

Biblical Ecclesiology

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Chapter VII

Biblical Ecclesiology may be studied under the following rubrics:

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I. The Origin of the Church

GOD

The Scriptures trace the origin of the Christian Church to God's words and deeds reported in the Old Testament, and especially to His words and deeds to Israel and in relation to her.

The Church's roots may be traced to God's words and deeds in relation to the Fall recorded in Gen. 3, and to human response to those words and deeds of His. However, God's creative activity and His words reported in Gen. 1 and 2, provided the backdrop to the Fall and to what occurred thereafter, so that, though the Church's origins are not in creation, the nature of creation is of relevance to the nature and activity of the Church.

Though God responded to the Fall with works and deeds (Gen. 3:8- 24), there is no clear biblical witness that Adam and Eve had a positive relationship to God thereafter.¹ However, thereafter various individuals are credited with a positive relationship with Him (Abel, Seth, Enosh [?], Enoch, Lamech [?], Noah, Shem [?]), but there is little, if any, indication of an unbroken continuity of devotion to the Lord prior to the time of Abram (Abraham). With God's call of Abram and His promise to him (Gen. 12:1-3) we have the founding of a blood line which constituted God's people together with those "adopted" into that family, which became the nation

of Israel. Though God had messages for other nations (see Jonah 1:1-2; 3:1-3; cf. Amos 1:3-2:3; Isa. 13-23; Jer. 46-51; Ezek. 25-32, etc.), and visited judgment on them for their iniquities. Israel was "His people" (Luke 1:68), of whom He said, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:1-2).²

"The Christians believed themselves to be the true continuation of the elect people."³ To Gentile Christians at Rome Paul said, "Remember that it is not you that support the root (the forefathers of Israel), but the root that supports you" (Rom. 11:18; cf. 11:28): "You have been. .. grafted. ..into a cultivated olive tree" (Rom. 11:24). And to Gentile Christians at Ephesus he stated, "At one time. ..you were aliens from the commonwealth (*12oliteias*) of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise. ..You are no longer strangers. .., but you are fellow citizens (*sum1political*) with the saints and also members of the household of God (Eph. 2:11, 12, 19).⁴ And Peter could affirm (apparently to Gentile Christians), "Once you were not a people but now you are God's people (*laos theou*)" (1 Pet. 2:10).⁵

The Church is rooted in God's revelation of Himself to ancient Israel, and in its relationship to Him. Indeed, though the interpretation is disputed, Paul could apparently speak of the Church as "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16).

Jesus Christ

"The Christians preserved their continuity with Israel, and yet there was. ..something altogether new in their concept of being God's people. This new factor. ..was Jesus Christ."⁶

In this connection it is to be noted that, though the Church is often called "the church of God" (e.g., 1 Cor. 1 :2; 11 :22; Gal. 1 :13; 1 Tim. 3.5), Jesus declared, "I will build my church," and even spoke of the "rock" on which He would build it (Matt. 16:18). Moreover, on the day of Pentecost Peter declared on the basis of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, "God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36), and went on to counsel those who had been "cut to the heart." "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. .." (Acts 2:38). Here was something significantly new. John the Baptist had preached "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins," but to be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven" was a new departure, justified by the proclamation of His Lordship, which was justified, in turn, by His resurrection and ascension. And shortly thereafter, again on the basis of His resurrection, Peter declares that "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" has "become the cornerstone. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12). Likewise Paul can write, "No one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).

Would a devout Jew not have thought that Abraham and/or Moses provided a sufficient foundation? John 8:31-39 represents Jesus as saying to "the Jews who had believed in him," "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Rejecting such doctrine, they insisted, "Abraham is our father" (cf. Matt. 3:9), and concluded therefrom, "We have one father, God himself." In other words, "their spiritual, as their physical, descent is impeccable."⁷ They could not believe that Jesus might be "greater than our father Abraham" (cf. John 8:53-59). Likewise, we have the man whose eyes Jesus opened accused, "You are his (Jesus') disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know

that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from" (John 9:28-29). They could not imagine that Jesus' spiritual authority might be superior to that of Abraham and/or Moses.

The New Testament clearly states that in His person and in His words, Jesus went beyond what we have in Judaism. "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son' (Heb. 1:1-2). "The law. . . was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1 :17; cf. John 14:6). Such statements do not necessarily imply that there is false doctrine in the Old Testament. They do imply that in Christ we have the mediator of a new covenant (Heb. 8:6-13; 1 Cor. 11 :25).

In 2 Cor. 3:6-11 Paul affirms that "God. . .has made us competent to be ministers (plural!) of a new covenant," a covenant whose ministry far exceeds the Mosaic ministry of the Sinaitic covenant in splendour. "Ministers (*diakonous*)" evidently refers to ministers of the Church.⁸ As such they have a ministry far exceeding in glory the ministry of the old covenant. Though the Church is in continuity with Israel, it exceeds Israel because of Christ..

The Holy Spirit

The exceeding weight of glory which characterizes the ministry entrusted to the Church is due basically to Christ's person, His ministry, His sacrifice, His resurrection, and His ascension, but is also due to the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Several Old Testament prophets anticipated an eschatological dispensation of the Spirit which would surpass any filling with the Spirit experienced in their own times. Joel represented the Lord as promising, "It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit" (2:28-29 [3:1-2]; cf. Isa. 44:1-5; Ezek. 36:26-30; 37:14; 39:29).

John the Baptist prophesied likewise, "Coming after me (is) ...one (who) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1 :7-8; cf. Matt. 3:11 ; Luke 3:16; John 1 :33). And Jesus is credited with speaking "about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). Moreover, at the Last Supper He is said to have promised, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor. ." (John 14:16); "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name. ." (John 14:26); "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father. ." (John 15:26); "If I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7); "When the Spirit of truth comes. ." (John 16: 13). And prior to His accession He said (referring to the coming of the Spirit), "I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay herein the city (Jerusalem) until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). "He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me, ...you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" (Acts 1:4-5).

According to John 20:22, on the evening of the day when He arose from the dead He 'breathed on' the gathered disciples, and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Some have held that this is John's version of the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit. "Breathed on" in Greek is a verb which does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, but which occurs in Gen. 2:7 LXX of God "breathing into" Adam the breath of life so that he became 'a living soul' (cf. the same verb in Ezek. 37:9 LXX of breath being breathed into dry bones).⁹ This suggests the idea of the creation of new life, and supports the view that the Spirit is being offered for immediate reception. However, John 7:39 states that the descent of the Spirit awaited Christ's glorification, and in John 16:7 Jesus says that He must "go away. ..but, if I go, I will send him to you" (cf. 15:26). Moreover, earlier on the

same day as He said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," He had said, "I have not yet ascended to the Father" (John 20:17). It seems, therefore, that Jesus is simply reiterating the promise of the Spirit as a gift to be given very soon.¹⁰

Certainly the descent of the Spirit is represented in Acts 2 as occurring on the day of Pentecost. Moreover, Peter is represented as declaring that Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled (Acts 2:16-21), and as going on to state, "Being exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear" (Acts 2:33). The conformity to John 15:26 is striking. Furthermore, it is significant that Peter immediately informs those "cut to the heart" that repentance and baptism "in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins," will result in reception of "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The Pentecostal gift of the Spirit is henceforth available to everyone.

That Peter describes the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost as "the beginning" (Acts 11:15), suggests that the Church really came into being at that time, which is not to deny the importance of the disciples Jesus had made during His ministry, His choice of the Twelve (Luke 6:12-16), or the witness of those sent out two by two, as reported in Luke 9 and 10.

It is significant in this connection that we first hear of baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ," or in the triune name, on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38; cf. 19:5), or in what may be described as preparatory there-to.¹¹ Moreover, it is only following Pentecost that the Holy Spirit is sometimes called the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, or the Spirit of his (God's) Son (Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19; 1 Pet. 1:11).¹² In this connection, furthermore, it is to be noted that "anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Rom. 8:9; cf. Gal. 4:6).

In this connection it is also noteworthy that the gift of the Spirit is closely connected with Christian baptism. As we have seen, Acts 2:38 is evidence of this. Further evidence is provided in Acts 19:5-6, "On hearing this, they (the Ephesians who had previously had John the Baptist's baptism) were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And, when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; ..." And, if we may put together the reports of Paul's own conversion, according to Acts 9:17 Ananias of Damascus said to him, "The Lord Jesus...has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit," and according to Acts 22:16 Ananias also said to him, "Now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his (Christ's) name." the instruction in the latter passage is reminiscent of Acts 2:38.¹³ In accord therewith, and also in accord with the urgency of the instruction in 22:16, the filling with the Spirit mentioned in Acts 9 was contingent upon baptism in Christ's name.

That the Samaritans of Acts 8 only received the Spirit subsequent to baptism, is an exception to Acts 2:38 (cf. Rom. 8:9). The explanations offered lack Biblical warrant, unless, being Samaritans, they needed to embrace the Jewish faith (cf. John 4:22-24), besides accepting: the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, the Messiah, and baptism in his name (Acts 8:5, 12, 16). (That Cornelius and his friends received the Holy Spirit prior to baptism (Acts 10:44-48), is another exception to the rule though these Gentiles would not have received baptism, but for the evidence that they had received the Holy Spirit, who fell upon them as Peter told of reason for faith in Christ, and made the point of the prophets' testimony that "everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.") Only baptism is lacking from the prescription set forth in Acts 2:38.) There may be exceptions to external and temporal elements of the prescription. God is not a legalist. But exceptions do not nullify the prescription.¹⁴

Power for witness to Christ is said to be characteristic of endowment with the Spirit. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). But, was Power, presumably the power of the Spirit, not available for ministry prior to Pentecost, at least on occasion? Was Jonah's witness to Nineveh not a powerful witness (Jonah 3:4-9)?¹⁵ Did John the Baptist not have a powerful ministry (Mark 1:5)? (According to Luke 1:15 "Even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit,"). Did those Jesus sent out two by two not have a powerful ministry (Mark 6:1,2,-13; Luke 9:6; 10:17-18)? Why the special need for power? In my opinion the special need for power was because they were to be witnesses to Christ. Effective witness to God, and to the Old Testament revelation concerning Him, could be difficult enough (e.g., 1 Kgs. 22:26-27; 2 Chron. 24:20-22; Isa. 6:9-10; Jer. 32:2-3; Amos 7:10-13). But to "proclaim Christ crucified" was to preach what was "a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (I Cor. 1:23). And to this day the idea of salvation freely provided by an event at a particular place and time in history is a common stumbling block and foolishness. It goes against our legalistic and/or rationalistic tendencies to a degree far greater than anything taught prior to Pentecost. For the preaching thereof to be effective requires an endowment with power far exceeding that required by the prophets. Nothing less than endowment with the Spirit of God who is also the Spirit of Jesus Christ Himself is sufficient. Though the Holy Spirit comes from the Father (John 15:26), and is the gift of the Father (John 14:16), He was sent "in (Jesus') name" (John 14:26), and was sent at Pentecost by Jesus Himself (John 15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:33). This being the case, those endowed with the Spirit are empowered to bear effective witness to Christ in accord with the particular gifts they enjoy.

The Spirit, however, not only empowers for witness, He also enables moral integrity. Though "the desires of the flesh" still assail us (Gal.5:16-17), we can "live by the Spirit," and so have victory over those desires, and abstain from "the works of the flesh" enumerated, though not exhaustively, in Gal. 5:19-21 (cf. Mark 7:21-22; Rom. 1:26-31; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; Rev. 21:8; etc..). Of course the Spirit of God endowed Old Testament saints with moral capability. Samuel prophesied that "the spirit of the Lord (would) come mightily upon (Saul)" and he would be "turned into another man," and soon thereafter "God gave him another heart" (1 Sam. 10:6, 9). David prayed, "Take not they holy spirit from me," in the midst of a petition for "a clean heart," and restoration of the "joy of thy salvation" (Ps. 51:10-12). However, there is reason to believe that following Pentecost the moral capability of God's people was enhanced. It seems to be significant that Paul calls the Spirit of God the Spirit of Christ in the midst of a passage affirming that "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death," and exhorting His hearers, "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live" (Rom. 8:2, 13). The Spirit of Christ enhanced moral ability because Christ had lived an exemplary life in the midst of this present evil age (Gal 1:4). Even more important was the manifestation of a love which suffered an undeserved death, a death in which the sins of the world were so borne that He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). It was a death for us "while we still were sinners" (Rom 5:8) so that we might be "reconciled to God" Rom. 5:10). Such a one, risen from the dead, and with us always by His Spirit (Matt. 28:19-20) has a moral significance beyond what was known prior to Pentecost.

But besides providing power to witness to Christ, and power to live a pure life, beginning with Pentecost the Holy Spirit provided a subjective experience superior to what had been experienced prior thereto. In the Old Testament, particularly in the Psalms, we have expression given to great inner beatitude. Nehemiah can say "to all the people," "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10). The Psalmist can say, "Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all day long," and can add, "Great peace have those who love your law" (119:97, 165; cf. Prov. 3:13-18; Isa. 48:18; Mal. 2:6). From time to time God manifested His love for His own (cf. Hos. 11:1), eliciting from them the confession, "I love the Lord" (Ps. 116:1). But the angelic message to Bethlehem shepherds, a message of "peace" and "a great joy" (Luke 2:10, 14) suggests that the coming of Christ presaged peace and joy beyond any previously experienced. And at the Last Supper Jesus indicated that He was leaving a legacy of love, joy and peace such as had not been known previously (John 14:21,27; 15:9-10; cf. 17:13). When Paul declares, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" (Gal. 5:22), was he not declaring that by the Spirit with which He endows His own Christ's legacy is being enjoyed? It may be significant in this connection that in the preceding chapter Paul spoke of God sending "the Spirit of his Son into our hearts" (Gal. 4:6).

Indeed, Paul had said, "Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal 4:6) And, when he later wrote to the Christians in Rome, He expanded this doctrine, asserting, "You have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:15-16). "We cry," in context, suggests that "Abba! Father!," or some equivalent, was common usage in the New Testament church. Jesus is credited with the usage (Mark 14:36), but what is particularly notable is that such language apparently implied an intimacy with God which was considered inappropriate in approaching the Most High.¹⁶ Indeed, in my opinion it would have implied an intimacy which was not previously experienced. The Spirit of Jesus, however, made it appropriate to follow Jesus' example by providing the kind of subjective experience which corresponded there with.¹⁷

II. The Ministers of the Church

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The ministers of the church may be conveniently divided into (1) The Apostles, (2) The Continuing Leadership, and (3) The Laity. As we proceed it will become clear why we distinguish the apostles from the continuing leadership, and also why we include the laity as ministers of the church.

1. The Apostles

It may be thought that we should have included Christ as the foremost "minister" of the church. He is represented as having called Himself "the shepherd of the sheep" (John 10:2, cf. 14), and to have said that the sheep "listen to" Him and "follow" Him (John 10:8, 16, 27). That He speaks of "one flock" (John 10:16; cf. Luke 12:32) suggests that He has the church in view. At the Last Supper He declared, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (John 15:10), and, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14; cf. Matt. 28:20). That He made these statements in the context of the vine and the branches suggests that the church is in view here too. Paul says that the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:24); describes

"Christ (as) the head of the church, his body" (Eph. 5:23); speaks of "the church (as) subject to Christ" (Eph. 5:24); and implies the necessity of "holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body. ..grows with a growth that is from God" (Col. 2:19). In the Book of Revelation the ascended Christ is represented as communicating to the seven churches of Asia, and emphasizing the importance of keeping His "word" throughout (cf. 3:3, 10; 22:18-19).

Jesus Christ is the Head of the church. As such, however, He is not only the object of her worship, and the one with whom she has an intimate relationship. He is also the one whose will is to be done, a will expressed as commandments.¹⁸

However, since Christ has ascended the question of authority is paramount, because He left behind no written document or documents. Who may be trusted to pass on faithfully what Christ taught? Who can be trusted to articulate the "many things" which His people need to know, but which His disciples could not "bear" while He was among them (John 16:12)?

Jesus is represented as addressing that question at the Last Supper. He told the eleven with Him in the Upper Room, "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (John 14:26); "You. ..are to testify, because you have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:27); "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into (or 'in') all the truth. ..., and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ..He will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13-15).

In accord with this provision Paul asserts that "members of the household of God (are) built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19-20); and that "the mystery of Christ...in former generation was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ..." (Eph. 3:4-5). ("Prophets" is anarthrous in both of these passages. Is it not probable, therefore, that individuals who are both apostles and prophets are in view?¹⁹ It is also in accord therewith that Jude 17 exhorts, "You, beloved, must remember the pre- dictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ"; and that Rev. 21:14 states the "the wall of the city (New Jerusalem) has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

The reference to the twelve apostles of the Lamb leads to several comments: (1) Acts 1:15-26 reports that Matthias "was added to the eleven apostles," to fill the vacancy caused by the defection of Judas Iscariot. (2) "Apostle" in a non-technical sense could be used of persons who were delegates of local congregations (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). (3) A few others, not of the Twelve, qualified as apostles in the same sense as the Twelve, though they had not accompanied Jesus throughout His ministry (cf. John 15:27; Acts 1:21-22; Acts 13:31). They were individuals who had (a) seen the risen Lord, and (b) been commissioned by Him, e.g., Paul (Gal. 1:16; 1 Cor. 9:1-2; 15:8-10; cf. Acts 22:14-15; 26:16-18; 1 Tim 2:7): probably James the Lord's brother (1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; cf. Gal. 2:9; Acts 15:19): and possibly Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:14).²⁰

The importance of eyewitness testimony is evident, and is emphasized in various Scriptures: (1) Luke testifies to the dependence of his gospel (and Acts?) on those "who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word (or 'eyewitnesses who were also servants of the word!)" (Luke 1 :2); John says, "We have seen his (the Word's) glory" (John 1:14); and, "What we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life. ..we declare to you" (1 John 1: 1, 3). Peter claims to have been "a witness of the sufferings of Christ" (1 Pet. 5:1), and to have been an eyewitness "of his majesty" at His

transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:16- 18). And the author of Hebrews claims that the message of salvation "was attested to us by those who heard him (the Lord)" (Heb. 2:3):

It is in accord with the apostolic authority conferred upon them that the apostles were aware of carrying on a ministry faithful to the truth of God. Their conduct may not always have been impeccable. Peter could act "hypocritically" not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:11-14). Perhaps Paul admitted 'wrongdoing' in that he had cried out in the Jewish council, "It is about the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial" (Acts 23:6; cf. 24:20-21). But in their ministry the apostles were conscious of being faithful witnesses to the truth. The clearest expression thereof is in 1 Thess. 2:13. "When you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word." Paul seems to imply that same consciousness in Gal. 1:11-12, "The gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin. ...I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (cf. 1:8-9); in 1 Cor. 2:16, "We have the mind of Christ"; and in Acts 20:27, "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." According to 2 Pet. 1:16 Peter seems to have had like confidence: "We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle John is credited likewise, "He knows that he tells the truth" (John 19:35; cf. 21:24).

Due to the passage of time the apostles passed from the scene of history. Paul instructed Timothy, "What you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well" (2 Tim 2:2). However, there is no indication that the Holy Spirit would teach any of them "all things," and/or accurately bring to their remembrance part or all that the apostles had taught them, let alone that He would guide them "into (or'in') all the truth" (cf. John 14:26; 16:13). Only what the apostles, or their close associates, had written could be considered reliable. And it may be noted that the official correspondence of the apostles was considered to be as reliable as their oral ministry. Paul can instruct, "Those who do not obey what we say in this letter; have nothing to do with them, so that they may be ashamed" (2 Thess. 3:14). We read concerning John, "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things. ...; and we know that his testimony is true" (John 21:24). And the author of Revelation warns against adding to, or taking away from, "the words of the book of this prophecy" (Rev. 22:18-19).

Through their writings and the writings of their close associates the apostles remain a permanent gift of Christ to the church (Eph. 4:11).²¹ They provide all that we can trust as a guide to doctrine and practice in the church.²² In the days following Pentecost the believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42). The first concern of a faithful church is to do likewise.

2. Living Leadership

Though the apostolic testimony provides continuing authority with respect to doctrine and practice, living leaders are necessary for the ongoing life of the church in the world.

In the earliest days of the church in Jerusalem the apostles apparently exercised all the leadership functions required. They were even responsible for the distribution of relief (Acts 4:35; 5:2). However, they soon found that their responsibilities were more than they could properly handle. First of all, the distribution of relief had to be entrusted to others who could give the task the attention it deserved (Acts 6:1-6). Circumstances apparently led quite soon to further development with respect to organization.

From an organizational standpoint, the foremost leaders next to the apostles were commonly called elders. Indeed, the apostles were apparently considered to be elders along with the elders who were not apostles. According to 1 Pet. 5:1 Peter could call himself an elder. And, if the Epistles of John were written by John the apostle, he too could call himself an elder (2 John 1; 3

John 1).²³ On the other hand, it was considered necessary for each local church to have its own elders (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5; cf. Acts 11:30; Jas. 5:14).²⁴

In some churches, apparently those which were predominantly Gentile, the term *episcopos* ("bishop" or "overseer") was used instead of "elder" (cf. Phil. 1 :1). That the terms were interchangeable is evident in that Paul could call "the elders of the church" in Ephesus *episcopoi* (Acts 20:17, 28), and could use the two terms indiscriminately in instructing Titus concerning the organization of the churches in Crete (Tit. 1 :5, 7). "Pastor (*poimēn*)" was possibly used as another alternative to the term "elder" (Eph. 4:11; cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2-4).²⁵ It appears that those who functioned as elders are in view in 1 Thess. 5:12, "those who. . .have charge of (*proΐstameoous*) you";²⁶ in Heb. 13:7, 17, 24, "your leaders (*hēgoumenoi*)"; and perhaps in 1 Cor. 12:28, "administrators (*kubernēseis*).",

Paul and Barnabas "appointed elders for them in every church" they had recently founded in Asia Minor (Acts 14:23), and Paul instructed Titus to "appoint elders in every town" in Crete (Tit. 1:5). However, though he is much concerned about the qualifications of elders (over-seers) in Ephesus, he says nothing about the method of their appointment (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17-22). Was this because Ephesus was an older congregation in which the appointment of elders (overseers) was no longer the responsibility of an apostle or his representative? (One of the qualifications listed for the office of elder [overseer] in Ephesus was that one "must not be a recent convert" [1 Tim. 3:6]. But no such qualification is mentioned in the instructions to Titus [Tit. 1 :5-9]. Was this because the churches in Crete had been founded so recently that all their members were recent converts?) However, it is to be noted that Paul says to the elders of the church in Ephesus, "The Holy Spirit has made you *episcopous*" (Acts 20:28). I. H. Marshall comments thereon that in Acts 14:23 "we read how (elders) were appointed by Paul in some of his churches with prayer and fasting, i.e. in dependence on the guidance of the Spirit."²⁷ It is implied, therefore, (1) The choice (or election) of elders is to be a matter of recognizing God's call of persons to the office (cf. Acts 13:2; Heb. 5:1-4). (2) Recognition of God's call is facilitated by (a) consideration of the spiritual life, morals and gifts (abilities) of those who are prospects and/or candidates for the office (cf. Acts 1:21-22; 16:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:1), and (b) engagement in prayer and fasting. (3) The appointment (or election) is apparently to become effective by the laying on of hands (1 Tim. 5:22; cf. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; Acts 13:2-3).

The responsibilities of elders include

(1) Being shepherds of the "flock" (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:2). This means having oversight of the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; 1 Pet 5:2), having charge thereof (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17), providing leadership thereto (Heb.13:7, 17), keeping watch over it (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17);²⁸ taking care of it (1 Tim. 3:5); helping the weak therein (Acts 20:35); and administering needed discipline (Tit. 1:11).²⁹ In general, the elder is to fulfill a ruling and caring function in the church.

(2) Ordinarily the elder is expected to be active in preaching (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7) and teaching (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:9), though not all elders fulfilled such a ministry (1 Tim. 5:17).

(3) According to Eph. 4: 11' 12, elders are largely responsible for the "equipment" of "lay" Christians "for the work of ministry."

Apparently deacons soon became officials of local congregations alongside the elders (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13).³⁰ Though they are not called deacons, the seven of Acts 6 were chosen to "serve (*diakonein*) tables." If they are to be distinguished from the deacons mentioned in Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3, probably they are nevertheless a prototype thereof.

Apparently deacons had responsibilities relating to the "secular" activities of the congregation. Acts 6 is probably indicative of responsibility for the congregational relief program. It may be assumed that other matters of a "secular" nature were also assigned to them. That their qualifications included the ability to "manage their children and their households well" (1 Tim. 3:12) suggests that they needed to have administrative skills, as did the elders. On the other hand, it is probably significant that nothing is said about ability to preach and/or teach, as was ordinarily (?) expected of elders (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Tit. 1 :9).³¹

Christian widows of at least sixty years of age., who had no relatives to support them, were enrolled and cared for by the congregation. In return they evidently participated in the visitation and aid programs of the local church, no doubt insofar as health and strength permitted (1 Tim.5:9-16).³²

Beside elders, deacons (and enrolled widows?) who were the official leaders of the local congregation, certain other individuals exercised leadership functions which were recognized as important, but apparently without official appointment or election thereto. Chief among these were prophets³³ (e.g., Acts 13:1; 15:32; 1 Cor. 12:28; 14:29; Eph. 4:11; Rev. 11:10; 18:20, etc.), evangelists (Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5),³⁴ and teachers (Acts 13: 1; 1 Cor 12:28; Jas. 3: 1).³⁵ Perhaps we may also distinguish apostolic representatives such as Timothy and Titus (1 Tim. 1:3ff.; Tit. 1:5ff.; cf. 2 Tim. 4:12).³⁶

3. The Laity

The "laity" of the church, as we have indicated, have a ministry. they are to (1) Exercise a priestly function (1 Pet. 2:5, 9), that is, have "charge of things pertaining to God on their (mortals') behalf" (Heb. 5:1), and "offer spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2:5), i.e., "acceptable worship" (Heb. 12:28); (2) "Proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9); and (3) Exercise their particular gifts "for the common good." Each Christian has been endowed by the Spirit with a gift or gifts with this purpose in view (1 Cor. 12:7; cf. Rom. 12:6; 1 Pet.4:10).

III. Activities of the Church

1. Worship

Corporate worship was undoubtedly important in the New Testament church, though clear reference thereto is not frequent, perhaps because it could be taken for granted. Indeed, sometimes it is not clear whether corporate or private worship is in view. For example, when Paul says, "(We) worship God" (Phil. 3:3), it is not clear whether he means that we worship Him individually or corporately, or both.³⁷ And when he urges those he addresses to pray for Him (Eph. 6:18-20), it is not clear whether he is asking for individual prayers, for corporate prayer, or for both, though I suspect that both are in view because both individual and corporate concerns pervade the epistle.

The corporate worship of God is reported in Acts 13:1-2 ("The church at Antioch ...worshipping the Lord"), and is implied in 1 Cor. 14:24-26, which speaks of Christians "com(ing) together," and of the possibility of an "unbeliever or outsider enter(ing)" and responding to what he observes with respect to the "worship (of God)." The corporate worship of Christians is also in view in Eph. 3:21, "To him (God) be glory in the church. ..." Corporate worship is specifically in view in Rev. 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4. Though this is reported as seen in visions of heaven, and of the future, it is clearly assumed that such worship is normal and typical of God's people on earth. Indeed, it may well be that the descriptions of this worship derive from worship practices in New Testament churches.³⁸

Though the term is often used with a wider meaning in English-speaking lands, worship is essentially the glorification of God. Such glorification may be through verbal ascriptions of praise (e.g., Rom. 1:25; 11:33-36; 2 Cor. 9:15; Eph. 3:21; 1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 24-25; etc.), prayers of adoration and thanksgiving (e.g., Acts 4:24-28; Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4, 9; Phil. 1:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:3-5); and songs of praise and gratitude (e.g., Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16; Rev. 5:9-10; 15:3-4).³⁹

It is notable that corporate prayer is in view in (1) Acts 1:14, where the Eleven, certain women, Jesus' mother and His brothers, are said to have devoted themselves to prayer together. That the prayer included worship may be assumed, in view of Luke 24:52 which reports that after the risen Christ "withdrew from them (the Eleven and some others) ... They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple blessing God." (2) Acts 2:42 where it is stated that those who responded to Peter's Pentecostal ministry devoted themselves to "the prayers," that is, probably, to the prayers of Christian meetings.⁴⁰ That the prayers must have included worship is indicated in that it is said that they had "glad. .. hearts, praising God" (Acts 2:46-47). (3) Acts 4:24-31 which reports corporate prayer recognizing God's sovereignty following the charge by the Jewish council to Peter and John "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus."

Singing as an element of corporate worship is in view in (1) Eph. 5:19 which speaks of Christians "sing(ing) psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father. .."; (2) Col. 3:16, where Paul encourages the Colossian congregation "with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God"; (3) In the visions of Revelation where corporate singing is replete with praise (e.g., 5:9; 14:3; 15:3; cf. 4:8, 10; 5:12; 11:17; 19:1, 4, 5, 6).

One cannot speak of worship in the early church without including reference to the Lord's Supper. That corporate worship was an essential element thereof is clear from the repeated emphasis on the giving of thanks included therein (Matt. 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22: 17, 19; 1 Cor. 11:24), and is indicated also in the close connection between the statement about the earliest Christians "breaking bread" and the statement about them "praising God" (Acts 2:46-47).⁴¹ Indeed, in my opinion the emphasis on partaking of the Lord's Supper "in remembrance of Christ," and the statement that in so doing people "proclaim the Lord's death" (1 Cor. 11:26), suggest the honoring of Christ, and so the worship of Him.

Acts 2:42, 46, indicate that the Lord's Supper was an important element in the life of the primitive church, and 1 Cor. 11:20 ("When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper") implies that at Christian assemblies there was commonly, if not always, participation in what was considered to be the Lord's Supper. Much disagreement prevails concerning the meaning of the Supper, but its significance as a major element of worship, is hardly debatable.⁴²

2. The Edification of God's People

The Apostle Paul admonishes, "When you come together. ..Let all things be done for building up" (1 Cor. 14:26; cf. 14:5, 12; Acts 20:32; Rom. 14:19; 2 Cor. 12:19; Eph. 4:12, 16, 29; 1 Tim. 1:4). Worship and edification cannot be divorced. We have seen how Paul could speak of "sing(ing) psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," but describes that activity as "singing and making melody to the Lord. .." (Eph. 5:19)! As M. Barth observes, "Only the praise of God is to be sung. That praise will serve mutual edification."⁴³ Likewise, missionary endeavour and edification cannot be divorced. Repeatedly the Acts tells of joy and the praise of God resulting from the reports of people responding to the proclamation of the gospel (e.g., Acts 11:18; 15:3). Moreover, report of such contributed to the maturity of vision which made possible the decree of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:12-29). Indeed verbal communication of every kind may contribute to the edification of God's people. In Eph. 4:11-12 Paul states that apostles, prophets,

evangelists and pastor-teachers perform a ministry important for "building up the body of Christ." And in 1 Cor. 14:26-28 he makes it plain that even those who speak in tongues may edify those who hear them, provided that what they say is interpreted.

And it is not only the spoken word which may contribute to edification. One's conduct may contribute thereto as well. In Rom. 14:17-19 Paul indicates that "righteousness and peace and joy" have a part to play in "mutual up-building"; and in 1 Cor. 8 he implies that conduct which accords with love "builds up." Again, in 1 Cor. 10:23-24 he exhorts to seek the good of the neighbor with a view to his advantage.. In this connection, participation in the Lord's Supper is said to be a means of "proclaim(ing) the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). The rites and public services of the church, as well as the good deeds of its members both individually and corporately, contribute significantly to the building up of the body of Christ.

Of major importance for the edification of God's people, however, is fulfillment of Christ's instruction, "Teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). (Indeed, deeds and ceremonial acts of themselves are meaningless. They need to be interpreted.) According to Matthew's gospel, Jesus began His ministry with proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and calling upon people to respond to that good news with repentance (Matt. 4: 17; cf. 4:23-25). Having made disciples, he proceeded to teach them in what we call the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). Though it appears that "the crowds" heard Him (Matt. 7:28-29), He was primarily addressing His disciples, and teaching them. The good news of the kingdom was not the burden of His speech on that occasion, but what it means to be a worthy member of that kingdom. Instruction rather than proclamation was primarily what He was about. Likewise, in the Book of the Acts we have a good deal of proclamation of the good news of what God has done and will do in Christ, and the appeal for response thereto, but the epistles are largely instructive of those who have responded to the gospel call, and of the churches into which they have been incorporated.

Paul recognizes and promotes other functions and activities of the church, but places emphasis on the instruction of God's people. He writes to Timothy, "If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 4:6). He states that elders are to be "able to preach with sound doctrine. ..." (Tit. 1:9; cf. 1 Tim. 3:2). Among the last things he says to Timothy in the epistle when he is "already being poured out as a libation and, the time of my departure has come" (2 Tim. 4:6), is the assertion, "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (3:16); and the exhortation, "Be persistent ...in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but. ..will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires. ..." (4:2-3).⁴⁴ Moreover, in this valedictory epistle he urges Timothy, "What you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well" (2 Tim. 2:2; cf. 1 Tim. 5:17). Sound instruction must prevail not only in the immediate future but thereafter as well.

As has been indicated, in 2 Timothy sound teaching is derived from two sources: (1) The Scriptures, i.e., the Old Testament; and (2) Paul's own teaching. In 1:13 he exhorts Timothy, "Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me. ..." (cf. 2:2; 3:10). In 2 Peter we may note also: (1) The authority of the Old Testament: "No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation" (1 :20); and (2) Paul's writings are included in the Scriptures (3:15-16); (3) Peter's teachings are reliable (1:12, 15, 16, 19).⁴⁵ In John's Gospel we have comparable material: (1) "Scripture (the Old Testament) cannot be annulled" (10:35; cf. 5:39); (2) "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things, and has written them; and we know that his testimony is true" (21 :24); (3) "The Spirit of truth. ..will guide you (the Eleven) into (or'in') all the truth" (16:13; cf. 14:26). The Old Testament plus the apostolic witness constitute the sources from which sound doctrine is derived.

Fellowship is also important for the building up of God's people. In Acts 2:42 we are informed that the first Christians not only devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, but also to their fellowship. And Heb. 10:25 exhorts the brethren not to neglect "to meet together, ... but encourag(e) one another."

According to Mark 3:14, Jesus chose the twelve in part that they might "be with him." "Being in the company of Jesus provided the Twelve with the basis for their mission."⁴⁶ But was this the only reason? Is it possible that Jesus wanted the support of a close relationship with other people? Though Mark 3:14 may not imply it, was Jesus fully human, if He did not require it? And in Gethsemane, Jesus rebuked Peter, "Could you not keep awake one hour?" F. V. Filson comments, "The reproach and desire for companionship are evident."⁴⁷

According to 1 John 1:7, "If we walk in the light, as he (God) himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another" (cf. v.3). It is possible that we should also see a reference to the fellowship of God's people in 2 Cor. 13:13 ("the communion of the Holy Spirit"), and in Phil. 2:1 ("sharing [*koinōnia*] in the Spirit"), though this is much debated.⁴⁸

It is fellowship of a particular kind that is to characterize the church, and be fostered in it. It is affirmed in 1 John 1:3, "We declare to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." The fellowship important in the church is a fellowship which (1) is based on "a common faith in Jesus Christ";⁴⁹ and (2) includes fellowship with "the Father and the Son."⁵⁰ Moreover, according to 1 John 1:7, as we have seen, this fellowship is an abiding matter, "if we walk in the light as he (God) himself is in the light." In this connection it is appropriate to note Jesus' statement to the Eleven, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14). And He proceeds to set forth what it has meant that He has treated them as friends, "I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (John 15:15). Friendship and fellowship imply open sharing, particularly with respect to that on which the relationship is based.

The Lord's Supper is of special significance with respect to communal Christian fellowship. In 1 Cor. 10:16 Paul speaks of the Supper as meaning "sharing (*koinōnia*) in the blood of Christ" and "in the body of Christ." He adds, "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." J. Behm comments, "The community which blesses the cup of blessing and breaks the bread is inwardly related to Christ now present. ..But partaking of one bread . . .creates fellowship between the members too. . ."⁵¹

That fellowship is important in the church is implied in Eph. 4:16, "The whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love." M. Barth comments, "'Love' is denoted as the ground, the sphere, the instrument of the church's existence." This love includes "the mutual love of the saints."⁵² In accord with such an understanding, Paul exhorts, "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col. 3:14). In this connection, F. F. Bruce asserts, "Love. . .holds Christians together in fellowship under the strain of all common life."⁵³

3. Ministry to Others

Besides providing opportunities for the worship and edification of its people, the church is to be engaged in ministry to those outside its ranks.

This ministry first and foremost means that the church heeds the mandate of Christ, "Go. . .and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19), a mandate which, in one form or another, is set forth

at the end, or near the end, of each of the four gospels (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16: 15; Luke 24:47-49; John 20:21), and again in Acts 1:8. Though the Matthaean form of the mandate is addressed to "the eleven disciples," the appended promise ("Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age") indicates a wider application. "The period indicated-from the Resurrection and enthronement of Christ till the final consummation-is for Matthew the era of the Church's life and mission."⁵⁴ Moreover, though in each form of the mandate the eleven are being addressed, at least primarily, the fact that they provided the founding leadership and abiding authority for the church is suggestive of a permanent responsibility of the church. And Rev. 22:17 indicates that it was so understood: "The Spirit and the Bride (the church) say, 'Come.' And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.' And let him who is thirsty come, let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift" (cf. Rom. 10:15).⁵⁵ R. H. Mounce comments, "It is the testimony of the church empowered by the Holy Spirit that constitutes the great evangelizing force of this age."⁵⁶

The New Testament church at Antioch is more or less exemplary in this respect. Those who formed the nucleus of that church "spoke the word to no one except Jews." But some of them "spoke to the Hellenists also, proclaiming the Lord Jesus," with the result that "a great number....turned to the Lord." And when Barnabas came to Antioch and gave leadership, "a great many people were brought to the Lord" (Acts 11:19-24). Then we read of this church sending Barnabas and Saul (Paul) on a missionary tour. And thereafter it continued to be supportive of Paul and his missionary activities (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-27; 18:22-23).

Evangelization was not the sole concern of the New Testament church for others. There was concern for the corporate welfare of those who responded to the proclamation of the word of the Lord. This is evident in the occasional references to the organization of local bodies of believers. In the earliest days in Jerusalem the apostles provided such organization as was needed (cf. Acts 4:35, 37). Soon further development of the organization was required and effected (Acts 6: 1-6). Paul was not only concerned about the winning of converts. We find him rather quickly appointing elders for new groups of believers, or arranging for their appointment (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5). In fact, he implies that the appointment of elders would "put in order what remained to be done" in the various Christian fellowships in Crete. Moreover, in more established churches he not only recognizes the significance of their leadership (e.g., Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:8-12; Phil. 1:1; cf. Heb. 13:7, 17, 24), he is also concerned about improving their organization (1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:9-22). Following his instructions to Timothy concerning the qualifications of elders and deacons, he says, "I am writing these instructions to you so that. . .you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God." (1 Tim. 3:15)⁵⁷

The New Testament church, however, was not solely concerned about the evangelization of mankind and the organization of Christian communities. It was also concerned with social issues.

The chief concern in this respect was with the social welfare of its own members. We read that members of the Jerusalem church "sold their possessions and goods and distribute(d) the proceeds to all, as any had need" (Acts 2:45; cf. 4:34-37). Needy widows seem to have been a special concern, not only in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1), but also in Ephesus (1 Tim. 5:16). James, Cephas and John exhorted Paul and Barnabas to "remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do" (Gal. 2:10). Indeed, prior to this time Paul and Barnabas had conveyed "relief to the believers living in Judea" (Acts 11:27-30), and at a later date Paul devoted much of his own time and energy, as well as enlisting his churches, in gathering and transmitting a large contribution for the relief of poverty-stricken Christians in Judea (Acts 24:17; Rom. 15:25; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9).

There are rather frequent exhortations to meet the material needs of those who are "of the family of faith" (Gal. 6:10; cf. Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; Jas. 2:15-17; 1 John 3:17; etc.) Though the

exhortations may be intended for the individuals to whom they apply, the very fact that the epistles in which they occur are read to the congregation as a whole implies that the congregation as a whole is to support them, and, no doubt, that the congregation is to take corporate action where applicable and appropriate.⁵⁸

The economic, social and political circumstances in which most first-century Christians lived explains the paucity of New Testament emphasis on contributing to the material and social needs of those who are not Christians. However, exhortation with respect to such needs is not lacking. Paul urges, "Whenever we have opportunity, let work for the good of all. .." (Gal. 6:10). And, when he instructs Timothy to charge those "who in the present age are rich" to "do, good, to be rich in good works, generous and ready to share" (1 Tim. 6:18), it seems unlikely that they are only being told to conduct themselves in such fashion toward fellow Christians. Indeed, on another occasion Paul exhorts, quoting Prov. 25:21-22 LXX, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink" (Rom. 12:20). C. E. B. Cranfield comments, "By the words food and drink we are to understand kindness of every sort."⁵⁹ Moreover, there would be the memory of Jesus' own words about loving our neighbor, which, as His parable of the Good Samaritan shows, means ministering so far as we are able to the needs of anyone, regardless of his/her nation, class or religion (Luke 10:27-37).⁶⁰

Insofar as the structures of society are concerned, the New Testament church and its members had little possibility of effecting improvement. What they did do was by way of influencing attitudes rather than initiating specific action for reform. For example, Paul did not attack slavery, but did make it clear that a Christian seeks to maintain the kind of relationships which make the legal circumstances essentially insignificant (Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1; Phil. 15-16; cf. 1 Cor. 11:22, 33-34).

Otherwise, early Christians were given, on the one hand, such instructions as Rom. 13:1-7 and 1 Pet. 2:13, which urged respect and obedience to governing authorities (cf. 1 Sam. 24:6, 10). On the other hand they had the example of Jesus and Paul standing up for their legal rights before authorities (John 18:23; Acts 16:35-39; 22:25-29; 25:11-12). Moreover, they had the example of Jesus driving those who bought and sold from the temple (Matt. 21:12-13; cf. 21:23), and of Peter and the apostles disobeying the charge by the Jewish council not to teach in Jesus' name (Acts 5:27-32). They also had the Old Testament example of Jesus' rebellion against King Joram of Israel in accordance with divine instruction (2 Kings 9:1-26).⁶¹ However, there is no evidence that the church as such, encouraged, or should have encouraged, political action, even by pacific means, with a view to change in social, economic or political structures. Whether this was due simply to the exigencies of their situation, and might have been different under other circumstances, is not indicated.⁶²

Conclusion

We have briefly summarized biblical ecclesiology. We have only to add that our outline, which we believe to be responsible and adequate, reveals a Trinitarian structure, in that there are three major topics, each of which, in turn, has a three-fold division. Moreover, we suggest that the major topics correspond, at least in general, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that each of the three subdivisions correspond to the same three persons of the Trinity.

1. Muller, Philippians, 90-1.
2. This seems to be the sense, cf. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, 304.

3. Gen 4:1, 25, may intimate that Eve had a positive relationship with Him, but this is not certain.
4. Unless otherwise indicated, biblical quotations are according to the New Revised Standard Version.
5. J. R. Nelson, The Realm of Redemption, Fifth Edition (London: E.P. Worth, 1962)
6. Some scholars reject the view that Gentile Christians are incorporated into God's ancient people. They interpret Paul's statement that Christ "create(d) in himself one new humanity in place of the two" (Eph 2:15), I. e., in place of Israel and believing Gentiles, in such fashion as, in effect, to nullify the significance of "fellow citizens (sumpolitai) with the saints and also members of the household (oikeioi) of God" (Eph 2: 19).
7. 'The people (laos) is used to refer to Israel as opposed to the Gentiles in Acts 26:17, 23; Rom 15:10. Though laos is anarthrous in 1 Pet 2:10, it occurs of Israel without the article in Wisd 18:13; Sir 16:10; Jude 5. Moreover; the modifier theou, indicates that laos is definite (cf. H. P. V.I: Nunn. A Short Syntax of New Testament Greek (Cambridge: University Press, 1956] 57)
8. Nelson, Realm of Redemotion
9. L. Morris, The Gospel according to John (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971 repr. 1973) 462.
10. Cf. C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 112. P. E. Hughes, ~ Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 93, thinks that Paul "is referring. ..to all that took place at the time of his conversion. "He does not give due weight to the occurrence of the plural.
11. Cf. Morris, .John, 846 n 53.
12. Cf. M. C. Tenney in EBC, 9:193.
13. We suggest that Jews and other devoted to the God of Israel only needed baptism in the name of Jesus because they were already recognized as devotees of the true God and of His Spirit. In Matt 28:19 baptism in the triune name is prescribed because making "disciples of all nations" is in view. Amongst Gentiles commitment to the true God, as well as to the Son and the Spirit, needed public representation.
14. In retrospect Peter can say that "the Spirit of Christ within" the Old Testament prophets predicted "the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory" (1 Pet 1:11). The Spirit was the Spirit of God's Son from all eternity; but was not recognized as such prior to Pentecost.
15. Cf. I. H. Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 357.

16. In my opinion a healthier individual and congregational life would prevail if churches today conformed more closely to the prescription.
17. If the book of Jonah is not a historical record, as many hold, a powerful ministry; is nevertheless considered a possibility.
18. W. L. Lane, The Gospels according to Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974 repr. 1978) 518.
19. In the Old Testament God is seldom referred to as "Father;" and even then usually as the Father of the nation or of the coming Messiah, and in those cases the context is usually one in which He is thought of as Creator or Redeemer. It never seems to be used because He is one with whom individuals may have a blessed personal relationship.
20. According to D. M. Mathers, The Word and the Way (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1962) 94, "When God's word comes to man, God is giving man himself. What He reveals is not something but someone; himself" (cf. pp. 91-95). But revelation without information is just an enigma. God's revelation of himself must include at least the information that it is God who is revealing himself. Mathers also says, "Christian faith doesn't really mean believing the things that you read in the Bible; it means believing in the God that the Bible tells you about, trusting him and obeying him" (p. 96, emphasis his). But to believe in "the God that the Bible tells you about" is to believe at least some of the things that you read in the Bible"!
21. For other views, see M. Barth, Ephesians (Garden City; N.Y.: Doubleday; 1974 repr. 1981) 1:314-17.
22. Some would add Andronicus and Junias (Rom 16.7) to the list.
23. Though Judas Iscariot was replaced by Matthias, there is no evidence that James the son of Zebedee, whose martyrdom is reported in Acts 12:2, was replaced.
24. The Ante-Nicene Fathers recognized that the apostles were the supreme, if not the only authority with respect to doctrine and practice.
25. Judaism had its elders who exercised a "ruling" function and provided the precedent for church elders (cf. Exod 3:16; Deut 19:12; Ezra 6:7; Matt 26:57; Acts 6:12; 24:1; etc.).
26. In his vision of heaven John saw twenty-four "elders" on thrones around the throne of God (Rev 4:4; cf. 19:4). G. E. Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972 repr. 1978) 75, understands "the twenty-four elders (to be) a body of angels who help execute the divine rule in the universe. " If so, they are probably the counterpart of elders in the local church.

27. J. Jeremias, ID1::!L 6:497-98, contends that 'pastor' "is not yet an established title in Eph 4:11."
28. Proĭstēmi is used of elders in 1 Tim 5:17; Rom 12:8 (?).
29. Acts, 333-34.
30. Acts 20:28: prosechō; Heb 13:17: hēgeomai.
31. J. N. D. Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (Grand Rapids: Baker; 1963 repr. 1981) 234.
32. Did Titus get no instructions concerning deacons because the congregations of Crete were of such recent establishment, and were as yet so small, that such a separate office was not needed?
33. According to Acts 6, the apostles, who apparently fulfilled the deacons' function in Jerusalem up to this time, now devoted themselves "to prayer and to serving the word."
34. The enrolled widows are not called deacons or deaconesses. Though they seem to have been involved in some of the activities in which deacons were involved, I suspect that they were not involved in the administration thereof, as deacons seem to have been. Phoebe was probably a deacon (or deaconess) but could hardly have been an enrolled widow (cf. Rom 16:1-2).
35. There seem to have been many who prophesied occasionally, but not with sufficient frequency to be known as prophets. According to 1 Cor 14:37 there were apparently those who functioned as prophets, without general recognition as such.
36. Probably these were, or included, individuals such as Apollos, who was not an apostle, but carried on an itinerant ministry (Acts 18:27; 1 Cor 16:12; cf. 3 John 5-8; Rom 10:15).
37. Elders were official teachers. Jas 3: 1 indicates that there were those who functioned as teachers without official sanction (cf. 1 Tim 1:7).
38. In my opinion workers of miracles, healers, helpers, speakers in various kinds of tongues, interpreters of tongues, etc., (cf. 1 Cor 12:8-10; 28-29) were not included among the leaders as such.
39. The corporate emphasis in Phil 1:27; 2:1-2, may suggest that Paul is thinking of corporate worship, or to both individual and corporate worship.
40. What is seen in a vision derives from what is familiar to the one who has the vision. The material may be reorganized, may be a pastiche of familiar matters, and may be located in a new time and place, but the elements of what one sees are not new.

41. Such worship is often in conjunction with petition, supplication, and inter-cession. And it may be closely joined to instruction, exhortation, admonition, etc. Indeed the very words giving expression to praise and thanksgiving may instruct and provide exhortation and/or admonition (e.g., Rom 8:31-39; 2 Cor 9:15; Eph 3:21; 1 Tim 1:17; etc.).
42. In view of Acts 3:1, the reference may be to "set Jewish hours of prayer" (Marshall, Acts, 83).
43. I hold with those scholars who are of the conviction that "the breaking of bread" was a way of speaking of the Lord's Supper (e.g., Marshall, Acts, 83. Per contra, J. Behm, II).NI, 3:731, 737).
44. The Quakers and the Salvation Army are probably the best-known groups which do not include the Lord's Supper in their practices. Acts 2 and 1 Cor 11 indicate that it was much more prominent in the primitive church than it is in many Protestant denominations today.
- Christian baptism focuses attention on commitment to Christ, dying and rising with Christ, and incorporation into the church. Because Christ is so central therein, honor and glory accrue to Him. Such being the case, worship is implicit, if not explicit, in the rite.
45. Ephesians, 2:583.
46. Instruction within the Christian community is clearly in view. Paul urges Timothy, "Proclaim the message," and "Do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4:2, 5). It seems to me, however, that sound teaching is especially on his mind.
47. J. N. D. Kelly; A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969 repr. 1981) 320, paraphrases 1:19. "In the apostles' experience of the Transfiguration we...have confirmation of the message of prophecy."
48. R. A. Guelich, Mark 1-8:26 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989) 159.
49. A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew (London: Black, 1967) 279; cf. S. E. Johnson, ill, 7:579. Lane, Mark, 518-19, argues, however; that Jesus' Gethsemane rebuke of Peter was not because He needed or desired, "comfort and companionship." He urged the apostles to watch and pray; not for Him but for themselves.
50. See Barrett, Second Corinthians, 344; G. F. Hawthorne, Philippians (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983) 66.
51. Paul speaks of "the faith we share" (Tit 1:4; cf. Rom 15:27; 1 Cor 1:9; Phil 1:7), and Jude of "the salvation we share" (Jude 3). Fellowship is implied in both instances.
52. Marshall, Epistles of John, 104.

53. TDNT; 3:739; cf. F. Hauck, TDNT, 3:806.
54. Ephesians, 2:451.
55. F. F. Bruce, "Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians, " E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Epistles to the Eoheians and the Colossians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957 repr. 1973) 281 n 106.
56. Hill, Matthew, 362.
57. It is possible to take the invitation in the first part of the verse as addressed to Christ, calling on Him to return from heaven, but this is not likely (cf. Mounce, Revelation, 395).
58. Revelation, 395.
59. The instructions referred to surely include what is stated in 1 Tim 2 concerning church practice. Indeed, Kelly, Pastoral Epistles, 86, holds, "The instructions cover the entire charge contained in the letter. " We are inclined to agree, but they cannot refer to less than what is stated in chapters 2 and 3.
60. Note the special emphasis on showing hospitality: Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 3:2; 5:10; Tit 1:8; Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:9. The conditions prevailing in inns and hostels, to say nothing of the meager resources of the average Christian, explain such exhortation.
61. Romans. 2:648; cf. Murray, Romans, 2:142.
62. In Rom 13:10 ("Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law") Paul's quotation of Lev 19:18 serves a somewhat different purpose from Jesus' quotation thereof.