Divine Lord. He is also a servant who represents the Living Human Friend. As a matter of fact, only through the power of the present Living Christ can the pastor adequately convey Christ as Very God of Very God and Very Man of Very Man. He represents both natures to the people of God even though he does not have both; he is only human. Yet, herein is the challenge and the tension of the pastoral role.

Distortions of Pastoral Ministry

Thomas C. Oden more accurately than anyone else talks about two problems in pastoral ministry that result from two distorted direction in which the pastoral task may become misunderstood: modern reductionism and archaic triumphalism. Both misplace the paradoxical core definition of ministry as pastoral service. "Reductionism, the characteristically modern misjudgment about ministry, attempts to reduce the essence of ministry to a human social function, or to philosophical insight, or to moral teaching, or to psychological counseling, or to political change advocacy. These views diminish the pastoral office by failing to see its distinctive self-understanding, its Divine commission, its Spirit-led calling, its dependence upon revelation, and its accountability to apostolic faith. The tension is lost between the Divine calling and the life of the world by viewing Divine calling as being socially determined and dissecting it as a quantifiable object. Reductionism dilutes the ministry of the incarnation to its fleshly side by reducing it to quirks or parenting or social determinism.

⁷ Ibid. pp.61-62.

“Admittedly the pastor is friend to many, even as Jesus was friend to many, expressing through ordinary human relationships the extraordinary love of God. But reductionism makes the mistake of seeing this friendship purely by analogy to human friendship, rather than through the lens of the Divine-Human friendship. The reductionism that sees ministry only as objectifiable sociological or psychological phenomena is not wrong; it only needs to be placed in a larger context and evaluated in terms of a more basic norm. When the divine and human sides are held together, ministry can be seen more wholly as human response to divine gift, a beautiful amalgam of graced nature and naturally embodied grace.

“Triumphalism, the opposite distortion of ministry, is a habit more characteristic of premodern consciousness. It loses track of the human, finite side of ministry in the interest of inordinately stressing its divine origin and eternal purpose. It is more prone to allow ministry to be elevated to a privileged caste or an exclusive sacerdotal order. Instead of being set apart for representative service, ministry may become separated from the people as something over against them, alien to their here-and-now world and hence perceived as irrelevant. The tension is lost between the holy calling and the ordinary spheres it is called to serve.”

“This distortion misplaces human friendship in ministry in the interest of disproportionately asserting the divine companionship. It dilutes the ministry of the incarnation by ignoring the finite, temporal instruments of the divine will. This is the point at which classical Protestantism complained about medieval, sacerdotal conceptions of ministry wherein priesthood had itself become trapped in the subtle or overt management of power and prestige, amid its well-intended attempt to mediate between God and people. Ironically, Protestantism itself later fell into the same trap in different guise.

“There remains something legitimate even about the triumphalist, sacerdotal view of an elevated priesthood, in that it rightly stresses the instituted office for the feeding of the vulnerable body of Christ in the hazardous world, that the holy should never be mistaken for the temporal, and that the church is not reducible to the world. However legitimate these emphases may be, the triumphalist excess has tempted priesthood to become inwardly turned toward its own self-importance and thus separated from the people as if it were intrinsically superior, to the neglect of engaged service in the life of the world.

“In both of these misconceptions of pastoral authority there is a distortion of the essential idea of ministry: holy calling

amid the life of the world.”⁸

The pastoral ministry is first and foremost pastoral in Acts 15, concerned over the “unsettling of your souls” (Acts 15:24), as the letter to the Gentiles produced by this gathering said. In practice, these ministers of the Gospel engaged a crisis in the Church. They applied Christ to the crises, the crying need of the modern Church and society. “Just as the passion for food, shelter, and services creates economies, or the passion for the order and relative justice creates governments, so there appears to be some deep underlying divinely elicited passion that continues to create communities of prayer and the social apparatus to guide them spiritually.”⁹ This is none other than the pastoral hierarchy of the New Testament Royal Priesthood.

Thus, the New Testament system of polity has a captains organization that is pastoral. It is hierarchical while at the same time it is personal. It offers the closest attention to the needs of the people of God. Its very heart is the pastoral.

⁸ Ibid., pp.55-56.

⁹ Ibid., p.58.

Chapter Five

New Testament Royal Priesthood: Legal

The New Testament hierarchy also has courts, meaning there is a judicial side to the pastoral life of the Church. Problems cannot always be resolved at a strictly pastoral level even though all problems are supposed to be worked out within the larger pastoral process. The courts of the Church as we see in Acts 15, allow for much personal give and take. They are not to be filled necessarily with an adversarial spirit for after all, in the Church we are not to be adversaries; we are one body. So, even though we are discussing a legal process, we should not forget that the purpose is to restore the offending party at every step of the way in the legal processes of the Church. The pastoral should not be lost sight of as the legal provides for a more objective approach to a dispute, particularly a wayward brother or sister in Christ. The process may make the legal look like it is not part of the pastoral, but in reality it is. This is the difference between the Church and the Civil realm. The latter, the State, does not have a pastoral function but a purely judicial one. The former, the Church, should always have a pastoral intent even if the scene becomes as it did in Acts 15, one of courts and debates.

Our Lord's own words about the restoration of a brother or sister reflect the pastoral that grows into the legal, while not losing perspective on the overall pastoral call of the Church. This background stands behind Acts 15 and we should carefully consider it first. Jesus says,

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them (Matthew 18:15-20).

Notice the pastoral context of this legal process. A person goes privately to the individual who is in sin, the allegedly guilty party. Then, he takes witnesses along to confirm that a second step is being taken. Here is where the legal aspects begin to enter. Witnesses are part of the objectifying procedures that we saw in the court system of the Old Testament. But the purpose is not to condemn. It is to restore. Only when the offending party refuses to hear the witness does the next step begin, which is to tell the Church.

How is a personal matter taken before the Church? We see in Acts 15. Personal disputes were taken via the officers of the Church, beginning with the pastors of the local parishes. Once again, we see that the legal never leaves the pastoral framework of the Church. As a problem is aired before the pastor, he can make a ruling that could turn the allegedly guilty person away from the accused sin. Sometimes this happens. At other times it does not. The accused person may deny the particular sin of which he (she) is charged.

In this situation, where the accused denies being guilty, a dispute arises. The pastor is forced to conduct a legal proceeding. A person is innocent until proven guilty. He is protected in the New Testament even more so than he was in the Old Testament because there is greater redemption. In the Old Testament, everyone in the land was innocent until proven guilty because the land was under the sacrifices. In the New Testament, everyone in the Church is innocent until proven guilty because they are officially declared right with God through the legal covenant act of baptism that represents the finished cleansing work of Christ.

Yet, the pastor is called to be a reconciler among men and sometimes must resort to the legal mechanisms of the New Testament to move toward some kind of reconciliation. When an accused person denies guilt, other offenses are compounded unless all parties involved are able to suffer the defraud (1 Corinthians 6:7-11). Sometimes this is the more prudent course of action. Many times, however, this is not wise, especially where there has been perceived sin. Rather than allow people to leave the Church and to go to the secular magistrate, the Church is commanded by the Apostle Paul to convene a jury from within the local parish. The Apostle says,

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you

unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law against brother, and that before brethren? (1 Corinthians 6:1-6)

Thus, we see the pastoral role of witnesses and juries in the New Testament court system, as we did in the Old Testament. These legal features are even more pronounced, being explicitly called for by the Apostle Paul. Even when a dispute comes to this level, the concern is to resolve the dispute in the Church so that the witness of God's people is not hurt before the unbelieving world. The restoration of the accused brother (sister) is still in sight but this other pastoral aspect is added. Once again, pastoral should be reflected at every stage of a court process of the Church, even to the point of being concerned about the pastoral witness to the world. But what happens if a person is found guilty at the local level and he (she) believes that some impropriety occurred in the proceedings? Is there any further recourse? Acts 15 explains that there is.

In the case of Acts 15, an appeals system is put into effect. The issue concerned those who began to teach that circumcision, referred to in summary form as the law, was necessary for salvation. The dispute over circumcision started at the local parish level and could not be resolved, proving that some problems are bigger than any single parish can handle. It went to the next level, to a larger geographic area. It was discussed but not able to be worked out. It then went to the geographic center of the Church, Jerusalem, where the Apostles and Elders of the Church gathered to hear the problem. We are told a little more about the details in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians.

But when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabus was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you being a Jew, live in the manner of the Gentiles and not as the Jews,

why do you compel the Gentiles to live as Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. . ." (Galatians 2:11-16)

We learn from the events leading up to and inclusive of the Jerusalem Council the need for an appeals system. We have acted out before us on these pages the importance for everyone to be accountable, even influential personalities. We find out that personalities can divide the Church, unless there is a way to bring the entire Church together and subordinate the personalities. The strength of the Biblical system is in its ability to submit all personalities to the Church which represents Christ, being called the Body of Christ. When personalities dominate, the message is, "The Church is not really the Body of Christ because individuals within are bigger than the Church, so big that they cannot effectively be disciplined or even checked and balanced." A few years ago, an evangelical denomination in America experienced the fall of its leading evangelist. They disciplined him and told him to go off the air. He eventually defied them because his personality was bigger than the Church and this particular body did not have any mechanisms of control. They had a kind of weak court system but they didn't have captains, or bishops, to whom personal accountability was expected. A true system of captains and courts prevents run away personalities.

Yet, at no time did the appeals and legal processes move out of pastoral concern. In the case of Peter and Paul, personalities were not destroyed. Their ministries were not lost. The pastoral and judicial working together prevented this. Paul talked directly under controlled circumstances to Peter. Eventually, Peter changed and was restored from the errors of his way. More importantly, his great ministry was salvaged. Thus, the appeals system protected the man, the ministry, and most of all the Church's witness to the world.

Thus, the Church's court system in Acts 15 became the pastoral mechanism necessary to restore individuals as well as order to the Church. It had its roots in the court system of the Old Testament, to which it is similar: multiple witnesses, juries, and appellate courts. At the same time, it is more pastoral and much more extensive because the Church is international. It provided greater reconciliation to a greater crisis. No Old Testament dispute can even begin to approach the Acts 15 disagreement in either the nature of the difference, or in the success of the solution. Most of all, conflict between Peter and Paul demonstrated the fullness of the coming of the Holy Spirit in History who manifested His presence in the unity

and symmetry of the Church, our next point to consider regarding New Testament Church polity.

Chapter Six

New Testament Royal Priesthood: Symmetry

All great art has symmetry, a balance and proportion. It may be ancient or modern, a painting or a piece of pottery, but it must have symmetry to appeal to the eye. This attraction to symmetry was established in man from the beginning at creation. It was put there by God, the originator of all true art. Just as God made a world of beauty, possessing the quality of symmetry, so He created the institutions of His people with the same attribute, explaining why all successful organizations have this characteristic.

The government of God's people, old and new, has symmetry. I pointed this out in regard to Jethro's Old Testament royal priesthood. His hierarchy had several levels, each consisting of captains and courts. Every layer from top to bottom and from bottom to top was designed that same and was supposed to function on the same principles. Each sphere is a microcosm of the larger or the smaller depending on the perspective from which the hierarchy is being viewed.

In the New Testament, symmetry is just as important as it is in the Old Testament. It becomes, however, even more pronounced as does everything in the New Covenant because of the redemptive work of Christ; He causes the death and resurrection of everything in the Old Testament, producing a glorification of the Old Covenant.

Symmetry Within

There is symmetry within the levels of the Church: house church, city church, regional church, and international church. In Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council is an international gathering, involving clergy from many other geographical regions. James takes a place of prominence. He is not a temporary leader, a moderator. He is a standing Presbyter/Bishop, meaning he holds his position and can represent the Church, or what I have called a captain at the larger level. But he did not stand entirely by himself. He was surrounded by a representative court from other areas. And, even when he court was out of session, he maintained the counsel of other Presbyters (Acts 21:17). There was a captain and a court at the highest level of the Church, Jerusalem.

At the next level down, the Antiochian region became the scene for a meeting between Peter and Paul (Galatians 2:11); it was a city representing the other cities of the area, a region. Peter and Paul apparently met in a court context, "before all them all" (Galatians 2:14). On the basis of the letters of Revelation being sent to individual churches that were represented by a Presbyter/Bishop (Revelation 2:1ff.), there was also a presiding captain of some sort.

We can only presume that the dispute between Peter and Paul was at the city level at one point. Perhaps it was not, since their stature in the Church was such that the issue moved immediately to a higher court. Nevertheless, the city level of the Church had individual Presbyter/Bishops who presided over the other Presbyters (Revelations 2:1ff.). And it also had a court arrangement, seeing that Paul addresses the Presbyters of Ephesus as a body (Acts 20:17).

At the lowest level of cells within the Church, the house-Church, we can only make a few presumptions. Churches met in houses and synagogues, analogous to the house structure. Apparently, the host of the house was some kind of leader, probably a Presbyter, since the Apostle Paul sends greetings to the ones who accommodate house-churches, i.e., Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3). Due to the Apostle's comments about not allowing the woman to exercise authority over the man (I Timothy 2:12), it is reasonable to assume that Aquila was the Presbyter/Pastor of his house-church. And on the basis Paul's statements regarding the use of a precursor to a jury system in settling disputes (I Corinthians 6:1ff.), there was also the principle for a court of advice and counsel at the parish level.

There was a place for lay "wise men" to serve as a kind of jury (I Corinthians 6:5). They have been historically called wardens in the Episcopal Church. Together, they are the Parish Council of advice to the pastor. The Apostle told the Corinthian Church to select wise men to help in the resolution of problems. The principle developed into positions that specifically aided the pastor and congregation to avoid disputes in the parish. These lay positions have come to be known as Senior and Junior Warden, elected by the parish to assist in the pastoral maintenance of the parish. The Senior Warden represents the pastor in those matters that may be so personal to the pastor that they are difficult to negotiate, such as his salary. The Jr. Warden represents the people in matters that may need to be addressed to the pastor but that do not warrant a direct confrontation. All of this is within the spirit of Paul's counsel to avoid disputes with lay wise people.

Together, the Wardens form a council of advice to the

pastor, especially in matters of discipline. This is called the Parish Council in the Reformed Episcopal Church, preserving the wisdom of many counselors principle from Proverbs (Proverbs 11:14). They can help the pastor so as to keep him aware of pastoral and spiritual concerns that might not be coming to his attention. Or, they can serve as a kind of jury at the first level of discipline in the parish.

Thus, each level of the Church was symmetrical, consisting of the identical structure: captains and courts. There was a standing leader, meaning one who remained in that position. There was also some sort of court of advice as well, to help in the making of decisions and the passing of judgments, what I call principles of singularity, plurality, and consensus.

Singularity and Plurality

At each level, there is a singularity principle. There is someone who is in charge, with whom the "buck stops." He is an identifiable leader. In every organization, someone needs to represent the organization as a whole, even though he does not have absolute power. He is a symbolic head to whom people relate, since they cannot relate to a group or committee for leadership. This is evident in political parties. Although people are committed to the party as a whole, they must have a leader around whom they can rally. This is the principle of singularity.

At each level, there is also a plurality principle. The individual is not allowed complete power under the Biblical system. He may represent the larger body and rightfully so, but because he does represent others he is bound up in a plurality. The plurality has a voice. It may be a voice of counsel. It may be a decision making voice. It may even be a voice of concern or ordered protest. Nevertheless, the larger body is allowed this voice.

How do the principles of singularity and plurality work together? Acts 15 is a classic example. We are not told exactly how the decision making process was reached. We are given some important facts. Parties were allowed to speak, the plurality. Then James apparently makes the decision, singularity. But he does not do so without taking into consideration the consensus.

The consensus of any body is agreement to a course of action. The text from the Jerusalem Council says, "one accord," literally one purpose of mind (Acts 15:25). We are not given the details of how this was determined, whether by vote or lot, the later of which we have good precedent (Acts 1:26). Whatever the

means, we should not confuse consensus with majority. A group can reach a consensus without reaching a majority because there was a one purpose of mind at Jerusalem. I know of a church that had to change its name. The majority of people did not want to rename the church but they knew of the need to do so. They reached a oneness of purpose even though the majority did not want to change the name. Perhaps this could be construed as a consensus of majority, but technically there is an important difference. Majority rule, pure democracy, is not sanctioned in Scripture. Examples of majority rule are extremely negative, such as the many occasions when the people of Israel were of a majority opinion to turn back to Egypt. The majority was wrong and can be just as wrong as an individual. We all know that people tend to be more pliable, or even worse, when they are with groups as opposed to when they are alone. Majority rule is extremely dangerous. There is the strength of a multitude of counselors but this is not the same as majority rule. The model for consensus is learned in the home, and usually taught by a wise father. As there is symmetry within the levels of Church government, there is symmetry outside the Church with other forms of government, particularly in the home. Families cannot be ruled by committees. The father, or the mother in the event that the father is absent for whatever reason (A c t s 16:14), is the head of the house (Ephesians 5:22ff.). The buck stops with him. But, the Biblical wife is his queen, a co-regent and top advisor. No father in his right mind would make a decision affecting the entire family without consulting his wife. And, only on rare, if ever, occasions would he make a decision contrary to some sort of consensus reached with her. If he does, he had better be right or he will pay in a multitude of intangible ways. Most of the time, however, a father/leader in the home will seek to find a consensus and then make his decision. This is apparently what James did at the Jerusalem Council.

Thus, at each level of the hierarchy of the Church, there are the principles of singularity, plurality, and consensus. There is a oneness and manyness to the body of Christ, what can be called a covenantal organicism.

Covenantal Organicism

The symmetry of the spheres within the hierarchy of the Church produces a unity and oneness that is covenantally organic. It is based on the foundational doctrine of the Church, the Holy Trinity. It is One and Many. The One and Many are distinct but not separate, and could be called a covenantal organicism. The Trinity has true unity of life. But, God in His Essence, called

the Ontological Trinity, does not have progression or growth because, He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The Trinity does not evolve, explaining why the word organic by itself is not satisfactory. On the other hand, the Trinity in function, called the Oeconornic Trinity, works out redemption progressively: The Father elects some to life, the Son accomplishes redemption, and the Spirit applies redemption. Thus, the word organic is helpful if combined with the word covenantal to summarize one of the Bible's own common metaphors for presenting the relationship between God and His people: the vine and the branches (John 15).

The symmetry of the levels of the Church is "an organic whole comprising parishes as organic wholes comprising souls as organic wholes: which is only saying that the vine consists of branches which consist of cells."¹⁰ This does not mean that there is continuum of being, as in paganism. It does mean, however, that the same Holy Spirit indwells individuals, who lives in local parishes, who dwells in city/churches (Revelation 2-3), who lives in the universal Church in regions and other larger areas. Each level of the Church down to the parish level is the Body of Christ and not a mere part of it. For example, "The local church would be regarded by Saint Paul not as one element of a Catholic confederacy but as the local representative of the one . . . Catholic [universal] society."¹¹ As the early Church father, Cyprian said, "The Church is likewise one, though she be spread abroad, and multiplies with the increase of her progeny: even as the sun has rays many and one light" ¹² Thus, each unit within the larger Body of Christ represents the whole and is in this sense a covenantal representative. But there is a mysterious unity between God the Holy Spirit and the Church as the vine to the branches such that it can be called organic. Following the model of the Holy Trinity for our theology, there is distinction but not separation, truly a great mystery. Beyond this we cannot and should not go other than to describe the union of symmetry in the Body of Christ as covenantal organicism. For, to summarize Dr. Cornelius Van Til's observation about error, "The attempt to reduce a mystery is the door to all heresy."

This principle of covenantal organicism is helpful in understanding the real place of each sphere and person in the life of the Church. If we begin, however, with the source of

¹⁰ Martin Thornton, Heart of the Parish: A Theology of Remnant (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Cowley Publications, 1989), p. 19.

¹¹ Gore, The Epistle to the Ephesians, appended note E.

¹² Cyprian, On the Unity of the Catholic Church, paragraph 5.

life in the Church, the Holy communion of bread and wine, we can work our way out into the complete rationale for active participation. "The consecrated elements are Christ to the communicant; wholly and completely Christ, divide them into ten thousand fragments and each is the Body and Blood of Christ [not corporally]. So the parish is the catholic [Universal and Historic] Church in microcosm. . . . If the whole Body is complete at every altar [table], the whole communion of saints are in attendance at every altar [table]. . . . There is but one Bread, so each altar [table] is microcosmic of the Throne of the Lamb in heaven. There is one Church and one Body, so that the work of each server, each organist, each verger, each good lady who arranges flowers is of catholic significance because it is truly parochial. This is why the Church's Office [Daily prayer services], said by two souls in the village church on Monday night, is an infinitely tremendous thing; the 'special' service with its teeming congregation is trivial by comparison."¹³

Every sphere and every level of the Body of Christ by means of the Holy Spirit is so organically one with our Lord that it is Christ to its locale. Moreover, each person represents Christ as well, which is the purest reason for that individual's participation in the life of the parish. What better justification could there be for involvement in the Church? For, not to be active is a denial of who a believer is and what he (she) can be and do for the Church, which is nothing less than serve Christ to the congregation through personal service. Therefore, as we conclude the chapter on the symmetry of the hierarchical structure of the Church, we see that it leads to our next principle in the following chapter, participatory hierarchy.

¹³ Thornton, Heart of the Parish, p.20. Brackets mine.

Chapter Seven

New Testament Royal Priesthood: Participatory

Participation in the Church occurs in many forms, beginning with its worship. The liturgy is designed to engage the people in some kind of activity, even a confession of faith. It is literally a statement of what the people believe, as one man has said, “The liturgy may be said to be a theological confession in the second person singular, and it would accord with the ethos of Anglicanism to say that this [is a] dramatized form”¹⁴ of theology. Perhaps this explains why Presbyterianism in England collapsed so quickly into Unitarianism after it left prayer book worship for “free” worship. Whatever the case, the liturgy moves the congregation to participate at the throne of God, hopefully translating into action in the streets of life.

When you hear the word, liturgy, what comes to your mind? Formal? Candles? Vestments? Chanting choirs? For most people, unless they have been properly trained in the meaning of the liturgy of the Church, they probably do not have the correct impression. They may think of a liturgy as something that a priest does in front of everyone. Nothing could be further from the truth according to the meaning of the word liturgy itself. The English word is derived straight from the Greek, leitourgia, which is a compound of two other words: people and work. Thus, the word liturgy literally means, work of the people.

The purpose of liturgy is to equip and lead the laity to worship God. This may not be your impression, but consider the ramifications of the popularly taught doctrine in the evangelical church: the priesthood of all believers. Do they really get to act like priests in their worship services? Probably not because their worship consists mostly of listening to sermons, doing a lot of sitting, and singing a little, usually three hymns.

If they are part of the livelier side of evangelicalism, they at least get to more in the worship. They get to participate, explaining why there is so much growth in this part of the kingdom. But liveliness is not necessarily priestly activity. True priestly response is nothing less than a conversation between the leader and the people, representing a dialogue between God and the common man. Liturgical worship is

¹⁴ Geddes MacGregor, Corpus Christi (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p.11.

an organized exchange between God and the people, consisting of various responses ranging from congregational prayers of confession and praise, to coming forward for communion at the throne of God on a regular (weekly preferably) basis. After all, the high point of the sacrifices of the Old Testament was peace offering where the family got to eat a meal with God as they accompanied the priest (Leviticus 5). Liturgy, therefore, is the practical working out of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers into the worship of the Church, teaching everyone from young to old how to act like a priest before God.

For this reason, liturgical churches have prayer books and missals. These books are to liturgy what a hymnal is to singing. They tell the officiant or celebrant (the one[s] who leads the worship) how to lead the laity in worship. They show as well involve the laity in an on the job type of training in worship. Moreover, they guide the laity so that they are the ones doing the worship. They, not the leader, determine the quality of the worship. Worship, liturgy, is the work of the people, clergy and most importantly, the laity.

But notice: the clergy/laity combination is hierarchical in the outworking of worship. Each group is assigned very precise roles, someone leading and someone following. The clergy are like captains of worship. The people are like the court of worship. Does this hierarchy somehow stifle participation? Only if the priestly sense of the entire body of believers is lost. If the people lose sight of the fact that they are the ones performing the liturgy, or if they are not taught how to behave as priests in worship, they become passive. But if they are trained that they are a priesthood, responding to the captains of the priesthood, the clergy who represent the Lord God to the people, then they have a recognized and needed place in the acting out of the liturgy before their Maker and Redeemer. It is the laity's ordination as a royal priesthood that sets them apart to act on behalf of God. Thus, Biblical hierarchy is part of functioning as a priesthood, the key to all participation in the Church.

Jethro was a priest who advised Moses to set up a priestly hierarchy. He counseled a system that demanded participation. In our study of the Old Testament royal priesthood, I pointed out the various activities of this general priesthood. The life and laws of Israel demanded participation. Without responsiveness on the part of the people, the whole nation fell into disarray. Without action at the grassroots level, Israel could not function. It became a top-heavy bureaucracy. The problem was not in the system or the concept of Biblical hierarchy. The problem was the obedience of the people. As long as they were faithful, however, they engaged in a lively system of the

priesthood of all believers. They were part of the system not outside of it. They functioned as a true hierarchy.

Jethro's model pulls into the New Testament through Jesus Christ. Our Lord at the feeding of the five thousand implements the Melchizedekkal model as never before. He is the fulfillment of Moses. He carries out the Jethro model in a way far superior to the Old Testament, for He engages His followers more intensely and actively in the priestly activities of the Kingdom of God. His conceptualization of Jethro's structure exacts more participation. How?

The Discipleship Model

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20) .

In Christ's final words to the disciples, He commissions them to make disciples, making the Church the center of discipleship. This commission is hierarchical in nature. Christ had demonstrated the hierarchy of discipleship in His ministry. He dealt with essentially three groups of people: the disciples, the mixed multitude, and the world. The disciples were the twelve. The mixed multitude were those who followed in large crowds, one moment enthusiastically supporting Him and the next calling for His Crucifixion. Such is the fickle nature of the larger, loosely disciplined group. The world is the group totally out of contact directly with His ministry, primarily the Roman Empire.

Christ's method for reaching the world is significant, however. To use Jethro's language, He appointed and trained captains who would carry His ministry far beyond where He went, to the world of the Roman Empire, His obvious long-range goal. Of the three groups, He spent most of His time with the twelve disciples, one of which betrayed Him but who was replaced by Matthias (Acts 1:15ff.). At the end of His ministry, He lost one twelfth. He regained rapidly what He lost because the others had been disciplined. Of the twelve, He invested Himself in the three to whom He was closest: Peter, James and John. This is hierarchy. He dealt often with the twelve by means of the three and He ministered to the mixed multitude through the twelve. Christ did not begin with the world, holding revivalistic campaigns. He began with the Church and specifically the twelve.

This hierarchical approach to ministry is copied by the disciples of Christ, especially the Apostle Paul who said, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (II Timothy 2:2). Notice the levels of discipleship. Timothy, to whom Paul wrote, had been a disciple, level one. The Apostle tells him to make disciples by committing Paul's teachings to others, level two. Finally, the Apostle tells Timothy to make disciples who can disciple others, making disciple makers, level three. These three levels form a bottom-up hierarchy of pastoral ministry.

Makers of disciple makers
Disciple makers
Disciples

The goal of the Apostle Paul's ministry was the outworking of what Christ had commissioned the Church to do. Thus, discipleship is hierarchical, analogous to Jethro's structure.

The hierarchical discipleship model of Christ forces participation. Becoming a Christian meant willing to become a disciple, level one. The nature of being a disciple, as the word implies, requires following the Master. It means doing what Christ did, which returns us to the hierarchy of discipleship. To be a disciple means not only being a disciple, but it consists of following Christ in the discipling of others.

Equipping the Saints

Specifically, to make disciples calls for the ministry of the Church to equip the saints to do what Jesus commanded. Someone has to equip and someone has to be equipped, with everyone in the Church being thrown into the process. The Apostle Paul explains the equipping ministry to the Church of Ephesus:

He (Christ) gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the

head -- Christ -- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love (Ephesians 4:11-16).

This section of Scripture could be called the correct philosophy of ministry. Notice how Paul defines the purpose of the offices of the Church. He says that pastors and teachers are supposed to equip the saints for the work of ministry. The pastors and teachers equip. Their role is not to do everything or else they will be subject to Jethro's counsel to Moses, "The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself" (Exodus 18:17-18). The pastor and teacher are supposed to decentralize. If they attempt to do everything, they will burn out themselves and the congregation. Besides, they cannot do everything. If Jethro's counsel says anything it is that one man cannot do all of the tasks.

From the saints' point of view, they must be willing to be equipped. They need training. Doing what is needed in the Church is not natural. They should allow the pastors and teachers to train them. After being disciplined they then have to be willing to do. If either the pastors fail to equip or the people fail to be equipped, the ministry closes down in whole areas. Parish ministry has only minimal effect in the community. The bottom line is that everyone is to participate in the ministry of the Church.

Agreed, everyone should participate in the ministry. Does this mean that everyone does exactly the same thing? No, this notion of requiring each person to do the same kinds of tasks doesn't work in any other area of life, such as the home and business; there is division of labor. It will not work in the Church. The Apostle Paul argues that since the Church is the Body of Christ; not every part of the body is the same or has the same function (I Corinthians 12). There are hands, feet, arms, legs, circulatory systems, respiratory systems, and so forth. The point is that not everyone is supposed to do the same function because not everyone can perform the same function.

For this reason, God gives each believer at least one spiritual gift by which to serve the Church. He gives that the gift might be given back. These gifts vary from teaching to giving money (Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:14). Without going into detail on each gift, they should be understood in terms of the ministry of Christ. Remember, the Church is the Body of Christ. As such, it should reflect the threefold offices of

Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King. It is not surprising, therefore, that the spiritual gifts given to the Church can be organized around these three offices.

Prophetic Office: Prophecy (Romans 12:6)
 Evangelism (Ephesians 4:11)
 Exhortation (Romans 12:8)
 Faith (I Corinthians 12:9)
 Miracles (I Corinthians 12:10)

Priestly Office: Ministering (Romans 12:7)
 Mercy (Romans 12:8)
 Healing (I Corinthians 12:9)
 Discerning Spirits (I Corinthians 12:10)
 Teaching (Romans 12:7)
 Tongues (I Corinthians 12:10)
 Interpretation of Tongues (I Corinthians 12:10)
 Pastors (Ephesians 4:11)

Kingly Office: Giving (Romans 12:8)
 Leading (Romans 12:8)
 Wisdom (I Corinthians 12:8)
 Knowledge (I Corinthians 12:8)

The offices of Christ give perspective to the gifts. As these gifts are put to use, the Church should be more Christ-like. In fact, this is the greatest test of a congregation in its application of the gifts. If there is a deficiency, it should be understood according to an office of Christ that is not being reflected.

Moreover, to keep gifts in perspective with Christ's ministry, they should be kept in a discipleship context, which is most often neglected. The gifts of the Church are to be used to make disciples. They are not given for the fascination of the believer and all who behold the exercise of a gift. They are provided to carry out Christ's commission. They are bestowed so that the pastor can equip and the layman can be equipped to use the gift in the hierarchy of discipleship.

For example, not everyone is an evangelist but everyone is called to evangelize. On the basis of spiritual gifts, not everyone will evangelize the same way. A person will reach people according to his (her) gifts. This calls for spiritual gifts to be understood in terms of discipleship, or the equipping

ministry of the Church.

The benefits of an equipping ministry are enormous. Aside from involving everyone, the church is provided with a built-in protection against becoming too overly dependent on the dynamic leader. The one-man-show approach cripples the church, causing the success of the ministry to rely on him. This is exactly what many church members think the ministry should be. The problem is that the great dynamic leaders are few and far between. Interestingly enough, most of them are involved in equipping types of ministry. This means that they will probably not come to the church that is depending on the super-pastor. Why? Because they don't want to be worn out. So if a congregation ever wants the "great man" to come to it, an equipping ministry is necessary.

But trying to lure the multiphasic pastor should not be the motivation for equipping ministry. The purpose should be to decentralize the strengths of the congregation so that it is not totally at the mercy of one man's gifts. The founder of McDonalds, Ray Kroc, once quoted someone who was describing the British Navy as the ideal organization when he said, "The British Navy is an organization designed by geniuses to be run by imbeciles." What is he saying? He is trying to get the reader to see that the best organization is the one that can be run by anyone, not just a super-person. Applied to the Church, the best Church organization is the one that can be run by imbeciles. Don't be offended. The imbeciles of the Church have to include clergy as well as laity.

Most evangelicals are astounded when they attend large successful Episcopal churches, or other liturgical ones. Most of the time, the pastor is not necessarily dynamic. I remember quite well how a friend of mine responded after going to a dynamic evangelical Episcopal church. He said, "I couldn't believe it, the pastor was just a simple preacher; he wasn't a great orator but the congregation was a growing dynamic parish." How could this be? The genius of the Anglican system (and most liturgical churches for that matter) is that it is not dependent on the super-star pastor. It is a discipleship, equipping ministry model whereby the people are trained to do the work of the ministry. It doesn't depend on any one person, because the saints are doing the work!

As we observed in the Jethro structure, Biblical hierarchy produces and demands participation at all levels. This is especially true of the Church. Without correct participation, disciples are not made. If they are not developed, then the Church dies from failure to comply with Christ's Great Commission. It dies and stagnates.

Shortcuts to Participation

Unfortunately, the Church often takes shortcuts to make disciples. One of those is the mistake of ordaining people to get them to serve. Instead of real discipleship and equipping, half elders and half deacons are created to "get the people involved." This has proved to be disastrous for the Church. Elders are ordained in some churches who can be involved in the spiritual oversight, but they are not ordained to preach and certainly not to consecrate the sacraments. Furthermore, they are not allowed to be a member of the Presbytery, the larger court of the Church to whom the ministers belong, the real Presbyters. They can only attend and participate but not be members. They are half Elders, a totally unbiblical concept!

Then there are other churches who ordain deacons who cannot function as Deacons. They cannot preach as Stephen did (Acts 7); and they cannot administer the sacraments as Philip did (Acts 8). Neither are they members of the Presbytery. After all, they are not able to perform any ministerial functions. They are half deacons, and probably not Biblical deacons at all.

What is the problem? The problem is the wrong motivation for participation in the Church. The motivation becomes leadership and not service, discipleship. As a result, competition arises and the Church is often thrown into conflict. When the purpose is discipleship, then the Church creates a servant approach to its ministry. It gives the layman a transcendent purpose for the so-called mundane aspects of Church life, which are absolutely necessary. It teaches the laity that they are working as part of the discipleship process, not just doing the task at hand as an end in and of itself. It says to everyone, "Your work in the Church is part of the Great Commission because you are doing this as a disciple with a view to being equipped for the work of the ministry; you, the layman, are doing the ministry." This is far superior to giving the layman an inferior kind of ordination to inflate falsely his ego so that he will participate.

Then there is another problem, the problem of the watchdog layman who is not involved in the life and ministry of the Church. Every church has this kind of person. His motivation is leadership, for that is what he is trying to exercise, but he has no sense of pastoral ministry. So what does he (she) do? He lurks in the background of the Church as the chief critic of everything going on, but he never does anything to bring people into the church nor does he serve in any constructive manner. He usually doesn't financially support the church much, if any at all. You know the old saying, "Eighty percent of the work is

done by twenty percent of the people and eighty percent of the problems come from twenty percent of the people.” Then, our watch dog friend shows up at the annual parish (congregational) meeting and makes a fool out of himself by causing arguments and commotion, usually making ignorant statements about the ministry of which he has not helped to grow during the previous year, or maybe ever. Much of this could be avoided if someone disciplined this individual into real service. If he (she) were involved in the work of ministry and service, he might change his attitude and quit trying to control the church through commotion, If he were not willing to be disciplined, then he might find himself disarmed in many of his objections.

Do these problems mean that there is no place for lay leadership in the work of the ministry? Not at all.

Lay Leadership

It does mean, however, that the layman should participate on the basis that he is already a part of the priesthood of all believers. He has spiritual gifts and talents that he offers to the Church to do the work to which Christ has called him, the work of the ministry, to use the Apostle Paul's words (Ephesians 4:12).

The non-ordained layman can also be vitally involved in the work of the ministry, even exercising leadership over certain aspects of the work. In the Episcopal Church, this person is called Vestryman¹⁵ because he was the person who historically had the honor of helping the minister put on his vestments for worship, making him "one who helps vest." In other words, he helped in the physical aspects of Church life to free the pastor to do his equipping ministry. He was called to this important task but he was not ordained. Are there any Biblical examples of non-ordained lay workers who provided this leadership role of service in the Bible? Yes, as a matter of fact, they are so numerous that one might tend to miss the obvious.

¹⁵ Other denominations call their leaders the Session (although it differs in function from the Vestry), the Consistory, and the Board (Baptists). Sometimes these groups criticize the Episcopal Church for not having Biblical titles for their leaders. But it should be kept in mind that words such as Session, consistory, and Board are not in the Bible either. So, every group tries to come up with a name for a Biblical or theological concept that they think is in the Scripture. The same is done in other areas of theology, the most notable being the word, Trinity, which although extremely Biblical is not found mentioned anywhere in scripture.

For example, Bezaleel and Aholiab were laymen who made and oversaw the construction of the Tabernacle. The text says of these mighty laymen of God,

See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all who are gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you (Exodus 31:2-6).

These men were gifted. They had been trained and equipped obviously to do what they did. They were given wisdom and knowledge by the Spirit of God. They did extremely important work requiring a variety of skills, serving as foreman under Moses for the project at hand. They exercised lay leadership over the physical aspects of the house of God. They were called but they were not ordained: Granted, they did not perform any spiritual oversight over the people of Israel. Did this mean they were not important? Hardly. They facilitated the establishment of the House of God.

There are others too in Scripture who served in similar capacities. Nehemiah was a lay leader who rebuilt the walls around Jerusalem. He was not a priest ordained to teach or offer the sacrifices. But he was used of God to rebuild the city and the place where the people of God met. He was a lay supervisor of the physical side of the work of the Lord.

When we come to the New Testament, whole passages of Scripture are devoted to people who functioned as lay workers in leadership capacities. Have you ever wondered why all the lists of names were provided at the end of the epistles? One of the reasons is so that the Church would know that there were active laymen doing the work of the ministry as believer priests. Paul lists some in his letter to the Church at Rome:

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ. Greet Mary, who labored much for us. . . . (Romans 16:3-6).

Were any of these laymen specifically ordained to do the work that they did? No, except for their general calling as the priesthood of all believers. Yet, they worked and helped in all kinds of various capacities. For their work, their names are recorded. Interestingly, not even the Presbyters and Bishops of the early Church are recorded in as great a number as are the laymen and "Vestrymen." Doesn't this tell us something about the importance of lay participation? Yes definitely!

In summary, the Jethro model that Jesus adopted was a hierarchical approach to ministry by means of calling disciples, a small group to reach a larger one. This hierarchy produced organizational participation unlike any other organization ever in the history of man. It provoked laymen to offer their services on a voluntary basis for the glory of God. They did the work of the ministry. They carried out the Great commission. They served the lay boards to facilitate the work of the Deacons, Presbyters, and Bishops, indeed, the entire church. It can safely be said that without them the work of the Church could not have been accomplished. Neither can it be today!

Chapter Eight

Deacons

In this chapter, I change directions by considering the actual types of captains in the Church. Starting with the lowest layer of officers but in no sense the least in importance, I begin with the Deacon.

My Bishop has a habit of writing on the inside cover of the Bible given to each new Deacon a remarkable statement from the early Church: "In the heart of every Presbyter is the heart of a Deacon." What does this mean? When a person becomes a Deacon, he enters the beginning of something that never ends, the life of service to Christ's Church. He never completely stops being a Deacon. Even though a person may advance to the office of Bishop, he is always essentially a deacon who is set apart for a wider sphere of service. He is expanding the Diaconal ministry of the Church into greater areas. The Diaconate is not transcended but extended into the so-called higher offices of Presbyter and Bishop. It is not to be viewed as a stepping stone to something else; it is the "something else" in smaller proportions. Thus, the first office to discuss is the office of Deacon.

But, before we can consider the Diaconate, we must back up a step further. Christ outlined His entire purpose of ministry within a diaconal framework by using one word, service. He said that "He came not to be ministered [diakonos] unto but to minister [diakonesai]" (Mark 10:45). The very word for ministry in the English is a translation of the Greek, diakonos, from which the word Deacon is derived, meaning simply servant or minister. Christ defines His ministry diaconally, so that the Deacon personifies all that distinguished Christ's work. Turning this statement around, Christ's ministry of service sets the parameters for the Diaconate. How did Christ serve (deacon) the world? He did so through the fulfillment of the offices of prophet, priest, and king, called the threefold ministry.

Threefold Ministry

Christ ministered to the world as prophet, priest, and king. He fulfilled what Adam failed to do. And because of this, He extends to the Church these same offices, providing for us the structure for ministry. How so? Christ calls the Church the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:27). Furthermore, He ordains the officers of the Church to carry out the same specific roles

of the threefold ministry precisely because they are to represent simultaneously who He is to the people and who the people are supposed to be as a corporate body. Looking at this another way: Because Christ is prophet, priest, and king, the Church mirrors the same. Since the Church is all of these functions in general, the officers reflect them in particular. To see this clearly, we must understand the nature of each office of Christ.

Prophet

Christ was called the Prophet. The office of prophet is one of being a witness, bringing testimony on behalf of God for and against God's people as the case may be:

The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear I will raise up from them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him And if you shall say in your heart, "How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?" -- When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him (Deuteronomy 18:15-22) .

From this description of the prophet, he is one who brings testimony about God to the people. Notice that the test is whether or not what he says "comes to pass." In other words, if what he says happens, he is a true witness. If not, he is a false witness. A prophet is a witness.

Jesus fulfilled this office in His ministry. He is the Prophet of whom Moses spoke, being specifically called by this title: "This is truly the Prophet who is come into the world" (John 6:14). Christ is designated this after He feeds the five thousand, comparing His miracle of feeding to the manna provided under Moses' ministry (John 6:32-33). He is the ultimate witness. To use John's own description at the beginning of the Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Christ is the Word, the truest fulfillment of what a witness could be. He doesn't simply bring the word; He is the Word.

Christ is the fulfillment of the role of Prophet, but He extends this office to the Church, since the people of God in the New Testament are called the "Body of Christ." He gives the Church a prophetic function when He says, "You shall be witnesses

to Me" (Acts 1:8). By this statement, He defines the witnessing role in an evangelical fashion, calling for the Church to carry the testimony to all of the known world.

But notice that Christ addresses the whole Church in terms of the apostles, the officers. He tells the leaders in particular to be what the whole Church is supposed to be in general. Simultaneously, therefore, the officer of the Church represents who Christ is to the Church and also he personifies what the Church is as a whole. Thus, we will see this dual representation in the captains of the Church in all three offices of Christ, just as we have in the office of prophet.

Priest

Christ became Priest. Unfortunately, the office of priest is quite misunderstood. It is often presented as exclusively sacrificial but this was not the original intent. In the garden, it was diaconal. Adam's priestly role was defined when the text says, "For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till [literally, serve] the ground" (Genesis 2:5). And then after God creates man, He tells him, "Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to cultivate [literally, serve] and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). In each reference the same Hebrew word ('avad) is translated as "till" and "cultivate" but both have to do with working the ground. Adam was called to serve the ground to produce a garden. He was to produce food, thereby performing a diaconal function of service. He worked that he and especially others might eat.

In addition, Adam was also told to guard the garden, the Hebrew word being shamar, which is consistently translated as to guard. Once it is understood that Adam's primary diaconal task was to provide and serve food, it creates the context for the need to protect. What Adam cultivated understandably had to be protected. Anyone who has ever tried to grow something knows that he simultaneously produces out of the ground and fends off all of the elements and bugs. He grows and protects. Thus, involved in the diaconal function is the requirement also to guard.

But, how do we know that Adam's diaconal function in the garden was priestly? Both of these Hebrew words are used to describe the priestly duties of the Tabernacle. In one passage, the Lord tells Moses to define the priestly function as service, using the Hebrew words, 'avad and shamar.

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the

priest, that they may serve him. And they shall attend [shamar] to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work, [literally, to do the service from 'abad] of the tabernacle. Also they shall attend [shamar] to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work ['avad] of the tabernacle" (Numbers 3:5-8).

This passage clarifies for us that Adam's diaconal work in the garden was priestly in character. Both of the key diaconal Hebrew words are applied. Both indicate a general and specific service. In general, the priests were to serve the High Priest, but they were also to serve the congregation, the people. This would involve a variety of tasks, everything from teaching to helping.

In particular, however, the priestly service consisted of serving food in two senses, sacrificial and sacramental. Priests were to sacrifice animals and serve them to God as an atonement for the sins of the people; this is the Divine direction. In the case of the peace offering where the family was allowed to eat the sacrifice with the priest (Leviticus 3), the priests performed a sacramental function by serving food to man. This is the human direction that is called a sacramental function because the eating of the food did not atone for sin but applied an atonement already offered; the food was efficacious when taken by faith.

Keep in mind that if the Fall of man had not occurred, neither of these special senses of serving food would have been required, Sacrifices would not have been needed. And, sacramental food would have also been unnecessary. In the Old Testament, sacrifices and sacraments were offered and served. In the New Testament, sacrifices were done away with but the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is still offered as a sign and seal of the once for all sacrifice of Christ at the Cross. Nevertheless, the priestly office of the Bible is diaconal, involving the serving of physical and spiritual food. The priesthood is not inherently sacerdotal; it is diaconal, telling us how Christ uniquely fulfills the office of Christ while at the same time describing the Church as a priesthood (I Peter 2:9).

Christ is the true Priest of the world. Since the provision of food for the people of God is the essence of priestly responsibility, Christ fulfilled the office of priest in a way that no other could. He regularly fed people, symbolizing that He is the true priest (John 6: 1-13). But He Himself is the bread of life: "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), making Him the sacrifice of the world as well. As such He is the High Priest

who offers the sacrificial food to God. Yet, He offers Himself to the world through the priestly ministry of the Church, making His food available to the church in the Holy Supper (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

The Church as a corporate body has a priestly function, being defined as a priest (I Peter 2:9). It is commanded to feed and provide food. It offers the Lord's Supper. It is also required to be hospitable. These all have to do with serving of food, non-sacerdotal priestly functions. This means we can recognize the priestly aspect of the Church without placing man back under the Old Testament system. On the other hand, we should acknowledge that the Church is a priest for God, ministering the bread of life to the world.

But, since providing food for the people of God is not an inherently sacerdotal function, not continuing in the form of a sacrifice but as a sacrament, Christ calls the Church to specific priestly activity by means of ordained officers. Just as we saw in the prophetic office, Christ directs the Church to a priestly function by appointing the Apostles to feed God's people. He says to Peter, "Feed My Sheep" (John 21:15-19). He tells the great fisherman to do what Adam was supposed to do, provide food for the world. Only, He directs Peter to give the food of Christ, which is specifically done at the Lord's Supper. Interestingly, the early Church had a practice of bringing the elements for communion down with the tithes and offerings. They provided the food as a symbol of their living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1-2). The food was then consecrated through the minister of God and given as spiritual food. In this twofold action we see how the Church served as a priest before God and how the minister performed a non-sacerdotal function of priest to man. Thus, the officers of the Church represent the non-sacerdotal priestly function of the office of Christ to the people because the Body of Christ is also given this priestly office. The officers stand for what Christ and the Church as the Body of Christ already is: prophet, priest, and king.

King

Christ became King. As we have seen with the other offices, however, kingship is not as the world normally portrays it. Consider the nature of the Biblical king. First, he was to be pastoral, leading his people into peace. Adam was given a kingly and pastoral function when he was told to name the animals. How do we know that this was kingly? Because the greatest king of Israel was a shepherd, David, the model of the true King who is called the Good Shepherd (John 10). Kingship is pastoral.

Second, kingship is judicial rule by wisdom. Solomon, another great king who was the son of David, was known for his wisdom. He made good decisions for the people. He did not use the world's standards. He used God's. He ruled by wisdom, becoming the greatest peacemaker up to the time of Christ, for his name literally means peace.

Christ fulfills the office of kingship. At the beginning of the week of His passion, He made an unusual ride into Jerusalem. He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. . . . He sent two of His disciples saying, "Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose him and bring him here. And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you loosing him?' Thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of him.'" . . . And as He went, they spread their clothes on the road. Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest" (Luke 18:28-39).

He perfectly met the demands of a Biblical king. He did not ride in on a horse because kings were not allowed to have horses (Deuteronomy 17:16). They were used for aggressive warfare and since the Biblical king was to rule by wisdom he was not to engage in offensive warfare. As He rode in the people recognized Christ as king.

The Church is called also to the kingly task. James says, "If anyone lacks wisdom let him ask of God" (James 1:5). Notice the command: The Church should ask for that by which the king of the Old Testament was supposed to rule, and that for which king Solomon did ask (I Kings 3:6-15). Thus, the Church is instructed to influence, "rule," the world through wisdom, the personification of which is Christ Himself (Proverbs 8:22-31).

As we have noted with the other two offices, the Church officers are called to specific kingly responsibilities. Christ says to Peter, "Tend my sheep" (John 21:16), a kingly activity. In Acts, the Apostles take specific leadership. They rule with wisdom, as we shall specifically note in the first crisis that provoked the formation of the Diaconate. As the Church develops, however, they pass leadership to others, such as James, who also exhibit the kingly office.

The offices of prophet, priest, and king are the threefold

ministry of Christ. The Church is given the same threefold ministry, being called the Body of Christ. But, since the ministers of the Church are special representatives of what the Church is as a corporate body and also especially called to present the ministry of Christ to the world and the Church, they too bear the threefold ministry. There is not a one-to-one correspondence, however, between the offices of Christ and the offices of the Church. Perhaps in a loose way the Deacon is like the prophet; the priest is analogous to the presbyter; and, the king is comparable to the Bishop in the ecclesiastical structure. But, this tight correspondence is too narrow to explain the different facets of each office. Rather, all of the Church offices bear out each aspect of the threefold ministry of Christ. Deacon, presbyter, and Bishop all have prophetic, priestly, and the kingly dimensions to their offices. This is most apparent in the Diaconate, for as I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter Jesus' threefold ministry is cast in a Diaconal framework: "He came not to be served but to serve." Let us examine specifically the Diaconate in view of the threefold structure of prophet, priest, and king.

The Biblical Diaconate

The Apostles early on faced a Jethro-type of crisis with a dispute so major that they feared being removed from their needed positions. They particularly are drawn into a confrontation between two groups of widows (Acts 6:1ff), and begin appointing the first level of captains. Here is where we start to see the threefold ministry of Christ appear in the Diaconate.

Priestly Aspect

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then, the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve [The Greek is diakonos from which we derive the word deacon.] tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Spirit, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmeans, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom

they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

The priestly office was defined as a work of service primarily involving food. It was not inherently an office requiring the sacrifice of animals. Between the Fall and the time of Christ, however, it was. After the Death and Resurrection, it became an office of serving spiritual and benevolent food; the sacrificial aspect was no longer involved.

Notice that the first dispute in the Church was priestly in character. It concerned widows and the distribution of food. In a way, it was similar to the beginning of creation, when Eve, a woman, was tempted by the serpent to eat forbidden food. It differed from the first Fall in that Adam and Eve were told not to eat, whereas the food dispute of Acts resulted from certain women being denied food, when they were not told that they couldn't eat. They were instructed that they could eat through the benevolent program of the Church. Nevertheless, there is enough of a parallel between the beginning of Genesis and the conflict between the widows for us to conclude that God wants the Church to see the contrast. When man fell, he did so because he wouldn't abstain from the particular food that God told him not to eat. He tried to resolve the dispute between Eve and the serpent by rebellion. His perverted Diaconal attempt to solve a food problem failed. After the work of Christ, the redeemed Church is enabled to settle a food problem through the ministry of the first Spirit-filled Deacons. This underscores the power of the work of Christ.

The Apostles demonstrate the continuing ministry of Christ in their response to the problem. They deal with it in a Jethro-like way. They asked the people to select men to deal with the problem. After the selection was made, they ordained these men as the first Deacons. They send the seven to resolve the dispute, which was evidently worked out because nothing more is heard about the problem. Through this delegation, they engaged the first Deacons in a priestly activity, while strictly speaking, the Deacons were not priests. The Diaconal office concentrates on benevolent food. Sometimes, however, the Biblical Deacon is allowed to administer the Lord's Supper, which is spiritual food. Always, this should only be done with special permission from the Bishop because the Deacon's focus is physical food.

The office of Deacon is first and foremost a benevolent ministry. The Book of Common Prayer says in its ordination service for the Deacon that one of the primary tasks of this office is, "To search for the sick, the poor, and the spiritually destitute, and to minister to their necessities." The Deacon as

an agent of the Church is specifically sent to deal with welfare problems in society. In the West, and especially America, the State was not involved at all in benevolences until the 1930s. It did not have a welfare program because the Church had historically done administered benevolences through the office of Deacon and other benevolent programs. This changed in the 1920s and 1930s. Government became a Welfare State, not coincidentally, as the Church was going through a horrible time of doctrinal apostasy in every major denomination. It literally attempted to fill a vacuum that was being created by the Church. Instead, it has broken the financial base of society as well as destroyed long-term incentive on the part of the needy by creating a professional and permanent welfare class.

According to Scripture, the Diaconate is the key to reversing the destructive force of the Welfare State. It must be raised up again to be more than a glorified "maintenance man," which unfortunately is how the Deacon is viewed in many churches. Or, in historic churches that require the office of Deacon before becoming a Presbyterian, the Diaconate is only viewed as a stepping stone. It is a temporary office for the novice preacher or the person who can't go to seminary. This must change if society is to change. Once again the office should become benevolently defined. Persons should consider being permanent deacons. And if they are interested in moving on to the Presbyterate, they should prove themselves to be true Deacons before any other office is assumed.

In the early Church, there was an assumption that the Church needed an abundance of Deacons, especially life-long ones. Why? The early Church believed that Christ established a benevolent model for reaching the world through service. In the parable of the "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:30-37), He told the story of a man who was beaten on the road. He specifically points out that priests and Levites did not stop to help the man, implying that they were not being what their office truly implied, servants. He refers to a Good Samaritan, a man from outside the normal priestly circles, as the true model of a servant. He obviously likens the Samaritan to Himself who was not of the Aaronic priesthood, but as was pointed out earlier, He was of the Melchizedekkal priesthood. The point is that the true priest and therefore the true Deacon is the Melchizedekkal priest who seeks to help the needy.

The problem with any mention of the Good Samaritan model is that it raises questions about the place of the Gospel. If we continue to look at the office of Deacon in the New Testament, however, we will discover that there was no conflict between benevolence and evangelism as we move to the prophetic aspect of the Diaconate.

Prophetic Aspect

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then there arose from what is called the Synagogue . . . disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. . . . Then they also set up false witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law”. . . . Then he said. . . . “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?” (Acts 6:8-7:60)

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. . . . But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized (Acts 8:5-12).

These passages in Acts concern the work of two of the original seven Deacons. They function prophetically, the prophetic office having to do with bearing witness. In the first passage regarding Stephen, notice the witness bearing theme. He begins to perform signs and wonders and false witnesses are raised up against him. He is seized and then begins to preach a sermon at his own trial. He delivers what is technically called a covenant lawsuit, because he brings witness against Israel for having rejected God's revelation to them through prophets (7:52). He is finally stoned to death, having been convicted of blasphemy, a false witness offense.

The second passage that immediately follows, chronicles the events of another Diaconal ministry, Phillip. He is led by God to go to Samaria, extending the Gospel to a new part of the land. While there, he preaches a revival, the response being so great that he is envied by a magician such that the rival prophet converts. The Deacon Philip also baptizes his converts.

From these two passages we learn a great deal about the Biblical work of a Deacon. He is specially placed in areas to bring witness to the Gospel, in Stephen's case a negative, covenant lawsuit witness, and in the instance of Philip a positive witness. The Deacon can preach and conduct evangelistic crusades. He can even give the sacraments, particularly baptism. Because he administers the first sacrament, he historically has

been allowed to serve communion with special permission. Yet, because his office is so predominantly prophetic as these passages indicate, his functions are mostly non-sacramental. Furthermore, he differs from a pastor (Presbyter) in that he is usually not permanently assigned to a ministry unless he is assisting a Presbyter or there is no Presbyter in the area. He is often moved around as he is needed.

But, notice that the Deacon is supposed to perform benevolent tasks as well as preach the Gospel. This solves a major problem for most Twentieth Century evangelical churches. For over one hundred years there has been a tension in the evangelical community over the relationship between social involvement and the Gospel. In the last century, liberals started to call for social concern on the part of the Church but they left out the Gospel. In reaction, Fundamentalists of this century have said that the Church should have nothing to do with social issues, particularly welfare. They have maintained a sharp separation between the Gospel and culture. Consequently, evangelicals have been easily portrayed as irrelevant and unloving.

The social/evangelical polarity resulted, I believe, from a faulty view of the Diaconate among Reformed churches, except in the Anglican Communion. In most of their congregations, and all Protestant ones for that matter, the Deacon is not allowed to preach. He can take care of the lawn and serve food to the needy but he cannot technically perform ministerial tasks. His benevolent responsibilities have nothing to do with an evangelical obligation. Hence, a liberal or social Gospel has easily crept into the Church. And, as long as an unbiblical view of the Diaconate remains in these churches, they will always feel a conflict between benevolence and evangelism.

The churches with historic Episcopacies and Biblical views of the Diaconate have the solution to an urgent problem in Western Civilization, particularly America: the Biblical Diaconate. Deacons such as Stephen and Philip had priestly and prophetic aspects to their office. They helped people in need and then seized upon these situations as opportunities to minister the Gospel. They should have, for Jesus Himself fed people and then told them that He was the true Bread of life (John 6). And so, the modern Church should return to the Biblical Diaconate, joining with the Historic Church's practice of this office.

Kingly Aspect

Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed,

seeing the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. . . . And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money. . . . But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you" (Acts 8:13-25).

Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and who had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot" (Acts 8:26-40).

In these passages, we see the kingly aspect of the office of Deacon. First, the Simon Magus section reveals in what sense the Deacon is not kingly in his office. Philip preaches and baptizes but he is not given the Apostolic commission to excise the Church of false teachers. He can bring people into the Church but he cannot excommunicate or discipline them out. The Apostles deal with Simon, pronouncing the judgment of excommunication: "Your money perish with you!"

Second, the Ethiopian Eunuch quite graphically indicates how the Deacon exercises the kingly office of Christ through his evangelical extension of the kingdom of God. Philip is specifically told by the Spirit to overtake the chariot, kingly language that one would expect in a military campaign. But this is precisely what the Deacon does. He performs long range reconnaissance, functioning as a point man for the Great Commission and blazing new territory for the Gospel. Furthermore, notice that the Eunuch was a man with royal responsibility under the Queen of Ethiopia. The text apparently mentions the details about his queen because it wants us to see that he has no king, that is, until he meets Philip. When he does, he receives Christ as his Savior and Lord. He then has a King, the true King of kings! Through this we see that the Deacon acts in kingly fashion by extending the kingdom of the King. He is not given any actual Ecclesiastical authority but an evangelical responsibility to enlarge the borders of the Church. Thus, the Deacon reflects the Kingship of Christ in his ministry.

In conclusion, the Diaconate is the most neglected and underestimated office of the modern Church. If revived, it will once again literally pave the way for the expansion of the

Gospel, for as we have seen, the Diaconate has an explicit evangelical and prophetic function. Without this office, however, the Church will continue to be culturally and evangelically irrelevant.

Chapter Nine

Presbyters

I began the last chapter by referring to a statement that my Bishop writes on the cover of the Bibles given at the ordination of Deacons: "In the heart of the Presbyter is the heart of a Deacon." This statement not only implies that the Diaconate extends into the Presbyterate but that the Presbyter has a serving ministry similar to the Deacon. The Presbyter just like the Deacon is shaped by the threefold ministry of Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King. He is different in that he is a Presbyter, called to serve a local parish. But he is to reflect the ministry of Christ in his calling as Presbyter. The Biblical qualifications required of him follow the threefold ministry structure. And, his functions as a Presbyter can be organized the same way. Let us begin with the functions of his office where we see most clearly the ministry of Christ.

Threefold Ministry of the Presbyter

Shortly after Deacons were appointed, the need for Elders (Presbyter) arose. Luke describes the establishment of the first Presbyters,

And when they [Paul and Barnabus] had preached the Gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they believed. And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia (Acts 14:21-25).

Immediately we begin to see a major difference between the Deacon and Presbyter. Deacons were mostly temporary. When the Apostles wanted to establish more permanent oversight of churches, they appointed Elders. They ordained them city by city keeping in mind the context of the passage above. Notice that the Apostles were moving from city to city: Lystra, Iconium, and so on. A Church in the early Church was always in terms of a city: the church of Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, and so forth. A Church was not

what we normally think of in the Twentieth Century, so we must be careful not to read into the New Testament what we want to see. My interpretation of this passage is confirmed as we compare it with what Paul says to Titus, "Appoint elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). The plurality of Elders was at the city level of the Church, leaving open the possibility that individual Presbyters could pastor smaller church groupings within the city, what I will develop later as the parish church.

The role of the Presbyter was distinguished from the Deacon in that the former normally served in a local Church in a more permanent arrangement. For this reason, he is called a shepherd, as Peter equates the role of Shepherd and Presbyter when he says, "The elders who are among you I exhort . . . Shepherd the flock of God" (I Peter 5:1). The relationship between shepherding and Eldering is reflected in Luke's statement above, "Through many tribulations entering the kingdom of God." The Elder is a Shepherd who is entrusted with the care of the souls under him, the English word care coming from the Latin, cur, from which one of the ancient titles for the Pastor and Assistant Pastor, Curate. Thus, a Presbyter is a Shepherd, explaining the connection with Christ, who was called the Good Shepherd (John 10), as Peter goes on to say, "Elders . . . Shepherd the flock of God. . . and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (I Peter 5:1-4). The parallel is striking, reminding us of the famous Good Shepherd passage that is the Gospel lesson appointed in the Book of Common Prayer for the ordination of a Presbyter.

I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father, and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd (John 10:7-16).

Christ's ministry is the model for ministry. With regard to the Deacon, he is to serve as Christ served, Deaconed. Pertaining to the Presbyter, he is to shepherd as Christ tended His flock. What Christ was, He tells the officers of the Church to be. As He was a servant, Church leaders are to serve. As the Good Shepherd, they are to be shepherds. Within this shepherding model of Christ, all three offices of king, priest, and prophet are found. Since Christ specifically defines Presbyters as shepherds, we only have to examine Christ's role as Shepherd to understand the office of Presbyter.

First, the kingly aspect of the shepherd: Presbyters are like shepherds in that they are to lead the congregation, an inherently kingly task. But kings may not seem to have anything to do with shepherds. In the Bible, they do. The first kings of Israel were called within a pastoral context. Saul was selected while he searched for his father's donkeys (I Samuel 9:4). David was literally a shepherd boy. Why? What is the Bible trying to tell us? Leadership is pastoral not forceful, the best example of which is tending sheep.

The Apostle Peter details the pastoral nature of leading, when he says, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock" (I Peter 5:2-3). Leading sheep is delicate. According to Peter, who was told by Christ to "tend sheep" (John 21:16), pastoral leadership required a gentle hand. It woos and moves the sheep along, not being heavy-handed. It is persuasive not pugilistic. It is considerate not caustic. It is understanding not underhanded. It is self-reflective not sanctimonious.

The Biblical Presbyter leads by being an example of basic attitudes and behavior toward the sheep. If the Pastor is angry, he will evoke anger. If he is belligerent, he will face stridency. On the other hand, if he is tender, interestingly derived from the pastoral word tend, he will cultivate the same spirit. The pastoral tone of a Biblical Pastor was recently provided by an explanation of leadership: "A leader is a person who gets people to do what they don't want to do to accomplish what they want to achieve." Thus, the Pastor has a kingly role, historically illustrated by the title, Rector (leader), not according to the world's standard of power but according to Christ canon pastoral care.

Second, the priestly aspect of the shepherd: Biblical Presbyter/shepherds are priestly in their task, keeping in mind that the priesthood is Melchizedekal and sacrificial

(sacerdotal). The original priestly task of Adam was to feed, being called to "till" the ground. This feeding character of the priesthood continued through the Old Testament and was made a particular part of the Melchizedekkal priesthood when Melchizedek served Abraham bread and wine after the defeat of Chedorlaomer (Genesis 14:18). It carried into the ministry of Christ as He fed God's people, and even extended to the Church through the challenge given to Peter after the Resurrection. Christ told him to "Feed the sheep" (John 21:17), a distinctly Melchizedekkal commission. He thereby commanded the pastors of the Church to do the same through both means of grace: the Word preached and the Word eaten in the sacrament. Both are called food in Scripture. Both are nourishment on the Living Christ when taken in faith. Thus, the Presbyter performs a Melchizedekkal priestly function when he teaches the Word of God and administers the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Third, the prophetic aspect of the shepherd: Biblical Presbyter/shepherds are given a prophetic responsibility of watching the flock so as to protect it from wolves. The Apostle Paul commanded the Ephesian Presbyters,

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears (Acts 20:28-31).

Paul's language is the same used to describe the role of the prophet in the Old Testament. In fact,

The image of pastor as watchman, or protective, vigilant, all-night guard, was already well developed by the Hebrew prophets. Radical accountability to God was the central feature of this analogy, as dramatically stated by Ezekiel: "The word of the Lord came to me: . . . I have made you a watchman for the Israelites . . . it may be that a righteous man turns away and does wrong . . . I will hold you answerable for his death" (Ezekiel 3 : 16-21) . . .

Listen to the analogy: The watchman over a city is responsible for the whole city, not just one street of it. If the watchman sleeps through an attack, the whole resultant damage is his responsibility. This was the covenantal analogy later applied repeatedly to the

pastor, who was charged with nothing less than the caring of the souls of an analogous small city, the ekklesia. If the congregation falls prey to destructive teaching or forgetfulness, whose responsibility can it be but that of the presbuteros, the guiding elder?¹⁶

The Presbyter was like a prophet to his congregation, standing watch over their souls. Without his vigilance, he would become an accomplice in the parish's spiritual death.

Thus, the Presbyter is called to be a shepherd, analogous to Christ. His ministry is the same threefold ministry of Christ. As he shepherds the flock of God, the congregation will sense that they are being ministered to by Christ as king, priest, and prophet, explaining why the Presbyter's qualifications must exemplify the same threefold ministry of Christ.

Qualifications

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you -- If a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination (Titus 1:5-6).

I will explain in detail why I believe that this particular list of qualifications differs from those of the Bishop in the following verses (Titus 1:7ff.). In short, Paul uses a different word for Elder, Episcopos, from which the word Episcopal is derived. Sometimes he uses presbuteros and episcopos interchangeably, but not always. In Titus, he doesn't for reasons I will mention in the next chapter on the Bishop.

For now, it is worth noting the qualifications of the Presbyter, listed in Titus and other passages to which I have already referred. The criteria for the Elder are organized easily in terms of the threefold offices of Christ.

First, the Presbyter is expected to be “blameless” in his character, implying purity, a priestly characteristic. God's priesthood is to be holy. As Peter says,

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, . . . you also as living stones are being built up a spiritual house,

¹⁶ Thomas Oden, Pastoral Theology, p.70.

a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:1-5).

The church is to be a holy priesthood and so are the Presbyters who minister within it. As the Body of Christ is to be priestly in character so are its officers.

Second, the Presbyter is to be faithful his wife, a kingly attribute. In the Old Testament, kings were explicitly forbidden to accumulate wives (Deuteronomy 17:17). Why? The king represented the Lord. To be unfaithful to his wife conveyed that God would be unfaithful to His bride, the people of God. This sent a confused message to Israel because God was faithful when His people were not, the opposite of what the king's unfaithfulness communicated. The Presbyter was to represent Christ to the people in his fidelity to his own family, the principle being that the Elder will treat the Church the way he does his wife. An adulterous Presbyter, therefore, sends the message of an unfaithful God. Nothing could be further from the truth, shedding light on the strict requirement of fidelity.

Third, the Presbyter is to have believing children, a prophetic qualification. The distinctive of the prophetic office is bearing witness. If the Presbyter has believing children then he proves himself to be a faithful and vigilant witness to his own children. He also exemplifies God's relationship with His children, encouraging the people of God to be faithful.

Thus, the qualifications of the Presbyter reflect the need to image the threefold ministry of Christ. The Presbyter is to be Christlike in all three senses. As he is, he demonstrates accurately who Christ is. As he reproduces Christ in his life, he will in others, those who are given to his flock. Now that we have considered the threefold ministry of Christ as a standard of what the Presbyter does and who he is supposed to be, we can proceed to the actual organizational structure of Presbyters in the early Church.

Early Church Organization

As the Church developed into many congregations in geographic areas, the Apostles became involved in appointing presbyters, whose captain responsibilities consisted of serving as pastors (1 Peter 5:2). These pastors were also arranged in a hierarchy. Keeping Jethro's system in view, the local pastor was initially the captain over the smaller cells, tens or ten family units. A captain over ten families, a house-church, or what can be called the parish, was the parish minister. Interestingly, in the historic Church and even in Judaism the presumption has

always been that ten families were needed to form a synagogue or church.

Keep in mind, however, that local churches in the First Century were organized in terms of cities, explaining why the “elders being appointed from church to church” were understood to be city by city (Acts 14:21-23). Note carefully that the passage in Acts speaks of the travels of Paul and Barnabus from city to city. The appointment of Elders should be understood in this context because initially in the Church the organization was in terms of cities: the Church of Corinth, Ephesus, and so forth. The plurality of Elders in these Churches was on a city-wide scale. But this should not be understood to mean that what the Twentieth Century calls a Church is the same as what the New Testament called a Church, forcing the same criteria of organization on the parish, where more than likely one presbyter was assigned to each mini-church as distinguished from a city-church where more than one Elder existed. Granted, a captain over fifties may have five other captains under him. But every indication in the New Testament is that although there should be more than one presbyter at the city-Church level, this was nowhere required, even though preferable, at the parish level.

Virtually all of the instructions to churches in the New Testament should be understood as being given to a city-church. The Apostles never envisioned a “denominational” Church. They organized in terms of geography, directing their commands at the city level. It is necessary to understand this because many of the instructions can end up being forced in their application if the corporate or covenantal sense is missed. For example, the passage that says the sick are to call for the “Elders,” plural, presumes a city-church organization. What about a sick person at the parish level, what Jethro calls the “captain over ten families” where there may only be one Elder? Normally, the pastor (Presbyter) would call on other Presbyters from nearby parishes or he could even ask the local Bishop. If this couldn't be worked out, however, he could go by himself.

James' directions do not preclude one elder from coming in representative fashion to lay on hands (James 5). The representative principle is that one represents many, an aspect common to Western government, especially in America. As a representative of the larger body of Elders, the single Elder enables the Elders (plural) to reach out to the sick and ask God for healing. Some denominations have argued that healing cannot be performed where there is only one Elder, even attempting to use this passage as a proof-text for such a notion. But this forces the text out of its normal city-wide Church configuration. This is not to say that more than one Elder is preferred, but again, since James was not speaking to the parish

Church level in application, more than one Elder is not absolutely necessary for anointing and the laying on of hands. One Presbyter can go and represent the larger body. For example, when an emergency arises and a call is made for the police, usually one policeman shows up. It doesn't occur to us to argue that unless more than one comes the police (corporately) have not responded. The assumption is that one represents the larger body and so it is with the elders of the Church.

All of this is to say that a plurality of elders is mandated at the city level but not at the house phase. More than one elder can be at the parish and in many ways is desirable, especially if there are more than ten families. If there is, the sense of hierarchy should not be lost because scripture does mandate a captain system that requires captains down to the ten-family level. The buck must stop with someone, meaning that even if there is more than one Elder in a parish, one of them is the designated captain, the pastor. The traditional title in the Episcopal Church is rector, which means leader, an appropriate paraphrase of the Biblical concept of captain. If one of the Elders is not the captain, and if all of the Elders try to have equal status in terms of authority (Parity), a horrible rivalry will develop.

Inescapability of Hierarchy

Hierarchy is inescapable. If it is not established through an orderly system of designating captains through the government of the Church, Biblical and Ecclesiastical criteria, a hierarchy will be arrived at on the basis of other standards. For example, it might be established in terms of perceived knowledge or even academic degrees, what I call intellectual standards. It is a structure based on who knows the most or who is perceived to know the most regardless of real Godliness. The captain in this system becomes the "smartest."

If not a kind of rationalistic hierarchy, it can be formed according to experience. It is not a structure based on knowledge, a reaction to the rationalistic hierarchy. It is a matter of who has apparently the richest experience in Christ as the ultimate determination of the hierarchy. Of course, it will have the opposite problem of the previous kind of pecking order. It will have leaders with rich experience but who may not know much about the Bible and the historic creeds of the Church. This is a hierarchy of irrationalism, where the captain becomes the one who has the best "testimony."

Finally, if hierarchy is not set up in terms of the rational or irrational standards, it is sometimes established purely on

the basis of charisma, natural gifts, talents, or personality. It is a hierarchy by popularity created around the dynamic personality of an individual. It easily degenerates into a personality cult. The captain becomes the one who is the most liked.

Whatever the case may be, hierarchy runs its own course. If not determined by Scriptural Ecclesiastical standards, the hierarchy will develop around other standards. Unfortunately, it may not be a declared hierarchy, which is always the case where an organization is not "up front" about who is in charge. It becomes like the alleged creedless church that moves people in and out of leadership on the basis of the unwritten creed. Undeclared hierarchies can be extremely tyrannical. Thus, the historic Church has deemed it far better to declare a hierarchy and not attempt to live in the illusory world of parity.

One writer has summed up the need for a careful and declared process of selecting a hierarchy, Thomas Oden. He says, "If historical experience be our guide, communities of prayer perennially engender social processes in which the office and duties of religious leadership become publicly exercised. Persons are carefully chosen by due process to fill roles rather than chosen haphazardly on the basis of unexamined charismatic immediacy. This social regularity does not rule out charisma, but wishes to bring native gifts of religious leadership into some more reliable, socially functional framework of expectations. Consequently, it is hoped that communities who look to that leadership will be better protected from the abuses of charlatans or manipulators who might exploit these powerful passions for their own individual interests. That is the social function of routinization and ordering charismatic gifts."¹⁷ Thus, parity is a myth and hierarchy is inescapable, providing another proof for the captains system of Jethro where there is singularity and plurality of leadership worked out in an ordered hierarchy.

The Wardens

Does the reality of hierarchy mean that there is not a plurality concept at the parish level, analogous to the plurality of Presbyters at the city-Church level? No. The ideal seems to be for the pastor at the house-church level to cultivate Deacons and Presbyters to assist him as the parish grows. This is why he is to equip the saints for the work of ministry. He should be

¹⁷ Thomas Oden, Pastoral Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), p.59.

developing the laity and even future Deacons and Presbyters to assist. He should not perpetuate aloneness. He should always be working to produce more leadership. The presumption of Scripture is that the Deacon begins at the parish and city level. Remember, the first Deacons were selected by the people. Perhaps there were seven different parishes in Jerusalem, explaining why seven candidates were put forth. Whether or not this was the case, leadership was developed from the bottom up at the grassroots level. Historically, in the Church, this has been a practice. Every minister must begin by first becoming a Deacon, and even then he is nominated from the local parish. So, the pressure is always on the parish minister to reproduce himself from the parish on up.

Historic Anglicanism has also recognized the need for a plurality of assistance at the parish level in the role of Church Wardens, Senior and Junior Warden, as has already been explained in Chapter Six. These are key lay people who serve on the basis the "wise man" principle referred to by the Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 6:5). Together the Wardens serve as a Parish Council with the Pastor. They are not ordained, however, so they do not have permanent positions, meaning they can be rotated in and out. This has several advantages. It allows for other laymen to be developed in leadership ability. It offers wide diversity of gift and personality in the parish, lending to the surfacing of a full range of talents. It prevents stagnation of leadership in the parish, avoiding the accusation of a "good ole' boy network."

The Half Elder

Other Church traditions since the Reformation have gone so far as to call the lay leaders Elders and Deacons. Interestingly, even in the Presbyterian tradition, the Elders were re-elected each year and they were not ordained. This is still the case in the Reformed Churches of France. They were simply called Elders, meaning the original intent of lay leadership in Presbyterianism was very close to the lay leader structure of the Anglican Church. Originally, the real difference between these two churches at the parish level was more in terms of what the lay leader was called and not so much in the function of the lay leader. Moreover, Presbyterians lacked the office of Bishop, which dramatically distinguished them from Episcopalianism, but as we shall see in the next chapter, Presbyterianism was initially not in principle opposed even to an office of Bishop.

American Presbyterianism, however, permanently ordained its lay leaders, calling them, Ruling Elders and Deacons. I believe that designating the lay leader an Elder or Deacon has led to

serious problems. The greatest concern is that although so called "Elder rule churches" pride themselves in having Biblical titles for their leaders, the function of these offices is not Biblical. Presbyterian Elders and Deacons are half Elders and Deacons at best! And in the Baptist Church, their version of the lay Elder, who is called a Deacon, is also a half Deacon.

Confusion of Function

In Presbyterianism, the lay Elders, usually called Ruling Elders, do not at all fit the Biblical description. They are distinguished from the so called Teaching Elder, a distinction that is foisted on the Bible text. Paul says, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and doctrine" (I Timothy 5:17). But notice that Paul says literally (in the Greek text), "The ruling well Elders," referring to those who are strong in teaching. This is not how Presbyterianism makes the distinction at all. Those who are strong in teaching are not called Ruling Elders. They are called Teaching Elders. Moreover, the Ruling Elders in Presbyterianism are not technically allowed to preach and certainly they are not permitted to consecrate the sacraments. Nowhere does the Bible substantiate that certain Elders cannot teach or serve the sacraments. Paul simply says that the ones who rule well in terms of being strong in teaching should be given double honor.

Some Presbyterians following the teaching of the famous Southern Nineteenth Century Presbyterian, James Henley Thornwell, have tried to do away with the Teaching/Ruling distinction. But this is only to move toward Anglicanism, in that all Presbyters in Anglicanism are allowed to preach and consecrate the sacraments. Even so, arguing for parity will not overcome the only problem of the Teaching/Ruling distinction among Presbyterians. Although some democratic versions of Presbyterianism push for parity, the local lay Elders are never allowed to be members of the Presbytery. The Pastors (Teaching Elders) may be able to join the local church but the lay Elders are not allowed to join Presbytery; they only get to participate.

Thus, a total confusion of office results that dilutes the real office. What do I mean? When layman and pastor have the same office, the standards for pastor will eventually be lowered. They have to be because a layman does not have the time to go to seminary and take extensive training in the Scriptures (I realize that because of the deadness of the seminaries this may be an asset to the Church in many cases). For the layman to have parity with the pastor under existing Elder rule systems, however, the requirements will have to be low enough in order for

the layman to become a pastor. This is not the direction that the Church should be going at this time in history. Granted, training should be made available through non-residence programs, but the training to be a Pastor should still be required. To minimize standards hurts the office of Presbyter.

Built-In Rivalry

Moreover, the lay designation of Elder not only dilutes the office of Presbyter but it creates a built-in rivalry between the Pastor and the Ruling Elders. The Pastor receives highly specialized training to do what he does, training for years in the seminary. Furthermore, he is the one who is ordained to preach and consecrate the sacraments. To give others the same title who do not have the training or the same kind of ordination undermines the position of the Pastor. On the other hand, very talented laymen have much to offer the Church and the Pastor. They may be much more experienced and qualified in certain areas. They need to be able to offer leadership to the Church. They don't need the same title as the Pastor, however, to do this. This only confuses matters. It is far better to have titles and functions, such as the Episcopal Church, where laymen can give valuable input and participate in the administration of the parish without being forced into some kind of rivalry because of confusion of title. Granted, the titles of office in the Episcopal Church may not be as Biblical in sound, but neither are some of the titles in other churches, such as Session and Consistory.

The Apostle Paul allowed for great flexibility regarding lay titles: Vestryman, Church Warden, Parish Council. He didn't specify what the wise men should be actually called (I Corinthians 6:5). He also permitted leeway on titles among Presbyters. He authorized these distinctions among Presbyters in terms of difference in degree and not kind. All Presbyters were allowed to preach, consecrate the sacraments, and administer discipline. Some, however, were given greater honor, which, although including money, meant more than money; honor means both! Historically, Presbyters with greater honor have been placed in charge of assisting the Bishop (initially in the training of Deacons), for which they are called Archdeacons. Or, they were appointed to help run the cathedral as Deans. Even in these cases, they still had certain Ecclesiastical functions in common. They were full Presbyters and not half Elders!

Nevertheless, the attempt on the part of various denominations to give laymen a role in the administration of the parish creates some parallels with the Biblical model and historic Anglicanism. But where these groups have gone too far

by actually ordaining permanent laymen, the office of Presbyter has been confused and diluted. They have forced additional practical problems to develop, such as in the case of large congregations where the system becomes clogged because of permanently ordained laymen on the board. Since they are ordained, how do they get off the board to make room for "new blood"? Some of these congregations have gone to rotation systems. But this puts ordained Elders off the active board and into the congregation, opening up the possibility of rival Elders, kind of like the problem King David had with all of his sons who were floating around in his kingdom but who were not ruling with him. Often, the ordained but rotating Elder also can lead to two congregations in one parish.

The Biblical and historic Anglican view of the Presbyter leads to a far better system of government. Presbyters are allowed to be Presbyters, but, laymen are also given the opportunity to be laymen and participate in parish leadership without damaging the office Presbyter.

Chapter Ten

Bishops

As the early Church continued to grow into entire geographic areas, it ordained the next level of captains, Bishops. Not all agree, however, that there are Bishops as distinguished from Presbyters in the New Testament. Many studies have been done regarding the use of the words presbuteros and episcopos. Some, even Episcopalian ones, have generally conceded that the words are always used interchangeably. It is my contention that sometimes these words are, but at other times they are not. Even if they are, the role of Bishop is conceptually found throughout the New Testament. I believe, however, that the various words themselves will confirm a Jethro model of Church hierarchy.

Indeed, the premise of this entire book has been that the Melchizedekkal priesthood imprints itself on Moses and Christ. Melchizedek ordained Jethro who advised Moses, the organizational structure being found in Exodus (Chapter 18) and Deuteronomy (Chapter 1). This priesthood is fulfilled in Christ and pulled through to the Church, for Christ is of the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7). When Peter called the Church a priesthood (I Peter 2:9), therefore, he was referring to the Melchizedekkal order. This being the case, the captains and courts system of Jethro applies to the Church, meaning there is a representative yet hierarchical arrangement of Church officers: Deacon, Presbyter, and Bishops. As we examine closely the New Testament we find a hierarchical arrangement, including Bishops, I begin with the fact of the existence of Bishops before proceeding to their function and qualifications.

Bishops in the New Testament

Timothy and Titus Argument

First, apart from the Melchizedekkal priesthood's structure itself, undoubtedly the strongest argument for Bishops is the fact that the Apostle Paul at the end of his ministry tells individuals, Timothy and Titus, to appoint Presbyters (Titus 6). Why doesn't he give this directive to the Presbytery? Instead, he uses Jethro-type language to describe their function. He says, "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality (I Timothy 5:21). With this solemn charge, the Apostle sounds a note quite similar to the

Melchizedekkal-Jethro advice to Moses,

Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, "Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him. You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's" (Deuteronomy 1:16-17).

According to this, the Apostle Paul gives almost identical instructions to Timothy, making him a captain over Presbyters since he as an individual is given specific authority to oversee the overseers. Timothy and Titus were not functioning like regular Presbyters. More importantly, this would have been the perfect opportunity at the end of Paul's ministry for him to call in a Presbytery (synod) if the Presbyterian system had been the government of the early Church. But he didn't. It was not as though the Presbytery was not fresh on his mind, for he mentions it in reference to Timothy's reception of a spiritual gift (I Timothy 4:15). And there were plenty of geographic courts such as Presbyteries or Synods around that part of the world. Why not send a commission, if the Presbyteries were too far away, as is customarily done in the Presbyterian world?

Instead, when Paul decides to leave his final legacy, he addresses individuals, Timothy and Titus, to perform what has been historically been called Episcopal functions, ordaining Presbyters and even exercising discipline (I Timothy 5:20). He speaks to them as having authority over other Presbyters, implying that they were the successors to an Ecclesiastical hierarchy. Whatever interpretation is placed on the use of individual words for Elder in the Pastorals, the simple fact that these letters give Episcopal authority to individuals should be seen as the larger context of interpreting whether episcopos refers to Bishop or Presbyter. It should be concluded, therefore, that the Pastoral Epistles (I & II Timothy, Titus) are actually manuals on the Episcopacy, forming one of the strongest arguments for pastoral hierarchy.

James Argument

Second, the role of James at the Jerusalem Council is the next most powerful argument in favor of Episcopal hierarchy. He functions as a Bishop figure at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) and in the Jerusalem Church thereafter. He is not an Apostle in the true sense of the Apostolic test; he is only a secondary Apostle. He is a Presbyter/Bishop. His function is clearly

Episcopal because he is not simply a moderator of one meeting but he functions as the captain of the Jerusalem Church. Notice that the text describes Paul's later visit to Jerusalem, "And he [Paul] went into James and the all elders were present" (Acts 21:8). Luke calls attention to the fact that Paul went to see James, meaning he was in charge. He doesn't say that Paul went to the Presbytery. Rather he distinguishes James from the others, which has to mean more than that he was simply the moderator. If James were only a moderator, why would special attention need to be called to him, unless he actually did hold a unique position as distinct from the other Presbyters? Mentioning him would have been otherwise unnecessary. On the other hand, however, neither were the other Presbyters irrelevant. The text also says, "the other elders were present," implying that James exercised oversight over the other elders but not to their exclusion. Thus, James was a standing, perpetual, pastor to other pastors.

Episcopal Messenger Argument

Three, by the end of the New Testament, city-churches have one Presbyter who functions as the Pastor over the other Presbyters, a Bishop. In the Book of Revelation, we read of letters that were sent to the "angel," literally messenger, of each Church (Revelation 2:1ff.) . Who was this "angel" or "messenger"? Was he a human or a heavenly being? The ancient Church, and some Reformational scholars such as Beza, for the most part understood this person to be a human, specifically a Bishop of the Church.¹⁸ The modern tendency of interpretation has been to reject this interpretation, although some formidable scholars such as Billerbeck have supported the Ancient position, "reviving an early conjecture that 'angel of the church' is a precise translation of the Hebrew phrase shaliach zibbor = one authorized by the congregation."¹⁹

The Ancients, however, generally defended the Bishop view on the basis of the Biblical use of "stars" and "messengers" to symbolize people, particularly Ecclesiastical officers. Daniel was told regarding a time when the leaders of the people of God would be, "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). And Malachi says, "For

¹⁸ Henry Alford, Alford's Greek Testament, Vol. IV, Part II (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, [1874] 1976), p.560.

¹⁹ G. R. Beasley-Murray, The New Century Bible Commentary: Revelation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1974] 1981), p.69.

the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. . . . Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight” (Malachi 1:7; 3:1).

These passages support the Bishop interpretation because they indicate a redemptive historical progression from the role of angels to humans in the Bible. In other words, Old Testament Scripture says that literal angels do have a role in leading the people of God and delivering messages (Exodus 23:20), but it also indicates that a time would come when man would take a more prominent role in leadership and specifically the angelic conflict. This is a progression from angel to man in the Bible, indicated in Malachi where the messenger becomes the ultimate messenger, Jesus Christ, who is not an angel at all but a man. So, in the New Testament, man is brought into the angelic conflict with the coming of Christ. Up to the Gospels there is not one single record of an exorcism, demons being cast out of men. Suddenly in the Gospels, however, men oppose demons. Indeed, the Apostle Paul tells the Ephesians that the war is not against flesh and blood but against angels, telling them therefore to put on their armor and implying that they (humans) are to engage angels. The Old Testament background portrays angels as representing human leaders and speaks of a day when the “stars” will be humans (Daniel 12:3). That day came when Christ called the disciples, “lights of the world” (Matthew 5:14) and the Apostle Paul described the Christians at Philippi as “stars” (Philippians 2:15; see the original Greek). Thus, it is not out of the question that the letters to the seven churches would be sent to the “angel” as a symbol for the human leader, the Bishop, especially in view of the immediate context.

The ancients held the Bishop view because of the symbolism of the immediate context in Revelation, where we are given a key to the correct interpretation. John records, “The seven stars are the angels, of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches. To the angel of the church of Ephesus write” (Revelation 1:20-2:1). Notice the relationship between the seven stars and seven angels, confirming the Old Testament background that referred to a day when the “stars” would be “leaders” in the Church. But more importantly, we are told that the “lampstand” symbolizes churches, actual realities in the physical world. Given the symbolism it is Biblically logical to conclude that if the lampstands are churches then the lights of those lampstands, the stars or angels, are the leaders of the churches. So, the “angel” is actually some kind of authority in the Church, a pastoral captain in the Biblical hierarchy who functions as a pastor to pastors, the Bishop. This

is consistent, as we would expect, with the earlier interpretation of the Pastoral Epistles.

In all likelihood, Revelation was the last book of the New Testament to be written.²⁰ And as I said, it indicates a redemptive historical development. But another redemptive development could also be in view. Perhaps the office of Bishop did develop later in the New Testament, explaining why the words presbuteros and episcopos are used interchangeably in some places in Scripture. The Ancient interpretation of the “angels” of the churches in Revelation would prove a later development. Perhaps not, however, for maybe the recipients of the letters prove that some sort of Episcopal office existed from the beginning of the Church. At least we can conclude that even if Revelation was the last book then the function of Bishop was already in existence fairly early. It is certain, however, that by the end of Scripture the office of Bishop, or what came to be called Bishop, had developed.

Historical Argument

Finally, the historic case for the Episcopacy should not be taken lightly. From the earliest Church Fathers (Ignatius, Polycarp, and Irenaeus), going back to the First Century (Ignatius), we read of an Episcopal structure: Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons. In the Western and Eastern Churches this polity was virtually uncontested until the Reformation. I know of no other practice in the church that can be so historically and universally proven for the first fifteen hundred years of the Church's existence, which by the way represents a consensus of interpretation of Holy Scripture. If for no other reason apart from Scripture itself, the Episcopacy ought to be seriously considered.

John Knox, the Sixteenth Century Scottish Reformer, altered the structure. He did so by adopting a monastic model²¹ which substituted an academic and pietistic standard of hierarchy and which still haunts Presbyterianism to this day. But one noted Presbyterian scholar, Geddes MacGregor, argues that even John Knox was not opposed to Episcopacy in principle, since he acquiesced to the Church of Scotland's appointment of an

²⁰ Kenneth L. Gentry, Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating of Revelation (Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

²¹ The Parish and the Parish Church

Archbishop of Aberdeen.²² In support of this view, he quotes from the First Book of Discipline in the Church of Scotland,

We consider that if the ministers whom God hath endowed with his singular graces amongst us, should be appointed to severall places there to make their continuall residence, that then the greatest part of the realme should be destitute of all doctrine; which should not onely be the occasion of the great murmur, but also be dangerous to the salvation of many. And therefore we have thought it a thing most expedient at this time, that from the whole number of godly and learned men, now presently in this realme, be selected ten or twelve (for in so many provinces we have divided the whole), to whom charge and commandment should be given to plant and erect kirkes [churches], to set, order, and appoint ministers And therefore nothing we desire more earnestly, than that Christ Jesus be universally once preached throughout this realme, which shall not suddenly be, unlesse that by you men be appointed and compelled, faithfully to travell in such provinces as to them shall be assigned.²³

MacGregor makes the simple observation that the Reformational Scottish Church thereby called for a division of Scotland into Bishoprics and requested that the ministers in charge of these areas be essentially given Episcopal authority. In addition, Andrew Melville, virtually Knox's replacement as a leader of the Scottish Church said, "The office of bishop, as it is now used and commonly taken within this realm, hath no sure warrant, authority, or good ground out of the Book and the Scriptures of God."²⁴ Geddes hastens to add, "Even this, however, is a condemnation of a particular system rather than of the principle of episcopal government itself."²⁵

MacGregor further states that Calvin was certainly not opposed to Episcopacy, having argued with some ambiguity in his seminal writings for the revival of Jerome's pastoral model of

²² Geddes MacGregor, Corpus Christi (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958), p.200.

²³ Ibid., pp. 199-200. Brackets mine.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 200-201. Emphasis mine.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 201. Emphasis mine.

the Episcopacy,²⁶ where the Bishop is viewed as a pastor to pastors or "First among equals" (Primus inter pares). Thus, Macgregor points out that the historic situation and not Scripture brought about the rejection of Episcopacy in Scotland and Geneva. In both cases, he says that the Bishops prior to the Reformation simply abandoned their sees, many times not being replaced at all, or if they were, the monarchs seized the opportunity to fill the vacancies with nobility and not clergy. He is forced to conclude that historic Presbyterianism is not opposed to Episcopacy, quoting G.D. Henderson, Master of Christ's College, Aberdeen, and ex-Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, "Episcopacy has unquestionable Bible warrant and no Presbyterian ever denied this."²⁷

Thus, the historic argument should not be underestimated, especially since the view of the Episcopacy that Calvin and the Reformers (even of Scotland) wanted has been revived in Evangelical Anglicanism, particularly the Reformed Episcopal Church of England, Canada, and America, the latter of which is now over a century old. What is this view of the Episcopacy that has historic roots in Scripture and the Church Fathers and yet one that would have been accepted by the Reformers had the historic situation been different? Having established the fact that there are Bishops in the New Testament, let us consider their function to discover this most ancient view of the Episcopacy.

The Chief Pastor

The Biblical model of the Bishop is that he is chief pastor under Christ. This pastoral model is Scripturally established as we look at two of the first Bishops in the Church, Timothy and Titus. From Paul's requirements of them, they were directed to be and do more than a Deacon or Presbyter. They were called to a pastoral role to pastors. Even the lists of qualifications given to them, so that they would not lay hands on the wrong people, point to a distinction between qualifications for Presbyters and Bishops.

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint Presbyters in every city as I commanded you ---

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 203-204. See also Calvin's Institutes, Book IV, Chapter IV.

²⁷ G.D. Henderson, The Claims of the Church of Scotland (London, 1951), p.81, cited in Geddes MacGregor, Corpus Christi, p.197.

if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

For a Bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict (Titus 1:5-9).

The Apostle Paul distinguishes between Presbyters and Bishops in the Pastoral Epistles, even though these words can sometimes be interchanged (Acts 20). Context obviously dictates and should not exclude the possibility that the words may be used to refer to different offices. For example, Paul tells Titus to appoint Presbyters (Greek is Presbuteroi) who are blameless, the Greek word is anenketos (Titus 1:6). Then he says, "For a bishop [Episkopos] must be blameless" (Titus 1:7). Unless Paul is distinguishing somehow between a Presbyter and a Bishop, he commits what is called a tautology. He says, "Appoint elders who are blameless because an elder must be blameless". It doesn't make sense with "A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" kind of argument. But, if Paul is instructing Titus as a Bishop, he is saying appoint Elders, who are pure, because a Bishop himself is supposed to be pure. The Apostle, in other words, wants to reproduce Godliness in the leadership of the Church. The standard in this case would be the Bishop, as we would expect. He himself is supposed to be blameless to appoint blameless leaders under him. Thus, the similarity of qualification actually supports the notion of two different offices.

Notice, however, that the lists of qualifications for Elder and Bishop are quite similar, the Bishop's list being much more extensive but essentially covering the same threefold ministry of Christ that we considered in the last chapter on the Presbyter. This explains why the Bishop is a Presbyter/Bishop, a Presbyter with special consecration and not separate ordination, as indicated in the historic prayer book of the Episcopal Church, the Book of Common Prayer. He is not separate from the other Elders and in a certain sense is accountable to them, preventing an autonomous Episcopacy.

Historically, there have been two models for the Episcopacy: The pastoral or Biblical model as opposed to the Princely or secular model. In the early Church, Bishops were pastors to pastors, being charged with the responsibilities outlined in the Pastoral Epistles. As the Roman Empire collapsed, however, the Bishop was forced to take a more magisterial role, often having

to fill two roles: Prince and Bishop. Eventually, a magisterial standard dominated the pastoral until the Bishop eventually / became simply an extension of the State, what has been called a prelate. The Biblical view of the Bishop, however, is pastoral and not magisterial. He is the chief pastor not the chief prince. This pastoral role of the Bishop becomes even more clear as we consider how the Bishop lives out the threefold ministry of Christ.

Threefold Ministry of the Bishop

Christ is the Good Shepherd who calls His ministers to be shepherds. He desires for His shepherding ministry to be conveyed through theirs. As such, what He did in His ministry is reflected in the continuing ministry of the Church. Since He was prophet, priest, and king, each office of the Church echoes His threefold ministry. This is especially true of the office of Bishop, the Chief Pastor of the Church. What Timothy and Titus are told to do, being two of the first Bishops, serves as an excellent model of the continuing threefold ministry of Christ. As I have already mentioned, many times students of Church government approach the Pastoral Epistles with a frame of mind to prove from the list of qualifications alone how many offices there are. In so doing, they miss the obvious, which is that they fail to take note of the ramifications of the imperatives given to Timothy and Titus, commands that place them as individuals in a role of authority over Presbyters and Deacons. So, not only do they fail to see the office of Bishop, but they do not recognize how the imperatives of the Pastorals mirror the threefold ministry of Christ in the Episcopacy.

First, the prophetic aspect of the office of Bishop: Since the prophet was a designated witness, Timothy and Titus are commanded to serve as an evangelical model to the Church. They are told by Paul to bear witness, doing the work of an evangelist (II Timothy 1:8; 4:5). From this we see that the Bishop's prophetic role is evangelical. He is to lead the Church in its expansion, being the embodiment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). This explains why historically the evangelical expansion of the Church has been most successful in terms of an Episcopal model. After all, Christ promised His special presence with the disciples as they carried out His Great Commission, meaning the Lord is especially present with the Bishop-led evangelical expansion: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the ends of the earth" (Matthew 28 : 20).

From a practical point of view, a hierarchical approach to expansion means the Church can grow in terms of a spiritual military campaign, not having to go through endless committees to

make key evangelistic decisions. Instead, the Bishop, like the prophet of old, could go into uncharted regions and take the Gospel. This explains why many times in the early Church, the Bishops were the first into new areas. For one, the Church believed that Christ's Great Commission presence was with the Bishop. For another reason, evangelical success required Church functions that only a Bishop was supposed to perform. Timothy and Titus are given the authority to ordain (I Timothy 5:12), a prophetic function since the prophet ordained priest and king in the Old Testament. Thus, it is a tremendous advantage to have the Bishop where the evangelism is taking place, because he is able to respond on the field to the expansion of the Church.

Second, the priestly aspect of the Bishop: The office of priest in the Bible is essentially feeding and guarding, as was noted in earlier chapters. Timothy and Titus are given several priestly responsibilities (in the Melchizedekkal sense). They are told to teach and uphold the doctrine of the Church (I Timothy 6:3; II Timothy 4:2). They are to feed the word but they are to be the guardians of the historic teachings of the Church, explaining why they are told to avoid "old wives' fables" (I Timothy 4:7). They were also to guard the integrity of the Church, being told to protect the purity (II Timothy 2:14,16,19,22).

The Bishop as such is supposed to be the master theologian of the Church. He was not to be an innovator; rather, he was to uphold and defend the Faith once given. For centuries the Church did not normally separate the theological office (Doctor) from the Episcopal office. The Bishop was the best theological mind of the church because he was not only supposed to be the best teacher but the best defender of the system. When the academic was separated from the Episcopal, however, it was not long before the academic was altogether severed from the Ecclesiastical, the Church, and knowledge was secularized. The Episcopal office, therefore, is vitally necessary to restore the integration of all knowledge into theology so that once again theology is the queen of the sciences.

The Bishop is also supposed to guard the morality of the Church. He himself must be pure and he must uphold the purity of the others, especially the clergy. He represents Christ and His people. Not to maintain righteousness reflects badly on both.

Third, the kingly aspect of the Bishop: The kingly office is pastoral. The king was to lead like a shepherd with wisdom, functioning as a symbol of unity. He was not located in any one local area; he was given authority over the whole realm. As such he could hear disputes and pass judgment. Timothy and Titus play a unifying role for the Apostle Paul. They are told to greet

various people around the Church (II Timothy 4:19-20; Titus 3:15), facilitating good will and communication. The Bishop serves a similar role. He is a symbol of the church-at-large because he has authority over more than one church. As such, he is able to move among the churches and speak on behalf of the entire church with authority. He is not a committee, in other words. He can function to unite the Church, communicating and drawing together the work going on throughout the Church.

Timothy and Titus were also given the authority to carry out discipline (I Timothy 5:19-20), a kingly function. The king was to hear cases appealed to him from the lower captains, because he served as the presiding officer of the highest court. In some instances, he would have to apply discipline to the community by punitive measures. The Bishop in a similar manner serves as a person of appeal. The advantage he has over other systems is that he can respond in a pastoral way to help the local Presbyter. He is a Bishop, so he has authority to act on behalf of the larger body while at the same time being accountable to the Synod. He has his own council of advice usually called a Standing Committee, consisting of clergy and laity who can be called for input. Nevertheless, he can provide “outside” counsel, an objective plurality of rule. He can be removed yet personally involved if necessary, a great advantage that only the Episcopal structure can provide. He counsels Presbyter and Parishioner so that both receive wisdom from more than one source. But, he is from outside the immediate local situation so as to provide the best possible resolution to matters.

Furthermore, the Bishop can respond much quicker than commissions and committees. He is authorized to act on behalf of the larger Church while at the same time being accountable for his actions. This is a tremendous advantage when dealing with problems. I recently heard of a church in one of the Presbyterian denominations that literally shut down before the Presbytery could convene, make a decision, send a committee, and respond to the situation. When working with committees, such is the problem. Pastoral concerns are not able to be met expeditiously.

Then there are situations where the Bishop presence is important where discipline is needed. He can be there in a relatively short period of time to support Presbyter and parish. For this reason, in the ancient Church whenever a person was excommunicated the Bishop would come and stand with the local presbyter, demonstrating that the whole Church was standing behind the discipline. Yet, because he does represent the Church at large, he is responsible to see that discipline is maintained in the Church. He makes certain that disputes are handled faithfully. If there are any problems with unfaithful clergy, he

must clean house; the buck stops with him. At least there is, however, someone to whom the Church can look and say, "The buck stops here," as opposed to being like a bunch of monkeys pointing to each other when asked, "Who's in charge here?"

Thus, the Bishop is Chief Pastor under Christ, the Good Shepherd. He conveys the threefold ministry of Christ to the Church: prophet, priest, and king, just as we have seen in all of the offices of the Church. He is not only a representative of Christ but the embodiment, representatively, of the whole Church. He is to be what Christ is, because he is also what the Church is supposed to be.

Apostolic Succession

One question remains to be answered: What connection if any does the Episcopacy have to the Apostles? According to my understanding, Scripture implies that Bishops have a historic relationship to the Apostles but they are not the same as apostles; they do not exclusively represent the Apostolic order.

First, Bishops have a historic succession from the Apostles. After Christ ascended, Peter called the remaining apostles together to select a replacement for Judas. He quotes Psalms saying, "Let his habitation be desolate, and let no one live in it; and, let another take his office" (Acts 1:20). The Greek word for office is literally episcopos, the same root word for Episcopacy or Bishop. In other words, the office of the apostle was called a Bishopric.

For this reason, James who was a secondary apostle, the prototype of a Bishop, could exercise authority over the Apostles, raising a question: "Was he ordained by Presbyters, the Apostles, or both?" According to Jerome, one of the four great Doctors of the Church, he was set apart by the Presbytery or Synod, making succession purely in terms of the Presbytery. According to others, he and other Bishops first received consecration by the Apostles. The problem with this interpretation is that the historic progression of the development of office in the Book of Acts is from Deacon (Acts 6), to Presbyter (Acts 14), and then to Bishop (Acts 15), James. No mention is made of a Bishop figure until James. Perhaps a third alternative would be that James was set apart by both Apostles and Presbyters, explaining his position of authority over both at Jerusalem. This would mean that the Episcopacy has historic succession back to the Apostles, but Appstolic Succession *per se* does not reside only in the Episcopacy. It involves the Episcopacy and the Presbytery so that the Church does not cease to be a Church if there are no Bishops. Thus, when the Apostles

died off, Bishops such as Timothy and Titus were left in their place, being similar but importantly also being different.

Second, Bishops are not the same as the Apostles. Because Bishops became successors does not mean they are identical. The best example is Christ Himself. He appointed the Apostles to succeed Him but they were not sinless; they never were nor could they ever be the Christ. In a similar way, the first Bishops were not the same as the Apostles. They had not been with Christ during His earthly ministry and seen His Resurrection. They were similar but different.

Thus, Bishops are necessary for the well-being (*bene esse*) of the Church but not for the being (*esse*). Apostolic succession does not reside exclusively in them. It is in the Word, the sacraments, and the discipline of the Church, as well as priesthood of all believers. Because the Episcopacy is an organizational expression of this believer priesthood, what is called the Melchizedekkal priesthood, it is necessary for the best rule, but its absence does not mean the Church does not exist. For example, picture a series of concentric circles such as is pictured below.

In the center is the Word of God, the ultimate authority of the church. Next are the sacraments and discipline. Around them is the priesthood of all believers and finally there is the

Episcopacy, representing the most effective rule of the Church. If the outside layer is stripped off, the priesthood and everything else still stands. The Church can still be a Church and function.

As a matter of fact, other forms of Episcopacy, as a substitute (Superintendents, and so forth), will develop even though they will be second best. In situations in history where the Episcopacy has not been available, this is precisely what has happened. But, as the Church matures and if it matures, the well-being of the Church comes in view and the Episcopacy is established. To be established, however, the existing historic Episcopacy found in only three churches, Anglican (English), Orthodox, and Roman Catholicism, is necessary to form proper Episcopal orders. These are the only Episcopacies who can trace their consecrations back to the Apostles. As is the case with each office, the laying on of hands by those who historically precede in a given office is required, thereby preventing self-made Church authority. Therefore, the Biblical Episcopacy is historic and Apostolic, having a linear connection in time back to the early Church, but it does not possess exclusively the Apostolic order.

In conclusion, the Episcopacy is a Biblical office. The Bishop is Chief Pastor, imaging the threefold ministry of Christ in his office. He plays an important role in the well-being of the Church, even though he is not necessary for a church to exist. With Godly Bishops, the Church functions better than it does without them. Thus, the notion of Bishops is absolutely consistent with the Word of God, being rooted in their origin in the Apostles themselves.

Chapter Eleven

Comparisons

There are three forms of Church structure: Hierarchical, Bureaucratic, and Independent. A brief comparison of these systems will summarize the differences, highlighting why a hierarchical church is a superior system.

The Hierarchical Church

For some, hierarchy is a bad word. They often think of a static tyranny. A true hierarchy, however, is neither static nor a tyranny. A Biblical hierarchy is a representative system of government. It has hierarchy, preventing some kind of anarchy: not everyone does the same thing, has the same rank, or the same position. It is also a government where the people are involved in the selection process, preventing tyranny. The only Ecclesiastical system to have true, Biblical hierarchy is the Episcopal system. Notice in the diagram that all four aspects that we observed in the Melchizedekkal form of government are present.

First, there are captains, pastoral figures at each level who are identifiable leaders. They are elected by the people and ordained by other captains, or the next higher level of captains as the case may be. For, there is a hierarchy of captains, as Jethro and Christ taught, preventing the tyranny of parity. They have permanent ordinations even though they may be temporary in the positions they hold. Even so, they function pastorally and authoritatively between business meetings. They have a continuing (standing) role to play from the parish up to the highest level, especially the Bishops. The Bishops can act on behalf of the larger body allowing for the most efficient use of time, money, and manpower. They have their Standing Committees of advice. Nevertheless, they can act in official capacity for the denomination.

But, second, there are courts. Every captain (and everyone else as well) is always accountable to the larger group by means of several layers of courts. Even the Bishops are answerable in some sense to the denomination as a whole, clergy and laity. Some Episcopal structures allow the Bishops to exist in a separate and virtually legally untouchable status. In this system, they are not accountable to anyone but other Bishops. Such a view of the Episcopacy has nearly destroyed the Episcopal Church. For example, in the Protestant Episcopal Church of

America in the 1950s, a notoriously liberal but famous Bishop apostatized. He began to experiment with drugs (LSD, Marijuana, and so forth) as well as the occult; eventually, he died in a Californian desert. In the opinion of many, he was a Rubicon for the Protestant Episcopal Church. Why? He was not disciplined by the Church.

Again I ask, “Why?” When the Bishops threatened to discipline him, he, being also a trained lawyer by profession, returned the threat by vowing to sue the entire Church before the civil court. The Bishops essentially capitulated. Since then, the Bishops of this Church have been virtually unchecked in their doctrinal beliefs and moral behavior. The reason is not hard to see. The Bishops had grown to become an entity to themselves. The rest of the Church couldn't discipline them because they were not accountable. Historically, this has not always been the case, as the structure of the Reformed Episcopal Church demonstrates. The Bishops of this church are accountable not only to themselves but to the entire General Council, meaning other clergy as well as laymen. Thus, this Biblical hierarchy has captains along with several checks and balances at every level.

Third, there is symmetry. Each level matches the other, having captains and courts from the General Council level to the Synod, and even down to the parish. There is no imbalance.

Fourth, there is a system of participation. The system, because it is hierarchical yet pastoral is set up like a giant discipleship model. Notice that the laity are heavily engaged in the work of the ministry. At every level, they are the ones actually doing the work of ministry. This is a system that more than any other has fostered true democracy. In fact, the important book, Parish and Parish Church, proves that the real spirit of democracy in the West grew out of the Episcopal system that operated with Vestries.²⁸ Historically, the Vestry did many tasks from taking care of the pastor to making sure the roads in the community were kept repaired so that the Gospel could continue to go forth. Remember, it was this atmosphere that produced laity who drafted and who called for King John to sign the Magna Carta. True Biblical hierarchy does not produce a passive society. It engages the laity in an orderly manner with a sense for division of labor.

The Bureaucratic Church

Bureaucracies are deceptive in many ways. Sometimes, a system is a bureaucracy and the people do not know it. Such is the case with the Presbyterian model.

²⁸ Parish and Parish Church, pp.108-134.

First, there are captains, but they can never act officially without a group: commission, committee, and so forth. This makes pastoral response difficult. Many times pastoral action is prohibited because a group is involved. For this reason, the disputes in this system tend to move in the direction of judicial and not pastoral solutions. How can pastoral action be taken when by definition the accompanying group turns the situation into a court?

Furthermore, there are no Bishops so any unresolved disagreement at the parish level goes straight to the next largest court, the Presbytery. For this to happen, the parties have to wait until the Presbytery meets or is convened, which may be months away from the time when a response is needed. Then, when the matter gets to the Presbytery the appeals process may take up to a year or even years. I know of one dispute that took eight years to resolve. In the mean time the parties lived in other parts of the country and the local church had dissolved. And, speaking of dissolved churches, I know of another situation where a church had a dispute, and because it took the Presbytery four months to convene and assign a commission to respond, the church had already disbanded. In the Episcopal system, the Bishop can be to a problem within a matter of hours from any part of the country. He can come even sooner if he is close at hand.

Second, there are courts in the bureaucratic system. There is also an appeals system. Courts and appeals systems are good and necessary. But, the only problem is in the delays that a system without captains can create. The wheels of justice turn so slowly that they spin in the dirt, going nowhere and accomplishing no justice.

Third, there is a breakdown of symmetry. Notice that the pastor at the congregational level is a standing pastor. He continues to act on behalf of the Session between meetings, ministering to people and dealing with problems. But, at the Presbytery and General Assembly level there is no person comparable to the pastor of the local level. This is an extreme imbalance in the system, creating breakdowns in the ministry. Imagine a local church without a pastor. How would it last? Not very long, because some and even most people need personal and pastoral attention. So it is at all levels of the Church. Congregations as a whole and Presbyteries need pastoral attention by individuals who are set apart to address these needs. The local group needs to be disciplined by someone who is part of larger body but personally involved. In other words, they need Bishops!

The only person who comes close to a captain at the higher level is a position called a Stated Clerk. But notice that even

the title is non-pastoral and bureaucratic. Technically, he is the expert on the-Church constitution, usually called a Book of Church Order. All he is supposed to do is render interpretation. He is legally not able to enter the process in any pastoral way. Besides, if he does, his counsel is not binding. Many a young pastor, as I know all too well from experience, has been counseled one way by the Stated Clerk only to find that the Presbytery can overturn the Clerk's advice and ruling. At that point, the pastor is hung on the Clerk's petard! The fact that such a position exists, however, creates an even greater imbalance to the system.

Fourth, there are many barriers to healthy participation. Since the real action of the Church is all official and juridical, the parishioners tend to get involved by waging legal disputes with each other. After all, this is how the system works and this is how real participation occurs.

Thus, the Presbyterian system tends toward a polit bureau type of bureaucracy. There are commendable features to the system, such as representational leadership, plurality, and courts. But unfortunately, there are not captains at the upper levels of the courts.

The Independent Church

The Independent Church is a complete reaction to the other two. Prior to the Reformation, this kind of structure was considered a cult. Since the Reformation, the Independent Church has had to be considered situation by situation on the basis of the historic creeds of the faith. Some are legitimate and most are not. Even the ones that are orthodox today may not be tomorrow. They usually go as fast as they come.

First, there are captains but no real ones beyond the local church. The pastor in this system is on his own. If he is successful he builds a mega-church (Which is also the same problem with Presbyterianism). He can't decentralize into other churches because he completely loses control. He can't be a Bishop so he becomes a super-pastor. If on the other hand, he does not do so well in the pastorate, he has nowhere to turn. He is left strictly speaking to a "sink or swim" proposition, not being disciplined by an older more experienced pastor, He can't be, because he and everyone else is independent, sinking or swimming independently.

Second, there are courts but not beyond the local church. Problems that are not bigger than the congregation can be worked out. But many problems are bigger than the congregation can

handle. Sometimes accusations so serious are made and disputes become so big that the local situation needs a court of appeal. Since there is none, Church disputes tend to move toward the state, exactly what the Apostle Paul warned against (I Corinthians 6: Iff.) I believe that this explains the implicit Statist mentality of the American Baptist culture. It also clarifies why the Southern Baptist culture of the South is so public school oriented. The irony of the Independent Church is that it becomes of necessity a Statist Church because it lacks its own internal court system beyond the local church.

Third, there is an antagonistic symmetry. Notice the inherent conflict over who is in control at the local level. Is the Board of Deacons or the Pastor in control? Usually there is a battle. Any good Baptist minister knows that his first battle at any church is the Board of Deacons. He must put them down and show them that he is in charge. This is how an independent in an independent system should operate. But, the Deacons are thinking the same way. They are saying to themselves, "This preacher boy trained at that fancy seminary is not going to control us We're independent." And so, the conflict ensues.

But, there is another battle for the preacher at an independent church: the Women's Group. Notice that this group is not under the Board of Deacon's authority. Nor is it under the Pastor. Thus, the Women's Group is the key to controlling a Baptist Church. Whoever allies with it wins the day. The truly illumined pastor knows this!

Fourth, there is a self-centered participation. An independent mind-set breeds a selfish attitude toward the church. The issue is, "What's in it for me and my family?" People come to Church as independents, focusing on the preacher, the choir, the youth group and so forth. When their particular reason for coming is no longer there, then they are gone to some other independent church. Why? There is no commitment to the larger church that transcends personalities or personal preferences.

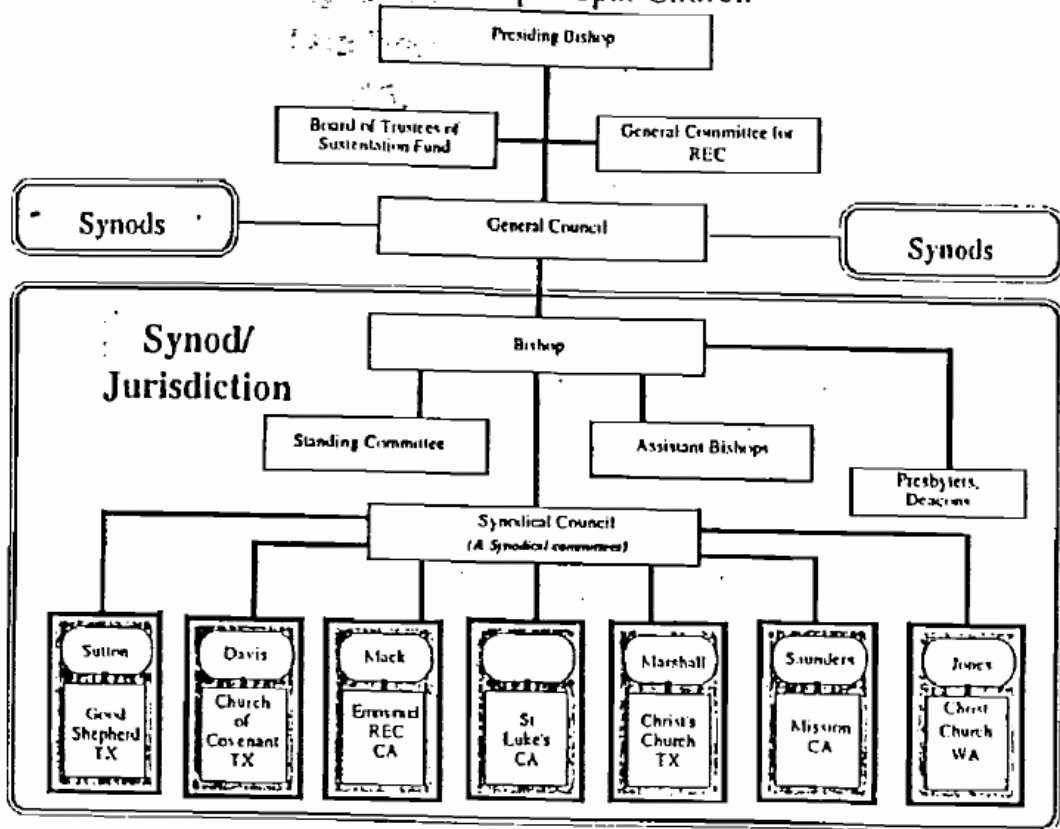
Thus, Independent churches are extremely unstable. The only ones that last for any period of time are those ones that form some sort of associations. These larger groups of fellowships can begin to offset some of the weaknesses that I've pointed out. But if they move beyond the local church they start to erode their whole reason for being independent. They either disintegrate or they evolve in the direction of the larger body. But since independency is usually so closely aligned orthodoxy in the minds of independents, the only way they can become part of a larger group is to give up both orthodoxy and independency. So, they move toward liberalism at a break-neck speed, which has certainly been

the historic case with virtually every independent group. This explains why the Independents, and the Presbyterians for that matter, went liberal way before the Episcopal groups, if we include Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy.

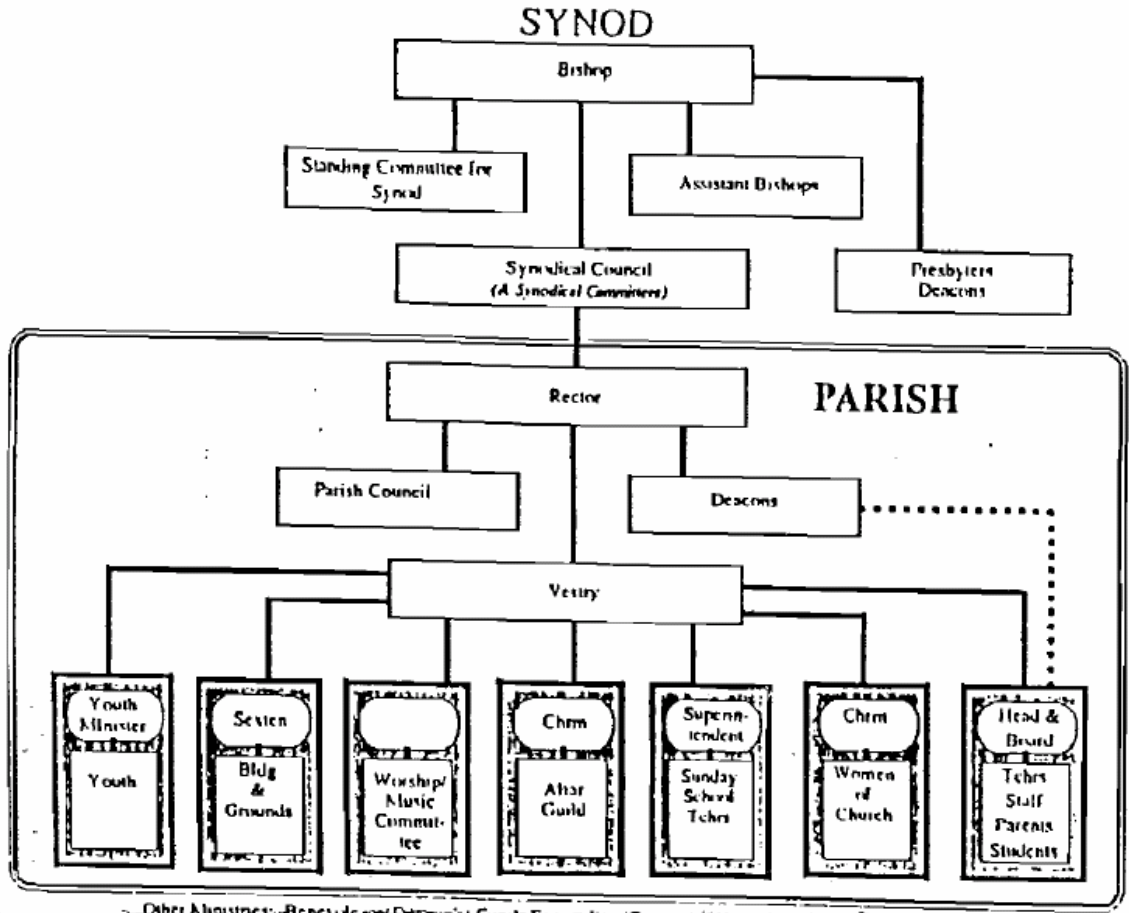
In the final analysis, the historic Church structure based on the Melchizedekkal model is the best because it was given by God. It avoids the pitfalls of bureaucracy and independency. It has captains, courts, symmetry, and participation. Consequently, it is able to maintain all of these aspects with a sense of balance. It is the best of all possible worlds!

(The following pages contain graphical representations of the various forms of church government discussed in this book.)

Reformed Episcopal Church

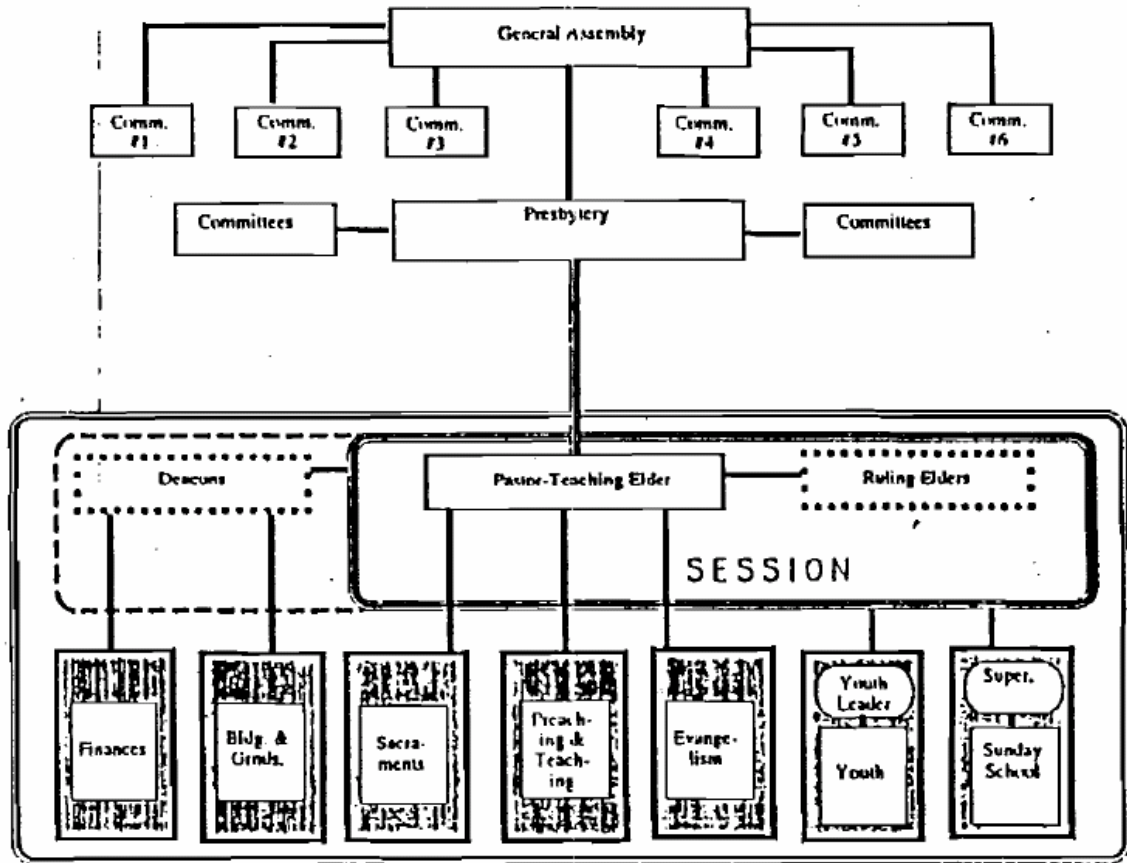


Other Parishes & Mission works: Rev. Card _____



Other Ministries: Benevolence, Women's Fund, Home Outreach, Hospitality, Liturgical Days
 EVERY CHURCH MEMBER IS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Presbyterianism



Baptist/Independent

