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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword

Essays in this <u>Faculty Bulletin</u> variously address issues associated with leadership and authority in the church. Rick Marrs provides suggestive insights for the contemporary church in his analysis of several types of leadership in Israel.

James Thompson and Allan McNicol separately address similar problems in examining leadership in the early church. Thompson finds in the early church a model of leadership which is neither autocratic nor democratic. McNicol focuses on the concept of ministry and applies his insights to the Restoration tradition.

The final essay argues that authority functions in and reflects an ethos. The contemporary church's difficulties with authority are in part due to a failure to understand this and in part due to the contemporary ethos.

Appreciation is due my colleagues for their cooperation in preparing these essays.

Michael R. Weed, editor

OLD TESTAMENT MODELS OF LEADERSHIP
By Rick R. Marrs

The issue of leadership in the contemporary church not only deserves attention, it demands it. A central concern in this discussion involves the question of where one turns for models of leadership. It may surprise some to suggest the Old Testament as a resource, since this ancient material seems so distant (and perhaps too distinct) from our modern Western culture. However, Israel experienced a variety of leaders over her lengthy history, and it would seem prudent to take note of her experiences with various types of leadership.[1]

In Jeremiah 18:18-19, the leaders of Judah, in response to a threatening message from Jeremiah, mention three influential types of leaders and their respective responsibilities: the priest with his law (torah); the prophet with his word (dabar); the wise man with his counsel ('esah). To suggest these three

leaders as contemporary models may be problematic, since these figures are often misunderstood by modern Christians. For many, the OT priest represents ritualism and legalism. As ritualizer, he endorsed and propagated a God/human relationship that majored in externals. For others, the OT prophet represents an ancient predictor/forecaster. Such predictive activity was appropriate and necessary in that ancient period, but inappropriate and unnecessary today. For some, the OT sage represents intellectualism. Many would shudder at the thought of intellectuals providing the leadership in contemporary congregations. However, these three models (prophet, priest, and sage), when properly understood, may provide useful information in formulating a biblical vision of a contemporary leader.

These three models are not the only sources available to us. Two other figures may be useful in formulating a modern vision of leadership. The first comes from the agrarian realm; the second derives from the political arena. In the OT, a common metaphor for a leader is shepherd. This image runs throughout the OT, from its earliest periods to its latest scenes, ultimately being appropriated in the NT as a metaphor of leadership. Through much of her history, Israel lived under the rule of a king. As we read the OT, we see not only the reality of kingship in ancient Israel, but more importantly, we are given the vision of what God

intended kingship to be, and what it means to affirm God as king. Both these figures (shepherd, king) provide helpful insights for discussion concerning contemporary leadership.

God's Leader as Prophet

Viewing the OT prophet primarily as predictor misunderstands the essence of prophecy. The prophet was primarily a proclaimer of the word of the Lord (a preacher). His commission was to convey God's message to an audience in desperate need of t. In a sense, the prophet was a mediator between God and his people. He was a mediator of the word of the Lord; he was also a mediator of salvation.

To understand the prophet's role as mediator of the word of God, a look at two well-known call narratives is in order. In Jeremiah 1:4-10 we find the call of Jeremiah. Two aspects deserve comment. First, Jeremiah's response is noteworthy. He expresses inadequacy to the task: he does not know how to speak; he is but a youth.[2] Second, Jeremiah's mission is not singular. His ministry will involve both destruction and construction (1:10)--i.e., both judgment and salvation.

In Isaiah 6:1-8 we encounter the call of Isaiah. Again, two aspects deserve mention. First, the vision of God is striking. God is portrayed in awesome

holiness and royal grandeur. Second, because of this majestic otherness of God, Isaiah realizes his own unworthiness to stand in the presence the Lord, much less become his minister. Not significantly, Isaiah only becomes Yahweh's messenger after having been purified and made worthy through God's cleansing.

Both call narratives reflect key elements regarding leadership. Both prophets saw themselves as unworthy and inadequate to the task. Although we may tend to look at the list of requirements for leaders in the NT and envision supermen, of more importance is how God's leaders envision themselves. If the prophetic model is valid, it suggests a leader who views himself as totally inadequate and hence heavily reliant on the grace of God.

Not only does the prophet mediate God's word, he also mediates (through that word) God's salvation. Several factors are involved. Clearly, mediation of salvation is multi-faceted and complex. It involves the pronouncement of judgment as well as a call to repentance; exhortation to hope as well as proclamation of deliverance. As God's prophet, he is commissioned to tell the people what they need to hear, which is not always (perhaps seldom) what they want to hear![3] Central in this context is the location of the prophet when he mediates God's message. Seldom (if ever) does one find a prophet standing apart from his community. Rather, the OT prophets regularly stood within the

community and with the community (see Jeremiah 8:18-9:1). Such notice is not insignificant. It is crucial that God's people perceive their leaders to be with them and for them.[4] God's leader, ancient and modern, is one whose life is intimately and inextricably bound to the community he serves.

God's Leader as Priest

Although some might consider the suggestion of priest as a model for leadership ill advised, it seems quite appropriate and helpful when one gains a clear understanding of the function of a priest in the OT. In ancient Israel, the priest was first and foremost a mediator of God's salvation. He performed this mediation through his teaching, through his actions, and most importantly, through his life.

As a teacher, the priest was entrusted with the important task of instructing the people in the statutes of the Lord, and of educating the people in distinguishing between the clean and the unclean (Leviticus 10:10-11). Not only did the priest mediate God's beneficence through his teaching, he also performed that function through his actions (viz., the performance of sacrifices). In this context, several aspects deserve comment and clarification. First, in ancient Israel there was a keen sensitivity to the distinction between the holy and the unholy, the pure and the impure. Whereas we might readily distinguish between the ritual, the

moral, and the theological, in ancient Israel these distinctions were of less concern. Of utmost importance was the awareness and recognition that <u>all</u> of life comes under divine scrutiny. No facet or sector of life stood beyond the bounds of Yahweh's purview. Because of this, what we actually see in the elaborate legal system is none other than an attempt to address God's comprehensive control over one's whole life. Further, the priest was to remind the people regularly of the true basis for their ethical behavior: "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). The priest functioned to remind the people that their ethical lives were rooted in nothing less than the nature and being of God. Third, the priest, like the prophet, was not considered <u>above</u> the people. Rather, he, like they, also had to be cleansed and purified (Leviticus 9). Finally, the priest found himself in a "double vulnerability."[5] In a sense, he was always "on the spot." On the one hand, he was called to stand before the people on behalf of God; on the other hand, he was called to stand before God on behalf of the people.

From this perspective, the priest as a model for contemporary leadership is instructive. Like the ancient priest, God's contemporary leader must be one who can teach. In this context, two aspects are involved. First, God's leader must be one who can teach the Christian faith. Second, as an integral element of this teaching, God's leader must be one who constantly reminds those entrusted to

him that the Lord is Lord (note the prominence of the refrain in Leviticus—"I am the Lord"). Through teaching and example, God's leader proclaims the claim of God on all facets of life. His teaching, actions, and life must be a constant testimony to the importance and centrality of the holy in one's life. God's leader is one who is willing to go into the breach for the people and for God

God's Leader as Sage[6]

OT wisdom was quite distinct from modern intellectualism. Wisdom was essentially <u>knowing how to live rightly</u>; i.e., it concerned behavior more than brains. The wise man was one who was "skilled in living."[7] At the outset, it is important to acknowledge that true wisdom necessarily entails devotion to Yahweh. Not inappropriately, a key refrain in Proverbs is: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." True wisdom cannot be present where awe and reverential devotion to Yahweh are absent. Further, wisdom <u>with Yahweh</u> is what one seeks; wisdom apart from Yahweh can be most destructive.[8]

When one thinks of the contemporary leader in the context of the OT sage, three aspects seem worthy of comment: 1) the sage as teacher; 2) the sage as a reflective one; 3) the qualities and attributes of the sage. Clearly, the wise man functions principally as one who teaches. However, of perhaps more significance, in Proverbs the wise man is one whose teaching not only transmits information,

but who also manifests the ramifications of that teaching through his daily conduct.

A second aspect concerns the reflective quality of the life of the sage. In ancient Israel, a wise man was one who pondered deeper issues, specifically issues of eternal import. This is not to suggest that contemporary leaders must be intellectuals or theologians; rather, it is to suggest that God's leader should be one who reflects on the deeper theological implications of contemporary church practices and programs. Church leaders, determining church policy and direction, must be theologically informed.[9]

Finally, noting the qualities and attributes characteristic of a wise man is useful.[10] A wise man is one who is prudent. This prudence is manifested in controversies (Proverbs 29:8-11) and in religious affairs (Hosea 14:10; Jeremiah 8:8-9). Significantly, the wise man is one who knows the wisdom of having and maintaining standards (Deuteronomy 4:6). His wisdom is evidenced in the various facets of his life (e.g., ethics and religion [Proverbs 10:8]). The sage is a wise learner: he seeks knowledge (Proverbs 1:5; 14:6; 18:15) and listens to advice (Proverbs 12:15; 15:31), becoming wiser through it (Proverbs 9:8-9). As a wise teacher he dispenses and shares his knowledge (Proverbs 15:2, 7). His wisdom is not only manifested in the content of his instruction, but in the very style and

manner of his instruction (Proverbs 12:8; 16:23 [his speech is judicious and persuasive]). Even his reproof (Proverbs 25:12) and his rebuke (Ecclesiastes 7:5) exhibit wisdom. His gracious words win favor (Ecclesiastes 10:12). Most significantly, a wise man is a <u>blessing to others</u> (Proverbs 13:14 [his instruction is a fountain of life]; 13:20 [one walking with him becomes wiser]).

The implications of the model of the wise man for the contemporary leader seem self-evident. God's leader must be a teacher not only formally, but informally through the testimony of his life. His behavior demonstrates the wisdom and validity of his message. Most importantly, those about him are blessed by his life, for he brings life in its fullness to them.

Shepherds and Kings

For many, to speak of shepherds and kings in the same breath is to associate two quite disparate images. However, in the OT (as in the rest of the ancient Near East), shepherd imagery was often associated with royal imagery.[11]

Shepherd imagery depicting Yahweh is embedded in the ancient living faith of Israel. This imagery, perhaps more than any other, was well suited to express God's sheltering care of his people.[12] Interestingly; the use of shepherd imagery is not divided evenly throughout the OT, but occurs principally in the Psalter and in the consoling prophecy of the Exile.

In the Psalter, Psalm 23 is quite well known. The depiction of God as one who nourishes, guides, and protects his people has been a source of comfort for many. Less well known, but equally powerful, is Psalm 78:52-53a:

> Then he led forth his people like sheep,
>   and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
> He led them in safety, so that they were not afraid...

Numerous other psalms affirm and extol God's beneficent and watchful care of his sheep.[13]

Similarly, the prophets present God as shepherd of his people. However, they also utilize this imagery for the earthly leaders of God's people. This imagery speaks powerfully, for it provides a model of what God's leader should be. Not surprisingly, God himself serves as the model shepherd.

> He [i.e., God] will feed his flock like a shepherd,
>   he will gather the lambs in his arms,
> he will carry them in his bosom,
>   and gently lead those that are with young.
> (Isaiah 40:11)

Significantly, God's Messiah is also depicted as shepherd.

> And he shall stand and feed his flock
>   in the strength of the Lord,
>   in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
> And they shall dwell secure,
>   for now they shall be great
>   to the ends of the earth.
> (Micah 5:4)

Tragically, God's earthly leaders often failed in fulfilling their role as shepherds. This scenario is most graphically depicted in Ezekiel 34:1-16, where the earthly leaders are excoriated for feeding themselves rather than the sheep,

and actually exploiting the sheep to their own advantage. Because of this, God appears as rightful Shepherd of his people, coming to replace these worthless shepherds with worthy shepherds. Even during Israel's most difficult and trying times, the prophets envisioned a day when true shepherds of God would rule.

> Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: "You have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil doings," says the Lord. "Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing," says the Lord.
>
> (Jeremiah 23:2-4)

In ancient Israel, to be God's shepherding leader was a high calling with weighty responsibilities. This linkage of royal imagery with shepherding is best seen in a reference to Yahweh, King and Shepherd of his people.

> Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
>   thou who leadest Joseph like a flock!
> Thou who art enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth
>   before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh!
> Stir up thy might, and come to save us!
>
> (Psalm 80:1-2)[14]

From this perspective, two aspects of kingship in ancient Israel seem especially worthy of note: 1) royal responsibilities; 2) the implications of the king as God's earthly representative.

Although the king in ancient Israel had numerous responsibilities (some bestowed; some presumed), most relevant in the present context is a rehearsal of the king's responsibilities toward his people.

> Give the king thy justice, O God,
>> and thy righteousness to the royal son!
> May he judge thy people with righteousness,
>> and thy poor with justice!
> Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
>> and the hills, in righteousness!
> May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
>> give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor!...
> For he delivers the needy when he calls,
>> the poor and him who has no helper.
> He has pity on the weak and the needy,
>> and saves the lives of the needy.
> From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
>> and precious is their blood in his sight.
>> (Psalm 72:1-4, 12-14)

Clearly few (if any) kings realized this lofty vision of kingship in ancient Israel. And yet it functioned as a constant reminder of what God's leader should be--a proclaimer and bearer of justice and righteousness.

A second aspect of utmost importance is the function of the king as God's earthly representative. In ancient Israel, the people's identity and future were inextricably bound to those of the king. The king, in his life and in his agenda, set the tone and direction for God's people.[15] The implications for the contemporary church seem self-evident. God's leaders should give direction and vision to God's

people. They must dispense God's justice, righteousness, and steadfast love. In a very real sense, they should enflesh the will of God in their lives. The testimony of their lives and values should inform and inspire the church's identity and vision.[16]

Conclusion

Read closely, the OT provides the contemporary church with several models of leadership. It is suggestive, for it details examples of both godly and ungodly leadership. Central to several models is the function of God's leader as mediator: mediator of God's word; mediator of God's salvific blessings; mediator of the essence of God through the message and life of the leader. God's leaders are called to be God's men before the people, to be the people's men before God. Perhaps no one in the OT more fittingly epitomizes leadership than Moses. Moses was a man of vision--he saw what the people of God could become through obedience. Moses was a leader who knew frustration--he dealt daily with the people of God as they were. Moses was a man keenly aware of his own limitations. Yet most tellingly, Moses was a leader who, in the most frustrating circumstances, when the people felt most threatened, faithfully pointed the people to their Sovereign Lord. Such is the lofty calling of God's contemporary leaders.

Footnotes

[1]   J. Olley ("Leadership: Some Biblical Perspectives," SEAsJTh 18 [1977] 1) has noted five possible sources for the pattern and style of leadership and authority for the church: 1) theology (including biblical materials); 2) inherited traditions (ecclesiastical and educational); 3) cultural traditions and

expectations; 4) other secular models (e.g., political structures and business management); *5)* exemplary or impressive individuals or organizations.

[2] One may compare profitably the call of Moses (Exodus 4) and Solomon's analysis of himself at the beginning of his reign (1 Kings 3:7-15).

[3] Such conflict was clearly present in the ministry of Micah. While his contemporaries pandered to the desires of their audience, Micah forcefully proclaimed the often-unpopular message from God (see Micah 2:6-11).

[4] It must be remembered that the prophets saw themselves as one of the people even when they most forcefully proclaimed God's judgment upon those people.

[5] The expression comes from J. Wharton, "Theology and Ministry in the Hebrew Scriptures," in A Biblical Basis for Ministry (eds. E. Shelp; R. Sunderland; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 46. Daily the priest touched and handled those things that belonged to God, things that could consume ordinary people. Coming into daily contact with the holiness of God placed him in a situation of utmost seriousness.

[6] In the OT, as in the rest of the ancient Near East, wisdom literature and wisdom thinking were of two types: optimistic and pragmatic (i.e., concerned with practical lifestyle [e.g., Proverbs]); pessimistic and reflective (i.e., concerned with the deeper issues of life [e.g., Job; Ecclesiastes]).

[7] The earliest uses of hokmah/hakam "wisdom, wise") refer to skilled artisans. These terms then came to be used of one who was skilled in the art of living. For an excellent description of wisdom (manifested in behavior) that is congruent with OT wisdom, see James 3:13-18.

[8] Again, one thinks of the contrasted wisdoms in James 3:13-18. Such a distinction between wisdom with Yahweh and wisdom without Yahweh is also present in the OT. Perhaps the best example of one who exhibited both types in his career is Solomon. At the beginning of his reign, Solomon had that wisdom that comes from the Lord. At the end of his career, Solomon apparently came to believe that wisdom in and of itself was sufficient for life. Lamentably, the end of Solomon's political career was marked by social corruption and exploitation. Absent from his reign was a sense of justice and equity.

[9] Significantly, the validity of many programs and practices in today's church seem to be decided not upon theological grounds or from religious convictions, but rather by the pragmatic criterion of effectiveness (i.e., success).

[10] Interestingly, the relation of wisdom with administrative skill finds fairly unimpressive attestation in the OT. To my knowledge, the only wise men noted as skilled administrators are Joseph (Genesis 41:33, 39) and Solomon (1 Kings 5:7).

[11] In an ancient Sumerian royal inscription, the king Lugal-zagissi is referred to as a "shepherd appointed by a deity." In Akkadian (the language of ancient Assyria), "shepherd" (re'u) is a common epithet for rulers; the verbal form is commonly translated "to rule."

[12] In Genesis 48:15, Jacob, at the end of his life, when blessing Joseph, refers to his God as the one "who has shepherded [RSV: led] me all my life long to this day."

[13] See especially Psalms 28:9; 68:7; 74:1; 77:20; 79:13; 95:7; 100:3; 121:4.

[14] Other passages that are helpful in this discussion include Isaiah 49:9-10; Micah 4:6-8; 7:14; Jeremiah 3:15; Nahum 3:18.

[15] The importance of this aspect should not be underestimated. In 2 Samuel 8:15, David's reign is heralded, not because of its expanse or power, but because "David administered Justice and equity to all his people." Conversely, one can legitimately suggest that as Solomon increased in wealth and became corrupt, so wealth became a cherished value and exploitation began to flourish in his reign.

[16] A. Paynor ("Where have all the heroes gone? It is time for the Shepherds to Stop Wandering with the Sheep," Christianity Today 28 [I984] 82-83) calls for contemporary church leaders to become once again role models for the church. She laments the loss of leaders who will function as representatives of Jesus Christ to lead God's people to higher plateaus of Christian experience.

AUTHORITY AND LEADERSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
By James W. Thompson

Within the restoration tradition, few have quarrel with the insistence that the governance of the church in biblical times provides the appropriate model for the contemporary church. Early leaders of the movement found in the church of the Philippians and the Pastoral epistles, with the "bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1; cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-10) mentioned there, a model for church life which could be employed in the church of all ages. However, considerable disagreement exists on the role and authority of these offices, both in the New Testament and in the contemporary church. Some insist that the early churches were highly democratic and that its leaders possessed little authority beyond that of their own personal example. Norman Parks argues, for example, that the "scriptural function (of elders) involved the positive role of teaching, looking out for the welfare of the members, and influencing conduct by their own good example."[1] For Parks, the responsibility for church discipline belonged to the corporate body and not to a

small group of leaders. The bishops did not exercise authority over the church. Larry Richards, in <u>A Theology Church Leadership</u>, also insists that the local leaders in the New Testament had the primary purpose of leading by example and not the authority to make decisions.[2]

An alternative view which has functioned in Churches of Christ is that of local leaders as highly authoritative, if not autocratic. The elders of the New Testament are perceived as a decision-making body and final arbiter on the doctrine and practice of the church. This view has been, in my own experience, the dominant understanding of the function of the local leadership in the New Testament.

The presence of two alternative views of the authority of leaders reflects a general uncertainty over the locus of authority in the local church. While no one denies that authority belongs to God, uncertainty exists when we ask who has the authority to speak for God. Is the church fundamentally democratic? Are leaders chosen by the congregation and subject to recall? Our uncertainty over authority is exacerbated by the fact that our own background and experience predispose us to read the biblical evidence in a way that corresponds to our own experience of the way groups function. In our own society, we are naturally tempted to take the biblical titles "elder," "minister." and "deacon," superimposing a democratic or

corporate model of authority. When this is done, we naturally read into the text ideas of representative government and decision-making that are foreign to it. Our own experience of authority thus conditions us to read the New Testament with our own assumptions.

The complexity of the modern situation, where the church holds property titles and has extensive programs and budgets, adds to the uncertainty about using the New Testament to discover the nature of authority in the church. Since ancient churches had no budgets or property titles, no one exercised authority in these matters. Thus our situation was not envisioned in the New Testament.

Despite the differences in culture between the past and the present, we nevertheless turn to the New Testament for the insights it may offer on the scope of authority in the local churches. In this article, I shall focus on the dynamics of authority on the churches influenced by Paul.

Authority in the New Testament

Eduard Schweizer has pointed out that one of the "surprising consistencies" in the New Testament is revealed in word statistics. Schweizer observes a reticence in the New Testament in speaking of offices in the church.[3] Although the Greek language has a wide variety of words for office, few of these words appear in the New Testament. Where they occur, they almost never refer to the

officers in the local congregations.[4] The one authority in Paul's letters is the gospel. Not even the apostles have the freedom to "tamper with" it (2 Cor. 4:2) or to preach any other message (cf. Gal. 1:6-9). Paul knows that he is only a steward of this message (1 Cor. 4:1) which has been entrusted to him. Even such an esteemed person as Peter is subject to the authority of the gospel (2:11-14).[5] Consequently, in the name of the gospel Paul challenges Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14); Thus authority in the New Testament belongs to the Lord alone. Even his apostles are nothing more than slaves (2 Cor. 4:5) who have been captured by the gospel. As slaves of the gospel, they exhaust themselves for the sake of others (2 Cor. 12:15).

While Paul is only a "steward" of the message, he writes letters to his churches to give instructions on a wide variety of matters. In Galatians, for example, he speaks with authority in clarifying the content of the gospel. In 1 Corinthians, he answers questions concerning a variety of problems in the Corinthian church. In all of the letters, he does not hesitate to give instructions on Christian behavior. Where his churches do not follow his instructions, he assumes the father's authority to give a beating (1 Cor. 4:21). He does not hesitate to say of these instructions, "this is the will of God" (cf. 1 Thess. 4:3), or to claim that God is speaking through him (2 Cor. 5:20). He pronounces the judgment on the man

who is living in an incestuous relationship in Corinth, and he expects the church to follow his instructions (1 Cor. 5:1-5). According to 2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10, the Lord has given him the authority to build and to tear down. Thus his role is not unlike that of Jeremiah, who was authorized to "pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (1:10).

This authority and power in Paul cannot be separated from other aspects of Paul's life as an apostle. His power is that of an anxious parent who has devoted himself to his children. As a parent, his role is to instruct, provide a model for imitation, correct his children, and require obedience from them.

Paul's personal authority over his churches is closely related to his total identification with the cross of Christ in his total ministry. He does not "lord it over" his church (2 Cor. 1:24). Instead, the features which legitimize his authority are his sleepless nights, anxiety for the churches (2 Cor. 11:28), and willingness to "be spent" for the lives of others.

Authority in the Local Churches

If Paul exercised authority over his churches, which included even the right to command the whole church to follow his instructions on church discipline (1 Cor. 5:1-5) or in the appropriate attire at worship (1 Cor. 11:2-6), one may reasonably ask if the local church had positions of authority. The letters were

addressed to the entire community, and they suggest that no function is reserved only for office holders. There is no Christian equivalent to the "head of the synagogue" (archisynagogos, cf. Mark 5:22; Acts 13:15; 18:8). Paul insists that every Christian has the gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 13), and that each one contributes to the life of the body. A persistent theme in his letters is that of mutuality, which is to be seen in his frequent use of the expression "one another" (allelon, Rom. 12:5, 10; 15:7, 14; Gal. 5:13, 15). All Christians are to "encourage one another" (1 Thess. 4:18) and "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). They are to "live in harmony with one another" (Rom. 12:16) and "welcome one another" (Rom. 15:7). Expressions with "one another" provide an important linguistic clue to the patterns of community life in the New Testament, as G. Lohfink shows.[6] This community life was built on the responsibilities of all for each other.[7]

Although the whole church is encouraged to be active in teaching, encouraging, and admonishing (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14), Paul's letters indicate that the church was not meant to be a "leaderless mob."[8] From the very earliest days, local leadership existed and was recognized by the congregation. The relationship between the obligations of the whole community and those of its leaders is evident in Paul's earliest extant letter, 1 Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11,

14, Christians are told to "encourage one another and build one another up" (5:11), to "admonish the idlers" and "encourage the fainthearted" (5:14). At the same time there is a special group composed of those who "labor among you and are over you and admonish you in the Lord" (5:12). That a single group is referred to is indicated by the single article used to describe them.[9]

The use of participles rather than nouns to describe them indicates that no fixed titles exist in the community.[10] They are known for the functions which they perform. A close interrelationship exists between the functions of laboring, being over the congregation, and admonishing others. Inasmuch as their role in "admonishing" is also the work of the whole church, a continuity exists between the roles of the group of leaders and the task of the whole church. Although all are instructed to "admonish," a special group had emerged who were recognized for their work of admonishing.

The RSV expression, "those who are over you" (proistamenoi), suggests that a measure of authority accompanied the task of laboring and admonishing. The term rendered to "be over" (proistemi) also means to "give aid," In the list of ministries provided by the Spirit in Rom. 12:8, the word is rendered in the RSV, "he who gives aid." In antiquity both meanings were present because the giving of aid was the task of those in high positions who cared for their dependents and

subordinates.[11] The word, according to H. Greeven, was used for the protective, authoritative care exercised by superiors.[12] Brockhaus calls it. "an authoritative care" and a "caring authority."[13] By the early fifties of the first century, therefore, some had emerged who were, like the leaders of a city or parents in their homes, looking out after the needs of those who were under their care. The mutuality of the life of the church did not preclude the presence of local leaders who exercised authority in the church.

The emergence of leaders who are distinguished from the rest of the congregation is also indicated in 1 Corinthians 16:15-16 where, as in 1 Thess. 5:13, the congregation is encouraged to "know" them. Here also no titles are given. The household of Stephanas is distinguished by the fact that they "have devoted themselves to the service of the saints" (1 Cor. 16:15). Similarly, the leaders of 1 Thessalonians 5:13 are recognized because of their work. Here, as H. Greeven has indicated,[14]

> It is not cleverness, worldly wisdom, or "connections" which predestine one for leadership in the community, but rather the zeal and joyful devotion on its behalf alone. One who is driven by zeal and does not hesitate to put forth effort is one who is capable of assuming leadership.

Consequently Paul summons his congregations to "know" them and "esteem them" (1 Thess. 5:13), i.e., to recognize what they have done and continue to do

for the church. Their legitimacy is not derived specifically from ordination or appointment, but from their commitment to a task and the church's recognition of their work.

In churches which were distinguished by the mutuality of obligations, what authority did these leaders possess in their local congregations? In the period of Paul's activity, their authority was limited, for, as we have seen, Paul exercised sweeping authority over his churches. When, for example, the church exercised discipline, it acted on the authority of the apostle. Nevertheless, the references in 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians indicate the presence of significant authority in the hands of the leaders who had emerged. In addition to the church's obligation to "esteem" and "know" them, it is also instructed to "be subject" to such people as the household Stephanas and "to every fellow worker and laborer" (1 Cor. 16:16). The verb hypotassein ("be subject") is used elsewhere in the New Testament for the wife's subjection to her husband (Col. 3:18), for the mutual submission of family members to each other (Eph. 5:21), and for the Christian's subjection to the state (Rom. 13:1). The word is derived from tassein, to order or determine,[15] and is related to taxis, order. The word and its cognates are used for the orderly arrangement of things. Since all things are to be done "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40),[16] some within the congregation are to be subordinate to

others. Thus one may speak of the development of local authority within the congregation are to be subordinate to others. Thus one may speak of the development of local authority within the Pauline churches.

Although local leaders with authority in the community had emerged in the mid-fifties, no fixed titles appear to be in use until a later date. "Those who are over you" in 1 Thessalonians 5:13 may be the equivalent to the "administrators" (kybernēseis) who are listed among the workers in 1 Corinthians 12:28.[17] In Philippians 1:1, the first reference is made to "bishops and deacons." We have no indication from Philippians what their functions were, except what can be inferred from the meaning of the titles themselves.[18] The bishop (episkopos) undoubtedly had the role of supervision. Thus the role of bishop in Phil. 1:1 cannot be distinguished from that of "those who are over you" in 1 Thess. 5:13, as both terms are derived from related areas secular speech.[19] James D. G. Dunn[20] is probably correct that

> some of the less well-defined areas of administration and service ... had begun to be grouped together or to cohere into more clearly outlined forms of ministry, so that those who regularly engaged in them could be known by the same name (overseer or deacon).

The Pastoral Epistles

A new development in the view of authority in the Pauline churches is

apparent in the Pastoral Epistles, for these letters anticipate the demise of the apostle's personal authority and the need of local leaders in the church in the battle against false teaching. The bishop episkopos of 1 Tim. 3:1 is apparently the equivalent of the elder in 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5.[21] Here one may speak of the "offices" of the bishop and deacon with specific qualifications for each. Such "faithful men" comprise the bridge between Paul and the post-apostolic age (2 Tim. 2:2). They are to be ordained "in every city" (Titus 1:6), where they serve as the bulwark against the growing dangers of false teaching. Alongside Timothy and Titus, Paul's emissaries, they are active in passing on the sound teaching. Some are said "to labor in preaching and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17).

Although the focus of the Pastoral Epistles is on the qualifications for church leaders, the actual authority of these leaders is indicated in a few references. The church in these epistles is viewed as a "household," according to 1 Tim. 3:15. Accordingly, the bishop functions as the head of an extended family. His role is especially evident in the instructions for bishops in 1 Tim. 3:4-5. In a parenthetical comment intended to justify the requirement that the bishop "govern" his household well, the parallel is drawn between governing the household and caring for the church: "For if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church?"

The authority of the bishop is indicated in the parallel between managing (proistemi) the household and "caring for" (epimeleomai) the church. The two words are interchangeable in referring to authority of various kinds at different levels, including the wide-ranging authority associated with the head of the family in the Hellenistic-Roman society.[22] Indeed, a form of proistēmi is used in the reference to "elders who rule well" in 1 Tim. 5:17. As heads over an extended family, they undoubtedly exercised a significant amount of authority, particularly in the area of teaching.

Their authority was not unlimited, for 1 Tim. 5:19-20 offers measures to be taken when elders "persist in sin." Procedures are mentioned for the rebuke of the elder. Here members of the congregation would serve as witnesses in such a proceeding.

<div align="center">The Scope of Local Authority</div>

During the period of Paul's active ministry, the scope of the authority of local leaders is not clearly indicated. They neither exercised church discipline nor arranged the services of worship (1 Cor. 14:26). Where major conflicts exist, as in Galatians, Paul does not place the leaders in charge.[23] One may reasonably ask, therefore, what authority was exercised by local leaders. Although Paul's letters do not answer the question directly, they refer to the functions of some who were

recognized for special qualities. Some were numbered among the "spiritual" of Galatians 6:1, who restored the wayward Christians. Others were recognized sufficiently for their teaching that they were to receive remuneration for their work (Gal. 6:6). Undoubtedly the primary authority of the early leaders grew out of their role as teachers. Perhaps, as B. Holmberg has suggested, they also cared for the sick and the poor, received traveling missionaries, and accommodated the church in their homes.[24]

The decisive reason for the limit in the authority of local leaders in the epistles written during the fifties is the presence of Paul as the final arbiter of all questions of faith and practice. His letters show that he still controls church life and takes personal responsibility for the members. Holmberg is correct when he says,[25]

> The founder has not left the scene, but is fully and energetically active in his churches (especially in Corinth). . . . And it is just this potential accessibility of the apostle, the fact that he is still actively present and his authority fully accessible, that prevents the full (social, legal and theological) development of those beginnings of an office structure we observe in the Pauline letters.

The Pastoral Epistles reflect the natural development in local authority. Where the demise of the apostle is anticipated, greater authority is assumed. The bishop/elder is responsible for the preservation of sound doctrine. As in Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:18-35), the task of the elder/bishop is to protect the church from the wolves who would destroy it. The authority to protect

the church undoubtedly included the determination of sound doctrine and the exclusion of those who failed to pass the test. The elder/bishop of the Pastoral Epistles was a patriarchal figure who had emerged as a leader because of his faithfulness and his ability to preach and teach. As the patriarch of an extended family, he took responsibility for the spiritual health of those who were under his care.

Authority of Local Leaders Today

Although local authority in the New Testament was in the process of development and rooted in a patriarchal culture, there are features of local authority which were so intrinsic to the Christian faith that they can be used in the contemporary church. I suggest that the following aspects of local authority should be present in local congregations today.

1.   The subtle dialectic in the New Testament between the responsibilities of all and the task of a small group of leaders, resulting in a mutual service between those who lead and those who are subordinate, should be recognized. Fundamental to the functioning of the local church is the recognition of the equality of all as members of the body of Christ and the recognition that some have the authority to serve as "helmsmen" for the community.

2.   The church is not a democracy. The church has a special need for those who, because of their maturity in the faith, provide special guidance and have grown in the faith. The major decisions affecting the identity of the church

are not settled by majority vote. Nevertheless, Christian leaders recognize that their authority does not justify the excesses of the autocrat. The model for Christian leadership remains the one who exhausted himself for others (cf. 2 Cor. 12:15).

3.   Christian leaders were, from the beginning, primarily teachers who had grown in the faith. They were recognized as leaders because they had demonstrated their gift of teaching and service (cf. 1 Cor. 16:15-16). The divorce of the teaching ministry from the modern eldership has disastrous results for the church. The selection of elders on any basis other than service and maturity in the faith will leave a church without essential leadership.

4.   Just as essential authority in biblical times resided in the gospel itself, and not in the apostles and local leaders, authority today rests in the gospel. All leaders remain subject to the claim of the gospel, which is mediated through Scripture. All leaders remain nothing more than "stewards of the gospel" (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1).

The New Testament is authoritative for the life of the church as it remains the source of doctrine and offers models of leadership. The church which lives after the demise of the apostles continues to need for its survival those "faithful men" who are able to teach others and whose authority is rooted in selfless love.

Footnotes

[1] Norman Parks. <u>Mission</u> 18 (1984) 5.

[2] Larry Richards, <u>A Theology of Church Leadership</u> (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) 89-95.

[3] Eduard Schweizer, <u>Church Order in the New Testament</u>, SBT 32 (London: SCM, 1961) 171.

[4] Schweizer, 171.

[5] Hans von Campenhausen, <u>Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries</u> (Stanford, California: Stanford University, 1969) 37.

[6] G. Lohfink, <u>Jesus and Community</u> (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 99.

[7] G. Lohfink, 102.

[8] See C. K. Barrett, <u>Church, Ministry, and Sacraments in the New Testament</u> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 34.

[9] H. Greeven, "Propheten, Lehrer, Vorsteher bei Paulus. Zur Frage der 'Amter' im Urchristentum," in K. Kertelge, ed. <u>Das Kirchliche Amt im Neuen Testament</u> (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977) 348.

[10] R. Banks, <u>Paul's Idea of Community</u> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 144.

[11] von Campenhausen, 65.

[12] Greeven, 346.

[13] U. Brockhaus, <u>Charismaund und Amt. Die paulinische Charismenlehre auf Hintergrund der fruhchristlichen Gemeindefunktionen</u>. Cited in B. Holmberg, <u>Paul and Power</u> (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 99.

[14] Greeven, 349.

[15] W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) 813.

[16] H. Conzelmann, "1 Corinthians," Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 298.

[17] Kybernēseis refers literally to the helmsman who "steers a ship." It was often used metaphorically for those who exercised leadership in communities. H. W. Beyer, TDNT 111. 1036-1037.

[18] Holmberg, 100.

[19] Greeven, 354.

[20] James D. G. Dunn, Unity and Diversity in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 113.

[21] Earlier Pauline letters make no reference to the presbuteros (elder). The term is derived from the Jewish synagogue and is used it Acts for the church leaders in Jerusalem and elsewhere (cf. Acts 4:5, 8; Acts 14:23).

[22] David Verner, Household of God; The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles, SBL Dissertation Series (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983) 152.

[23] Holmberg, 112.

[24] Holmberg, 116.

[25] Holmberg, 116.

A HIERARCHY OR MERE FUNCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: IS THERE ANOTHER MODEL FOR THE MINISTRY?

by Allan McNicol

It is a too frequent story. As I sit down to read the brotherhood newspaper my attention is drawn toward a veritable litany of reports which involve conflict with the ministry (elders, deacons and preachers) in the local churches. In one church a faction is suing the elders. The group alleges that the elders have abused their role as trustees and are not making a full disclosure of their stewardship of the monies in the church treasury. In other places a number of slander, libel, and invasion of privacy disputes involving disciplinary action by the ministry in local churches has spilled over into the courts. Clearly we in churches of Christ are a contentious people; and increasingly a litigious group as well. These developments seem to be a more frequent part of our scene every year. Why is there so much conflict in the church between the ministry and the rest of the membership?

Of course some of these developments have their origin in the political ethos of our liberal democratic society. Here the individual is fed the constant line that he has all sorts of constitutionally guaranteed rights and these are often under assault by the large institutions in our society; for institutions are always susceptible to abuses of power. Thus the continual suspicion that exists in our society toward corporations, the government, and other major entities is carried over into the church. "We need to watch out for that eldership!" It appears to be assumed that the business of the kingdom is pursued in a similar ethos and with the same ground rules as in any other major institution in our society. As such this seems to represent another example of what Michael Weed has called "the secularization of the church."[1]

Nevertheless our grief over this situation should not in any way be perceived as special pleading for poor administrative practices and raw abuses of power that, unfortunately, still occur in some congregations. In the early church the New Testament writers could credibly hold up the moral life of the leading members as far superior to anything that took place in the outside world (1 Pet. 4:3-4, 15; Acts 2:46-47). Even toward the outsiders Paul exhorts the Christians at Rome to be scrupulously honest and pay their taxes in order to cause no offense to the authorities (Rom. 13:1-7).

Thus there is no excuse for the leadership in churches if they handle the finances unprofessionally or do not conduct themselves with fairness and rectitude, seasoned with genuine care, in delicate matters of administration and discipline. When the believing community does not fulfill the promises evoked by its story it invites the condemnation of disgruntled members as well as outsiders.

Yet, even taking into full consideration the insidious influences that our political ethos infuses into the church, one wonders whether this accounts fully for the current problems which beset our ministry. Years ago, the English scholar T. W. Manson noted that real confusion exists over the understanding of ministry among churches which are organized totally along congregational lines.[2] For example, in such a church whom do we call ministers? Are minister just members who have lost their amateur status?[3] If ministers are paid, are they employed to do what other members are too lazy or incompetent to do?[4] Is there a place for an order or office of ministry in the church of Christ?[5] Perhaps our present problems over church leadership occur because we are confused as to what we perceive ministry in the church to be, what is its theological rationale, and how we are to respond to it.

This essay intends to bring some clarification in this area. Our attempt will be to lay the groundwork for a doctrine of ministry that can gain acceptance

within the churches of Christ. Procedurally, as a way of orienting ourselves historically and theologically we will discuss two models for ministry that have emerged in historical Christendom: the hierarchical and the functional egalitarian model. After having shown the strengths and weaknesses of these models we will attempt to discuss the biblical teaching on ministry. We will conclude with a brief summary of the vision of ministry that we would commend to the churches. We trust that these reflections will be helpful; for it will enable us to get in clearer focus what we mean by the ministry of the church, what claim it has over us, and what our obligation is to it.

<div align="center">The Hierarchical Model of Ministry</div>

Throughout the greater part of the history of Western Christianity, especially in Europe, the paradigm for the ministry of the church has been that of the hierarchical model. The ministry of the Roman Catholic Church is the example par excellence for this kind of structuring of the ministry of the church. We will now examine the Catholic view of ministry to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a hierarchical model for the ministry of the church.

One of the most recent authoritative documents on the Catholic view of ministry are those statements that have emerged from Vatican Council II.[6] In the section on the church it is stated that the Lord, after having sent his apostles,

willed that the bishops be their successors and guide the church to the consummation of the world.[7] In order that the true bishops be identified it is claimed that the episcopate was established by Peter, who was placed in authority over the twelve, and that it was confirmed by the Holy Spirit that Peter's primal authority be carried on by the Roman Pontiff and his infallible magisterium.[8] Thus the church is structurally organized on the basis of its episcopate. Ministry only has legitimacy if it operates in direct connection with the episcopate.

This model of ministry is, of course, based on an historical anachronism: the primacy of the church at Rome founded on Peter. It has its origin in the development of the three-fold ministry (bishops, presbyters [priests], deacons) which perhaps first was advocated by Ignatius and then developed in the second-century church. By the end of the second century Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons, had produced a list of bishops of the church at Rome which he traced back to Peter.[9] This development further consolidated the belief that Peter was primum inter pares among the apostles. In later centuries the metaphor of Peter obtaining the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16:19) became very significant. In the Middle Ages the perception was widespread that in an institutional setting, keys were the special prerogative of a steward or vicar who had sole use of them so that no one could open a door he had shut or close a door he had opened.[10] Ultimately, when

the papacy became dominant, the pope on the basis of his claim that he was the successor of Peter, asserted that he had the right to bind or loose in matters of faith and practice in the church.

Under this model of ministry there is a clear division of the church into two groups: clergy and laity. The laity are dependent upon the clergy for their spiritual life and sustenance. For example, the sacraments (including baptism and the Lord's Supper) can only be administered under the direct Jurisdiction of the episcopate. Any other form of ministry is considered to be unapostolic and illegitimate.

Such a model for ministry is not without its advantages. First, since there is a clear distinction between the ministry and laity the ministry is clearly identifiable and visible in the community. Moreover, since it has functioned this way for many centuries it has created a number of deeply hallowed traditions. Protestants often dismiss traditions as stifling and permeated with superstition. But, as many modern secular Jews have discovered, contemporary American secular culture is spiritually bankrupt and one may find identity by returning to observance of various models of Torah observance available within their own tradition; so many Catholics look upon Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi, or Mother Teresa as models to shape their own identity today.

Second, since the validity of ministry in the Catholic Church rests upon the transmission of authority from an episcopal body it is easy for that body to determine who should be clergy and under what conditions they should be called. This has the distinct advantage of assuring the world that the clergy must have finished a prescribed course of study in theology, have a reasonable understanding of the tradition, and can present it fairly, before they are ordained This position is particularly striking when it is compared with the situation in many Free churches where the call to ministry has no theological pre-requisites and is often only subject to whatever political forces are operative in a given congregation. Thus the ministry in many Free churches is often less educated theologically than that in the Catholic episcopate.

Nevertheless despite the great impact of the hierarchical model of ministry in the history of Christianity, it appears deficient for both historical and theological reasons.

The idea that the church at Rome was founded by Peter, and that as steward of the keys of the kingdom he passed on the powers of binding and loosing to the universal church through the power of apostolic succession is an historical fiction. With reference to Peter's connection with Rome, there is no historical evidence to indicate he ever spent significant time there before the great fire of July 64 A.D.,

and his subsequent death shortly thereafter. There is evidence that the church at Rome was in existence in the early forties of the first century and that Paul's letter to the Romans (circa 58) presumes the existence of a considerable body of Jewish and gentile Christians active in the faith by that time.[11] Thus, it is impossible to claim, on historical grounds, that Peter was the founder of the church at Rome.

Moreover, evidence from the primary literary sources indicates that governance of the church at Rome (unlike some other major cities in the Empire) was exercised by a plurality of elders or bishops until well into the second century.[12] Therefore, the idea that Peter ordained one bishop to succeed him as the bishop of Rome is also impossible.

Furthermore, while it is true that the New Testament, including Matthew 16:16-18, indicates that Peter was a foundational pillar in the early church, the textual evidence points more to the fact that he was of foundational significance for the church at Jerusalem--not Rome![13]

Nevertheless, although the hierarchical model of ministry operative in the Catholic Church is historically an anachronism it is often argued that theologically it is true. That is to say there is no doubt that ultimately the ministry of the church at Rome did become an episcopacy and so long as these material structures which emerged acted in a way congruent with the gospel this

development is theologically defensible; even though it may be vastly different from anything that we find in the New Testament!

Yet, given our long historical experience with the hierarchical ministry in European Christianity, the results attained do not make us feel sanguine. One does not necessarily need to raise the scandal of the Inquisition. What we have in mind is a more fundamental inner contradiction in the Catholic view of ministry. There seems to be a basic incompatibility between the proclamation of the gospel and the perception of ministry (as it developed in Western Christendom) as a status, or ordo, perceived to function as somewhat akin to the old Roman senatorial system.[15] Instead of becoming a vehicle to preach the gospel, the Catholic Church became like any other monolithic institution. Certain permanent offices were available to be filled within the hierarchy. Each of these positions had a peculiar status of its own. Achieving status within the hierarchy became a major preoccupation. Such a perception of ministry constituted a fundamental distortion of the gospel; for to minister the gospel is to serve others.

At the heart of Jesus' announcement of the kingdom was a new definition of power. Unlike the highly structured society of the Roman Empire with its constant preoccupation with power and status, Jesus envisioned a new world that would be structured with different priorities. The greatest in the kingdom would

be the humble servant (Matt. 20:20-28; Lk. 21:24-27; Mk. 10:35-45). Children who daily trust and live without anxiety in absolute dependence upon their parents are held up as the models for life in the kingdom (Matt. 18:1-5/Lk. 9:46-48/Mk. 9:33-37; Mk. 10:13-16, 42). Jesus' followers constituted a new family who had only one father, the one in heaven (Matt. 23:9). In turn, they were not to be concerned with possessions or any other symbols of status (Matt. 23:8-12; Mk. 10:17-31).

This word of Jesus found its fulfillment in his congruent conduct in going obediently to the cross and constituted the paradigm for ministry in the early church. In 1 Peter 5:1-2 Peter himself, as a witness of the suffering of Christ, exhorts the leaders of the church to show the same attitude as Jesus toward their flocks (1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:17-18). As is well known, Paul sees his own life as an imitation of the commitment of Christ in going to the cross; and he frequently calls upon his followers to imitate this lifestyle (Phil. 2:1-11; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 1:21-29; 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 1 Thess. 1:5-6).

Thus our analysis can only lead to a fundamental conclusion. The hierarchical model of church leadership, although hallowed and respected because of its long-standing use, is a fundamental contradiction of the gospel. Even though it has manifested itself historically, primarily in the "high churches"

of European Christianity it also may represent an attitude in any church when leadership is sought as a status in itself and domineers over others in the body. In no way can this model be commended to the church today as a theological discrimen which may fruitfully inform our view of ministry.

It is now time to give attention to a quite different model for ministry. This model is significant because it had a major impact on the churches of Christ--especially in recent years.

The Functional Egalitarian Model of Ministry

With the establishment of the first permanent English colony in the New World in 1607 a new era in the history of Western Christianity came into existence. As Sidney Mead points out, the transplanted European may have retained the family names and proclivities of his ancestors yet "all had been changed by the subtle magic of the new land."[16] This change included the churches. There were no longer the traditional state churches of Europe which made claims to legitimacy, either through creedal confessions or territorial jurisdiction; neither were there traditional European sects.[17] Rather the various ecclesiastical expressions of Christianity were free purposive voluntary associations engaged in the proclamation of the gospel--each according to its own understanding and ingenuity.[18] This social climate unquestionably has affected

the structure of the ministry of religious groups in America--even those who continue to maintain connectional or hierarchical polities. Every religious group in America is dependent upon voluntary contributions for their existence. And since giving takes place at a local level a strong degree of control also is maintained there. Thus ministry in America tends to be influenced strongly by egalitarian forces in the wider society. Functional egalitarianism is the model of ministry that often arises in these churches. Here the agenda for a local church totally determines the structure of its ministry. Leadership is set up to fulfill the various perceived functional needs for ministry in the life of the congregation.

The move to a functional egalitarian form of ministry can certainly be seen in the history of those churches who are heirs of the nineteenth century Restoration movement. When Alexander Campbell came to America in 1809 he had already been well schooled in the model for ministry favored by Scottish Restorationists. This was a two-fold ministry: (1) a plurality of elders in a local congregation who exercised pastoral oversight over the members; (2) "mutual ministry" where the men of the congregation regularly took turns in exhorting the congregation.[19] After Campbell came to America he seemed to favor a three-fold ministry: elders, evangelists (either local or peripatetic), and deacons. This seemed to him to come closer to the model of the New Testament church. It also

limited the number of men who regularly preached--something that Campbell was strongly in favor of.

However, in the strongly egalitarian environment of the American frontier and in the liberal twentieth-century era the idea of a strong eldership exercising oversight over a congregation in both doctrinal and spiritual matters has not sat well. Among the Disciples of Christ this is true to such an extent that a writer can say, "We have seen most of their congregations move from an organization supposedly based on a New Testament model to the position that local church order must be judged on its functional effectiveness."[20]

The situation in many of the churches of Christ today is similar. The pastoral ministry once primarily exercised by the elders has been taken over by a number of functionaries who often represent a particular constituency in the church. These functionaries may be called minister of education, minister of youth, minister of pastoral care, etc. It is these functionaries who constitute the core of the ministry in many congregations. The local church may have elders in name but they do little more than set policy.

Such a functional model for ministry may be perceived as having several advantages. The first is pragmatic. It appeals to common sense to say that the ministry of the church ought to be structured in a simple and straightforward way

to carry out the mission of the congregation. Robert S. Paul tells the story of an American theologian who was giving a lecture on American Church History to European theological students.[21] The theologian described some of the remarkable stories of evangelism which took place on the American frontier. He gave examples of the improvised ways in which the Lord's Supper was administered. But this was too much for an affronted Episcopalian who blurted out, "Do you mean to say that the service of Holy Communion was conducted by men who had not been properly ordained?"[22] The American responded, "If some parts of America had waited for the Communion to be administered by an episcopal clergyman they would be waiting still."[23] At a fundamental level of getting the job done the functional egalitarian mode of ministry has a clear advantage over the hierarchical model.

Such a model of ministry often can involve a large number of believers in direct meaningful participation in the life of the church. Churches with this form of ministry often do more good works and generate more activity and enthusiasm for the Lord's work than those that are structured along hierarchical lines.

Finally, the functional egalitarian model of ministry, at least at a superficial level, would seem to derive some warrant for its use from the practices of the early church. For example, a similar way of structuring the ministry seems to be operative in the ordination of the seven Hellenists in the church at Jerusalem to

assist in the daily distribution of food (Acts 6:1-7). The practice of ordaining those who can best carry out the function of ministry seems to have some affinities with the biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:5, 6).

Yet there are several disadvantages to this model as well. Curiously enough in our modern society the abolition a distinction between "the clergy and the laity," implicit in the functional egalitarian model of ministry, has a downside. This occurs in what we call the demystification of the ministry. In theological terms we may refer to this as a cheapening of both the call to ministry and its sense of worth. The minister does not wear clerical attire and lives his daily life in a way similar to the other members. He joins the same social clubs, his children go to the same schools, and he receives the same remuneration for his work as others in the congregation. In other words, the minister is hardly different in function from the school teacher, state employee, or the assistant manager at Safeway. Persons who hold these latter positions in our society seldom refer to their work as a calling. Neither, we would assert, are many who happen to serve in ministry today in the local church. In practice many people merely drift into ministry. They may just as well have ended up selling insurance or being the local mortician. Yet, by virtue of some peculiar set of circumstances they are the ones who speak the word of the Eternal One in the assemblies and are called to share the most intimate moments

of highest joy and deepest grief in the lives of the various families of the congregation. Surely, if we think about it, there is something special about the call to ministry. Surely we respect the elder or pulpit minister for something more than the fact that he marries, counsels, or buries us. But the functional egalitarian model for ministry has a difficult time teasing out just what that difference is.

And this is specifically a problem in another setting as well. In a functional model of ministry where is the final locus of authority in a church where the ministry is ultimately one-dimensional? Harry Truman used to speak of his office as president as the place where "the buck stops here!" In some of our local congregations who ultimately is in charge and how is authority dispensed in the congregation?

Ministry as Charisma

It is now time to attempt to determine as closely as possible the biblical teaching on ministry.

Within the history of the Restoration Movement considerable exegetical effort has been expended in order to find an underlying formal pattern for church organization and ministerial offices in the New Testament church and to implement this pattern in the church of our time. But such an attempt is doomed to repeated frustration and failure. Try as we can it is very difficult to see that the

churches of the New Testament period structured their ministry along the lines of conscious following of some revealed formal pattern of ministry. Thus the answer to the problem of what model of ministry we should implement is not to be seen in discovering and decoding for modern application a certain formal pattern for ministry supposedly found in the pages of the New Testament. What is demanded is that we look at the context in which ministry is discussed in the New Testament and determine what are the theological principles that inform the New Testament discussion. This procedure offers better prospects for understanding the New Testament teaching on ministry.

It can be shown that the New Testament view of history, as so much of its other doctrinal teaching, has its origin in implications drawn by early Christians in response to the death and resurrection of Christ. As a result of his absolute commitment in obedience to the heavenly Father in going to the cross, Jesus was vindicated and placed at God's right hand (Phil. 2:1-10; Acts 2:34-36; Rom. 1:3-4). As the one who became the heavenly king, the lesson was that Jesus' rule was not attained according to the earthly standards for kingship held by the Herodians or Caesars; but he elicited allegiance by the sheer power of the love and commitment of his wounded life given for others. Because of the offering of his life Jesus Christ was seen not only as the heavenly king but as the heavenly

high priest (Heb. 4:14; 5:6, 8-10; 8:1-6; 9:11). As a result of the once-and-for-all-offering of his life he offered, proleptically through that single act, the obedience of all those who afterwards would be united with him. (Heb. 10:10-14).[24] This image of Jesus as the eternal high priest is very important for understanding the New Testament view of ministry: for it is the presupposition for the important doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Since Jesus is the High Priest the believer responds by offering himself in living a faithful holy life, and thus the individual offering of his life is taken up into the one perpetual offering made by the eternal high priest of the new covenant (Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 4:10; Col. 1:24-25).[25] Whether one perceives of the believing community as the body of Christ over which Christ the head rules (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18) or as the new priesthood who faithfully carry on the work of the obedient life of Christ, the community continues and there is a constant necessity for it to be exhorted, guided, and disciplined by those who live the most exemplary lives.

The writer who gives the most specifics about this leadership in the New Testament is Paul. Paul clearly sees the ministry of the church as an expression of the charismata of the spirit. It is the power emanating from God (viz. as in his raising Christ from the dead) now applying the rule of the exalted Lord in the community. As such, leadership is a direct result of the presence or rule of the

exalted Christ in the community of believers. Formally the appearance of leadership in the community is no different than the appearance of the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. Both are <u>charismata</u> of the Spirit. Just as it would be silly to speak about an "office" in the church for speaking in tongues so, for Paul there is no such thing as a distinctive ministerial group or office of ministry in the church <u>apart from</u> the <u>charism</u> of the Spirit which works in the body giving the gift of leadership.[26] Leadership and gift are intermingled. Ministry in the church is no more or less than the working of the <u>charismata</u>. Ministry is as much penumatology as it is ecclesiology.[27]

A good example of this thinking is found in Eph. 4:7-16. In 4:7-10 we are told that the exalted Lord has been given the right to give gifts as a result of his saving ministry on earth. Certain of the gifts were distributed to the body for the sake of teaching, edification, and maintaining order (4:11-12). As recipients of the gifts, the apostles, prophets and teachers, and shepherds are the ligaments or joints whom the Lord has provided to give nourishment to the body (4:19; Col. 2:19).

In the earlier Pauline writings a similar view of ministry is set forth. In 1 Cor. 12:7, 11 and Rom. 12:4-6, each believer is given a manifestation of the Spirit. Some have been given gifts of leadership. The persons who fulfill leadership roles in the church are diverse (1 Cor. 12: 28; Rom. 12:6-8). From the

beginning we hear of the proistamenoi (leaders) in the Pauline churches (1 Thess. 5:12. 14; Rom. 12:8). A similar designation for leaders (kubernēseis) is given in 1 Cor. 12:28. These ones seem to be the precursors for the bishops (Phil. 1:1). The term elder (drawn from post-exilic Judaism) only comes in the Pastoral letters of Paul and Acts. It seems to be the equivalent of bishops and overseers (Titus 1:5-7; Acts 20:17 -28). But, even here, it would be a mistake to view this diversity of terminology as some major stage of development in the ministry of the early church from the dynamic charisma in the early Pauline churches to some self-perpetuating office in the Pastorals, Acts, and Johannine epistles.[28] As the church became established certain precedents for doing things clearly became established. But from beginning to end leadership in the New Testament finds its basis in the spiritual rule of Christ in the lives of his followers who excel in sharing common obligation to sustain the weak and who show the agape manifested by their Lord.[29] These are the true princes of the church.[30] As their Lord, they elicit the flock to follow them by the power of their surrendered lives. This is the model for ministry we would commend to the church today.

Conclusion

By the end of the New Testament period groups of Christians were meeting in the major cities throughout the eastern part of the Roman Empire to honor

Christ as Lord. Unlike the modern day churches of Christ in America who may have twenty congregations in a city, all with their own autonomous leadership, the Christians in a particular city would meet in a various number of places (usually homes) and the ministry would be thought of as constituting the total leadership among the brethren in the particular area.[31] If C. K. Barrett is correct in his analysis of the ministry of the church at that time, leadership carried out three primary tasks: discipline, exposition of the word (preaching and teaching), and service.[32] Of course, there is nothing sacrosanct about the actual material shape of the ministry of churches in the New Testament period vis-à-vis the way we structure it today. At that time there were disputes between leaders just as there are today. No structure can create perfection.

But what is different today is that the churches have largely lost the theological foundations for leadership which were known by the first-century church: the sense of the church as a community of priests offering itself in service to God guided by overseers who exemplify the best of the Story; or the community filled with the Spirit of the risen Lord. In this essay I have shown that when the church forgot these theological truths in its history one of two things happened. Either the ministry degenerated into a self-perpetuating hierarchy or there arose a functional egalitarian type of leadership. The former was too

dictatorial. The latter could not elicit the complete support of the total flock.

I would submit that this analysis aptly describes the current crisis of leadership in churches of Christ. Some churches emphasize the importance of the office of eldership. But without any sense that leadership is a charism it becomes an empty call to authoritarianism. Other churches have become so functionally egalitarian that they appear to be getting anyone, no matter how poorly qualified, to do the job. They have no definable ministry. In either case, such churches constitute the perfect breeding grounds for conflict.

T.W. Manson once described the ideal minister as one in whom the love of God is not only offered to the community but in whom it is also seen to be offered. In the divine scheme of things such men, and they alone, constitute the ministry of the church and truly, as the biblical writers say, "are worthy of double honor."

Footnotes

1   Michael R. Weed. "The Secularization of the Church: From Transcendence to Technique," <u>Institute for Christian Studies Faculty Bulletin</u> 6 (Fall, 1985) 69-85.

2   T. W. Manson, <u>Ministry and Christ's Priesthood: Christ's and Ours</u> (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, n.d.) 41.

3   <u>Ibid.</u>

4   <u>Ibid.</u>

5   <u>Ibid.</u>

6   <u>De Ecclesia: Constitution of the Church: Vatican Council</u> II. eds. C. Leetham and C. Clifford (Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides Publishers, 1965), 35-48.

7   <u>Ibid.</u>

8   <u>Ibid.</u>

9   Irenaeus, <u>Adversus Haereses</u> 3.2.3. A good translation is found in <u>The Early Christian Fathers</u>, edited and translated by Henry Bettenson (London: Oxford University Press, 1956) 122-126.

10 J. Kunze, "Keys, Power of the," <u>The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge</u> 6. ed., S. M. Jackson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959) 323-324.

11 Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, <u>Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity</u> (New York: Paulist Press, 1983) 97-111.

12 1 Clement 42:4, 44:4-5, 54:2; and Didache 15, which many think came at the end of the first century; see Brown, <u>Antioch and Rome</u>, 167 for the second century evidence that Rome, always conservative, was very slow to change to the threefold ministry with a single bishop being the leader of the church in the city of Rome.

[13] Ben F Meyer, <u>The Early Christians: Their World Mission and Self Discovery</u> GNS 16 (Wilmington, Delaware. Michael Glazier, 1986) 57-66 gives copious evidence that the Hebrew Christians, of whom Peter was the early leader, viewed themselves in their community at Jerusalem as the eschatological Zion in fulfillment of O.T. prophecy. With respect to the latter Rome could not qualify.

[14] This seems to be the point of Reginald Fuller's review of C. K. Barrett's work on Ministry and the Sacraments, <u>Religious Studies Review</u> 12 (April, 1986) 163.

[15] E. Schillebeeckx, <u>Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ</u> (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 31.

[16] Sidney Mead, "The Rise of the Evangelical Conception of the Ministry in America (1607-1850)." <u>The Ministry in Historical Perspectives</u>, eds., H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956) 208.

[17] <u>Ibid.</u>

[18] <u>Ibid.</u>

[19] Dwight E. Stevenson, "Concepts of the New Testament Church which Contribute to Disciple Thought about the Church," <u>The Revival of the Churches</u> III, ed. W. B. Blakemore (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1963), 28.

[20] W. B. Blakemore, "The Christian's Task and the Church's Ministry," <u>Revival of the Churches</u> III, 173.

[21] Robert S. Paul, <u>Ministry</u> (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, 1965) 116.

[22] <u>Ibid.</u>

[23] <u>Ibid.</u>

[24] T. W. Manson, 61.

25 Ibid., 64.

26 Some think that they can determine such a ministerial office was in existence by the time of the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 3:1; 4:14; Titus 2:2). We are not convinced. It is said that Timothy was the beneficiary of the gift of the ministry. This came through the congregation recognizing this gift or charism appointing him to ministry through a laying on of hands by the older men (presbuteriou) and Paul (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). This process does not seem to be materially different than the earlier Pauline writings. Neither can 2 and 3 John provide that evidence as Abraham Malherbe, "The Inhospitality of Diotrephes," God's Christ and His People: Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl, Jacob Jervell and Wayne E. Meeks eds., (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977) 222-232 points out.

27 H. A. Lombard, "Charisma and Church Office," Neotestamentica 10 (1976) 47.

28 C. K. Barrett, Church, Ministry, and Sacraments in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 83-87.

29 Ibid., 39.

30 Although the New Testament is not unduly concerned about the process of selection and appointment of these leaders (ordination), there are attempts to point out that the key criterion in the community in recognizing the charism of leadership is that the person manifest qualities shown in his life similar to that of the earthly Jesus. Paul will sometimes hold himself up as the appropriate model (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; 2 Cor. 11:1-30).

31 Malherbe, 227.

32 Barrett, 42.

33 Manson. 71.

ETHOS AND AUTHORITY: THEN AND NOW
By Michael R. Weed

The burgeoning number of publications addressing the topic of authority suggests that the nature and function of authority is increasingly becoming a problem within modern society.[1] Evidence to this effect can also be found in various institutions and organizations throughout our society. It is not surprising then, that churches--especially fragile voluntary associations from a sociological point of view--should find the whole area of authority fraught with difficulties.

Problems facing Christians regarding authority are real and complex, and they will not be easily resolved. These comments are not intended as the final solution to the problems facing the church in this area. A more modest intent, however, is that they may help clarify dimensions of the problem and Promote reflection on the part of those perhaps more capable of addressing the issue.

It is of critical importance to note that authority functions in, and is a function of, communities.[2] Communities with different self-understandings--different values, beliefs, and goals--will develop different kinds of leaders and procedures for exercising authority, transferring authority, and limiting authority. For example, leaders in motorcycle gangs, service organizations, combat teams, and medical societies may all be "leaders," but the nature and function of their authority--not to mention their personal traits and characteristics--vary drastically.

Second, it is important to note that any major shift in the community will cause an accompanying shift in the type and function of authority in the community. That is, any new self-understanding--change of basic values and goals--will bring about a different understanding of authority.

This seemingly simple and obvious point is all too frequently overlooked--often with comic results, but sometimes with tragic ones. For example, the placing of a retired military man in charge of a dormitory for college men because of his military experience represents a miscalculation. While the retired officer may survive and make a good dormitory supervisor, he will not do so on the same basis that he exercised authority in the military. And. in fact, if he attempts to treat residents in the dormitory as if they were serving in the military,

no end of problems will arise.

Christians are not immune from making this kind mistake and attempting to interchange and transfer authority from different communities. This began to happen very early in the history of the church. One rather vivid case, for example, occurred when in the fourth century the Bishop of Milan died. A young civil servant was alerted by the commotion of the crowd and attempted to quell the near-riot. The unruly crowd was so taken with his bearing, deportment, and courage that Ambrose--unbaptized at the time--was named Bishop of Milan.

It appears that several fundamental shifts in the church's self-understanding--its nature and goals--are occurring today. These changes are related to and reflect a number of overall shifts in the contemporary climate or ethos in which the church exists. In turn, these shifts also have far-reaching implications for the understanding and exercise of authority in the church.

The Ethos of the Early Church

"Ethos" designates the climate of opinion--those deeply held values, beliefs, and assumptions which underlie and guide the manner in which life is lived in a given culture. The early Christian movement was fundamentally shaped by its environment. While the Christian movement in time developed its own distinct ethos, it was critically indebted to the ethos in which it appeared and

grew. At least four factors had a direct bearing upon the nature and exercise of authority in the emerging Christian community--factors in large part shared by Jewish communities and by the Hellenistic society into which the Christian movement quickly spread.

First, the church emerged in an environment in which a high value was placed on tradition. Tradition preserved the past--not just for the Jews but also for Hellenists--linking present society with the sacred events and heroic events upon which society was founded. Tradition preserved society with time-honored and revered ways of doing things. Thus in spite of the tensions between different traditions, life was virtually unthinkable apart from the existence of foundational traditions. Tradition formed an authoritative body of customs, practices, and teachings which gave shape and direction to both public and private life.

Second, the ethos of the first-century world was one marked by respect for aged ones in the community. This was particularly the case in Jewish communities where the very fact of longevity was regarded as a sign of God's favor. Old ones were also, however, regarded as custodians and interpreters of the traditions--living links with the past.

Respect, and occasionally almost reverence, for aged members of the community, however, was not unique to Jewish communities. In the Roman

world as well, elderly persons were respected and thought to serve as exemplars or models of ideal behavior. Significantly, respect for age was not limited to the age of one's own community but could occasionally give rise to expressions of respect even for the aged of other communities. (For example, in the semi-legendary account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, the pagan proconsul expresses respect for Polycarp's age and attempt to dissuade him from accepting martyrdom.)

Third, the world of the early church was a world in which wisdom was highly valued and thought to be necessary in order to live a good life. Jewish youth were enjoined to seek after and follow the ways of Wisdom. Hellenists also placed high value on that theoria and phroneisis, which promoted what Aristotle would call "human flourishing."

Finally, the world of the early church was a world which, for the most part, was structured and regulated by authorities. The political and military presence of Rome was felt throughout the empire. Additionally, local customs and traditions existed which shaped and guided everyday affairs ranging from marriage and commerce to recreation. In short, it was a world in which authorities existed and, if not always respected, were at least accepted. Moreover, structures of authority were generally linked to an underlying cosmic pattern or divine purpose. Whether or not one was satisfied with the particular expression or practice of a given authority, the idea of life apart from authority would have been unthinkable and meaningless.

The Early Church

The early church emerged in a world in which these four factors formed part of the basic underlying ethos. Accordingly, we should not be surprised to hear its leaders enjoining early Christians to "be subject to the governing authorities" (Rom 13:1), and to "be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution" (1 Pet. 2:11). To be certain, these exhortations are not blanket endorsements of existing authorities. They do suggest, however, that early Christians recognized and understood themselves to be living in a world structured by authorities either directly or indirectly reflecting the overarching governance of the Creator.

Certainly the church was a new community--an eschatological community--with a membership open to all and with a revolutionary understanding of power and authority. And yet the early church certainly did not understand itself as an anarchic community. It was neither a leaderless mob nor was it an egalitarian society. For all its newness, the church emerged as a community which reflected certain basic underlying motifs of the traditional ethos.

While the church stood in considerable tension with many of the particular traditions of other groups, it nonetheless quickly developed its own authoritative

traditions--regarding doctrine (Rom. 6:17), church practices (1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33), and ethics (1 Thess. 4:1ff.; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6). And these traditions carried more than the force of habit; they were regarded as deriving their authority from the Lord, apostolic figures, and the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit within the ongoing life of the community. Accordingly, the Pastorals indicate the emergence of a recognized body of authoritative tradition variously designated as "the teaching" (1 Tim. 4:16; 6:1; 2 Tim. 3:10), "sound teaching" (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9), or "that which has been entrusted" (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:12, 14). Regarding this authoritative body of tradition, the church is enjoined to "hold firm to the sure word" (Tit. 1:9), "guard it" (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:12-14), protect it (1 Tim. 6:1), and faithfully to teach and pass on the tradition to others (2 Tim. 2:2).[3]

Naturally, as a community deriving its very existence from the revealed tradition, the church chose and recognized as its leaders those older ones who knew the tradition. These were also those who possessed unique insight and wisdom given to the faithful. Such ones--exemplars of the faith--taught and gave instruction in the faith, and thus assumed a primary responsibility for the faithful passing on of the tradition. These leaders and authority structures (ranging from household relationships to social relationships and, ultimately, to the Emperor

himself) were--where not in direct conflict with the Christian tradition--to be respected.

Although the early church initiated new traditions and stood in considerable tension with many surrounding customs and traditions, it still reflected features characteristic of its surrounding ethos. The synagogue, philosophical schools, voluntary associations, and the Hellenistic household all contributed to the developing self-understanding of the new community.[4] And behind these particular influences the early Christian movement was also reflective of the general ethos or climate in which it emerged.

Hence it would be distorting to view the church as an egalitarian or democratic community in any contemporary sense. It was a community possessing an authoritative tradition and a community in which old ones and wise ones were accorded special honor and respect. Such ones were entrusted with interpreting and transmitting the sacred and authoritative tradition and with overseeing the welfare and direction of the life of the community.

<center>The Modern Ethos</center>

The modern ethos is one that is fundamentally different from that in which the early church emerged. In the present age the supporting framework of a traditional ethos is quickly disappearing. More precisely, the particular features which we have traced have largely eroded. Hannah Arendt succinctly states: "We

live in a world that is neither structured by authority nor held together by tradition."[5] It is a society which, outside of annual ceremonies, knows little real tradition other than perpetual restlessness and an openness to the new and the novel. In this climate it is not surprising that wisdom does not fare well Christopher Lasch states:

> The real value of accumulated wisdom of a lifetime is that it can be handed on to future generations. Our society, however, has lost this conception of wisdom and knowledge. It holds an instrumental view of knowledge according to which technological change constantly renders knowledge obsolete and therefore non-transferable.[6]

Likewise, the significance of old ones in the community has undergone a radical shift in meaning. Again, Lasch states:

> Our society notoriously finds little use for the elderly. It defines them as useless, forces them to retire before they have exhausted their capacity for working, and reinforces their sense of superfluity at every opportunity.[7]

In modern society, old ones represent antiquated, quaint, and pre-modern views. They are not viewed as links to an authoritative tradition or as possessors and exemplars of wisdom valuable for human flourishing. Like children of an earlier era, old ones are now expected to be seen and not heard. In the modern ethos, "the older generation has nothing to teach the younger... ."[8]

Accordingly, we may contend that the erosion of the traditional ethos is presently having far-reaching and devastating effects on contemporary society and its institutions--particularly with regard to the nature and function of authority. These destructive effects can be seen at work in government,

commerce, education, and even in the contemporary family. In essence, the modern ethos promotes an ahistorical, radically individualistic, and egoistic view of the human. Such a view of the human legitimates the raw pursuit of narrowly defined self-fulfillment. And, as is increasingly evident, this is an ethos which can neither sustain a culture nor preserve and promote that which is truly human.

Concluding Theses

In concluding these reflections several theses may be stated which, while not profound, do appear to merit further consideration.

Thesis One. Given the pervasive influence of the modern ethos on the institutions of contemporary society, it should not be surprising that the church is also becoming heavily affected by the modern ethos and the loss of the traditional ethos.

Thesis Two. The loss of the traditional ethos will have a radical impact on the church. Given the formative influence of the traditional ethos on the shape of the early church as it emerged, the disappearance of this ethos is not merely the loss of some incidental and expendable aspect of first-century cultural baggage. Because of the integral role of the traditional ethos in the formation of early Christian faith and practice, its disappearance will have far-reaching implications for the contemporary church.

Thesis Three. The traditional ethos, in its formal attributes, may be viewed as more of a truly human ethos than the contemporary ethos. That is, it may be argued that, given the fact that humans are social and rational beings living in history, there are certain foundational values, practices, and institutions which preserve and promote reflection, free and just communities, and the endurance of meaningful human experience in history. Tradition, wisdom, respect for aged exemplars, and a general sense of order and purpose, may all be included in this category.

Thesis Four. The loss of the traditional ethos will have radically negative and far-reaching effects on the contemporary church--especially in the area of authority. At the very least, contemporary Christians will increasingly find themselves bewildered, confused, and even stupefied as they attempt to comprehend the strange world of the early church. At the more extreme, an increasing number of contemporary Christians will overtly resist such ideas as the authority of scripture or apostolic authority. They will say with candor, "Paul just doesn't do anything for me," or "But isn't that just the writer's opinion?"

Far more pervasive, however, will be a number of more subtle forms of compromise and accommodation. Thus biblical images and terms will either be used in ornamental fashion or will be infused with new meaning reflecting

contemporary values and practices.

By way of illustration, in the modern technological and bureaucratic climate of managers, executives, and directors the traditional concept of "elder" is as meaningful as "alchemist." While the term itself survives as part of the debris of bygone days, many elders would frankly admit that they serve more as members of an executive board or as elected officials representing and responsive to a body politic.

Or, to cite another example of how a biblical image or term may survive but be infused with new meaning, one could note the current interest in New Testament (and especially Pauline) family and household imagery (e.g., "the church family here at Woodvine"). Ironically, while this imagery is presently being employed to capture or create an impression of intimacy, acceptance, and informality, this is not its primary significance within the early church. Like the contemporary nuclear family, the first-century household (both Jewish and Hellenistic versions) had a definite structure and order. New Testament scholar Wayne Meeks states that in the first century, the

> . . . head of the household . . . would exercise some authority over the group and would have some legal responsibility for it. The structure of the oikos was hierarchical, and contemporary political moral thought regarded the structure of the superior and inferior roles as basic to the well-being of the whole society.[9]

While the church did set in motion countervailing tendencies, in the first instance, familial terminology provided the early church with an imagery which suggested structure, order, and stability. Consequently, membership in the family or household of God conveyed a sense of order, structure, obligation, and even some sense of ecclesiastical hierarchy rather than a sense of simple conviviality and familiarity.[10]

(Certainly it is understandable that closeness and intimacy are desirable, especially in large churches and especially in a society which makes people feel alienated, lonely, and insignificant. But the long-term value of using biblical imagery of the family without further thought may be undesirable--especially regarding questions of authority. In light of the instability of the modern family, its marginal nature in society, and the increase in single-parent families, emphasis on the church-as-family may become problematic. In a world where "mom, dad, and the kids" are on a first name basis and grandmother water skis with her boyfriend, church-as-family may require some review and revision. At the very least, church-as-family may prove problematic imagery in churches struggling with the nature of biblical authority.)

Thesis Five. Strategies of accommodation, compromise, and adaptation may help to build numerically large churches. The test, however, is not whether

churches can draw crowds or "meet needs" (to use a terrible cliché--barrooms and pool parlors "meet needs") but whether the Christian faith is taught. The test is whether there is spiritual growth and growth in knowledge of the Christian tradition--scripture. And the test is whether the faith is being passed on.

Thesis Six. A recovery of authority in the church will entail the reconstruction of something analogous to the traditional ethos (in particular the above factors indicated) in which the early church emerged. For reasons already stated--namely, the formative role of the traditional ethos in the emergence of the early church and because the traditional ethos is, in the attributes noted, more of a human ethos than the contemporary ethos--a recovery of biblical authority demands that the church understand itself as founded on and drawing on the biblical tradition for its existence. Only a church that sees itself as primarily interested in promoting something like a growth in Christian wisdom and recognizes exemplars of the faith will be one in which biblical models and images take on substantive meaning.

In essence, a recovery of authority in the church--in the total life of the church--will entail the emergence of an "ethos of the Word." That is, only as the church takes seriously what it means to be a people formed by an authoritative word and responsible for the faithful passing on of that word will we find the

church's self-understanding to be one which is compatible with biblical images and also illuminates structures of the truly human.

Thesis Seven. The recovery of a biblical-traditional ethos in the modern world will entail a willingness on the part of Christians to be committed to a lifestyle that is in considerable tension with modern values, beliefs, and practices. Among other things, it will entail the church being a community that has spiritual reality as its primary reality. It will entail the church being a community that sees salvation, not wealth and prestige, as the primary goal of human life. In short, it will entail a willingness and commitment on the part of Christians to live a sectarian lifestyle.

Footnotes

[1] See for example Robert Nisbet, <u>Twilight of Authority</u> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975) and Jeffrey Stout, <u>The Flight from Authority: Religion, Morality, and the Quest Autonomy</u> (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

[2] This important insight does not appear to be sufficiently recognized in many discussions of the nature and function of authority in the early church (or modern church as well). For a notable exception see Bengt Holmberg, <u>Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles</u> (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978). "...the nature of authority is such that it is in itself a social phenomenon, not a theological interpretation of social phenomena" (204).

[3] Cf. James D. G. Dunn, <u>Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry Into the Character of Earliest Christianity</u> (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 67ff.

[4] Cf. Wayne A. Meeks, <u>The First Urban Christians: Social World of the Apostle Paul</u> (New Haven: Yale, 1983), Chapter 3.

[5] Hannah Arendt, <u>Between Past and Future</u> (New York: Viking, 1961) 195.

[6] Christopher Lasch, <u>The Culture of Narcissism</u> (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1979) 213.

[7] <u>Ibid.</u>, 209.

[8] <u>Ibid.</u>, 213.

[9] Meeks, 76.

[10] <u>Ibid.</u>, 77.

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