helpless (like Joseph in the cistern); they have to surrender, fulfil all the conditions Joseph has imposed on them, but still they are called robbers. Finally, they have to confess their sins (Gen. 44:16), they repent (Gen. 42:21), ask for forgiveness (Genesis 50:17), surrender and submit themselves (Gen. 50:18), as they realise that they would not find any other way out. In Gen. 44:14 they call themselves "servants"! In the Koran, we only find a pale reflection of all this. The brothers consent to Joseph being in some way "superior" to them (12:91) and they vaguely confess their "sin" (12:97), but there is no visible change in their attitude.

9.   In the Bible, Joseph realises how merciful God is in dealing with him as he releases him from prison and gives back to him what he had lost. Seeing that he cannot change his destiny (as he tried to speak up for himself to get out of prison), but that God is in control of everything and has helped him out of perhaps the darkest place in the whole of Egypt, makes him merciful towards other people. So he can forgive his brothers and not take revenge when he had the opportunity. In the Koran, the main intention of Joseph's mission is to proclaim monotheism (12:38, 40, 106). Aspects like showing mercy or forgiving those who do not deserve it do not seem to be of any importance for the Joseph story in the Koran.

10. In the Bible, the last verses of the account of Joseph belong perhaps to the most touching ones in this story and also in the whole of Scripture: Joseph completely denies the possibility of taking revenge for all he had to endure. His brothers confess that they had wickedly sold him to Egypt, but Joseph tells them three times, that *God* sent him to Egypt, not them: "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save

lives that *God sent me* ahead of you . . . But *God sent me* ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance . . . So then, *it was not you who sent me here, but God*. He made me father to Pharoah" (Gen. 45:5–8). After the death of his father, Joseph was moved to tears when he realised that his brothers were still afraid of his wrath. They kneel before him, but Joseph says: "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives . . ." (Gen. 50:20). God brought about insight, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. He saves his people from death and carries out what brings about salvation for Israel as well as for Egypt.

In the Koran, we completely miss these aspects, which make the story of Joseph in the Bible so precious. How much more shallow reads the last sentence of the Koran: "O my Lord! . . . You are my protector in this world and in the hereafter. Take my soul as one submitting to your will (as a Muslim) and unite me with the righteous" (12:101). Joseph is only one of the long line of predecessors of Muhammad in the course of history, since God has ordained him to be a preacher of Islam. As a prophet, he knows for sure that his victory will come, as an honoured prophet of God does not have to suffer. A messenger of Allah is not left helpless, abandoned and alone, he does not have to learn what God wants to teach him about mercy and forgiveness, because humiliation, disgrace, slander and defeat are not meant for a prophet of God. Joseph is more the "hero" type in Surah 12 than a servant and a tool in God's hands. Muhammad has cut the biblical Joseph story to the size he needed in order to illustrate his own situation. No wonder there is not much of the biblical report left over. *C&S*

Church Government:
The Three Levels of Government in the New Testament Church[†]

by Thomas Schirrmacher
(Translated by Cambron Teupe)

ALL New Testament apostles and authors agree that Christ is the absolute Head of the Church, and that no one else can usurp that role. For this reason, he can bear any leadership title: "Bondservant" (Phil. 2:7, as well as in Matthew and in Acts), "Servant" (Rom. 15:8; Lk. 22:27), "Apostle" (Heb. 3:1, cf. Mk. 9:37, Lk. 10:16; Jn. 3:34), "Teacher" (Mt. 23:8,

[†] This essay is an abridgement of a chapter in the author's book *Ethics* (*Ethik*, 2002, third edition, Vol. 5).

Jn. 13:13. The Greek term *didaskalos* appears 58 times in the Gospel, the Aramaic *rabbi* 15 times.), "Overseer" or "Bishop" (1 Pet. 2:25), "Shepherd" (1 Pet. 2:25, Heb.13:20, Jn. 10:11–14), "Chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4), "Cathechet" (Mt. 23:10), "Lord" (appears 100 times in the New Testament), "Master" (7 times in the four Gospels). Above all, Jesus is the highest priest ("High Priest" or "Chief Priest") of his Church (Heb. 2:17, 4:14–15, 5:10, 6:20, 7:26–27, 8:1, 9:11, 10:21).

Note that Jesus is not only Head of the universal Church, but also of the local congregation, as 1 Cor. 12:14–21 makes clear. His leadership has very practical consequences for

the local Church and for its structure (see 1 Pet. 5:1–4, Jn. 13:13–17, Mt. 23:8–12). We find here, by the way, a typical example of apparent inconsistency. All authors agree that Jesus can use any title, but apply different titles in different situations. (We do not know which other titles might have been used, but do not appear in the texts which have been handed down to us.)

In the New Testament, the local Church always originated with the proclamation of the gospel by itinerate believers (either fleeing persecution or simply emigrating), by evangelists, apostles or their assistants. It was the apostles' responsibility to ordain local elders, who then led the congregation under the supervision of leaders responsible for several Churches, while the apostles tried to reach new areas for the gospel (see 1 Thess. 1 and Rom. 15:14–33[1]).

The apostle, his colleagues and his successors led the Churches until elders had been appointed, but continued to hold an authoritative position, described as "father" (1 Cor. 4:14–16; 3 Jn. 4). The local Church ruled itself, on the one hand, but was responsible to the apostles and their assistants and successors, on the other. Paul's relationship to the Church in Corinth best demonstrates this principle.

From the very beginning, the government of the local New Testament Church consisted of several elders and deacons elected to office on the basis of their good reputation (Acts 6:3, Tit. 1:5–9, 1 Pet. 5:1–4). For this reason, Paul, Luke and Peter determined and handed down lists of qualifications. Beside a good reputation, spiritual gifts were required. As these cannot be closely conceptualised, we find quite varied and always fragmentary lists, consisting only of examples.[2] Both Paul and Peter speak of spiritual gifts (1 Pet. 4:10–11), which determine the individual's ministry (1 Cor. 12:4–7). As some are important for leadership ("some . . . apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers"—Eph. 4:11), various offices are named after them ("apostles and elders" for example, in Acts 15:6 and 23, 16:4; or "prophets and teachers" in Acts 13:1–3).

The Scripture does not distinguish between professional and lay ministry. It does, however, describe the appointment to "full-time" service in the sense that proven, gifted Christians were ordained by the spiritual leaders and by the Church to offices and duties which required the individual's complete time and energy. As in the Old Testament[3] (1 Cor. 9:13, Lev. 6:16, 26, Lev. 7:6, 31ff., Num. 5:9–10, 18:8–20, 31 [particularly verse 10]; Dt. 18:1–4; cf. the tithe[4]) these New Testament Church workers were paid by the congregation as a matter of course (1 Cor. 9:1–18, particularly verse 14, 1 Tim. 5:17–18, 2 Tim. 2:4, 6). Paul writes very plainly to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:4), "No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him a soldier." It was not the salary, however, which distinguished the professional minister, but the priority he put on that service, which determined the use of his time. According to our contemporary definition, Paul, for example, was only a lay worker as mission leader, because he earned a living

for himself *and* his colleagues (Acts 20:33–35, 1 Thess. 2:9, 1 Cor. 9:12, 2 Cor. 11:5–9, Acts 18:3). His colleagues would therefore be considered "full-time," but it is Paul whom we see as the prototype of a full-time Christian worker.

I believe that we have too few full-time workers in the Church and in mission. In the Old Testament, a whole tribe, the Levites, were appointed to serve God's people full-time. Many were priests, others teachers, musicians or legal advisors. They lived on the tithes. The amount of the tithe, ten percent, demonstrates God's evaluation of the need for full-time workers.

Let's carry the principle of paying the priests and the Levites over into the Church. Is there no contradiction between paying the deacons and elders (pastors) and the general priesthood of all believers? Both Peter and John speak of a priesthood consisting of all Christians: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation . . ." (1 Pet. 2:9). Jesus has "made us kings and priests . . ." (Rev. 1:6), but this is, as a matter of fact, the renewal of an Old Testament reality, for the Law of Moses had already declared God's people to be a general priesthood. "And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6, See Is. 61:6). The general priesthood of believers in the New Testament no more contradicts the necessity of deacons, pastors, and bishops, than the general priesthood of believing Jews contradicts the necessity of Levites, priests and high priests in the Old. Israel had, as a nation, a priestly ministry to the world, but only a certain group of people carried it out on a professional basis. The same principle is valid in the New Testament.

For this reason, the New Testament emphasises the special position of the offices of Church leadership. In Philippians 1:1, Paul greets "all the saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi" on the one hand, and, on the other hand, particularly the "bishops (or overseers) and deacons." The exhortation to the Church to submit to the full-time workers is very clear: "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). ". . . and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints—that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labours with us" (1 Cor. 16:15–16). "And we urge you, brethren, to recognise those who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. 5:12–13).

Objecting to its meaning in the Roman Church, John Calvin opposed the use of the term "clergyman," but wrote: "It was in itself, however, a most sacred and salutary institution, that those who wished to devote themselves and their labour to the Church should be brought up under the charge of the bishop; so that no one should minister in the Church, unless he had been previously well trained, unless he had in early life imbibed sound doctrine, unless by stricter discipline he had formed habits of gravity and severer morals, been withdrawn from ordinary business, and accustomed to spiritual cares and studies."[5] On Ephesians 4:1–16, he added: "By these words he shows that the ministry of men, which God employs in governing the Church, is a principal bond

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1. See the commentary on this text in Thomas Schirrmacher, *Der Römerbrief* (Hänssler: Neuhausen, 1994), Vol. 2, pp. 291–297.

2. See Thomas Schirrmacher, *Ethik*, Chapter 24 (Hänssler: Neuhausen, 1994), Vol. 2, pp. 87–98.

3. See Walter C. Kaiser, "The Current Crisis in Exegesis and the Apostolic Use of Deuteronomy 25:4 in 1 Corinthians 9:9–10," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21 (1978), 1: 3–18.

4. See Thomas Schirrmacher, *Ethik*, Vol. 2, pp. 432–441.

5. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994, translated by Henry Beveridge), p. 333 (Book IV, Ch. 4, Section 9).

by which believers are kept together in one body. He also intimates, that the Church cannot be kept safe, unless supported by those guards to which the Lord has been pleased to commit its safety . . ."[6]

Korah's rebellion is an Old Testament example of wrongly-understood democracy. They "rose up" (or "gathered together") against Moses (Num. 16:2, 11) by questioning the absolute claims of Moses and of his law on the wrongly understood premise that "*all are holy*" (Num. 16:1–13). The congregation participates in the appointment of the deacons, elders and bishops through the means of election, but we cannot simply disregard the government structure designed by God. John uses Diotrephes, however, as an negative example of a single, tyrannical leader, who wanted to dominate the Church (3 John). Spiritual leadership is, therefore, not licence (see 1 Pet. 5:3: "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock"). As we will see, it is also possible to bring an action against an elder.

The apostolic council, for example, consisted of the full-time leaders of the congregations. "Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter" (Acts 15:6). Still, the "whole church" played a certain role beside the elders and apostles, as well (Acts 15:4, 22). At the end of the first Christian synod, we are told, "Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company . . ." (Acts 15:22).

Here again are two errors to avoid, overrating of the office of spiritual leadership, and underrating it. I believe that the New Testament Church structure consisted of three levels of leadership (deacons, elders, regional conference),[7] although only two terms are used. Above the deacons were the presbyter or elders—leaders of the local congregation—and over them, those responsible for several Churches, such as Timothy or Titus, who held no "office" specifically defined in Scripture.

The Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran and some Reformed denominations have retained this classic terminology: "The orders are the episcopate, the presbyterate and the diaconate"[8] (whereby the various confessions interpret the third, supraregional level differently, and I understand this level completely differently than the Churches mentioned above).

I would like to begin with the second level, since this office represents the leadership of the local congregation, and since most denominations agree on most aspects concerning it. Then we will investigate the first level, the deaconate, which is also generally fairly uniform, although we will have to go into a little more detail when we deal with the issue of women deacons. Finally, we will discuss the third level, and investigate the issue of the existence of supraregional authority over the New Testament congregations. This question will take up the most space because of the wide range of interpretations and practice among the various denominations.

The Second Level of Government: Elders (Pastors)

The New Testament refers to the second level of leadership in several different ways: "rulers" (Heb. 13:17), "those who are over you" (1 Thess. 5:12), "pastors" (i.e. "shepherds"—(Eph. 4:11), "elders" (Tit. 1:5), and "overseers" or "bishops" (1 Tim. 3:1, Phil. 1:1). The titles "overseers" and "bishops" can be used interchangeably. Acts 20 describes "elders" (20:17) who have been appointed as "overseers" and who, like shepherds, are to take heed for the flock (20:28). 1 Peter 5:1–4 admonishes the elders to "shepherd the flock of God"; the Chief Shepherd is Christ, and Peter a fellow elder. Titus 1:7 speaks of "elders" who are to be appointed, but in verse 5, Paul defines the qualities required of an "overseer."

The elders were involved in the ministry full-time, not merely in teaching, and usually received a salary. The arguments for paying Church workers in leadership positions are usually formulated with apostles, elders and traveling ministers in view. The elders in the New Testament Church were equivalent to our pastors, but not to laymen who served the Church only in their free time. Scripture draws a parallel to the salary of the priests and the Levites. In 1 Corinthians 9:13–14, the salaries of the priests and Levites are used to justify provision for the elders and apostles (Compare Lev. 6:16, 26; 7:6, 31ff.; Num. 5:9–10; 18:8–20, 31, particularly verse 10; Dt. 18:1–4. Compare the tithe.) In 1 Cor. 9:7–10, Paul refers to Dt. 25:4, "Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.' Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does he say it altogether for our sakes?" Similarly, in 1 Tim. 5:17–18, he refers to the same text and to Jesus' words in Matthew 10:10, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain' and 'the labourer is worthy of his wages'." According to these statements, not only were the elders (presbyter) to be paid, but anyone primarily involved in ministry was to carry greater responsibility and to receive higher wages.

In the original languages of the Old and New Testaments, the word for "honour" could also refer to a salary or to money, as is obviously the case here (see examples in the singular form: Mt. 27:6, Acts 5:2, 7:16, 1 Cor. 6:20, 7:23; in the plural: Acts 4:34, 19:19). Besides, Scripture repeatedly emphasises that money or goods can and should be employed to express respect. "Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first-fruits of all your crops" (Pr. 3:9). Paul mentions an offering made to "honour the Lord himself," (2 Cor. 8:19), and admonishes Timothy to honour true widows by providing them with a pension[9] (1 Tim. 5:1–2) and relates taxes and customs to the honour due to the State (Romans 13:7).

The classical Presbyterian tradition, to which I belong,

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6. *Ibid.*, p. 317 (Book IV, Ch. 3. Section 2).

7. I thank Ray R. Sutton for giving me a copy of his unpublished manuscript *Captains and Courts: A Biblical Defense of Episcopal Government*, 96 pp., Philadelphia (PA), 1992. Beside this Reformed-Episcopal study see a Lutheran view on bishops in Karsten Bürgener, *Amt und Abendmahl und was die Bibel dazu sagt* (Selbstverlag: Bremen, 1985).

8. *Codex Iuris Canonici: Codex des kanonischen Rechtes: Lateinisch-deutsche Ausgabe* (Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon and Bercker, 1984), p. 451 (Catholic Canon Law Can. 1009 §1). Of course there are great differences between the view of the nature of office in the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches that hold to those three offices.

9. Vgl. zur Altersversorgung als Ehrung der Eltern Lektion 15.5. zum 5. Gebot und Lektion 28.4.

in spite of my criticism, distinguishes between the "teaching elder"—the full time pastors—and the "ruling elder." I do not believe that this distinction is justified by New Testament teaching, which makes all elders responsible for both teaching and counselling. In fact, the time consuming social duties were to be left up to the deacons, so that the elders could dedicate their energies to teaching.

Calvin also distinguished between disciplinary authority and doctrinal authority; in his opinion the disciplinary action in Matthew 18:15–18 was to be carried out by the whole congregation, as represented by the lay elders, whereas the doctrinal authority defined in Matthew 16:19 and John 20:23 was limited to the pastors.[10] "From the order of the presbyters, part were selected as pastors and teachers, while to the remainder was committed the censure of manners and discipline. To the deacons belonged the care of the poor and the dispensing of alms."[11] Elsie Anne McKee has demonstrated that the primary reason for the distinction between permanent and temporary offices lay in the fact that Ephesians 4:11 was understood to define offices rather than responsibilities or spiritual gifts.[12]

Ever since, 1 Timothy 5:17–18 has been used to classify the elders as ruling lay elders and teaching, mostly fulltime elders; a view originated by Calvin and long characteristic of Reformed-Presbyterian Churches. Prior to Calvin, the text had been interpreted as a distinction between paid elders and better paid elders, i. e. pastors.[13] Homer A. Kent, writing about 1 Timothy 5:17, says: "This verse does not give sufficient warrant for the Reformed view of two classes of elders, those who ruled and those who taught. Every elder [is] engaged in teaching (3:2) However, some would do so with more energy and excellence than others. The differentiation in this verse is between those who do the work perfunctorily and those who labor to the end of their strength performing their function."[14]

Reformed Churches have begun to question the classical Reformed interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:17, in spite of the fact that it has been the most typical feature of their theology.[15] The Reformed New Testament theologian Jan van Bruggen disagrees with Calvinistic tradition at this point, for the New Testament, including 1 Timothy 5:17, requires only that all elders should teach, not that there are two classes of elders.[16]

A comparison[17] of the qualifications of elders and overseers (Tit. 1:6–9; 1 Tim. 3:2–7) and of the deacons (1 Tim. 3:8–12) shows that the only qualification required only of elders, was the ability to teach: "A bishop then must be . . . able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). Paul describes the elder as "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."

The New Testament never calls Church officers, especially the elders, "priests," even though Paul uses Old Testament ritual language to describe his ministry (for example Romans 15:15–16), terminology he also applies to all Christians (for example Rom. 12:1. See also 1 Pet. 2:5–9).

The First Level of Government: Deacons and Deaconesses

The first level of leadership consists of the deacons and deaconesses. The Greek word *diakonos* is often translated as "servant" in various translations, and, according to the majority of exegetes, is used as the official title of "deacon" in only three instances. The term originally designated the person who served at table or took care of others. The New Testament term is intimately connected with serving and with service in general, and can only be understood in those terms.

1. *The original meaning.* Out of the thirty occurrences of the word "servant" in the New Testament, only a few reflect the original meaning. Matthew 22:13 and John 2:5 used the word to describe the servants at a wedding. In Romans 13:4, Paul calls the governing authorities "servants." The aspect of material and personal service, however, is never completely absent in New Testament usage, particularly when designating the "servant" (deacon).

2. *Discipleship as ministry.* Jesus was the role model of the servant, even though the Bible never uses the term explicitly as a title (in Rom. 15:8, he is a "servant of the Jews [Greek: circumcision]," which describes his submission to Jewish custom). For this reason, discipleship is equated with service: "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me." The services of Christians is, however, radically different from secular rulership (Mt. 20:26; 23:11; Mk 9:35; 10:43; See also 1 Pet. 5:2–4). Whether service or ministry pleases God or not depends on the person it is dedicated to. There are servants of Sin (Gal. 2:17) and servants of Satan who "masquerade as servants of righteousness."[18]

3. *Minister.* While every Christian is a servant, special duties may carry the designation "ministry." Paul, who includes his assistants, sees himself as a minister, who led the Corinthians to Christ (1 Cor. 3:5), as a minister of the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:6), as a minister of God (2 Cor. 6:4), as a minister of Christ (2 Cor. 11:23) or as a minister of the gospel (Eph. 3:7; Col. 1:23) or of the Church (Col. 1:25). He applies the same title to Tychicus, who is both a faithful servant in the Lord (Eph 6:21) and "a fellow servant in the Lord," (Col. 4:7). Epaphras is a "our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf," (Col. 1:7), and Timothy is admonished to be a "good minister of Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 4:6). In these contexts, the word "servant" or "minister" means a fulltime colleague with a leadership function in Church and mission work.

10. Elsie Anne McKee, *Elders and the Plural Ministry: The Role of Exegetical History in Illuminating John Calvin's Theology* (Droz, Genf: Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance Librairie 223, 1988). pp. 28, 33, 62.

11. Johannes Calvin, *op. cit.*, p. 328 (Book IV, Ch. 4, Section 1).

12. Elsie Anne McKee, *op. cit.*, pp. 162–165.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 88–89. This book includes a thorough history of the exegesis of 1 Tim. 5:17 up to the end of the Reformation.

14. Homer A. Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Chicago: Moody, 1977 [1958]), p. 181f.   15. Elsie Anne McKee, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–114.

16. Jan van Bruggen, *Ambten in de Apostolische Kerken: Een exegetisch mozaik* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1984), pp. 98–104 and Jakob van Bruggen, "Apostolischer Gemeindebau: Widersprüchliche Ekklesiologien im Neuen Testament?" pp. 57–82 in Helge Stadelmann (Ed.), *Bausteine zur Erneuerung der Kirche* (TVG. Brunnen: Gießen & R. Brockhaus: Wuppertal, 1998), p. 69. *Ihm stimmt der Presbyterianer Reinhold Widter: Evangelische Missionskirchen im nachchristlichen Europa, Theologische Schriften* 3, (Medien, Neuhofen: Evangelisch-Reformierte, 1999). pp. 85–86 zu.

17. Vgl. die Tabelle in William Hendriksen, *I & II Timothy & Titus: New Testament Commentary* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976 [Nachdruck von 1960/1957] p. 347ff.

18. See 2 Cor. 11:14.

4. *The office of church leadership.* Assuming that the texts which designate full-time workers as servants of God are not referring to a specific office, we find few instances in which a "deacon" held an official function. Philippians 1:1, with its greeting, "to all the saints . . . with the bishops and deacons," is the only definite evidence that the New Testament Church had an office of deacons alongside the actual leadership position of the elders and overseers. Unfortunately the text does not define the office more clearly. In 1 Timothy, Paul lists not only qualifications for the overseers, but also for the deacons (1 Tim. 3:8–13). Parallel to the qualifications for the elders and overseers (bishops), a deacon must demonstrate a good reputation for their service, good leadership of their families and a blameless life. Paul, however, fails to describe the deacon's responsibilities.

Were the "women" in 1 Timothy 3:11 the deacons' wives or deaconesses? I find the arguments in favour of the deaconesses more convincing.[19] It seems significant to me that Paul gives no list of qualifications for the wives of the elders. Why should more be required of the deacons' wives than of the elders' wives?[20] The fact that Paul gives deaconesses an extra list of qualifications besides those of the deacons, but none for female bishops or overseers, corresponds to the rest of the New Testament: women could carry out responsible functions, but were not ordained as fathers of one or more Churches.

Romans 16:1 proves that the Church had deaconesses. Phoebe is described as a "sister, who is a servant (or deacon) of the church in Cenchrea." Since the masculine form of the word is used, it would seem to describe a specific office rather than a general term, an office open to women. Besides, the addition, "of the church in Cenchrea," indicates that Paul means an office in a specific local congregation, not a general sort of service.[21] Besides, Phoebe is also called a *prostatis* ("Patroness"—Rom. 16:2), which emphasises her official role. The Greek word means "protectoress" or "patron."[22] The corresponding form indicated a patron, a chairperson, a legal advisor.[23]

The office of deaconess was well known in the Byzantine Church until the eleventh century,[24] and in Rome, Italy and the Western Church until the fifth and sixth centuries.[25] There is also documentation for the office in the West up until the eleventh century.[26] The Monophysites had the office until the thirteenth century,[27] and the Eastern church defended the office, following Johannes Chrysostomos, while the Western Church gave it up in order to avoid ordaining women, according to Ambrosiaster and Erasmus of Rotterdam.[28]

These deaconesses definitely carried out spiritual duties. Elsie Anne McKee rightly says there is strong evidence that the deaconesses where employed by the Church and were counted among the Church officials.[29] They thus shared the status, privileges and restrictions of clerical persons such as the right to provisions,[30] ordination[31] and celibacy,[32] and are mentioned in Canon 19 of the Council of Nicaea for this reason.[33]

Since the time of the early Church, the specific responsibilities of the deacons and deaconesses have been drawn from Acts 6. The apostles distinguish between their responsibility, "to give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4) and the duty to "serve tables" and to rule this business (Acts 6:2). Certain qualifications are required and an election is carried out. There is good reason to use this as example for the deaconate, for other cases in Scripture also discuss duties without clearly designating the "right" office. The duty is essential, not the title, which may vary.

A comparison[34] of the necessary qualities of the elders and overseers (Tit. 1:5–9, 1 Tim. 3:4–5) and of the deacons (1 Tim. 3:8–12), shows that the only qualification required of the elders above and beyond that of the deacons, was the ability to teach: "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2), "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." After all, the deacons in Acts 6 were appointed so that the apostles and elders did not neglect "prayer and the ministry of the word."

Social ministry was the deacons' first priority, but that does not eliminate the possibility of other responsibilities. The only deacons in the whole New Testament about whom we learn details are Stephen (Acts 6:8–7:60) and Philip (Acts 8:4–40). Both were active as evangelists. Philip baptised as a deacon (Acts 8:12, 16, 36), but apparently did not carry out the laying on of hands which followed baptism (cf. Heb. 6:2 for example), for the apostles Peter and John came as representatives of all apostles to Samaria for this purpose. (Acts 8:14–17). It was also the two apostles, not Philip, who excommunicated Simon Magus from the Church (Acts 8:18–24).

A comparison with the Old Testament Levites further clarifies the role of the deacons. Subject to the priests, the actual spiritual leaders of the people of God, the Levites assisted in the services and in teaching, in organising the

19. See the arguments in Gerhard Lohfink, "Weibliche Diakone im Neuen Testament," *Diakonia* 11 (1980) 1: 385–400 and Hermann Cremer, Julius Kögel, *Biblisch-Theologisches Wörterbuch des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, F. A. Perthes: Stuttgart, 1923, p. 290. Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership: A Survey of Old and New Testament Examples and Teaching," pp. 209–224 in John Piper, Wayne Grudem (ed.), *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Crossway Books: Wheaton (IL), 1991, lists pp. 213–214 the arguments for deaconesses, but follows the arguments against it (pp. 219–221), even though he proves p. 220 that the difference between the offices of presbyters and deacons is that presbyters teach and govern and deacons do not (1 Tim. 3, 2, 5).

20. See Gerhard Lohfink, "Weibliche Diakone im Neuen Testament," *op. cit.*, p. 396.

21. See Hermann Cremer, Julius Kögel, *op. cit.*, p. 290 and Thomas Schirrmacher, *Der Römerbrief*, Vol. 2, pp. 310f.

22. Walter Bauer, Kurt and Barbara Aland, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments . . .* (Berlin : W. de Gruyter, 1988), col. 1439.

23. G. E. Benseler, Adolf Kaegi, *Benselers Griechisch-Deutsches Schulwörterbuch* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1926), p. 794.

24. Adolf Kalsbach, "Die altkirchliche Einrichtung der Diakonissen bis zu ihrem Erlöschen," *Römische Quartalsschrift*, Supplementheft 22 (Freiburg: Herder, 1926), especially pp. 63–71, in which the author discusses the problems of widowhood, virginity and the office of deaconess in the Early Church.

25. Vgl. L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution: A Study of the Latin Liturgy up to the Time of Charlemagne* (New York: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1931). pp. 342f.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 79–94 in detail.

27. Adolf Kalsbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–60.

28. Elsie Anne McKee, *op. cit.*, pp. 161–163.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 65.   30. *Ibid.*, p 66.   31. *Ibid.*

32. Deaconesses, like the priests, were required to remain single, which Protestants see as a possibility, but cannot consider a law. The necessity of remaining celibate proves that the office of deaconess was understood as a spiritual office.

33. *Ibid.*, 46–49.

distribution of the tithe and the provision for the poor, provided the music and took on other duties.

Under Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch, the Church continued to use the title "deacon" in a general way but later limited it to the designation of the official responsible for the provision of the poor, or to assistants at the Eucharist, often forgetting how closely these two duties are related (food for the starving and spiritual nourishment for the congregation at Communion). Not until this century did the office of deacon regain its responsibility for the practical concerns of the Church. Modern Church practice orients the duties of deacons and deaconesses on the functions described in the New Testament, although the appropriate biblical structure is often otherwise absent.

In many Churches, the deaconate has become merely a preparation for the presbyterate. However, in 1967 at the Second Vatican Council, even the Catholic Church recreated the deaconate as a separate office, which can be held for a longer period of time or even for a life-time.[35] Primarily due to this development, women were not permitted to become deacons, because the ordination to the deaconate would practically allow them to become priests or elders as well.[36] The deaconate is certainly a natural antecedent to the priesthood, but need not necessarily lead to it. As Calvin did, we may consider the deaconate a "step to the priesthood"[37] without making the priesthood a necessary result or requiring the deacon to seek the priesthood in the near future.

The Reformed refer to Calvin as the source of their doctrine of Church office, but his high evaluation of the office of deacon and deaconess has been largely forgotten.[38] He adopted this attitude from Martin Bucer, and had first encountered it in Strassburg.[39] Like the Early Church, he considered Acts 6:1–6 not merely a report, but a norm for all time.[40]

Calvin deliberately revived the office of deaconess,[41] which he justified with reference to New Testament texts which speak of female deacons,[42] but had been ignored throughout the Middle Ages, as is the case in most modern Evangelical Churches, in which the pastor is the actual leader of the Church, although in theory he is only one elder among many.

In my opinion, most Churches would do well to increase the number of pastors and reduce the number of elders, for many lay elders carry out administrative duties

more appropriate for deacons or for a Church committee. Adminstering buildings, book-keeping and paying salaries is not the responsibility of the elders, but takes up most of the presbyters' time in many Churches. Churches should appoint a committee, which with the assistance of the deacons, takes care of the "earthly" matters, so that the elders, who should be elected according to the time and ability they have for teaching and counselling, should be able to dedicate themselves to these areas. This would mean that we would have more pastors, salaried or not, but smaller presbyteries.

<center>

Excursus:
Social Responsibility in the
New Testament Church according to Acts 6

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The appointment of deacons in Acts 6 and in the New Testament Church in general is of great significance. It is surprising, that besides the offices of overseers (bishops) and elders, who were responsible for leadership and teaching, the Church had only one other office, that of the deacons and the deaconesses, whose duties were exclusively social in nature. The social responsibility of the Church for its members is so institutionalised in the office of the deacons, that a Church without them is just as unthinkable as a Church without leadership or biblical teaching.

(1) The Church carries fully the social responsibility for its own members, insofar as the individual's family is unable to do so. This duty consists in more than donations or symbolic assistance for a few, but in responsibility for all.

(2) Therefore the Church must distinguish clearly between its social obligations toward fellow Christians and its social responsibility for others. The former has been institutionalised in the office of deacons and is binding, insofar as funds and possibilities are available (assuming that the individual has not willfully brought the situation upon himself). Proverbs 3:27 speaks of both cases, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so." Galations 6:10 speaks of our duties toward all men, but emphasises the priority of the believer: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

The command in Matthew 25:45 should also be understood in this sense. Jesus is speaking of believers, not of everyone. Were the "brethren" mentioned in verse 40 intended to mean all men, this would be the only text in the New Testament that uses the term figuratively to indicate anyone other than Church members or fellow Christians.[43]

A comparison with the question of peace-making will help clarify the matter. Scripture obliges Christians to live in peace with fellow-believers. If they do not, then the Church leadership is to interfere. As far as the relationship to non-Christians is concerned, Paul says, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). The New Testament Church is based on a covenant binding on all members. The expectation that the believer is obliged to care for all men stems from a false understanding of fairness and justice, for the Bible requires the believer to provide first for his own family, next for the members of the local congregation, and finally for the world-wide Church.

34. See the table in William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, pp. 347–349.

35. See Rudolf Weigand, "Der ständige Diakon," p. 229–238 in Joseph Listl, Hubert Müller, Heribert Schmitz (ed.), *Handbuch des katholischen Kirchenrechts* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1983), p. 229.

36. Leon Morris, "Church Government," pp. 238–241 in Walter Elwell (Hg.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986).

37. Johannes Calvin, *op. cit.*, p. 349, (Book IV., Ch. 5, Section 15; See also Vol. IV, Ch. 3, Section 9).

38. Elsie Anne McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving*, a. a. O. S. 13; vgl. etwa Jean Calvin, Calvin-Studienausgabe, Bd. 2: Gestalt und Ordnung der Kirche. Neukirchener Verlag: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1997. p. 257–259 (aus Ordonnances ecclésiastiqes [1541/1561] p. 227–279).

39. Elsie Anne McKee, *op. cit.*, pp. 129, 153; See also the note on Bucer's 1538 pamphlet, "Von der Waren Seelsorge" on p. 179. McKee also mentions John Chrysostomos as an influence on Calvin's thought on the deaconate (p. 153). She also shows that, following Bucer, Calvin applied Romans 12:8 to the deaconate, which no one does today (pp. 185–204).

40. Elsie Anne McKee, *op. cit.*, p.156.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 213–217.   42. *Ibid.*, pp. 205–210.

43. Kurt Hennig, "Beim Wort kommt es auch auf die Worte an," *Das Fundament*, (DCTB) 1, 1991, pp. 9–24 (particularly pp. 22, 19–24).

Only when these obligations are fulfilled, does he have any responsibilities for other people.

(3) Acts 6 gives great priority to the social obligations of the Church towards her members, but the responsibility for proclaiming the word of God and prayer remains more important and is institutionalised in the offices of the elders and the apostles.

The apostles give the following reason for refusing to accept this "business" (Acts 6:3): "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). Prayer and proclamation of the word, which always belong together, have priority over social engagement and must never be neglected. The combination of prayer and teaching is not new. Long before, for example, it had been the ministry of the prophet Samuel to "pray" and to "teach" (1 Sam. 12:23).[44]

The provision for the socially weak was also considered a matter of course in the Early Church, which universally reserved special funds for social purposes.[45] Its provision for widows was exemplary.[46] As a matter of fact, more money was spent on social concerns than on the salaries of the elders and pastors. According to the Church Father, Eusebius, the Church in Rome in the year 250 A.D., for example, supported 100 clergymen and 1500 poor people, particularly widows and orphans. Alois Kehl writes, "Never, in the whole of antiquity, had there been a society or a religious group which cared for its members as the Christian Church did."[47]

Arnold Angenendt adds: "Becoming a Christian automatically means practicing social service. Every Christian church has its 'social services,' and the bishop is to prove himself a father to the poor. This was a quite new idea in the ancient world—in all of the Greek and Roman world, there is not one legal enactment dedicated to the needs of the poor."[48]

Incidentally, the responsibility of the wealthy, above all, for the provision for the poor, gave the donors no special rights in the congregation. For this reason, James 2:1–13 energetically attacks their attempts to exploit their position in the Church.

THE THIRD LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT (FIRST PART): CONGREGATIONALISM AND PRESBYTERIANISM

At this point, we need to investigate the third, supraregional level of Church leadership. Let's take a look at the structures in the Evangelical denominations.[49]

The Baptist-oriented Churches are generally Congregationalist[50] in structure, that is, they consider the local congregation the basic and essential element of the Church.[51] Church government consists of only a two-part hierarchy, that of the deacons and the elders, offices seldom exercised on a full-time basis. Above the local congregation is no further hierarchy but only a loose confederation of Churches (which does wield a certain amount of unintended authority by employing and training the editors of denominational literature, the presidents of denominational seminaries, etc.).

There are two different forms of Congregationalism. The most extreme is to be found in denominations such as the Brethren, which in theory acknowledge no supraregional structures at all, but in reality permit a single publishing house or publisher and a single seminary to determine their theology and practice. Besides, the fact that local congregations all belong to one denomination points to a sense of a certain inter-congregational accountability. Some of these Churches have no officers at all; all decisions are made by the membership (the brethren). In other Churches, laymen serve as officers, but can be overruled by the congregation at any time and are seldom employed on a full-time basis. The few full-time ministers are usually "itinerant brethren" who preach in various Churches, but have no authority over the local congregation.

The second type of Congregationalist structure permits a loose affiliation of local congregations (denomination), which provides seminaries, publishing houses, or synods, but maintains the fundamental independence of the local congregation. The deacons, elders and pastors elected by the congregation wield actual authority as long as they are in office. This structure thus serves as the transition to the Presbyterian system.

Since the visible Church consists of all members accepted on the basis of their confession of faith, the authority of the local congregation to elect its officers is not to be denied, but since, as we have seen, the office of elder is essential to Church government, a structure without elders is unsustainable. At the same time, such elders are in reality the highest Church officers designated in the New Testament and require neither ordination nor the authorisation by a higher officer. Nor must the local Church of the New Testament visibly belong to a larger unit or submit to a higher authority in order to be a Church in the full sense of the word. This aspect of Congregationalism is a truth not to be denied or surrendered. We will see, however, that this concept neither denies the possibility of supraregional co-operation between congregations and their spiritual leadership nor forbids any sort of supraregional direction above the local elders and pastors. As a matter of fact, most congregationalist denominations have some sort of advisory synodical structure which consists of delegates sent by the local congregation and functions as a co-operative governing body.

The Presbyterian Churches[52] have only a two-part Church government (elders and deacons), but form a third level of

44. Compare the combination of prayer and watching in Neh. 4:9.

45. Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (VMA-Verlag: Wiesbaden, O. J., reprint 1924), pp. 178–183, and the chapter, "Das Evangelium der Liebe und Hilfsleistung," pp. 170–220.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 184ff.   47. *Ibid.*, pp. 182ff.

48. Arnold Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien: Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart* (München: C. H. Beck, 1997), p. 48.

49. For a good, concise comparison, see Leon Morris, "Church Government," in Walter Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), pp. 218–241.

50. "Congregationalist" from "congregation," i.e. the local congregation has the last word on all issues.

51. John Huxtable, "Kongregationalismus," in Gerhard Müller (ed.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000/1990, Studienausgabe), Vol. 19, p. 452. For the history of Congregationalism, see the whole article.

52. The term designates the structure of Church government, but is frequently used to indicate Reformed since this form developed in that tradition. See James K. Cameron, "Presbyterianism," in Gerhard Müller (ed.), *Theologische Realenzykopädie*, Vol. 27, pp. 340–359 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000/1997, textbook edition).

government by collecting the elders of several Churches into synods, without giving any single person supreme authority.[53] The Presbyterian-synodal constitution "describes an ecclesiastical principle evolved within the Reformed tradition of the sixteenth century, in which ecclesiastical authority (church government) lies in a cooperative body, in which both theologians and non-theologians discuss and resolve pertinent issues."[54] "The theological intent of the presbyterial-synodical constitution is to be found in the conviction based on Matthew 18:15–20, that the church can be led by lay elders without bishops or local princes. Jesus Christ Himself rules His Church through His Word in such a way that He entrusts the churches with certain functions, so that the Gospel is brought to all men in various forms. These officers and offices are of equal authority, and since each congregation is a church in the full sense of the word, no church has power over any other. Synods consisting of delegates from all the congregations resolve all interchurch issues so as to avoid permitting the supremacy of any one officer or individual congregation."[55]

The authority of the synod varies, depending on the range of issues in which its decisions are binding on the local congregations. The boundaries between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism are rather fluid in this respect. In some Presbyterian groups, representatives from the synod exercise visitations in order to investigate the state of the congregations or to examine candidates for the pastorate, but these officials act only as the representatives of the larger Church and have no personal authority.

The idea of a synod consisting of officials and lay delegates originated neither with Calvin nor with the early Reformed synods,[56] which were merely assemblies of the presbyters of the local Churches. The first mixed synods were held in 1559 in Paris and, in Germany, in 1571 in Emden. Beginning in 1610, mixed synods were held in Jülich, Cleve, Berg and Mark.[57] Both the synod itself and the mixed synod have biblical roots in the Apostolic Council of Acts 15, in which apostles, elders and the Church participated. "Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their own company . . ." (Acts 15:22).

As a unique historical event, the Apostolic Council serves as the prototype for a synod, but cannot be used to warrant an absolute rule. Note, however, that the Council did have a leadership structure. Simon Peter (Acts 15:7–10) and James (15:13–21) had the veto—James, as chairman, formulated the final decision (15:1–20), to which the others agreed. All full-time elders and all supraregional officers were present: "Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter" (15:6. See also Gal. 2:9, where John, Peter and James are called the "pillars." See also 1 Cor. 9:5). Acts 21:18 also mentions a meeting between Paul and the synod of the elders and James, the leader ("bishop") of the Church in Jerusalem: "On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present." Within the highest level there may be further hierarchies—James, for example, presided over the Council, but we do not know whether he merely represented the others or had more authority over them. Paul's associates, Silas and Timothy, also take their orders from him (Acts 17:15). The New Testament frequently mentions the fact that Paul, in an "Episcopal" role, sends his assistants out to their new fields (for example, Timothy in Phil. 2:23 or 1 Thess. 3:2).

The synodical principle of the Reformed Churches has been adopted by almost all Churches in the world,[58] and determines the constituents of the supraregional bodies of the Congregationalist denominations as well as of the Episcopal bodies.

In both Presbyterian and Congregationalist Churches, the full-time pastor plays a special, fairly independent role not intended in the original model, such as that of the teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church, in contrast to the usual governing elders, although the pastor is theoretically and legally on the same level as the other elders.

Elsie Anne McKee has shown that the Calvinists in fact had instituted three governing offices: pastors, elders and deacons,[59] with a fourth office, the teacher, in the Genevan church.[60] In this combination, the pastor often plays a role similar to that of the bishop, when the congregation officially opposes the idea of episcopal government. At least in larger congregations, the office and function of the main pastor corresponds very closely to the role of the bishop in the Early Church. The Baptist Johannes Jansen wrote in 1931: "Many Churches have liberated the preacher from the burden of administration by electing two or more elders, so that he is only responsible for the spiritual direction."[61]

Many Baptist congregations have resolved the problem by designating only the pastor as elder and calling the other members of the leadership structure deacons, just as the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican Churches, in which the pastor is the "priest" (derived from "presbyter," which means "elder"). All other officers are subject first to the pastor, then to the deacons. In both cases, the individual congregation has only one elder, which is possible, but not recommendable.

The fact that the Book of Revelation mentions the "Angel of the Churches" seven times (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14) is often used to justify this one-man leadership, whether for a local pastor or for a bishop. The meaning of the term has been disputed and interpreted in so many ways that the text cannot serve as an adequate argument.

The Third Level of Government (Second Part): Episcopalianism

The view that the early Church had professional leaders responsible for several Churches and their elders is called

53. Gerhard Troeger, "Bischof III: Das evangelische Bischofsamt," in Gerhard Krause, Gerhard Müller (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 6, p. 693, writes, quoting Hans Dombois: "Calvin's rejection of the office of bishop is still alive in the Reformed Church, like an allergy against any form of officialdom dependent on any individual."

54. Joachim Mehlhausen, "Presbyterial-synodale Kirchenverfassung," in Gerhard Müller (ed.), *op.* cit., Vol. 27, p. 331. On the origin and history see the complete article.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 331.

56. Irmtraut Tempel, *Bischofsamt und Kirchenleitung in den lutherischen, reformierten und unierten deutschen Landeskirchen*, Jus Ecclesiasticum: Beiträge zum Staatskirchenrecht 4, (Munic: Claudius Verlag, 1966), p. 54.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

58. Joachim Mehlhausen, "Presbyterial-synodale Kirchenverfassung," *op. cit.*, pp. 331–332.

59. Elsie Anne McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving*, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance Librairie 197 (Geneva: Droz, 1984), p. 134. 60. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

61. Johannes Jansen, *Gemeinde und Gemeindeführung: Episkopat, Presbyterium oder Demokratie? Gemeinde und Gegenwart* 2 (Kassel: J. G. Oncken, 1931), p. 5.

"episcopal," because the early church had begun to give this inter-Church function the title "bishop." (Actually, "overseer" [Greek: *episkopos*], which is the origin of the word "bishop," in contrast to the "elder" [Greek, *presbyter*], the origin of the word "priest," that is, the pastors of the local Church).[62]

Within the episcopal Churches, the authority of the bishop varies. It declines as we move from the sacramental and judicial power of the Roman Catholic bishop through the Orthodox, the Anglican,[63] the Lutheran to the Methodist bishop, whose duties are representative and advisory rather than judicial.

As we have already seen, the titles, "elder" and "overseer"/"bishop" can be used interchangeably. "Overseer" describes the governing function of the elders (Acts 20:28, 1 Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:7, Phil 1:1—"bishops and deacons" without further specification. In 1 Pet. 2:25, Jesus is called the "Shepherd and Overseer of your souls"). We also find the term "office of overseer" (*episkope*) used to describe the office of apostle (Acts 1:20) as well as the office of the elder (1 Tim. 3:1. "If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work").

Adolf Schlatter assumes that Tit. 1, 5, 7 distinguished between bishops and elders, and that Paul had chosen bishops out of the presbyterate.[64] Leonard Goppelt, in studying the Pastoral Epistles, comes to the conclusion that each body of elders was led by an overseer ("bishop").[65] Similarly, Ray R. Sutton believes that Titus 1 defines the qualifications of the bishops, who are to be examples for the elders and are responsible for them.[66] A. M. Farrer also objects to the identification of elders with overseers in the New Testament and applies the duty of overseeing mentioned in Acts 20:17–18, 28 to the elders. He sees this idea more definitely in 1 Peter 1:5–4 and in Hebrews 12:14–15,[67] where only the verb "to oversee" is used. He divides Titus 1:7 into one list of qualities for elders and one for overseers, but suggests that verse 6 does not apply to elders, but belongs to the following section, since the expression "If a man . . ." is used four times in the Pastoral Epistles to introduce a new paragraph (1 Tim. 3:1; 5:4, 16; 6:3).[68] These views may be valid, but are unconvincing—their argumentation is a rather forced

attempt to read the modern terminology back into the New Testament. The designation of Timothy as overseer would have been a more convincing attestation for the existence of a first century supraregional level of authority above the elders.

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses the same word, "episkopos" or "overseer" to designate the "overseers" of the sons of Benjamin (Neh. 11:9, 14, 22), as well as the overseers of the Temple builders (2 Chron. 2:2; see also 34:17 and compare the verb in verse 12) and political officials.[69] In these cases, "episkopos" indicates a normal office, not a superior one in the hierarchy.

The New Testament evidence thus neither proves nor contradicts the use of the term "bishop" or "episcopal," but the appellation has always been controversial among Christians. On the other hand, the supraregional structure was retained for centuries after the Reformation, even by many Anabaptist Churches, who retained some sort of supraregional structure in order to provide a necessary supervision of their pastors. The question is not whether the *term* itself is biblical, but whether the *office* existed in the New Testament Church.

The New Testament often uses one title to indicate a variety of offices, and Jesus was often given titles used for many other offices and duties in the Church. The apostles are only "fellow elders," but have authority over the other elders, and could also classify themselves simply as elders. The elders have received a certain degree of authority from God, but remain simply brethren: "The elders who are among you I exhort . . . shepherd the flock of God . . . nor as being lords . . . but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:1–5).

No one disputes the fact that the apostles were Church leaders responsible for larger geographical areas, and that they appointed the first elders in each region. "So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:2).

Since many assume that the apostolic office died with the twelve apostles, we must ask whether the supraregional responsibility was limited to them or at least to their immediate successors, or whether it was carried on by a third level of leadership. Because we know almost nothing about the apostles' assistants, except for Paul's associates Timothy and Titus, and nothing about their subsequent activities, we can only ask which responsibilities Timothy and Titus carried and which of Paul's responsibilities they later took over. Unfortunately, this issue has been insufficiently explored in discussions of church hierarchy.

Apostolic practice and particularly that of the Church in Jerusalem, in so far as Scripture reports it, is considered to be the model for all the Churches of Jesus Christ, as Paul writes to the Church in Thessalonica, "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 2:14). Besides, we find not only reports in the New Testament describing Church structure and leadership issues, but—particularly in the pastoral letters (First and Second Timothy, Titus)—we also find concrete directions about the expression of the Church's essential character in structural and organisational matters. How

62. On the development of the term "bishop" in Judaism, in the New Testament and in the Early Church, see Hermann Beyer, "episkeptomai . . . episkopos . . ." in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1990, [1935]), Bd. II, pp. 595–619, here pp. 604–617; and Theo Sorg, F. O. July, "Bischof/Bischofsamt," pp. 279–281 in Helmut Burkhardt, Uwe Swarat (ed.), *Evangelisches Lexikon für Theologie und Gemeinde* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1992), Vol. 1.

63. The "continuing Churches," independent Churches that have taken over their the bishop's office from the Anglican Church, ordain their bishops by laying on of hands. To a certain extent, these Churches demand the same sort of submission to the bishop as the Roman Church does.

64. Adolf Schlatter, *Die Kirche der Griechen im Urteil des Paulus: Eine Auslegung seiner Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1958), p. 182 (see also: pp. 181–183).

65. Leonhard Goppelt. "Kirchenleitung und Bischofsamt in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten," in Ivar Asheim, Victor R. Gold (ed.), *Kirchenpräsident oder Bischof? Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung des kirchenleitenden Amtes in der lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1968), p. 21.

66. Ray Sutton, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

67. A. M. Farrer, "The Ministry in the New Testament," p. 113–182 in Kenneth E. Kirk, *The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and the Doctrine of Episcopacy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957 [1946]), pp. 134–141.   68. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

69. See Johannes Neumann, "Bischof I: Das katholische Bischofsamt," pp. 653–682 in Gerhard Krause, Gerhard Müller (ed.), *op. cit.*. Vol. 6, p. 611. Neumann cites examples from Grecian culture.

did the apostles deal with the fact that they were unable to oversee certain areas because they were involved elsewhere in evangelisation? What did they do to provide the Church with leadership in the event of their deaths? Apparently, they ordained their successors by laying on of hands, so that these men could oversee the congregations and their elders. The best known successors are the recipients of the Pastoral Epistles, Timothy (Acts 16:1–3; 17:13–15; 19:21–22; 20:3–4; Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; 15:10–11; 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; 2:19–21; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 3:1-8; 1 Tim. 1:1–2, 18, 14–15; 5:23; 2 Tim. 1:1–2, 5–6, 8; 3:10; 4:9–22; Phlm 1:1; Heb. 13:23) and Titus (2 Cor. 2:12–13; 7:6–7, 12–16; 8:16–24; 12:16–18; Gal. 2:1–4; 2 Tim 4:10; Tit. 1:1–5; 1:1,15; 3: 9,15).

Timothy was originally ordained by laying on of hands by the elders (1 Tim. 4:13–1 5; See also 1:18), but probably later ordained by Paul into a higher office (2 Tim 1:6)—unless both verses refer to the same incident—as ordination is always carried out by a higher official (Acts 1:24; 6:6; 13:3).[70] His ordination by Paul clearly indicates that he took on the apostle's responsibility. In the Old Testament, successors were ordained by laying on of hands (Moses and Joshua; Elijah and Elisha).[71]

Titus was to "appoint elders" (Titus 1:5) and resist heretical teachers in the Churches, and was responsible for all of Crete (Tit. 1:5). Timothy had the same charges and was responsible for Ephesus and its surroundings (1 Tim. 1:3).

The word used for "appoint" (Greek: *cheirotonoeein*) can mean either "to raise one's hand in voting" or "to point at someone," i. e. "to elect a person" or "to appoint."[72] In 2 Corinthians 8:19, it indicates the selection of a delegate by the congregation. Acts 14:23 uses the word to describe the election and ordination of elders by the apostles, and probably intends both the election by the congregation and the confirmation and the ordination by the apostles.[73] The apostles apparently suggested several candidates, from which the congregation selected the person consequently ordained by the apostles. This process is used frequently in the Bible when ecclesiastical or political offices are to be filled: the superior nominates candidates, his followers then elect the official. The best example is the election of the first deacons in Acts 6:1–6.

Timothy's responsibility for several Churches and particularly for their elders can be seen in 1 Tim. 5:19–21: "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality." Timothy deals here, as superior elder (bishop) over several Churches, with accusations against the elders of local congregations. This duty has a personal aspect unsuitable for a committee or synod. The bishop, Timothy, is, above

all, teacher and counsellor to the pastors (elders). Who cares for the personal and dogmatic needs of the pastors, when there is no inter-Church leadership? Who provides them with "soul-care" if the supraregional authority consists only of committees, which make decisions, but cannot handle personal, spiritual needs?

Timothy and Titus exercised these episcopal functions during the life-time of the apostles. Before Paul, others had done so. Barnabas, for example, ordains elders with him (Acts 14:23). The existence of a body governing several local congregations can also be observed in Jerusalem, where James is bishop and chairman of an episcopal college. The Twelve led the entire Church under Peter's direction; James and the elders led the Church in Jerusalem,[74] and James, as main pastor of the mother Church in Jerusalem, was honorary chairman of the apostolic council.

The Pastoral epistles are generally dated rather late, but the episcopal system is already in operation[75] (which is of course all the more true, if we date the Pastoral Epistles later).

I have dealt with the failure of Protestantism, not only of the liberal camp, to seriously study the Pastoral Epistles and their supposedly late, non-Pauline ecclesiology, in my theological thesis,[76] since Emil Brunner's rejection of the New Testament treatment of Church office depends on his rejection of the Pastoral Epistles. This has led me to a more intensive scrutiny of these epistles, their authenticity and their ecclesiology.[77] I have yet to find a reason for the general failure to recognise Timothy's and Titus' responsibility as Church officers above the local officers, and to underestimate the role of the deaconate, as I mention in the first edition of my *Ethik*.[78] The issue requires much more study, and I hope that my ideas will stimulate further discussion.

What can we conclude from our knowledge of Timothy and Titus?

1. Timothy and Titus had spiritual authority and advisory roles within and over the local Churches, but their activities were not tied to any specific office. Whereas we can clearly demonstrate that deacons and elders/overseers (Greek: *presbyteros*, *episkopos*) existed as specific offices not designated by specific titles, Scripture never designates any third office with any sort of title carried by the two men. For

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70. See also Eduard Lohse, "*cheir . . . cheirotoneo*," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 417–418, 420–423. 71. *Ibid.*, p. 418.

72. Walter Bauer, Kurt and Barbara Aland, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1988), col. 1757; Eduard Lohse, *op. cit.*, p. 426–427.

73. Josef Bohatec, *Calvins Lehre von Staat und Kirche: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Organismusgedankens*, Untersuchungen zur Deutschen Staats und Rechtsgeschichte 147 (Breslau: M. & H. Marcus, 1937) [Josef Bohatec, *Calvins Lehre von Staat und Kirche: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Organismusgedankens*, (Aalen: Scientia, 1968 [1937]), p. 478.

74. Leonhard Goppelt, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

75. Z. B. Gerhard Tröger, *Das Bischofsamt in der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, Jus Ecclesiasticum: Beiträge zum Staatskirchenrecht* 2 (München: Claudius Verlag, 1966), pp. 20–21; Leonhard Goppelt, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–20.

76. Thomas Schirrmacher, *Das Mißverständnis des Emil Brunner: Emil Brunner's Bibliologie als Ursache für das Scheitern seiner Ekklesiologie*, (Theologische Untersuchungen zu Weltmission und Gemeindebau), ed. von Hans-Georg Wünch and Thomas Schirrmacher, *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Weltmission und Gemeindebau* (Lörrach: 1982,), p, 54, Revised and abbreviated in "Das Mißverständnis der Kirche und das Mißverständnis des Emil Brunner," *Bibel und Gemeinde* 89 (1989) 3: 279–311 and "Zur neutestamentlichen Gemeindestruktur: Ergänzungen zu, Das Mißverständnis der Kirche und das Mißverständnis des Emil Brunner," *Bibel und Gemeinde* 90 (1990) 1: 53–62.

77. See: Thomas Schirrmacher: "Die Pastoralbriefe Factum" 3, 4/1984: 9–10 and "Plädoyer für die historische Glaubwürdigkeit der Apostelgeschichte und der Pastoralbriefe," a. 181–235/254 in Heinz Warnecke, Thomas Schirrmacher, *War Paulus wirklich auf Malta?* (Neuhausen: Hänssler, 1992).

78. Thomas Schirrmacher, *Ethik* (Neuhausen: Hänssler, 1994), Band 2, Lektion 44, pp. 525–566, especially pp. 532–546, Abbreviated as "Die drei Ebenen der neutestamentlichen Leitungsstruktur," Anstöße—Beilage zu Neues vom Euroteam 1/1994: 1–4.

this reason, I consider their roles an argument against the creation of a third office with definite duties and areas of authority, although I believe their responsibility for spiritual guidance to be essential, especially for the spread of the gospel.

2. Even though no final word can be spoken on the issue, I believe that their duties in Crete and Ephesus probably corresponded to the roles later carried out by pastors. They were not bishops in the modern sense of the word, but pastors. That would explain the fact that there is no historical documentation of an episcopal system in the Early Church derived from the Pastoral Epistles. The bishops of the Early Church derived their offices from the apostolic successors, but seem to have been officers of the local congregation above the elders, not supraregional bishops with sacramental authority.

3. I believe that Timothy's and Titus' duties outside of the local congregation within the framework of a growing missionary movement should be understood as a facet of the expanded New Testament apostolic concept, which we must investigate more thoroughly.

Nine Propositions on Church Structure and Leadership

I would like to conclude with nine propositions on the subject, and a call for spiritual leadership.

1. The question of New Testament Church structure does not depend solely on the terminology used in Scripture: the issue is not whether to call a pastor's superior a bishop, superintendant, a visitor or nothing at all, but whether such an institution can be found in Scripture. If so, what duties and authority should such a person carry?

A Christian with the title "Brother" can be dictatorial, while another with the title "Father" or "Bishop" may prove to have no authority at all in the decisive moment, when evil must be opposed. A man with no authority at home may be adamant in his demands for female submission. Another, who supports women's rights in public, may be a tyrant at home.

2. The issue of proper Church government cannot be decided on paper or in theory, but only in the everyday reality of Church life. We must not forget that theory and practice are often worlds apart. The Pope, whose theoretical authority is supreme on earth,[79] has little influence in many local Roman Catholic Churches, but I have experienced the absolute authority exercised by the editors of one of the Brethren's publishing companies, often the secret leader of the whole denomination. Although the denomination officially vehemently rejects the idea of any sort of power or authority outside of the local congregation, all of the Churches in that denomination accepted his decree that a foreign Christian was not to speak in the Churches.

3. The use of a term such as "episcopal," "presbyterian"

or "congregational" has little to do with the reality within a Church or denomination. The buildings of some congregationalist Churches belong to the denomination, and those of some episcopal churches belong to the local congregation. In the latter case, the local Church is more independent than in the former. If an episcopal Church elects its own pastors (and if this denomination has no seminary of its own), it is more independent than a congregationalist Church which can select only pastors trained at the denomination's own seminary.

The seminary administrations, the people who determine which students may study at a seminary, and who refer their graduates to the congregations, often have more influence on the denomination than the bishops. (The role of the director of a seminary partly corresponds to that of the Early Church's bishops.)

4. Even when form and content agree, and even though the visible forms of Church life have a certain significance, spiritual goals must have the first priority. We are always in danger of paying more attention to visible differences than to the invisible ones, but true spiritual humility is more important than the limitations of authority on paper. An arrogant person will destroy any office, but a humble man will never abuse even the most exaggerated authority. Anyone who intends to exercise personal power in a Church will do so—with or without the authorisation of a Church constitution. A person whose first priority is the spiritual welfare of the Church will never harm her, even though the constitution may give him absolute power.

5. Both the Old Testament and the New limit authority delegated from below through authority delegated from above. A summary of New Testament decision-making[80] demonstrates that the actual procedure depends on the situation; sometimes authority is exercised from above, sometimes from below. Some decisions are made by consensus, some by an individudal. Johannes Jansen writes: "Neither the episcopalian, the presbyterian nor the congregational leadership models comprehend completely the dimensions of the first churches' constitutions, individually or in their entirety. We find administration by qualified individuals (autocratic-episcopal), as well as through cooperation between elders, groups of apostles, the individual apostle and the elders of Jerusalem (presbyterian) and authority carried by the congregation (democratic-ecclesiastic). Yet, in all models, all submit to each other, and to Christ. The New Testament provides a happy union of liberty and obedience, a synthesis of all three principles. There is neither monarchial apostolate or episcopate, nor all-powerful presbyter, nor absolute congregational democracy with elected officers."[81]

6. Both the Old Testament and the New limit both the power of the leadership to make decisions and the authority of the group. Robert Woodward Barnwell points out that the New Testament equally values the authority of individuals and that of the many.[82] He rightly says that

79. See Thomas Schirrmacher, "Has Roman Catholicism Changed? An Examination of Recent Canon Law," *Antithesis: A Review of Reformed/Presbyterian Thought and Practice*, 1 (1990) 2 (März/Apr): 23–30. For the Roman Catholic position see Knut Walf, "Kollegialität der Bischöfe ohne römischen Zentralismus?" *Diakonia: Internationale Zeitschrift für die Praxis der Kirche* 17 (1986) 3: 167–179, here pp. 167–173; and Joseph Kommonchak, "Das ökumenische Konzil im neuen Kirchenrechtskodex," *Concilium* (German edition) 19 (1983) 8/9: 574–579.

80. Joost Reinke, Jürgen Tischler, "Dynamisch leiten," *Missiologica Evangelica* 10 (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1998), pp. 68–70 in Anlehnung and Johannes Jansen, *Gemeinde und Gemeindeführung: Episkopat, Presbyterium oder Demokratie?* (Kassel: J. G. Oncken, 1931), p. 49. For an opposing view, see Jeff Brown, *Gemeindeleitung nach dem Neuen Testament* (Nürnberg: VTR, 2000), pp. 14–15.

81. Johannes Jansen, *op. cit.*, p. 49. On p. 3, he summarises: one leads, a council of brothers leads, all lead.

82. Robert Woodward Barnwell, *The Analysis of Church Government*

		Decision Making in the New Testament		
Text	Problem	Participants	Procedure	Structure
Acts 1:15–26	Enlargement of apostolate	11 Disciples and 120 men (plus women?)	Peter takes the initiative, two candidates are nominated. Choice made by casting lots.	Democracy, the congregation
Acts 5:2; 6:1–2	The Church account and care of the poor	12 Apostles	Distribution and administration by the disciples alone	Presbyterial, leadership team
Acts 6:1–7	Care of the poor is more than the Twelve can handle	12 Apostles, the Church (more than 1000?), 7 deacons	Initiative: apostolic counsel, election with confirmation	Presbyterial, democratic
Acts 10:48	Conversion and baptism	Peter and several brethren from Joppa	Peter orders the baptism	Episcopal, authoritarian
Acts 14:23	Ordination of elders	Paul and Barnabas	Both elected	Almost episcopal, but also presbyterial (as two were involved)
	Apostolic Council, fellowship between Jews and Gentiles	Paul, Barnabas, the apostles and elders, the Churches of Antioch and Jerusalem	The congregation and a final meeting elders and apostles ⟶ resolution of the Church	Presbyterial, democratic
Acts 15:36–40	Qualifications of John Mark for planned missionary journey	Barnabas, Paul (objects: Barnabas, possibly also Silas)	Dispute ⟶ separation. Mission is carried out in spite of the division. Reconciliation at later time.	Episcopal? (Two bishops at odds?)
Acts 21:17, 25	Paul's visit to Jerusalem Rumour that Paul is contradicting Jewish law	Paul, James, the elders of the Church at Jerusalem	Meeting of the elders leads to resolution, which is carried out by the congregation	Presbyterial
1 Cor. 14:26ff.	Directions on the form of worship	Paul and the Church at Corinth	Written directions	Episcopal
2 Cor. 13:2–4:10	Sin in the Church	Paul and the Church at Corinth	"Do not spare the sinner"; Paul uses his authority	Episcopal

papalism has magnified authority so much that consensus died, while congregationalism has emphasised consensus so much, that authority died.[83] Synods are therefore important, but they have never shown the activity, iniative and daring essential to the advancing of the Kingdom of God. The great missionaries and Church builders have always been individuals. Monte E. Wilson writes:[84] "A biblical case can be made for each of the above mentioned forms of church government. Each of them has a revered history. Each also has its potential weaknesses. Congregationalism can degenerate into a democracy where we vote on God's revealed will and everyone does what's right in his or her own sight, a.k.a., anarchy. Presbyterianism may morph into a ruling aristocracy detached from and insensitive to the spiritual needs of the congregation. Episcopacy can lead to an autocracy that is utterly divorced from the local congregation it presumes to lead."

Central to biblical Church structure are the offices of deacon and elder, who require authorisation by the congregation's membership. The deacons are responsible for the practical and social needs of the congregation, the elders, who govern the Church, for doctrine and spiritual guidance.

(Petersburg, VA: The Franklin Press Company Publ., 1907). pp. 250, 269, 279.   83. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
84. Monte E. Wilson, "Church Government: The Problem of Tyranny and Anarchy within the Local Church," Chalcedon Report No. 416 (March, 2000), pp. 18–19, here p. 18.

Besides these structures within the individual congregations, the New Testament Churches demonstrated a sense of spiritual responsibility for each other, which implied supraregional co-operation and mutual support.

Personally, I find a combination of elements of the three models the best solution to the problem. The Bible does not necessarily imply synthesis of congregational, presbyterian and episcopal elements, and there may, of course, be other ways to handle the matter. Essential to the solution are: (1) a strong, relatively independent local congregation whose elders have both authority and responsibility, (2) synods, in which the full-time ministers, the elders and the congregations both correct and stimulate each other, and (3) supraregional leaders, spiritual role models who observe general developments and manage missions, but have no sacramental or legal powers.

7. Authority, whether it flows from above or below, is in the last instance subject to the word of God—neither office nor constitution have the last word, but Scripture. Authority belongs to the person whose admonitions are drawn from the Bible and the Holy Spirit. When Paul took leave of the elders of Ephesus, he left them neither a Church code nor an office. He merely admonished them, "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). That is what the Church is for. When the Church fails in its missionary responsibilities, it needs spiritually gifted, independent, courageous leaders to admonish and recall her to her duties, as the Old Testament prophets did. They disregarded the Levitical priests, when these officials neglected their duties or exploited their positions. On the other hand, leaders in the local congregation must be replaced when they misuse their authority or substitute bureaucracy for missionary perspective. In that case, the membership, insofar as it is motivated by the word of God and the Holy Spirit, is called upon to reprove the leadership.

No constitution or structure, as excellent as it may be, is infallible. Even if it has provided for co-operation and mutual restraint from above and from below, a Church government can founder, when it follows unbiblical doctrine or unspiritual leaders. God stands by his word and the work of his Spirit. In any conflict, he will support those who, like the Old Testament prophets, exhort according to his word with or without the legal justification of Church constitution or custom. Because Scripture was on their side, Paul (and Barnabas) were right in daring to accuse even Peter ("I withstood him to his face," Gal. 2:11–14, 18) of betraying the gospel (". . . they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel" Gal. 2:14).

Paul later writes in a similar vein when rebuking the Corinthians about their doctrinal disputes. "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other" (1 Cor. 4:6). Anyone who goes beyond Scripture is vain and endangers the Church, whether or not he is authorised by his Church's constitution.

Just as the State should be subject to the law (the consitution)[85] and not to any individual, the New Testament Church acknowledges no person, either local or supraregional not subject to the Bible. Scripture is the only constitution given to the Body of Christ, even though denominations and congregations may find it practical to formulate concrete regulations or confessions of faith.

8. Pastors need counsellors and mentors. Visitators, bishops, etc. are above all the pastors and counsellors of the pastors, not administrative bosses or officials. Pastors need encouragement and exhortation just as much as other Christians do, but such mentors should not be members of the pastor's own Church. In the New Testament, the errors of one pastor concerned not only his own congregation but also the other Churches. When, however, a pastor or elder was in difficulties, he was first approached by an individual, not by a synod, a committee or a Church court, just as in the case of a sinning Church member in Matthew 18:15.[86]

In episcopal Churches, the office is carried out by a "synodical bishopric" in which the bishop is elected by the synod as a visitor, and is thus subject to the synod. In the other Churches, a synodical president, a deacon or visitor carries out these duties. This officer should have at least enough authority to require a synod to reconsider wrong decisions, but the synod should have the power to call the visitor to account, to dismiss him or to regulate the limits of his authority.

Marie M. Fortune insists that the elders of congregationalist Churches have the authority to interfere, when pastors misuse their office. She blames the lack of such restraints for the repeated cases of pastors who entertain sexual relationships to women seeking counselling. [87]

9. A Church should have enough counsellors to provide sufficient personal and spiritual guidance. These should be active in a local congregation as well. No one can know 50 pastors and 300 elders (for example) well enough to provide the "soul care" they need.

Few episcopal Churches have enough bishops to be aware of all that goes on in the local congregations. Except for practical administrative and organisational matters, such as calling synods etc., the Church does not need a hierarchy above the bishops. Episcopal Churches need to learn from the early Church, which had bishops as "pastors" over small areas and as colleagues, who supported and exhorted each other.

Because of the usage of the word, "apostle," in the New Testament, I assume that there were founding apostles, such as Peter or Paul ("apostles of Jesus Christ"), whom God had confirmed by signs and miracles, and whose directions were absolutely binding on all Churches. This office no longer exists, but the spiritual gift and the office of apostle in a general sense still do ("apostles" [or messengers of the churches], 2 Cor. 8:23, Phil. 2:25).[88] These apostles were and are missionaries with a particular gift for starting Churches where none previously existed and where there are no believers. First, Jesus' twelve disciples are called apostles. Later, Matthias, a substitute for Judas, and Paul are added. All of these had seen Jesus (Paul in a vision), were appointed

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85. See Thomas Schirrmacher, *Ethik*. Vol 2, Lektion 59 and 60.

86. *Ibid.*, Lektion 57.

87. Marie M. Fortune, *Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 98.

88. See my list and discussion of all New Testament texts speaking of apostles in Thomas Schirrmacher, *Ethik*, Vol. 2, pp. 542–546 and Thomas Schirrmacher, *Der Römerbrief*, Vol. 2, pp. 292–296.

by him, confirmed their apostolic authority by signs and miracles and assisted in the revelation and recording of the New Testament message.

Occasionally, other workers in the New Testament Churches are called apostles, namely Jesus' brothers, James and Jude (1 Cor. 9:5, 15:7, Gal. 1:19) and possibly Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14) and others (1 Cor. 15:7, possibly Acts 1:25). In the case of Barnabas, the term may already be used in the general sense, as in 2 Cor. 8:23. Paul, speaking here of the "apostles" or "messengers" of the Churches, refers to colleagues whom he has sent out as missionaries (the word "missionary" being the Latin translation of the Greek "apostle" or "messenger"), with governing duties over several congregations. They are not "apostles of Jesus Christ" in the narrower sense of the word, but correspond to modern missionaries involved in founding new Churches, or to missionary bishops.

As important as the general responsibility of the missionary is, note that only the founding apostles are meant, whenever Scripture speaks of the words or commands of the apostles, the foundation of the New Testament Church or of the revelation of God's word.

It becomes apparent, therefore, that the office of founding apostle existed only in the generation during and immediately after Jesus' life on earth. In the second century,[89] however, there were still "apostles" in the sense used in 2 Cor. 8:23, as there are now as well, although, in order to avoid confusion, one should call them missionaries and bishops. *C&S*

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89. See Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Wiesbaden: VMA-Verlag, O. J. [1924]), pp. 361. According to Einar Molland, "Besaß die Alte Kirche ein Missionsprogramm?" pp. 51–76 in Heinzgünther Frohnes, Uwe W. Knorr (ed.), *Die Alte Kirche, Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte* 1 (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1974), p. 57, missionaries were still called "apostles" during the Middle Ages.

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CONTENTS