Early Church Leaders

by
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The Development of Christian Leaders in the Early Church

When Christ returned to the Father after his passion, he left no mandate for a church order. Rather, he promised to send the Holy Spirit who would direct the disciples and remind them of all he had taught them (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13-15). Hence, leadership in the early Christian communities evolved by a process guided by God. From apostles to deacons to pastors, including both men and women, this development of leadership necessarily had to keep pace with the growing number of believers in multicultural settings.

Tracing this development is a matter of piecing together small hints and incidental mentions that are scattered throughout the New Testament. Christians do not always see eye-to-eye on how this development occurred nor what final shape it took, though all agree that it happened. Here, we intend to explore the background of the Jewish community, Jesus' choice of the apostles, the various New Testament descriptions of character and roles for pastors, elders and bishops, the development of a diaconate, and the role of both men and women as leaders in the early church. Finally, we will conclude with a look at the continuing development of leadership in the post-apostolic church with its distinction between pastors and bishops and the development of the metropolitan bishops.

The Jewish Background

While Jesus left no mandate for church order, the disciples of Jesus were not without patterns of religious leadership from their Jewish background. Such leadership was to be found in four primary areas, the temple, the Sanhedrin, the synagogue and the less formally structured special interest groups and community settings. *The temple* was regulated by the priesthood, which, since the time of David, divided its members into twenty-four orders so that they could minister "by course" (cf. 1 Chr. 24:1-19; Lk. 1:8-9). The office of high priest theoretically was supposed to be inherited (Nu. 25:10-13), but during the Hellenistic period, and later, during the Roman period, this office was often achieved by simony or political favor so that dissident Jewish groups considered the high priesthood to be corrupted. In addition to the high priest and the large numbers of ordinary priests there were "chief priests," either the permanent staff of priestly officials in Jerusalem or the aggregate of former high priests and their family members.[1] There

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[1] Due to dismissals and appointments by the Romans, there were no less than twenty-eight high priests from the time of Herod the Great until the end of the First Jewish Revolt, cf. E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 449.

were also the many Levites divided into two main groups of singers and gatekeepers.

The *Sanhedrin* was the supreme religious, political and legal council in Jerusalem. Its roots went back to the post-exilic period when Joshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the governor, ruled the community along with a council of priestly nobility (Ezr. 3:8; Hg. 1:1; Zec. 3-4; Ne. 2:16; 5:7). Seventy in numbers, the council was presided over by the high priest, making the total number seventy-one. Most of its members were priests, though it also included scribes (copyists of Scripture) and elders (powerful laypersons and dignitaries).[2]

The *synagogue* was the place of prayer and assembly for local Jewish communities. It was the center of community life, both religious and social, and it served as a school, a place of worship, a site for general assembly, and a venue for community discipline. Wherever there were a minimum of ten Jewish males, a synagogue could be started, and within the synagogue, any Jewish male could read Scripture, translate, preach or lead prayers. Women were restricted, however. They were allowed to attend the synagogue service, but lattice barriers or galleries were constructed to segregate the women from the men. They, along with children and slaves, were forbidden to teach or to publicly read the Torah. During the service, they could only listen.[3] Leadership in the synagogue consisted of a ruler or head of the assembly, who presided over services and designated those to perform the functions of the liturgy. There was also a "servant" of the synagogue who kept the scrolls, a sexton who cared for the building, a scholar to serve as schoolteacher, and an officer for discipline (and sometimes, these offices were combined). Scholars called *rabbis* (= teachers) were often associated with synagogues, though they also functioned independently as they drew on the ancient traditions and modified or reshaped them for contemporary relevance.[4]

Besides the more familiar religious structures of temple, Sanhedrin and synagogue, local Jewish communities had various forms of authority that belonged to the assembly of men of the city. Older males served as a council of leaders called "the elders," a kind of local Sanhedrin with general oversight for community affairs. Also, there were special interest groups, like the Qumran community or the various zealot groups, with their own indigenous leaders. At Qumran, for instance, there was a supreme council and an overseer who examined candidates for membership, directed the treasury and divided the labor. Members were examined

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[2] G. Twelftree, "Sanhedrin," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels,* ed. J. Green and S. McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), pp. 728-732.

[3] J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, trans. F. and C. Cave (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), pp. 374-375.

[4] Ferguson, pp. 455-456, 462.

annually and assigned a rank in accord with their spiritual progress.

It is not apparent that the disciples of Jesus followed completely any one of these preexisting structures. The temple hierarchy had limited application to church life, since the Christians looked back to the older ideal that the entire community was the priesthood (He. 10:19-22; 1 Pe. 2:9; cf. Ex. 19:6). The function of high priestly service, at least in a sacerdotal way, had been performed once and for all by Christ Jesus (He. 9:23-26; 10:11-14, 18; 1 Ti. 2:5-6). The Sanhedrin, likewise, had little to offer as a model for Christian church government. To be sure, the Christians faced occasions when discipline was necessary, but the ideal for such discipline seems to have been from the assembly of peers, not an established hierarchy (Mt. 18:15-20; 1 Co. 5:1-5; 2 Co. 2:5-11).

The synagogue, however, was more fruitful for leadership paradigms, and there were both similarities and dissimilarities to the Christian churches. Titles like "elder" and descriptions such as, "synagogue" were used by Christians (Ja. 2:2).[5] The general pattern of Christian worship, with Scripture reading, prayers and a homily, was generally similar to the Jewish synagogue liturgy. When Paul and Barnabas took a gift from Antioch, Syria to the Jerusalem church and presented it to the "elders" (Ac. 11:30), there seems little doubt that the title functioned for the Christians more or less like it did in the broader Jewish communities. Later, Paul and Barnabas would appoint "elders" in all the new Christian congregations in Asia Minor (Ac. 14:23).

There were some marked differences, however, especially for slaves and women, who were welcomed as full members of the Christian assemblies and allowed to publicly participate (1 Co. 11:5) and engage in theological dialogue (Ac. 18:26). The distinction of carrying a church letter, which generally included reading the letter publicly and explaining its contents, was a high honor indeed that Paul conferred upon Phoebe (Ro. 16:1-2).[6] (Ro. 16:23) Quartus and Tertius, both probably slaves, are reckoned with the Christian brothers as fully as Erastus, the Director of Public Works in Corinth, and Tertius served as Paul's amanuensis (Ro. 16:22-23b).[7] Paul had no hesitation in recommending the slave Onesimus as a full brother in Christ (Philmn 15-16).[8] Thus, it is to be expected that the early

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[5] Most translations render the Greek word συναγωγης (= synagogue) generically in Ja. 2:2 as "meeting" (NIV), "place of worship" (NEB), or "assembly" (KJV, RSV, NAB, NASB).

[6] That Phoebe heads the list of recommendations is usually taken to mean that she was the bearer of the Roman epistle, M. Black, *Romans [NCBC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), p. 178. Dispatch of private letters required a private courier, since the *cursus publicus* (Roman imperial post) was reserved for state business. If Paul's comments in Ephesians 6:21-22 are any indication, the courier was in a position to verbally explain the letter he carried.

[7] The names Tertius and Quartus were common names among slaves, cf. J. Dunn, *Romans 9-16 [WBC]* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1988), pp. 909, 911.

[8] If this Onesimus is the same as the one mentioned in Ignatius' letter to the Ephesians in the early 2nd century, then

Christians drew some of their ideas about leadership from familiar patterns in the Jewish community. At the same time, because they were a new community bound to the teachings and ethics of Jesus, they were free to reshape these traditions to conform to Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus and the Twelve

While the early Christian churches may have owed some aspects of their emerging structure to the Judaism that preceded them, without question the single most important source was not from the synagogue but from the teachings of Jesus. Just as in architecture there is a relationship between form and function, so in church leadership structures there also was such a relationship. Form followed function. For the followers of Jesus, the earliest *form* was the apostolate. Only later, after Christ had returned to the Father, would various other leadership forms development. Jesus' teaching on *function*, however, was broad enough to extend considerably beyond those who carried the title apostle. What Jesus said about the character of leaders applies to apostles, elders, bishops, deacons and virtually all other categories of leadership.

The Twelve

The title "apostle" came from Jesus himself, who choose from among his larger group of disciples a core of twelve men whom he designated apostles (Mk. 3:14). This term $\alpha\pi o\sigma\tau o\lambda o\varsigma$ generally describes a messenger, envoy, ambassador or representative.[9] As the personal representatives of Jesus, the twelve were first of all to be "with him", and after that to tour the villages in Galilee preaching the advent of God's rule (Mk. 3:14; Mt. 10:7). Jesus gave them special powers to demonstrate the coming of God's kingdom (Mt. 10:8//Lk. 9:1-2).

There was an important symbolism in the number twelve, which matched the number of the original sons of Israel and the clans that descended from them. Symbolically, Jesus' choice of the twelve apostles implied that a new Israel was in the making. During Jesus' ministry, the apostles had the chance both to observe and listen to Jesus intimately, and this intimacy constituted their special training. In the end, their office of apostleship qualified them to testify to Jesus' messiahship from the unique vantage point of eyewitnesses (Ac. 2:32; 3:15; 10:39-42; 13:30-31). In fact, when Judas Iscariot defected, the candidates for replacement could be drawn only from the select number who had been with Jesus from the time of John's ministry to Jesus' ascension (Ac. 1:21-22). Because of the function of the

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this slave rose to become a bishop, cf. *To the Ephesians*, 1.

[9] The word is built from two other Greek words, the preposition $\alpha\pi o$ (= from) and the verb $\sigma\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omega$ (= to send).

original twelve as personal eyewitnesses of Christ's earthly ministry, death and resurrection, the boundary of the group is necessarily closed. No vehicle for succession was ever instituted in the early church. Nevertheless, Jesus' teaching to the twelve about leadership in the Christian community extended far beyond the twelve's individual life spans. Because all twelve eventually would die - most by martyrdom - other leaders had to step forward. Even before the apostles passed from the scene, the numerical growth of the church compelled the development of leadership functions. Yet though the group of apostles could not be expanded, the lessons Jesus gave to the twelve about leadership inform all other subsequent types of leadership in the church.

Jesus' Teaching on Leadership

Even though the group of the twelve apostles is closed, the teachings of Christ on leadership have broad application. This teaching concerned function more than form. The form of Christian leadership structure - titles, offices, and procedure for selection - would come later. Of first importance was the function and character of leaders.

The call of the original disciples, even before they were designated apostles, was to follow Jesus (Mk. 1:16-20). His first call was not, "I will give you power," but rather, "Follow me, and I will make you to become..." This initial call became the final call as well (Jn. 21:20-22). All leadership within the community was to be conducted within the framework of discipleship. They were, as he said, to "learn of me" (Mt. 11:29). The mark of true leadership was not innovation but faithfulness to Christ.

The character of the Christian leader was to be defined by servanthood. In contrast to the conventional leadership of power, position and privilege - a style that he called the way of the pagans (Lk. 22:24-27) - Jesus urged a kind of leadership that sought humble service. Even though he was God's unique Son, he came among them as one willing to wash their feet (Jn. 13:3-5). To the ones who wanted positions of privilege, Jesus advised that instead they should prepare for the cross (Mt. 20:20-23). Anyone who wants to be first must become a slave (Mt. 20:24-28). When asked who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus set before them a little child and challenged them to change and become childlike themselves (Mt. 18:1-4).

When he sent out the twelve in Galilee by twos, Jesus offered several mandates that shape the idea of Christian ministry. First, the message was firmly grounded in the grace of God. What they received, they must pass on as a generous gift (Mt. 10:8-10), taking for them only what hospitality was freely offered (Mt. 10:11-13, 40-42; Lk. 10:4-11). In their ministries, they were to be both wise and

harmless and to expect harsh opposition (Mt. 10:16-23). They must be willing to leave everything in order to serve (Mt. 10:37-40). Like the Baptist, they might see miracles for others but have none for themselves (Mt. 11:2-6). Though they were given extraordinary power, they must consider their greatest privilege to be accepted by God (Lk. 10:17-24). When rejected by others, they must not resort to vituperation (Lk. 9:51-56).

In their religious observances, Jesus taught them above all to guard their hearts (Mk. 7:1-23; Lk. 16:10-15). A clean heart and a ministry of grace are better than punctilious religious observance (Lk. 11:37-52). They should not seek to elevate themselves but to value the positions of lesser importance (Lk. 14:7-14). Especially, their leadership must not succumb to the influences of those who took external religion to be paramount (Mt. 16:5-12). In the end, anything they had given up to serve Christ would be more than amply rewarded (Mt. 19:27-30).

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus prayed for his apostles that they would be unified and protected (Jn. 17:6-12). God would not remove them from the world, but he would protect them from the evil one while setting them apart for God's holy mission (Jn. 17:13-19). Though Jesus was going away from them, they must remain deeply devoted to each other (Jn. 13:33-35). The true sign of their discipleship would be love (Jn. 13:34-35).

The final function of the apostles was described in Jesus' great commission. He sent them into the whole world to preach the good news to everyone through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20:21-23). Among the nations, they were to make disciples, to baptize and to teach (Mt. 28:16-20; Lk. 21:45-48).

The Early Jerusalem Church

The very first issue of leadership after Christ's return to the Father was the replacement of Judas Iscariot, the member of the original apostles who betrayed the Lord and committed suicide. Peter took responsibility to initiate the process, presumably because Jesus had singled him out as having special status among the twelve (cf. Mt. 16:17-19). The candidates were limited to those who had been with Jesus for his entire public ministry (Ac. 1:21-22), and the method of choice was by lottery, trusting in God to make the final decision (Ac. 1:23-26; cf. Pro. 16:33).[10] The lot fell to Matthias over Justus, and he became the twelfth apostle.[11]

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[10] Lotteries had a long-standing tradition in Jewish heritage, stretching all the way back to the apportionment of land to the twelve tribes. During the second temple period, lots were used to determine the rotation of priests and Levites in their temple duties. Among the Romans, the process of choosing two candidates and casting lots between them was common, and the disciples seem to have followed this method, cf. D. Aune, *ISBE* (1986) III.172-173.

[11] Though it has been proposed that this choice was premature and that St. Paul should be numbered as the twelfth apostle, this theory falls on three important grounds. First, the various early mentions of the number "eleven"

Apostles

The ministry of the twelve apostles continued to guide the church after Pentecost. They, with Peter as spokesman, served as the interpreters of what happened when the Spirit descended (Ac. 2:14ff). The primary function seems to have been teaching, and the apostles conducted their teaching ministry daily in the temple courts (Ac. 2:42, 46; 4:2, 18; 5:17-21a, 25, 28, 42) as well as in private homes (Ac. 5:42).

It is hard at this early stage to distinguish between teaching and evangelism, since much of the teaching obviously was evangelistic in orientation and many converts were gained. However, one should remember that the primary audience was Jewish, well-versed in the Torah and the Prophets, so that the primary aim of the discourse was not that Yahweh was the one true God, but rather, that Jesus was the Messiah (Ac. 4:2, 18; 5:42). We probably should assume that the pattern of interpretation initiated by Jesus in bringing to bear the Torah and the Prophets upon his own person and ministry was central (cf. Lk. 24:44-48; Ac. 1:2).

Deacons

The first expansion of leadership beyond the twelve apostles occurred as a solution to the tension between Aramaic-speaking Jews and Greek-speaking Jews. The early Jerusalem church practiced a communal lifestyle with the apostles serving as administrators of the funds (Ac. 2:44-45; 4:32-37).[12] However, as the Christian community began to grow, there developed an inequity in the distribution that favored the Aramaic-speaking widows (Ac. 6:1). Rather than leave their primary work of teaching and prayer (Ac. 6:2, 4), the apostles led the community in selecting seven administrators over the distribution of food. It is significant that the seven were selected by the community (as opposed to being appointed by the apostles), and they all apparently came from within the marginalized group.[13] While the word "deacon" (διακονος, *diakonos* = servant) is not used here, it is generally agreed that this incident is the beginning of the office that later in the New Testament comprises the diaconate. The order of deacons seems to be something new, since there was no comparable title or order in the synagogue or other Jewish structures.

(excluding Judas) precludes Paul but must assume Matthias (Mt. 28:16; Mk. 16:14; Lk. 24:9, 33 Ac. 1:26b; 2:14). Second, Paul refers to "the twelve," assuming the inclusion of Matthias, but distinguishes them from himself (1 Cor. 15:5). Finally, the number twelve is viewed as complete prior to the conversion of Paul (Ac. 6:2).

[12] It may be that the apostles delegated the actual distribution to others, since Luke uses the imperfect middle/passive "it was distributed."

[13] Notice that all the names of the seven are Greek, suggesting that they all came from the Greek-speaking sector (Ac. 6:5). At least one, Nicolas, was not a Jew by birth but a proselyte from Syrian Antioch.

Two things, especially, stand out concerning the selection of the first deacons. First, they were spiritual people. While their ministry was administrative, their qualifications were that they were "known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Ac. 6:3). Stephen, especially, is singled out as a "man full of faith and the Holy Spirit." Second, while they were chosen by the community as a whole (presumably by election), their ministry was confirmed by the apostles with prayer and the imposition of hands (Ac. 6:6).[14]

Prophets

Along with the apostles and deacons, prophets also figure in the early Jerusalem church. The earliest references to prophets in the Christian church are the anticipations based on the Old Testament prediction of Joel. When the last days came,[15] the Spirit would be poured out upon all people, both men and women, old and young (Ac. 2:16-21; cf. Jl. 2:28-32). With the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, Peter announced that this time of blessing had been inaugurated! Hence, it is no surprise to find that the spirit of prophecy was expressed in the lives of both men (Ac. 11:27-28; 21:10) and women (Ac. 21:9). While the full ministry of prophets is not described in the Book of Acts, later Paul will number them along with the apostles as foundational for the early church (Ep. 2:20; 3:5) and second only to apostles (1 Co. 12:28; cf. Ep. 4:11).

Paul offers the basic description of the prophetic ministry, when he says "everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort" (1 Co. 14:3). If we take the pattern of the Old Testament prophets as normative, and there is no reason not to do so, then the ministry of prophets was primarily as a medium for the direct Word of God, whether by preaching or prediction. The writing prophets, especially, were preachers of the Word of Yahweh. Their primary concern was to call the nations of Israel and Judah back to covenant, and their oracles emphasized social justice and the active working of God in history through judgment. If such Old Testament concerns have any application to the ministry of prophets in the New Testament, then their ministry was broad indeed.[16]

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[14] The imposition of hands can be traced in antiquity for the bestowal of blessing (Ge. 48:13-20) and the commissioning of someone to leadership (Nu. 27:22-23). Members of the Sanhedrin, during the second temple period, were confirmed by the imposition of hands, cf. *Sanhedrin* iv.4.

[15] The "last days" refers to the coming of the Messiah, cf. D. Lewis, *Three Crucial Questions About the Last Days* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), pp. 50-68.

[16] There is some debate as to whether there is continuity or discontinuity between Old Testament prophets and New Testament prophets. To be sure, Old Testament prophecy culminated with the ministry of John the Baptist (cf. Mt. 11:13), but Jesus also announced that he would send more prophets along with teachers and the wise (Mt. 23:34). Hence, there seems every reason why a considerable amount of continuity should be recognized.

Elders

The first mention of the office of elder ($\pi\rho\epsilon\sigma\beta\upsilon\tau\epsilon\rho\sigma\varsigma$, *presbyteros* = elder, presbyter) is almost incidental. Paul and Barnabas led a group of delegates from Antioch, Syria to Jerusalem bringing a gift of relief funds to the impoverished Christians in Judea (Ac. 11:27-30). The gift was delivered to "the elders." As background, one should remember that the deacons had been forced to leave Jerusalem due to intense persecution (Ac. 8:1). Of the original seven, Stephen was martyred (Ac. 7:54-60), and Philip went to Samaria (Ac. 8:4-5). The apostles managed to stay (Ac. 8:1), but it seems that the elders were now administrating the funds in the absence of the deacons. Somewhat later, at the Jerusalem council concerning the debate over circumcision, we find the "apostles and elders" functioning together as leaders of the Jerusalem Christian community (Ac. 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4). Still later, when Paul returned to Jerusalem at the close of his third mission tour, he met with James and the elders (Ac. 21:18).

Since the title elder is introduced without qualification or explanation, we probably should assume that the office derived from its Jewish predecessors in the synagogue and Jewish community. As such, the elders would have been family heads, and quite possibly, since the Jerusalem church was burgeoning (Ac. 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7), they may have served as the leaders of various house churches in Jerusalem.

Teachers

The other leadership function in the early Jerusalem church was the role of teachers. Already we have seen that the earliest teachers were the apostles themselves. However, later there seems to be another group identified as teachers in Syrian Antioch, where Luke describes "prophets and teachers," none of whom were from among the original twelve (Ac. 13:1).[17] Other itinerant teachers from Jerusalem visited Antioch also (Ac. 15:1). If we accept later descriptions of such a function, then the role of teachers was to exposit the Old Testament Scriptures, especially in light of Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophetic promises (cf. 1 Ti. 4:13; 2 Ti. 1:13-14; 3:16). Obviously, such teaching had to be assessed, and sometimes teachers went beyond the bounds of sound theology (Ac. 15:24; cf. Ga. 2:4-5; 1 Ti. 1:3-11). Whether or not such teachers were ordained with the imposition of hands, such as were the deacons, is not directly stated, and the use of the verb $\delta\iota\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omega$ (*diastello* = to give orders, to commission, to authorize, cf.

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[17] The Greek text of Ac. 13:1 twice contains the untranslatable particle τε, one connecting Barnabas, Simeon and Lucius and the other connecting Manaen and Saul, which in turn suggests that the first three were prophets and the latter two were teachers. One of them, Paul, later describes his own calling to be that of an apostle and teacher (1 Ti. 2:7; 2 Ti. 1:11).

Ac. 15:24) is sufficiently ambiguous to prevent certainty.

Obviously, the teaching ministry was one of the primary responsibilities of the original twelve. Later, the function of teaching would be connected to the role of pastors (Ep. 4:11), where grammatically the terms "teacher" and "pastor" probably refer to the same person and might even be rendered as "pastor-teacher."[18]

Though the transition was not without difficulty, the earliest Christians eventually moved beyond the boundaries of their Jewish circle. Without question, the most important figure in gentile missionary work was Paul of Tarsus, a converted Pharisee who grew up in Jerusalem, served the Sanhedrin as an inquisitor against Christians, and supported the lynching of Stephen. However, after his conversion and subsequent service in the Christian community at Antioch, Syria, Paul and his missionary team made three tours to Asia Minor and Greece, and afterward, Paul went to Rome under house arrest, where he continued to evangelize both Jews and Gentiles.

The influx of non-Jews into the Christian community meant the availability of additional leadership patterns. The title "elder," for instance, also was used in the Greco-Roman world for officers in various Greek religious cults as well as for village magistrates in Egypt.[19] The title "bishop" (= overseer) appears frequently in Greek literature as a designation for officials, both religious and civil.[20] The Greco-Roman social structures of *politeia* (= the city community), *oikonomia* (= the household community) and *koinonia* (= the voluntary association) now were available as paradigms in addition to the Jewish institutions of temple, sanhedrin and synagogue.[21] The term *ekklesia* (= church) had both Jewish and Greco-Roman precedents in that Jews could use the term to refer to the congregation of Israel and Greeks to refer to the political assemblies of free citizens in cities. Not that the early Christians were limited to developing their leadership structures from preexisting patterns, of course, but it would be surprising if at least some influence was not felt.

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[18] If two nouns of the same case are connected with and preceded by only one article, then both nouns refer to the same thing, cf. Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), pp. 147 (the so-called Granville Sharp rule).

[19] *IDB* (1962) II.73.

[20] *IDB* 1962) I.442.

[21] D. Tidball, *The Social Context of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1984), pp. 76-89.

The Gentile Churches

Apostles and Elders

The first significant vocabulary shift occurred on Paul's first mission tour, when Luke begins calling Paul and Barnabas "the apostles" (Ac. 14:4, 14) Obviously, they were not among the original twelve chosen by Jesus, though later, of course, Paul will appeal to his confrontation by the risen Christ as proof of his apostleship (1 Co. 9:1). Nevertheless, when one adds the names of Barnabas, Andronicus and Junia (Ro. 16:7), James the Lord's brother (Ga. 1:19), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), and Silas and Timothy (1 The. 1:1; 2:7), not to mention an unnamed group accompanying Titus and Paul (2 Co. 8:23), it is obvious that the title has expanded.[22] If we take Paul's statement to the Corinthians to be definitive, where he says, "Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord" (1 Co. 9:2), it seems that the title *apostolos* refers to missionaries. It is apparent in Luke's description of the council in Acts 15 that apostles and elders are two distinct offices, since both consistently are listed side by side as "the apostles and elders," inferring two groups (Ac. 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4). Probably, the apostles were the missionaries who had been preaching the gospel from city to city, while the elders were stationary leaders of local congregations.

At the end of their initial missions tour, Paul and Barnabas went back through the various cities where they had established Christian assemblies and authorized elders to be congregational leaders (Ac. 14:23). The process of selection is less than clear from Luke's use of the verb χειροτονεω (*cheirotoneo* = to choose, elect by raising hands, appoint, install), since this can mean that they appointed elders or that they had elders elected (see NIV text and margin).[23] Furthermore, it is unclear whether there was a single elder or a college of elders serving each congregation. To be sure, the term "elder" is plural, but several churches are involved, so the question is moot. It should be kept in mind that very quickly the Christians were divided into house churches based on the Greco-Roman model of the *oikonomia* (cf. Ro. 16: 4-5, 14, 15, 23; 1 Co. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phil. 4:22). If this Greco-Roman household model were followed, then the leader of the household hosting the assembly of Christians probably also would serve as the leader of the Christian group. The church in a particular city was made up of all the Christians from the house congregations, and when Paul refers to them all, he speaks of "the whole

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[22] Depending upon the English translation, the Greek term *apostolos*, due to its range of nuance, may not always be rendered as "apostles", but also as "representative" or "messenger" or the like.

[23] Later, however, Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders in every Cretan town, and the verb καθιστημι (*kathistemi* = appoint, ordain) does not favor a free election.

church" (Ro. 16:23; 1 Co. 14:23). When Paul called the Ephesian elders to meet with him at Miletus, we probably should assume that they were the leaders of the Ephesian house churches (Ac. 20:17).

Elders, Bishops and Pastors

From the New Testament letters, three leadership titles seem to be more or less interchangeable: they are πρεσβυτρος (*presbyteros* = elder), επισκοπος (*episkopos* = overseer, bishop) and ποιμην (*poimen* = pastor, shepherd). This latter title was familiar from Greek usage as a description for a community leader going all the way back to Homer, and in the Septuagint, it was used as a title for the leaders of Israel.[24] All three are joined in describing the same person/function where Paul instructed the Ephesian "elders" that the Holy Spirit had made them "overseers", and therefore, they were to be "shepherds" (Ac. 20:17, 28). Peter offers a similar statement, when he writes as a "fellow elder" and urges his colleagues to be "shepherds" of God's flock, serving as "overseers" (1 Pe. 5:1-2). Various references to Christian congregations as a "flock" implies a shepherd leader (Jn. 21:15-7; Ac. 20:28; 1 Pe. 5:2).

The "elder," then, is a title for a congregational leader (1 Ti. 5:17, 19; Ja. 5:14; 1 Pe. 5:5; 2 Jn. 1; 3 Jn. 1). The "bishop" is another title for the same function (Ac. 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Ti. 3:1-2; Tit. 1:7). Inasmuch as the two titles are used interchangeably (see especially Tit. 1:5-7), there seems to be no hierarchical difference at this early stage.

Both to Timothy and Titus Paul offers a character profile for such leaders (1 Ti. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:6-9). Elders must be clear-headed, devoted to a single wife,[25] prudent, respectable, hospitable, skilled in teaching, gentle, peaceable and not obsessed with making money. They must demonstrate leadership in their homes as well as in the church. They should be people of tested Christian experience with a sound reputation inside and outside the church. They must be firmly committed to the Christian message as it has been handed down in the church, both willing and able to defend the Christian faith.

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[24] *LS*, loc. cit.

[25] Though some have interpreted this to mean that elders must be married, Paul would hardly urge such a condition when he was unmarried himself. Others see here a prohibition for ministers being remarried after the death or divorce of a spouse. Better, in view of the rampant polygamy and bigamy in the Greco-Roman world, is that Paul refers either to monogamy as opposed to bigamy or polygamy, or else in a more general sense, one who would not succumb to the popular morality that winked at extra-marital affairs. A minister must be a person of unquestionable moral integrity, loving his spouse and no one else.

Deacons

The ministry of deacons calls for special attention, since this term is somewhat broader than any of the foregoing titles. In one sense, there is a distinction to be made between "deacons" and "bishops" (Phil. 1:1), which are commensurate with their institution in Acts 6. In another sense, New Testament writers can use the term "deacon" in a more general way, since διακονος (*diakonos* = servant, minister, deacon) has several nuances. This is especially true because corollary words, such as διακονια (*diakonia* = ministry) and διακονεω (*diakoneo* = to minister), have wide application to Christian service. In the Greek language, the word *diakonos* originally referred to a house servant, an attendant or a helper, and Christians took over this word to designate one who was a servant of the gospel (1 Co. 3:5; 2 Co. 3:6; 6:4; 11:23; Ep. 3:7; 6:21; Col. 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7; 1 Th. 3:2; 1 Ti. 4:6). It could refer to Paul and his fellow missionaries, as some of the above passages illustrate, or it could be used of Christ himself (Ro. 15:8), not to mention civil rulers (Ro. 13:4).[26]

There is, however, a special sense in which the term *diakonos* applies to people who held positions of leadership (Ro. 16:1; Phil. 1:1; 1 Ti. 3:8, 12).[27] Paul recommends Phoebe as a "servant (or deaconess) of the church in Cenchrea", which is much more specific than the general expressions "servant of God," "servant of the gospel," or "servant of Christ." When Paul refers to the "bishops and deacons" he obviously intends two offices of leadership in the congregations. Later, when Paul offers a character profile for deacons, which immediately follows his character profile for elders, he obviously intends someone with a specific rather than a general function.

The longest single passage regarding deacons, of course, is the character profile in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Here, Paul requires that deacons be dignified and sincere, not addicted to wine or compromising their integrity for the sake of money. They must be people of deep theological commitment, moral integrity and proven experience. They must devote themselves to a single spouse and manage an orderly household.

The introductory phrase "in the same way" (1 Ti. 3:8) suggests that a corollary order is in view, and thus the possibility of the translation "deaconesses"

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[26] Though the word is the same, the above passages virtually never translate διακονος as "deacon," since to do so would be unnecessarily confusing. All words have ranges of nuance, and these passages, while they describe Christian ministry, do not refer to a particular office, such as the function of those chosen in Acts 6.

[27] In these passages, the word *diakonos* usually is translated "deacon", with the exception of Ro. 16:1, which has various renderings ("deaconess", so RSV, NAB, JB, Williams, Phillips; "servant", so KJV, NIV, NASB). The NEB offers the following dynamic equivalency: "one who holds office in the congregation."

for γυναικας (*gynaikas* = women, wives). Unfortunately, several English translations add the possessive word "their", for which there is no underlying word in the Greek text, thus tilting most English readers toward the idea that Paul refers to the wives of male deacons. Instead, Paul probably intends deaconesses.

Three areas, especially, have generated debate among Christians regarding the development of leadership in early Christianity. One is the concept of ordination, another concerns the role of women in ministry and the last addresses the hierarchical distinctions that developed in the post-apostolic church. Christians have decided differently on all three issues. Brethren churches and Quakers, for instance, do not have ordained ministers. The role of women has been and is currently under debate in virtually every Protestant denomination. The sacramental churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, long have maintained sharp hierarchical distinctions, though Protestantism is more varied.

Ordination

The words "ordain" and "ordination" come from Latin, and they mean "to set in order," "to arrange," but particularly, "to appoint." As such, Jesus "ordained" the twelve apostles as his special representatives (Mk. 3:14). When one of the original twelve defected, another was "ordained" to replace him (Ac. 1:22). Paul considered himself to have been "ordained" by God as an apostle and teacher to the Gentiles (1 Ti. 2:7). Paul instructed Titus to "ordain" or to set in order certain individuals to be elders in the church at Crete (Tit. 1:5), and this was his practice in other congregations as well (Ac. 14:23). While there are several Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible that fall under the general meaning of the English term "ordain," they all suggest someone or something that has been marked for special service.

In the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, ordination is considered to be a sacrament instituted by Christ that confers special grace upon the recipient. For Catholics, priesthood is a divinely ordained mediatorial role bringing God and humans together, especially in the priest's power over the Body and Blood of Christ in Eucharist, in his power over life and death in baptism, and in his power to judge and decide penance in confession. In their view it follows Christ's choice of the apostles, and it is replicated by the bishop's decision to accept for priesthood those who are candidates. In Eastern Orthodoxy, the priesthood becomes the successor to the apostolate, Christ's visible representatives on earth. The highest visible authority is the bishop, followed by priests and deacons.

In Protestant churches, ordination is less rigid. Though some, such as the

Anglican and Episcopal denominations, follow the lead of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Churches with regard to Apostolic Succession, most Protestants avoid a mechanical dispensation of holy orders. For them, ordination largely consists of group approval of an individual to proclaim the gospel and to take a leadership role in the church to which he/she has been called once appropriate and careful examination has been made. In sacramental churches, function follows office. In non-sacramental churches, function follows gift. Though not sacramental, ordination is deeply meaningful to the free churches. It signifies the church's recognition of God's hand upon an individual in a special way for spiritual leadership. While it does not confer a spiritual gift, it recognizes that God has given such a gift. Legally, ordination is required in some states in order to perform marriages and/or funerals (laws differ from state to state).

Biblical support for such recognition is based upon the appointment of elders in the early Christian congregations, and especially, in the blessing of the imposition of hands. The deacons were so commissioned (Ac. 6:6), as were the apostle-missionaries (Ac. 13:3). With respect to Paul and Barnabas, Luke describes Antioch as the place "where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work" (Ac. 14:26). Timothy was commissioned in this way as well (1 Ti. 4:14; 2 Ti. 1:6). Paul infers this commissioning when he advises Timothy against hasty appointments (or reinstatements) to leadership (1 Ti. 5:22a). A novice might fall into the sin of conceit (cf. 1 Ti. 3:6), while a fallen church leader might bring reproach on the whole church, so that those who reinstate him share the taint of his sin (1 Ti. 5:22b).

The different views on ordination depend, in turn, upon different views of authority in the church. If ordination is perceived as granting authority inherent in an office—a God-given right to rule—then its character is markedly different than if it is perceived as a commissioning based on a spiritual gift. While the word εξουσια (*exousia* = authority) appears in the New Testament more than a hundred times, it rarely is used of church leadership. Rather, the New Testament emphasis is consistently on servanthood.

The Role of Women

The most debatable current topic about Christian ministry must surely concern the role of women. Though women have made significant advances toward equality within society in general,[28] traditionally the Christian church

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[28] It may be remembered, for instance, that prior to 1900, only four states had given women the right to vote in the United States. By 1914 the number had increased to eleven, but it was 1920 before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment granting women full suffrage.

maintained tightly defined gender roles for clergy. Only within the American holiness movement and among the early Pentecostals did women have full rights. Today, a wide range of Protestant denominations are addressing this issue, and theologians are lining up on both sides.[29]

Those who restrict women's ministry appeal especially to two Pauline passages that seem to give apodictic commands: *women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak...* (1 Co. 14:34) and *let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence* (1 Ti. 2:11-12, KJV). Those who are egalitarian, on the other hand, appeal to those passages that categorically deny spiritual differences between men and women: *even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit...* (Ac. 2:17-18), and *there is neither...male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Ga. 3:28). Some New Testament passages directly describe women in Christian ministry as apostles (Ro. 16:7), prophets (Ac. 21:9; 1 Co. 11:5), deacons (Ro. 16:1; 1 Ti. 3:11), teachers (Ac. 18:24-26), missionaries (Ro. 16:3, 12; Phil. 4:2-3), worship leaders (1 Co. 14:26) and house church leaders (Ro. 16:2; Phlm 2). Each side attempts to soften the biblical passages unfavorable to their position by appealing to various exegetical considerations, and in this area, the role of the biblical translator looms large.

The Restrictive Position

It has always been somewhat of an embarrassment to the restrictive position that the Old Testament community had quite a number of women leaders, even in the midst of a patriarchal culture. Miriam was a prophetess, who along with her brothers, led the Israelites out of Egypt (Mic. 6:4). Deborah was a prophetess and judge (Jg. 4:4-5), and Huldah was a prophetess (2 Kg. 22:14ff.) as was Isaiah's wife (Is. 8:3). Within the wisdom tradition there were women also (2 Sa. 14:2; 20:16), and women served at the tent of meeting (Ex. 38:8). All this notwithstanding, the two restrictive passages by Paul mentioned above along with the submission and headship passages (1 Co. 11:3; Ep. 5:22-24) are taken as absolute norms for the whole church for all time. As such, then women cannot hold positions of authority in the church. They can speak only so long as they are under the authority of a male church leader. Seemingly egalitarian passages, such as Galatians 3:28, are taken to refer to equal aptitude for salvation, but not equal availability for church ministry. The various passages that show women in ministry

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[29] Though the literature is becoming voluminous, a couple samples will suffice: for those espousing female limitation, read W. Grudem and J. Piper,, ed., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991); for those espousing egalitarianism, read L. Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

roles are translated with nuances of subordination. Phoebe was a "servant" and a "help," not a deacon and a protector (Ro. 16:1). Junia(s), the apostle, was a man, not a woman. Prisca worked under the authority of her husband (Ac. 18:24-26), while Euodia and Syntyche were Paul's supporters working directly under his authority (Phil. 4:2-3). There are no examples of female elders in the New Testament, but rather, elders are to be male, as indicated by the qualification that they were to be the husband of one wife (1 Ti. 3:1-2; Tit. 1:6).

In the end, while women may be supporters of Christian leaders - and under the authority of a male leader may perform limited roles - they cannot themselves be church leaders in their own right. God has ordained male headship, for the head of the woman is the man. God is himself male. Jesus chose all of his apostles from among males. Hence, women cannot be ordained, they cannot serve as pastors, nor can they occupy authoritative teaching ministries within the church.

The Egalitarian Position

Given the Pauline restrictive statements, the burden of proof naturally rests upon egalitarians to offer compelling alternative interpretations. At the very beginning, they argue that the issue is skewed when one begins with the preset categories of "office" and "authority." The New Testament, far from emphasizing offices and authority, emphasizes gifts and servanthood. If function follows gift, and if the primary role of Christians leaders is to serve rather than to rule, quite different interpretive dynamics are at work.

The language of New Testament leadership is given its full leadership nuance in translating those passages describing women. Phoebe was a deaconess of the church (so RSV, JB, NAB, Williams), or as one translation puts it, a Christian "who holds office in the congregation at Cenchreae" (Ro. 16:1). She was a church leader, a benefactor or sponsor for the church (Ro. 16:2).[30] She apparently carried the Roman letter, as is implied by Paul's recommendation that the Roman church "receive her", and she would likely have been the first one to read the letter publicly to the church and explain its contents. Junia, the apostle (Ro. 16:7), is a woman leader, not a man.[31] Prisca was the leader in biblical teaching as is indicated

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[30] The word προστατις (*prostatis* = protector), in the literature of the times, referred to a leading officer, president or superintendent. In 1 Th. 5:12, for instance, its verbal counterpart clearly refers to those taking the lead.

[31] To be sure, some translations put an "s" on the name, thus making it masculine (so NASB, NIV, NAB, JB, NEB, RSV), but most recent translations do not (NKJV, TEV, NRSV) nor do the earlier English versions (ASV, KJV) or the Vulgate or the various translations before 1950. John Chrysostom may be taken as representative of ante-Nicene Christianity when he wrote in the 4th century: *How great is the devotion of this woman [Junia] that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle*, cf. *Homilies on Romans,* 31. The masculine name Junias simply does not occur in any work contemporary with Paul, while the feminine name Junia, on the other hand, is common and well attested both in Greek and Latin inscriptions. In fact, scholars have found more than 250 examples of this feminine name in Rome alone, cf. Belleville, p. 55. Hence, the masculine translation is tendentious.

by the fact that in a teaching setting she is listed first (Ac. 18:26).[32] Euodia and Syntyche were Paul's "co-workers" in missionary evangelism (Phil. 4:2-3), a term he also uses to describe Timothy (Ro. 16:21; 1 Th. 3:2), Titus (2 Co. 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25) and others (Col. 4:11; Phlm 1, 24). The early Christian congregations met in homes, and the administrators of such churches were commonly the home-owners. Of the several such homes mentioned in the New Testament, women were owners and/or leaders in most of them (Ac. 12:12; 16:15; Ro. 16:3-5; 1 Co. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phlm 2).[33]

If women are to be found in such various leadership roles in the early church, how can such a fact be reconciled with the severely restrictive statements by Paul? With respect to interpretation, there are two options which do not leave Paul in some final self-contradiction. One is that his *practice* of using women in leadership roles is the norm, while the two restrictive passages are special cases. The other is that his *theology* is, in fact, restrictive, and his practices were either temporary expedients or were not as equalizing as they may seem. There are sound reasons for thinking the former rather than the latter.

The Order for Women in 1 Timothy 2:9-15

Traditionally, this order has been read as a universal code for female decorum and applied generally to the women of various times and places throughout Christian history. It has been used as the primary passage for restricting women's roles in church life.[34] Such application seems to ignore the local circumstance out of which Paul was writing. To be sure, it is indeed a Christian ideal for women (and men as well) to present themselves in modesty and propriety. The desire to dominate is equally to be avoided by women (and men as well). Decency and moderation are not only the responsibility of women, nor is the call to servanthood.

The present passage arises out of the context of heretical teaching and false teachers, and this heresy seems to have significantly involved women and an aggressive feminist perspective (1 Ti. 3:11; 4:3, 7; 5:13-15; 6:20-21). In all likelihood, Paul's comments about women are directed toward the behaviors of certain women who were caught up in this heresy. Their demeanor and dress was brash and ostentatious. Paul orders them to dress themselves with good deeds, not

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[32] Name order was culturally important in the Greco-Roman world, and to be listed first shows priority.

[33] In the church of Colossae, the possessive pronoun in the expression "your house" (Phlm 2) is plural, indicating that Apphia along with Philemon and Archippus were the leaders.

[34] Luther, at least, offered to women the privilege of leadership by way of exception in times of necessity. Calvin and Knox, on the other hand, were adamantly against women in any kind of ministerial role. Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* left little doubt about where he stood on the issue. Calvin contends that women are "by nature born to obey men," P. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 67-68, 117, 131.

flashy clothes, since they profess to be worshipers of God (2:9-10).

Furthermore, Paul calls for these women to become learners instead of teachers (2:11). They are in no position to teach, since they do not understand the gospel, and they are certainly in no position to domineer over men or to defy the creation accounts as recorded in the Old Testament (2:12-13).[35] A popular mythology in the ancient world was that woman was the author of man. The society around Ephesus had a definite matriarchal character, and it looked upon the feminine gender as primal source.[36] Analogous to this view was a Gnostic teaching that Eve was the source of divine revelation, particularly in the Garden of Eden. In a region such as Ephesus, where the foremost deities were maternal, it can be well understood how Eve was venerated as the one who first tasted of the tree of knowledge. Thus, it seems likely that Paul was forbidding this sort of matriarchal primacy, and particularly, the view that woman was the author of man, since such a view flatly contradicted the Genesis account (cf. 2:20b-24). He forbids these women to teach; he forbids them to peddle their myths concerning female dominance; he bluntly corrects the fallacy that the woman was the author of the man or that she was the brilliant and daring channel of special revelation in Eden (2:11-14).[37]

The Order for Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36

The order for women's behavior in the worship service also has given rise to controversial and heated discussion along lines well beyond the exercise of spiritual gifts. What does Paul mean when he says, "Women should keep silent in the church?"

It should first be noted that here Paul refers to a different level of discourse than in 1 Co. 11, where he obviously allows women to speak during worship. There is good reason to take the word *gynaikes* as "wives" rather than simply as "women."[38] If this is so (and 14:35 fits well with such a translation), then Paul is not forbidding women *per se* to speak, but rather, he is forbidding wives to

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[35]The word αυθεντεω (*authenteo* = to have authority, to domineer, to commit murder, to instigate), cf. *LS* (1968), p. 275; R. and K. Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), pp. 87-98. This word has traditionally been taken to mean that women cannot have authority over men, and as a corollary, that they cannot serve as a teacher of men. This interpretation has been used as a general mandate for keeping women out of leadership roles in both churches and societies, refusing to women ordination, and restricting them to subordinate roles in a patriarchal structure. It is unlikely that this is what Paul has in mind. Rather, he addresses a specific, local situation. In the context of first century Asia Minor, the word *authenteo* was used in literary patterns which described sex reversal, female dominance and promiscuity, and creatorship, cf. Kroeger, pp. 94-98.

[36]See extensive discussion in Kroeger, pp. 105-170.

[37]An alternative translation for 2:12 would be, "I do not permit a woman to teach nor to represent herself as originator of man, but she is to be in conformity [with the Scriptures]. For Adam was created first, then Eve," cf. Kroeger, p. 103.

[38]W. Orr and J. Walther, *I Corinthians [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), p. 312-313.

interrupt the worship service with irrelevant or disorderly questions. If they do not understand what is happening (and since women in the ancient world were usually not favored with the education of men, which no doubt contributed to their chances of misunderstanding), they must not break in upon the speaker to ask questions and so disrupt the service.

Furthermore, it should be observed that the larger context has a series of commands to silence - one for tongues-speakers (14:28), one for prophets (14:30), and one for women (14:34). Such a series seems more likely to have arisen out of a local problem of disorder than a general prohibition for all women everywhere. Possibly the women were publicly contradicting or arguing with their husbands in the service.[39] The fact that they were to "ask their own husbands at home" implies that the problem is not for all women, even in Corinth, but for married women.

That it was disgraceful for a woman to speak publicly was a common cultural standard in both Jewish and Greek societies. Even though Paul permitted women to exercise their charismatic gifts, he realized the social stigma that would arise over women participating in open discussions. Are Paul's injunctions temporary, that is, for a particular culture in a particular era, or are they timeless, that is, for all cultures of all ages. This question may be answered by juxtaposing Paul's statements about women with his injunctions regarding slavery and the Jewish-Gentile problem.

Paul's ethic of freedom extended to the slave-master relationship. He clearly declares that slave and free categories do not exist in Christ Jesus (Ga. 3:28). He counsels Philemon to receive his slave Onesimus as a brother in Christ (8-16). At the same time, he enjoins slaves to submit to their masters and commands masters to treat their slaves fairly (Ep. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22--4:1; 1 Ti. 6:1-2; Tit. 2:9-10). He counsels slaves not to fret over their slavery, but if they have the opportunity to gain freedom, they should do so (1 Co. 7:21). Does this mean that Paul endorsed slavery as a moral social institution? No, yet for the time being, in order not to reduce the gospel to a catalyst for social upheaval, Paul gives regulations for master-slave relationships. His fundamental principle, however, is that in Christ these categories should not exist.

With respect to Jewish and Gentile categories, again Paul seems ambivalent. He maintains that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek (Ga. 3:28). He boldly stands against the idea that his Gentile converts must be circumcised (Ac. 15:1-2; Ga. 2:3-5). Yet to pacify the Jews, Paul had Timothy circumcised, and on another occasion he himself joined in Jewish purification rites (Ac. 16:3; 21:20-24, 26).

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[39]Orr and Walther, p. 313.

Is there a harmonizing principle that can explain this curious behavior? The best explanation is found in 1 Co. 9:19-23. Paul is guided by the all-encompassing principle that he will not allow secondary issues to cloud the primary issue—the preaching of the gospel.[40] Paul willingly accommodates himself to the mores of society as far as necessary "for the sake of the gospel." If the questions of slavery, cultural practices and women's rights obscure the good news about Jesus, Paul is willing to forego addressing these issues in preference to the primary cause, the gospel. This does not mean that Paul had nothing to say to these issues. On the contrary, he unequivocally declares his position of freedom and equality in Ga. 3:28 on the basis of the gospel. Nevertheless, in practical circumstances Paul was flexible enough to forego his convictions for the present time. Paul's statements in 1 Co. 14:34-36 are culturally accommodated to the first century. They are not a rule for all time.

In the end, then, the arguments for the equality of women seem more compelling than those for the restriction of women. So long as church leadership is viewed primarily in terms of authority and office, the question is skewed by issues of power and rulership. However, if church leadership is understood along the lines of servanthood, then there seems no reason that women cannot serve the church as well as men.

Post-Apostolic Developments

As the Christian community moved beyond the period of the apostles, there was considerable continuity, yet some discontinuity. For instance, leadership titles, such as, apostles, teachers, prophets, elders, pastors and bishops continued to be used.[41] At the same time, a definite trend toward hierarchy developed. The first clear instance of a hierarchical distinction between deacons, elders and bishops is in AD 115 in the letters of Ignatius. While on is way to Rome to become a martyr, he wrote seven letters to the congregations in Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles and Philadelphia as well as to Polycarp, the Smyrnians and the church in Rome. In these letters Ignatius calls for obedience and loyalty to the local bishop, the position Ignatius himself held at Antioch before his arrest. For Ignatius, the office of the bishop was the focal point for the unity of the church (he was the first to use the term "catholic" with respect to the church) and the purity of apostolic doctrine. Ignatius was deeply concerned about false doctrines and divisions threatening the

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[40]P. Richardson, *Paul's Ethic of Freedom* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979) 87.

[41] It may come as a surprise to note that the terms apostle, possibly more in the sense of missionary, and prophet are used in some early post-apostolic literature, cf. *Didache* 11, 13. That there were pseudo-apostles near the end of the first century (cf. Re. 2:2) suggests that there were legitimate ones as well. However, both these titles eventually disappeared form the ante-Nicene church.

church, especially due to the influence of gnostic thought. His attempt to foil such threats was to elevate the position of the bishop.

> *For when you are obedient to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, it is evident to me that you are living not after men but after Jesus Christ... It is therefore necessary...that you should do nothing without the bishop.*
>
> *...let all men respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, even as they should respect the bishop as being a type of the Father and the elders as the council of God and as the college of apostles. Apart from these there is not even the name of a church.*

Trallians 2-3

According to Ignatius, the bishop must give his consent for baptisms, the celebration of the eucharist and marriages. Ignatius conceived of the clergy as a hierarchy of bishops, elders and deacons and in that order. There was a single bishop,[42] who constituted the highest authority, a body of elders who served as advisors to the bishop, and a company of deacons who assisted each church in worship and pastoral visitation.[43] Eventually, this pattern became accepted throughout all the churches, though the change took time. By the late 2nd century, the local bishop was the unchallenged leader in church life.[44]

Still later, the metropolitan bishops emerged (from the Greek *metropolis* = mother city). These leaders, called *patriarches* (= patriarchs), ruled the church in five of the major cities of the empire: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. In time, the bishop in Rome came to be regarded as the first among equals, because of the weight of tradition associated with the church in Rome. Eventually, this Roman primacy developed into a Roman supremacy of the bishop as the "father" (papa or pope) of the entire Christian church. Leo of Rome (5th century) made the theological case for the succession of authority from Peter to the Roman bishop, a position held by Roman Catholics ever since.

Responses to this hierarchical development have been varied. Protestants and Eastern Orthodox, of course, categorically deny the claim of the supremacy of the Roman Bishop. The Orthodox, however, accept the concept of Metropolitan Bishops and ethnic Patriarchates. Today, in addition to the original Patriarchates, the Orthodox have national churches in Albania, Bulgaria, Finland, Greece,

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[42] Hence, the designation "monarchical bishop" (= rule by one).

[43] M. Shepherd, Jr., *IDB* (1962) I.441.

[44] We know that in Alexandria, for instance, that there was no single bishop until about AD 180, B. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), p. 86. Nevertheless, the authority and centrality of the bishop became more-or-less standard by about AD 200.

Poland, Rumania, and Russia, among others.

Among Protestants, even the earliest development of hierarchical distinctions is controversial. Some Protestants object entirely to this development as a serious mistake and a departure from the servanthood emphasis of primitive Christianity. Others (Lutheran, Anglican, Episcopal, Methodist) allow some amount of hierarchical development without following it all the way to papal supremacy. Still others regard hierarchical development as a temporary expedient to unify the church, but an expedient that has long since outlived its usefulness.

Was this gradual development of hierarchy a work of the Holy Spirit? Certainly Christians accept other post-apostolic developments as directed by God, not the least of which was the formation of the New Testament canon. Those churches that accept the concept of apostolic succession regard the hierarchical development as guided by the Holy Spirit and binding on the church for all time.

In summary, the more one accepts the ideas of office and authority as constituting appropriate church leadership, the more one is inclined to accept the development of hierarchy within the church as legitimate and Spirit-led. On the other hand, the more one emphasizes giftedness, and especially the idea that function follows gift, the less one can accept the legitimacy of hierarchy among church leaders.