

CAN CHRIST ACTUALLY BE HEAD
OF THE LOCAL CHURCH?

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Divinity in
Grace Theological Seminary
May 1979

Title: CAN CHRIST ACTUALLY BE HEAD OF THE LOCAL CHURCH?
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Degree: Master of Divinity
Date: April, 1979
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The modern local church is generally impotent because it has substituted the leadership of man for the headship of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ, and like the church at Laodicea, He stands at the door and knocks. But, the problem is not hopeless; there is a way of local church renewal that is open if Christians will heed the Word of God.

The body of the thesis is developed in three parts, namely: 1) The nature of the local church as to members who make it up, both saved and unsaved, 2) The design of the leadership structure: qualifications and number of elders, qualifications of deacons, New Testament priests, and other leadership and ministries. 3) The head of the local church is Christ in the appointment of all officers and in the direction of all true believers to accomplish this task.

The first part unfolds the theme that the local church, although ideally wholly made up of only true believers, is in reality a mixture of both saved and unsaved. This fact alone poses a great problem in the selection of officers and in the function of the local church. Since the heart of problems within the local church is a product of the elders selected, the great bulk of the thesis is taken up with the requirements and selection of these men.

The second part defines the qualifications of elders in detail. Since there is a modern tendency toward immaturity, the physical age of the elder is developed in six detailed arguments. Also, because of the very old problem of pride and preëminence in the local church pastor, the doctrine of the plurality of elders is carefully delineated.

The third part, which is the heart of the thesis, defines how the local church Christians can place themselves under the headship of Christ. Particularly detailed is the headship of our Lord in the selection of the local church elder. The necessary Spiritual capacity and requirements of the voting membership are developed.

The local church can be under Christ, its Head, but an eager willingness and application of doctrine is required.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree
Master of Divinity


Advisor

DEDICATION

To my Lord who loves me and gave Himself
for my sin and is patient with me,

And to my dear wife, Helen, who was
"not weary in well doing"

And to my dear children, Hollis III,
Marguerite, Jeffrey, Cathryn and Patrick, through
whom God has ministered the lessons of life that
"we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror
the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same
image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of
the Lord."

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INTRODUCTION

A. The Proposition of the Thesis

The modern local church is generally impotent because it has substituted the leadership of man for the headship of Christ. Dr. Edmund P. Clowney, President of Westminster Theological Seminary, emphasizes the indispensability of Christ in the first of six lectures entitled, "The Church Centers on Christ."¹ The problem with the local church has been nicely pointed out by Howard A. Snyder: "It is hard to escape the conclusion that today one of the greatest road-blocks to the gospel of Jesus Christ is the institutional church."² Only a sober-minded attention to the precepts of the polity of the apostolic church as contained in the New Testament can avert this continuing failure. All denominations, whether Catholic or Protestant, evangelical or hierarchical, orthodox or liberal, are desperately impotent for the same reason: the principles of church polity contained in the New Testament are either neglected or explained away in such a manner that the customs and traditions of men

¹Edmund P. Clowney, The Church of Christ as His Assembly, a series of six short lectures (Philadelphia: Westminster Media, the Audio-Visual Department of Westminster Theological Seminary, 1975), first lecture, EC 301.

²Howard A. Snyder, The Problem of Wine Skins (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), p. 21. [This writer by no means agrees with all of the theology of H. A. Snyder, but this book is a worthwhile addition to the library of the searching Christian.]

have supplanted the precepts and examples set forth in the New Testament. The fiery Tertullian, who lived around the end of the second century, is reputed to have said, "Custom without truth is error grown old."¹

This ongoing impotency within the local church is easily curable, curable by returning to the precepts of the polity of the apostolic church.

B. The Plan and Limitations of the Thesis

The thesis is laid out in three parts, to wit: the Introduction, the Argument and the Conclusions. Because of the limitation of length placed upon this thesis, the scope of study and arguments have been reduced to those that are highly sensitive to the proposition of the thesis. A complete argument in support of the proposition of the thesis would embrace all of ecclesiology, spiritual life and much of Christology, pneumatology and theology proper. The New Testament elders are Christ's officers to rule in the local church (Heb. 13), other officers being in submission to the elders; therefore the arguments of the thesis will be confined to the elders. Other non-central issues will be taken up by more cursory argumentation and by making a number of "presuppositions," which will be only partially developed.

¹S. Lewis Johnson, The Local Church, a series of eight lectures (Tape Ministry, Believer's Chapel, 1968), quoted a number of times.

PART I

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

CHAPTER I

THE INCEPTION AND DEFINITION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

The church is described in the New Testament in two ways: 1. The body of Christ, otherwise called the universal church (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:12; Col. 2:17) is made up of all born-again believers, both living and dead. 2. The local church is the visible, earthly assembly (ἐκκλησία, Acts 8:1, 3; 9:31; Rom. 16:4, 5, 16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 4:17; 7:17; Gal. 1:2, 22; 1 Th. 1:1 among many passages) of "professing" Christians, many saved and some unsaved. The thesis is limited to this "local church" concept except where noted otherwise.

Because of the doctrinal confusion among many true Christians, the local church and the universal church both need to be carefully distinguished from Israel. It is the presupposition of this writer that Israel can in no way be identified with the local church or the universal church. Lewis Sperry Chafer, in an extended discourse on Israel and the church, lists "twenty-four far-reaching distinctions"

between them.¹ George N. H. Peters in his voluminous work on The Theocratic Kingdom,² Alva J. McClain in The Greatness of the Kingdom,³ and Earl D. Radmacher in The Nature of the Church,⁴ all make similar clear distinctions between Israel and the church.

It is a presupposition of the thesis that the local and universal church began at Pentecost. The disciples were told to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5; cf. Mt. 16:18); at Pentecost the Spirit came (Acts 2:1-4); and this action of the Spirit was confirmed in the Cornelius affair (Acts 11:15-17). See also Ephesians 2:20-22 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-13.⁵

¹Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, Vol. IV (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), pp. 29-35, 47-53, 127-33.

²George N. H. Peters, The Theocratic Kingdom, Vols. I and III (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1957), I. 632, III. 585.

³Alva J. McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom (Winona Lake, Indiana: BMH Books, 1968), pp. 325-30.

⁴Earl D. Radmacher, The Nature of the Church (Portland, Oregon: Western Baptist Press, 1972), pp. 269-74.

⁵Alva J. McClain and John C. Whitcomb, "The Kingdom and the Church," unpublished syllabus for Christian Theology (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1978), p. 86.

CHAPTER II

THE LOCAL CHURCH, A MIXED ASSEMBLY

In 1 Corinthians 3:5-23 the universal church, of which the local church is partially constituted, is "increased" by God, is referred to as "God's building," has Jesus Christ as the "foundation," is built upon by man--viz. "man's work" which is good if it "abides," is the "temple of God" and "holy," and is "Christ's." In 1 Corinthians 12, the body of Christ is a spiritual body into which each Christian is placed by the Spirit. Ephesians 2:11-22 shows both the Jew and the Gentile are reconciled unto God in one body "built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." The universal church is "built up a spiritual house" in 1 Peter 2:3-8. All these passages in a general way refer to the "universal church" and are descriptive of a few of the ways in which it is a divinely made up body.

But, although the local church at its very best may be made up entirely of born-again believers and may therefore be truly the work of the Holy Spirit, few if any local churches at any period of history have been in such condition. Lewis Sperry Chafer states the problem rather directly, that the church includes a "staggering percentage of unregenerate persons in the fold."¹ In Galatians 2:4 "false brethren" were

¹Chafer, IV, p. 145.

secretly brought in, and in Jude 4 "ungodly men" crept in unawares. In the thirteenth chapter of Matthew seven parables are presented, the sower, the tares, the mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure, the pearl and the dragnet. Each parable refers to the "kingdom of heaven" and in none is the church referred to in any way. The context is that Christ has been firmly rejected. Christ stops revealing the kingdom to the "great multitudes" (v. 2) because of their spiritual condition (vv. 14-15).¹ McClain observes regarding the "purpose of these parables about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" that "it was to hide rather than to reveal,"² "hence Christ now adopts a method of teaching that will hide the truth from all those who have not yet been imbued by it"³ McClain further states that this particular parabolic teaching of Christ is a divine judgment.⁴ Although these passages do not identify the "kingdom of heaven" and the "church" (either universal or local), the "children of the kingdom" who are "the good seed" (v. 38), viz. who believe in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12), these "children" are mixed with the "tares" who are "wicked" (vv. 38, 49) until the end of

¹John F. Walvoord, Matthew, Thy Kingdom Come (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 96-97.

²McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom, p. 322.

³G. H. Schodde, "Parable," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Vol. IV, ed. by James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1939), p. 2244a.

⁴McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom, p. 322.

the age (vv. 39, 49).

The "local church" is then a "mixed assembly," composed of "believers" and "unbelievers." In 1 Corinthians 2:13-3:3 three classes of people are named, the natural man (tares or wicked) in v. 14, the spiritual man (the good seed) in v. 15 and the carnal man (v. 3) who is saved but not walking under the control of the Spirit. Only the spiritual man has the "mind of Christ" (v. 16) and is capable of making decisions under the headship of Jesus Christ.

Neither the "natural" man nor the "carnal" man, although they are both a part of the local church, will have the "mind of Christ." If the carnal man "walks in the Spirit" again (Gal. 5:16) he will no longer do the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:17-21; cf. 1 Cor. 3:3), but will have the mind of Christ. Every Christian is at times "carnal" (1 Jn. 1:8, 10) and he does not at all times have the mind of Christ, but the "natural man" cannot receive "the things of the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. 2:14).

The "local church" then has a problem in its government or polity: how can it obtain the clear direction of Christ, the head of the church, when some of those who participate in the local church are "carnal" or "natural"? This will be taken up later in the thesis.

PART II

THE DESIGN OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

CHAPTER I

THE ELDERS

A. The qualifications of Elders under 1 Timothy 3

The qualifications of elders are listed formally in only two passages, 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The arguments concerning these passages have been divided as Kent has made his divisions.¹ The life, growth, and well-being of the local church as well as its relationship to its Lord is to a large measure dependent upon how well the elders measure up to these God-breathed qualifications.

1. Nature of the Office

"Faithful is the word" (1 Tim. 3:1, πιστὸς ὁ λόγος; cf. 1:15) very probably belongs with verse 1 rather than with 2:15. This view is held by Kent,² Van Oosterzee,³

¹Homer A. Kent, Jr., The Pastoral Epistles (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), pp. 121-36.

²Ibid., p. 122.

³J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Two Epistles of Paul to Timothy," trans. by E. A. Washburn and E. Harwood, in Vol. 11 of Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, ed. by John P. Lange (12 vols., reprinted; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 36.

Hendriksen¹ and Ellicott,² although not by all scholars.

a. The office may be rightly desired by a male believer.

If a man "desire" to be an overseer. "Desire," ὀρέγεται, is from ὀρέγομαι and means "to aspire to,"³ here used in the present tense and middle voice having the sense of continuing to be reaching for something,⁴ namely the overseership. This is good as the context indicates.

b. The "office" is properly "overseership"⁵ [ἐπισκοπή].

This emphasizes the function of the office. The office of "overseership" (often translated "bishop" which does not properly emphasize the function) is the same as "elder," πρεσβύτερος. The New Testament does not make a difference in the various contexts. In Acts 20, vv. 17 and 28, and also

¹William Hendriksen, A Commentary on I & II Timothy and Titus (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1957), p. 117.

²Charles J. Ellicott, Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (Reprinted; Minneapolis, Minnesota: The James Family Publishers, 1978), p. 55.

³William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, "ὀρέγω," A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 583.

⁴Hans Wolfgang Heidland, "ὀρέγομαι," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. V, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 447.

⁵Arndt and Gingrich, p. 299; Hermann W. Beyer, "ἐπισκοπή," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 608, 617.

Titus 1, vv. 5 and 7, the two terms refer to the same persons. In the entire New Testament where the word "elder," πρεσβύτερος, occurs, the term never indicates an office separate from overseer, ἐπισκόπος, and the term is never indicated as an office into which a man is placed by recognition of the congregation or ordained by laying on of hands. It is difficult to understand why no "bishops" or "overseers" are ordained except that the term is identical in position with the term "elder"; it should be recognized also that deacons are ordained (Acts 6:6) even though of a subordinate office. It is interesting that in Paul's salutation to the Philippians in v. 1, only two offices are mentioned, the "bishops" and "deacons."

The New Testament "elder" and "overseer" or "bishop" are descriptions of the same local church officer, as verified also by Ellicott,¹ Hendriksen,² Kent,³ Van Oosterzee,⁴ Kelly,⁵ Vine,⁶ Barrett,⁷ Grant⁸ and others. Ellicott, after agreeing to a single office of elder (or overseer),

¹Ellicott, p. 55.

²Hendriksen, p. 118.

³Kent, p. 122.

⁴Van Oosterzee, pp. 36-37.

⁵William Kelly, An Exposition of the First Epistle to Timothy (London: F. E. Race, 1913), p. 81.

⁶William E. Vine, The Epistles to Timothy and Titus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), p. 49.

⁷Charles Kingsley Barrett, The Pastoral Epistles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 58.

⁸Frederick W. Grant, Hebrews to Revelation, The Numerical Bible (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1944-53), Vol. VII, p. 87.

then proceeds to attempt to vitiate his original argument by appealing to the history of the already decaying church. The overseer, by the gender used and the context, can only be a man.

c. The office of overseer requires work.

The word "work," ἔργον, means "occupation" or "task."¹ It is not just a place of "pomp and circumstance," but requires considerable attention to Scripture and patient walking with God, and is good, καλός.

2. Other qualifications for the work

(See the table on the following page.) Unless a man "desires" the office, these other qualifications are meaningless, which fact is born out by the use of "then" (οὐν).

a. A comprehensive qualification is set forth.

The elder (v. 2 and cf. Tit. 1:6) "cannot be taken hold of," ἀνεπλήμητον (Kent²), or is "irreproachable" (Ellicott³). Nobody can bring a viable charge against him.

b. A moral qualification is stated.

He must, regarding his attitudes and actions involving women and marriage, be the "husband of one woman," μιᾷς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα (v. 2 and cf. Tit. 1:6). This phrase has been

¹Arndt and Gingrich, p. 308.

²Kent, p. 125.

³Ellicott, p. 56.

PRINCIPLE WORDS DESCRIBING QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS	
1 Timothy 3:1-7	Titus 1:6-9
<p>v. 1 ὁρέγεται</p> <p>v. 2 ἀνεπίλημπτον μιας γυναικὸς ἄνδρα νηφάλιον σώφρονα κόσμιον φιλόξενον διδασκτικόν</p> <p>v. 3 μὴ πάροινον μὴ πλήκτην ἐπεικῇ ἄμαχον ἀφιλάργυρον</p> <p>v. 4 τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον</p> <p>v. 6 μὴ νεόφυτον</p> <p>v. 7 μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπο τῶν ἕξωθεν</p>	<p>v. 6 ἀνέγκλητος μιας γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ</p> <p>v. 8 σώφρονα φιλόξενον</p> <p>v. 7 μὴ πάροινον μὴ πλήκτην μὴ αἰσχροκερδῇ</p> <p>v. 6 τέκνα ἔχων πιστά</p> <p>v. 7 μὴ αὐθάδη μὴ ὀργίλον</p> <p>v. 8 φιλάγαθον δίκαιον ᾧσιον ἐγκρατῇ</p> <p>v. 9 ἀντεχόμενον τοῦ κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν πιστοῦ λόγου</p>

the subject of dispute and abuse through the centuries, and only the more reasonable views will be discussed.

One view sees it with reference to "any deviation from morality" whether by concubinage, polygamy or improper second marriages. Ellicott considers this "clearly too undefined,"¹ and that appears so, as "real life" situations are seldom so easily categorized or generalized.

Polygamy, although practiced by some of the Jews, was forbidden by the Roman empire,² and is probably not in view here.

The view that no second marriage is permitted is argued strongly by many, including Ellicott,³ Van Oosterzee,⁴ and Hendriksen⁵ (perhaps he is not wholly definitive). But this view is difficult to sustain, even though men are inclined in their best moments to desire "purity" in the extreme, because of Paul's position on remarriage after the death of the spouse (1 Tim. 5:14, 4:3; Rom. 7:2, 3; 1 Cor. 7:9). Hendriksen⁶ argues thusly, but not definitively. A. T. Robertson states that "of one wife" means "one at a time,

¹Ibid., p. 57.

²Kent, p. 127.

³Ellicott, p. 57.

⁴Van Oosterzee, "The Two Epistles of Paul to Timothy," p. 38.

⁵Hendriksen, p. 121

⁶Ibid., p. 122.

clearly."¹ The implication is that other portions of Scripture are not violated; Robertson is too erudite to have meant anything else. Barrett argues against a prohibition of a second marriage after the death of the spouse because

(1) This kind of abstention if required at all would not be confined to the leaders; (2) in 5:14 younger widows are enjoined to marry again. It may be urged that "faithful to his one wife" would equally be a requirement laid not upon leaders only but upon all Christians; this argument, however, loses weight if the words are quoted from a popular saying, describing the qualifications for public office. [This was the case in the Empire.²] Christian leaders must observe standards at least as high as those looked for in secular office-bearers.³

This writer, as well as Kent,⁴ Lock,⁵ Vine,⁶ Kelly⁷ and those noted above hold to the view that the overseer may be married again after the death of his spouse; other Scriptural conditions being right is assumed.

¹Archibald T. Robertson, The Epistles of Paul, Vol. IV, Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), p. 572.

²Marvin E. Mayer, "An Exegetical Study on the New Testament Elder," Unpublished Th.D. dissertation (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1970), p. 58.

³Barrett, pp. 58-59.

⁴Kent, p. 128.

⁵Walter Lock, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, The International Critical Commentary, ed. by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), p. 37.

⁶Vine, p. 50.

⁷William Kelly, An Exposition of the Epistle of Paul to Titus and of That to Philemon (London: Thomas Weston, 1901), p. 30.

The view of marriage that requires the overseer to be married is held by a few, including Paul R. Fink of Grace Theological Seminary and Zane C. Hodges of Dallas Theological Seminary [This writer has studied under both of these men; their positions are well-known in the classroom.] as well as Grant,¹ Wuest,² and Mayer.³

This writer, although not agreeing with this view, believes that it has certain features which recommend it. If a man is married and has children about fifteen years old as Titus 1 implies, he is in a much better position to be examined by a congregation than if he were single. William MacDonald, formerly president of Emmaus Bible School, holds the view that a single man, otherwise qualified, may be an overseer [from personal acquaintance with William MacDonald].

c. Mental qualifications will be very briefly reviewed.

(1) Sober-minded (v. 2), νηφάλιον, sober in judgment.

(2) Prudent, thoughtful (v. 2; Tit. 1:8), σώφρονα.⁴

(3) Orderly (v. 2), κόσμιον.⁵

(4) Able to teach (v. 2), διδακτικόν.

¹Grant, p. 88.

²Kenneth S. Wuest, The Pastorals in the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), pp. 54, 55.

³Mayer, p. 60.

⁴Arndt and Gingrich, p. 810.

⁵G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), p. 255.

"Skillful at teaching"¹ or "apt at teaching"² are both good meanings, viz. fitted and ready to teach.

d. Six personal qualifications

(1) Hospitable (v. 2; Tit. 1:8), φιλόξενον, meaning "loving strangers."³

(2) Not addicted to wine (v. 3; Tit. 1:7), μὴ πάροινον, meaning "not addicted to wine,"⁴ "not given to wine,"⁵ but actually "not beside wine," viz. not the man who habitually sits beside the glass and the bottle.

(3) Not a striker (v. 3; Tit. 1:7), μὴ πλήκτην, meaning not a pugnacious man nor a bully.⁶

(4) Gentle (v. 3), ἐπεικῆ, meaning yielding, gentle, kind.⁷

(5) Peaceable⁸ (v. 3), ἀμαχον, from the alpha privative plus μάχη⁹ or not striving, not disputing, not quarreling.

(6) Not loving money (v. 3), ἀφιλάργυρον, a compound of three parts, the alpha privative, φιλέω and ἄργυρος. The sin of φιλάργυρον is not passive, but desire affecting attitudes and ambitions of life.¹⁰

¹Arndt and Gingrich, p. 190.

²Abbott-Smith, p. 113.

³Ibid., p. 470.

⁴Arndt and Gingrich, p. 634.

⁵Abbott-Smith, p. 346.

⁶Arndt and Gingrich, p. 675.

⁷Ibid., p. 292.

⁸Ibid., p. 44.

⁹Ibid., p. 497.

¹⁰Mayer, p. 65.

e. The domestic qualification.

The phrase "one that ruleth well his own house" (v. 4), τοῦ ἑδίου οἴκου καλῶς προΐστάμενον, is similar to another phrase in v. 12 which applies to deacons. προΐστημι literally means "to be at the head of," here "to manage" or "to conduct."¹ In 1 Timothy 5:17 a parallel phrase is used, οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι, which means "the well-ruling elders" and applies to the church. The kind of ruling is the same. In 1 Timothy 3:4 the overseer's family is the concern as an indicator of how he might rule in the church, but ἐν ὑποταγῇ, "in subjection," with all "dignity," σεμνότητος, in control with firmness, wisdom and love. Paul does not say that the overseer must have children. Usually the overseer would have children; they would be good indicators of the character of the overseer.

f. Christian experience.

"Not a novice" (v. 6), μὴ νεόφυτον, literally means "not newly planted" (neophyte), here newly converted.² The genitive, τοῦ διαβόλου, is taken as an objective genitive following κρίμα, modifying it and receiving the action of κρίμα. Novices are subject to pride, then problems ensue.

g. Reputation.

Having a good testimony from those outside (v. 7),

¹Arndt and Gingrich, p. 713.

²Ibid., p. 538.

μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔξωθεν, meaning those outside of the household of faith. This is the only time that ἔξωθεν is used to refer to people.

To interpret the adverb ἔξωθεν, its cognate ἔξω must be appealed to . . . [when ἔξω is used of people], it always refers to unbelievers (cf. Mk. 4:11; 1 Cor. 5:12, 13; Col. 4:5; 1 Th. 4:12). Therefore, ἔξωθεν also is to be taken in this sense [viz. it refers to unbelievers].¹

The testimony to those outside, whether silent or audible, must be good. In the phrase, "the snare of the devil," τοῦ διαβόλου is a subjective genitive where the devil produces the snare.² This writer takes the position that it is a subjective genitive, although Ellicott³ allows the possibility of either "gen. subjecti" or "gen. objecti."

B. The Qualifications of Elders under Titus 1

The table of principal words shows the duplication of wording; in such instances the description will be eliminated.

1. Qualifications

a. Blameless.

Blameless (vv. 6-7), ἀνέγκλητος, means not to be called to account, unprovable, irreproachable, blameless,⁴ the first meaning being the most literal interpretation. The meaning in context is that he cannot be called to account

¹Mayer, p. 69.

²Ibid., p. 70.

³Ellicott, p. 59.

⁴Abbott-Smith, p. 35.

because there is no charge that can be made to stick.

b. Moral and domestic

(1) The husband of one wife, see 1 Timothy 3:2, above.

(2) Having children [that] believe. Van Oosterzee,¹ A. T. Robertson,² Hendriksen,³ Barrett,⁴ Guthrie,⁵ as well as Vine,⁶ all believe the children must be believers. Walter Lock dissents from the common view, saying "perhaps 'believing,' 'Christian,' . . . More probably, as suiting the following qualifications better, 'trustworthy,' 'loyal'; cf. 1 Cor. 4:17 and 1 Tim. 3:5."⁷ See (3) following for more.

(3) Not accused of profligacy or unruly (v. 6), *μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ αἰσχροῦ ἢ ἀνυπότακτα*, literally "not in accusation of incorrigibility or rebellious."⁸ Mayer argues that *πιστά* must mean believing "because of the two words that follow, *ἀσώτεια* and *ἀνυπότακτα*, which seem to indicate that these children are assumed to be of accountable age."⁹ It appears

¹J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Epistle of Paul to Titus," trans. by George E. Day, Vol. 11 of Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, ed. by John P. Lange (12 vols., reprinted; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 8.

²A. T. Robertson, The Epistles of Paul, p. 599.

³Hendriksen, p. 348.

⁴Barrett, p. 129.

⁵Guthrie, p. 184.

⁶Vine, p. 155.

⁷Lock, p. 130.

⁸Arndt and Gingrich, pp. 424, 119, 76.

⁹Mayer, p. 74.

that if they are of "accountable age" the father as a future overseer or elder should have carefully presented the gospel to them, and they should be believers, if the father is to be an elder. This requirement is difficult, but no less so than most of the others.

The word ἀσωτία means "incontinently"¹ when referring to money; when used as an adverb in Luke 15:13 it means dissolutely, loosely or in a debauched manner.² The word ἀνυπότακτα means undisciplined or rebellious.³

The above description of the child of the potential elder or overseer can apply only to a child who has reached the age of personal accountability. There is an age when every young child is considered "unsaved" insofar as his personal testimony is concerned. The potential elder or overseer is not held responsible at that age because the child is in the period when he is being trained, he is not yet old enough to be accused of being unbelieving, incorrigible, or rebellious.

c. Personal qualifications

(1) Not self-willed (v. 7b), μὴ αὐθαδέη, better translated⁴ "not self-pleasing," "not arrogant." In the context

¹James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, "ἀσωτία," The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1930), p. 89.

²Arndt and Gingrich, p. 119.

³Ibid., p. 76.

⁴Abbott-Smith, p. 68.

of 2 Peter 2:10, the term is easier to understand: "Presumptuous, arrogant, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities."

(2) Not soon angry (v. 7b), μὴ ὀργίλον, only here in the New Testament, but its cognates are common. The word means "not inclined to anger," or "passionate."¹

(3) Not addicted to wine (v. 7b); see 1 Timothy 3:3 above.

(4) Not a striker (v. 7b); see 1 Timothy 3:3 above.

(5) Not given to filthy lucre (v. 7b, cf. 1 Tim. 3:3 above), μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ, which means "greedy of base gains,"² "fond of dishonest gain"³ or as Kent translates it, "not shamefully greedy of gain."

(6) A lover of hospitality (v. 8), see 1 Timothy 3:2 above.

(7) A lover of good men (v. 8), φιλάγαθον, better translated "a lover of good,"⁵ "a lover of goodness."⁶ This writer prefers "goodness" because it fits the context better and is a characteristic of a Spirit-filled person, not a "natural" or "human" characteristic (cf. Gal. 5:22 where ἀγαθὸν occurs) and would be cherished among leaders of the flock.

¹Ibid., p. 322.

²Ibid., p. 13.

³Arndt and Gingrich, p. 24.

⁴Kent, p. 220.

⁵Ellicott, p. 193.

⁶Kent, p. 221.

d. Mental qualification

σώφρονα (v. 8), see above under 1 Timothy 3:2.

e. Spiritual and moral qualifications

(1) Just (v. 8), δίκαιον.¹

(2) Holy (v. 8), ὁσλος, religiously right.²

(3) Temperate (v. 8), ἐγκρατῆ, better translated "exercising self control" or "self-controlled."³

(4) Holding fast the faithful word (v. 9), ἀντεχόμενον, is a present middle participle from ἀντέχω meaning here "holding firmly to" or "cleaving to,"⁴ cf. Matthew 6:24 or Luke 16:13. πιστοῦ means "trustworthy" or "reliable."⁵

The phrase κατὰ τὴν διδασχὴν can be interpreted in two ways. Ellicott states:

. . . what meanings are to be assigned to κατὰ and διδασχὴ; is it (a) "sure with respect to teaching others". . . διδασχὴ having this an active reference? or (b) "sure in accordance with the teaching received" ("as he hath been taught," Auth. Ver.), διδασχὴ being taken passively? Of these (b) seems certainly best with the normal meaning of πιστός; the faithful word is so on account of its accordance with apostolic teaching.⁶

The phrase would then read "cleaving to the reliable word in accordance with the teaching." Notice that διδασχὴ has the article making the teaching specific.⁷ The need for

¹Abbott-Smith, p. 116. ²Ibid., p. 325. ³Ibid., p. 128.

⁴Ibid., p. 40. ⁵Ibid., p. 362. ⁶Ellicott, p. 194.

⁷H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: MacMillan Company, 1927), p. 137.

this qualification is found in the text that follows, in simple terms, to protect the flock against the entrance of false doctrine by false or misinformed brethren. This qualification of being able to handle God's Word properly does not apply to one man in the local church but should apply to all the elders.

C. The Problem of the Qualification of The Age of Elders

The secular youth of this generation propelled along by seen and unseen powers of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the "now generation," are distinctly opposed to patiently training and waiting in order to accomplish their goals. But, the Christian society, more or less "conformed to this world," fell into line in a mechanical lockstep, mesmerized by so seemingly wonderful a cause. The older people in the local church have involuntarily acceded, and the very important age of qualification of the elder has been relaxed or evaded. Does Scripture say anything definitive?

There are six arguments that can be set forth in the determination of the age requirement for the elder of the local church. The first four arguments lap over each other to a certain extent and the last argument is a practical one.

1. The Meaning of the Word πρεσβύτερος

The basic root-meaning of the word is simple. πρεσβύτερος is a comparative of πρέσβυς, a term which is not

found in the New Testament, but in secular literature. This comparative means "older" (as an adjective), "elder" (as a noun or adjective) and "alderman" (as a noun).¹

2. Secular Greek Literature

Various meanings, from secular history, include "the element of venerability," "that which is of weight or of supreme worth," "counsel and wisdom of the aged are especially emphasized" as well as other nuances.² Further clarification of the term can be drawn from another study of classical Greek and papyri by Lothar Coenen as follows:

The comparative presbyteros, elder, and the superlative presbytatos, eldest, are found as early as Homer The group of words probably first signified older in comparison with others; then of greater importance Finally, it meant more honoured. In the order of society the elders receive respect and authority on the ground of their experience and wisdom This meaning of greater respect, usually combined with greater age, determines the use of other words from this root. Thus the noun presbytes denotes age, rank, or the old or older man who is no longer a neaniskos, young man, and is probably over 50 years old Hence the words from this root came to be used also for institutional functions in society, for which the wisdom of age is regarded as a prerequisite . . . [Examples cited from old documents].³

¹Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, "πρεσβυς," A Greek-English Lexicon, revised by Henry S. Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 1462.

²Gunther Bornkamm, "πρεσβύτερος," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. VI, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 652.

³Lothar Coenen, "πρεσβύτερος," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, ed. by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), Vol. 1, pp. 192-93.

3. The use of the term in the LXX

The LXX, although only a translation, gives some clues as to the meaning of πρεσβύτερος during the third century B.C., the time of its translation from Hebrew into Greek. πρεσβύτερος is used in 80% of the instances where זָקֵן is used in the Hebrew.¹ Taking Exodus 24:1, 9 as an example that well exemplifies God's vested authority, and Israel's usage of the term, the word זָקֵן is found² and its meaning determined.³ The word and its cognates in the LXX context mean "old man," is usually plural in form, and refers to one having authority. In the passage used as an example, Exodus 24:1, 9, that authority, although limited in scope, came from God.

4. The use of the term in the synagogue

Bornkamm gives some clues to the meaning of πρεσβύτερος:

¹Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, "πρεσβύτερος," A Concordance to the Septuagint (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1975), Vol. II, pp. 1201-02.

²Gerhard Lisowsky, Konkordanz Zum Hebraischen Alten Testament (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1958), p. 452; and Rudolph Kittel, ed., Biblia Hebraica (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937), p. 115.

³William Gesenius, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, ed. by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles E. Briggs, trans. by Edward Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 278.

The peculiar problem of the use of πρεσβύτερος in Judaism and Christianity arises out of the two-fold meaning of the word, which can be employed both as a designation of age and also as a title of office. The two meanings cannot always be distinguished with clarity. . . .¹

Bornkamm makes this statement regarding use of the term in the Jewish community:

The older communal order of the local Jewish community is cautioned in the constitution of the synagogue, συναγωγή. To the local board, usually made up of 7 members, there corresponds in places with a separate Jewish cultic community the synagogal council. The title πρεσβύτερος is also perpetuated for the leaders of the community and the disciplinary body of the synagogue, cf. Lk. 7:3. . . . More numerous, but late, are the instances [of the use of πρεσβύτερος] from Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine. πρεσβύτερος here is not a term for officials, nor a simple designation of age, but an honorary title for the heads of leading families. . . .²

5. The general argument from the context of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-11

a. Teaching

A rather literal and somewhat stiff translation of 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:9-11 in part thusly:

[That the prospective elder be] skillful at teaching [and that he be] cleaving to the reliable word in accordance with the teaching [of the apostles] in order that he may be able by means of sound instruction both to exhort and while contradicting to convict (or convince) them, for there are many ungovernable, idly talking and self-deceiving [ones], most of all, they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert entire houses, teaching things [which they] ought not for the sake of dishonest gain.

¹Bornkamm, p. 654.

²Ibid., pp. 661-62.

Only an experienced man, mature in faith and with considerable knowledge of Scripture, can adequately handle the kinds of people described in this passage. Practically speaking, there are very few men who measure up to this qualification.

b. Newly converted

1 Timothy 3:6 does not apply necessarily to physical age, but applies to spiritual age and maturity. A literal translation reads thus: "Not newly converted, lest having been clouded (puffed up, deluded) [with pride] he might fall into the condemnation [reserved for] the devil."

The picture is one of a new convert placed into an office of authority and honor too soon. Without spiritual maturity and knowledge of the Word of God, he becomes conceited, his mind becomes clouded or deluded, he makes the errors of a conceited person and God the Father chastens him for pride, which fault the devil has. Sufficient knowledge of God's Word and spiritual maturity sufficient to avoid the pride problem require many years of time.

c. Outside testimony

Another limiting qualification is found in 1 Timothy 3:7, which translated reads: "But also it is necessary [that he] be having a good testimony from them [who are] outside [of the household of faith¹] lest he may fall into reproach

¹Ellicott, p. 60.

(disgrace) and the snare of the devil."

Here "snare" is "of the devil" and therefore definite; it is the snare set by the devil. Reproach, ὀνειδισμὸν, is anarthrous, here it is indefinite and would come from anybody, either within or without of the household of faith. The word for "be having" is ἔχειν, a present active infinitive of ἔχω, and expresses an action started in the past and continuing on at the present time, and is purposive to the end that he may not fail.

The Christian's contact with the outside world is in the daily occupation of making a living, in social (and somewhat limited) contacts and in chance contacts such as the market, the street, etc. The place of a "good testimony" that cannot be avoided is first of all in the Christian's occupation. His maturity will show in his relationship to others (cf. Gal. 5:16-26) and if he has a position of any consequence his honesty in such things as how he keeps his time card or how he treats his employees will be scrutinized (cf. Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-4:1).

How much time does it take for a man to obtain a "good testimony" with those on the outside? So long as his Christian walk is not reasonably consistent and he does not do service to his boss as unto the Lord, his testimony outside will not measure up as it ought to for a good testimony and he will fall into reproach and Satan will have had his way. It should be born in mind that a "good testimony" in the eyes

of the world is measured by the conscience of men in a world sullied by sin, not a perfection that can only be fully obtained at death (2 Cor. 3:18, μεταμορφούμεθα, a present passive indicative with action continuously in progress). The prospective elder is not then required to be "perfect."

d. Blameless

The two terms for blameless, ἀνεπίλημπτον (1 Tim. 3:2) and ἀνέγκλητος (Ti. 1:6), appear to refer to charges brought by those inside of the household of faith rather than outside, as discussed above. In a general sense, spiritual maturity and honesty, as discussed above, are the yardsticks for measuring "blamelessness." Any contention in the local church will result in charges being preferred against the elder, whether in verbal form or a social "shunning." As above, time is required to create the blameless or unassailable prospective elder.

6. The argument based upon the age of the children in Titus 1:6

(Please see "The Qualifications of Elders under Titus 1," 1.b(3) "Not accused of profligacy or unruly" and the conclusions at the end.) The kind of a child that is described in this passage is above the age of accountability. There are two ways of viewing this passage.

a. The potential elder's children must be above the age of accountability (which makes the elder about forty years old)

before an accurate index of his child-ruling ability can be obtained. This is true in real life, as well.

b. If the potential elder's children are below the age of accountability, then a determination cannot be made and the man is not disqualified until the children become bad enough to cause question.

The argument under "b" is specious because it cannot be harmonized with the other five arguments presented before it.

Summary

Six arguments have been presented, namely: the meaning of πρεσβύτερος, the meaning in secular Greek history, the meaning of the term in the LXX, synagogal meaning, the age from the context of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and the age of the elder related to the age of his children. The arguments presented, although not uniformly definitive, militate against a prospective elder of less than about forty years of age. The man properly prepared to be an elder is one of spiritual maturity, one with the mind of Christ, one who has a record that is solid, dependable, and fruitful. The local church should "lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Tim. 5:22), but should wait until he is ready according to God's timing "and he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season; its leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Ps. 1:3).

D. The Number of Elders

What does the New Testament say about the number of elders? Whether there is a single elder or a plurality of elders in the local church is a matter of utmost importance, not only to the function of the church as an organization, but also to the worship of the church, corporately and severally.

1. Plural terms are used.

Ἐπίσκοπος is used five times, but in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:7 the singular is used in reference to the local church. In 1 Timothy 3:1, the word ἐπισκοπή, a noun, means the "office, charge, oversight"¹ and in the context τις is used as the subject of the verb ὁρέγω, "to reach out," and τις is here masculine, nominative singular, an indefinite pronoun and here means "a man," "a certain man" or "some man"; it is used in the generic sense as opposed to the specific sense. The word ἐπίσκοπος used in v. 2 refers back to that same "man" and is therefore also generic as is "man." Dana and Mantey refer to this very passage, 1 Timothy 3:2, as an example of the generic use of the article:

This is the use of the article with a noun which is to be regarded as representing a class or group. . . . It comprehends a class as a single whole and sets it off in distinction from all other classes. It individualizes a group rather than a single object and points out that group as identical by certain characteristics.²

¹Abbott-Smith, p. 173.

²Dana and Mantey, p. 144.

Ἐπίσκοπος also does not refer to an actual situation in a local church, but refers to a postulated office as it applies to an individual man. Either plural or singular words could have been used--either would be a generic use, as e.g. "a president of the United States must be native born" or "presidents of the United States must be native born." Neither use of the word "president" tells how many or how few "presidents" are simultaneously required; that issue is separately spelled out, while here only a requirement is described. In Titus 1:7, the word ἐπίσκοπος is used generically and has as its antecedent the word πρεσβυτέρους, or elders. The word in question is a generic representative of "elders." In 1 Timothy 5:19, the word πρεσβύτερος is used without an article, viz. anarthrous. If there were only one elder in an assembly, then an article would be expected. But, that is not sufficient evidence. The word πρεσβύτερος in v. 19 is the antecedent of τοὺς ἀμαρτάνοντας, which is plural. Further, the word is the singular of the subject of general reference "elders," which is the subject of each verse of vv. 17, 18, 19 and 20. The term πρεσβύτερος does not otherwise appear in the singular with reference to the local church officers.

In 1 Timothy 5:3 "widows" appears in the plural and in v. 4 immediately after, the same word appears in the singular. The word χήρα (v. 4) is a generic representative of χήρας in v. 3; the situation is similar to the Titus 1:7 and

1 Timothy 5:19 instances. No argument is made for only one widow in each church.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13 and 14, the words τοὺς κοπιῶντας, αὐτοὺς and ἀδελφοί respectively appear and mean "them who labor," "them" and "brethren" and "are over you in the Lord." These appear to be unspoken, oblique references to elders. In Hebrews 13:7, 17 and 24, the words οἱ ἡγούμενοι appear, reading "who have the rule over you." "Him who has the rule over you" does not appear.

2. The contention over Acts 14:23

There has been argument over the Acts 14:23 passage and it has been contended that κατ' ἐκκλησίαν may be used collectively referring to the assemblies at Lystra, Iconium, Antioch and Pisidia. In this argument the term "elders" means one elder to each assembly, thus supporting the single-elder viewpoint of local church government.

The word κατὰ is commonly used "distributively," as in Luke 2:41, κατ' ἔτος meaning "every year"; in Luke 8:1, κατὰ πόλιν καὶ κώμην meaning "through cities and villages," which A. T. Robertson describes as the "distributive use of κατὰ";¹ in Acts 2:46, καθ' ἡμέραν, meaning "day by day"; in Acts 15:21 and 20:23, κατὰ πόλιν, meaning "every city"; Acts 22:19, κατὰ τὰς συναγωγὰς, meaning "in every synagog" which

¹Archibald T. Robertson, The Gospel According to Luke, Vol. II of Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), p. 110.

A. T. Robertson translates in a distributive way;¹ 1 Corinthians 14:27 in which *κατὰ δύο* means "by two" and *ἀναμέρος* means "in turn," both *κατὰ* and *ἀνα* being used "distributively" (cf. Smyth²), A. T. Robertson states the meaning as "one at a time and not over three in all,"³ which is the distributive interpretation; and lastly in 1 Corinthians 14:31, *καθ' ἓνα* meaning "one by one" (A. T. Robertson⁴).

In the contended Acts 14:23 passage A. T. Robertson states: "Note the distributive use of *κατὰ* with *ἐκκλησίαν* (2:46; 5:42; Ti. 1:5)."⁵ The distributive use of *κατὰ* here means "elders in every church," viz. more than one elder appointed in each church. This viewpoint is shared with Max Zerwick⁶ and G. V. Lechler.⁷ Richard B. Rackham notes that elders (plural) were appointed "for each church," thus taking

¹A. T. Robertson, The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. III of Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), p. 392.

²Herbert Weir Smyth, Greek Grammar (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 106.

³A. T. Robertson, The Epistles of Paul, p. 184.

⁴Ibid.

⁵A. T. Robertson, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 216.

⁶Max Zerwick, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament, trans., revised and adapted by Mary Grosvenor (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974), Vol. I, p. 399.

⁷Gotthard Victor Lechler, "The Acts of the Apostles," trans. by Charles F. Schaeffer, Vol. 9 of Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, ed. by John P. Lange (12 vols. reprinted; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 272.

the same viewpoint.¹

The use of the terms ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος in the New Testament, and the syntax of the word κατὰ indicate that there was a plurality of elders in each local church.

3. A practical argument "from silence"

But there are some who, when syntax and word meanings run counter, adopt a practical argument which in effect says that "Some churches are too small, and there is only one man in the church, what then?" This argument is of no effect because of a number of reasons: (1) It is an argument that has no Scriptural basis. (2) Is a church with only one qualified elder really a church? i.e. did God really intend to run any church with only one elder? (3) If it is indeed not really a local church, according to Scripture, why cannot the group of people agree to pray and meet regularly until God does supply at least one more elder?

It is interesting to note that A. T. Robertson, a Baptist, took the distributive viewpoint of the use of κατὰ in Acts 14:23, even though that viewpoint among most Baptists of today is neglected or ignored. An old and respected history of the Baptists argues quite persuasively against the

¹Richard Belward Rackham, The Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), pp. 236-37.

single-elder position,¹ and a somewhat later shorter Baptist history of relatively poorer scholarship argues weakly for a single church ruling officer "called 'bishop,' 'elder,' 'pastor,'"² but he equivocates later in the book saying, ". . . but early in the second century we find bishops and presbyters--two offices, not one--the bishop being superior to his presbyters."³ The inference is, of course, that the writer, H. C. Vedder, has elected to follow the traditions of men rather than Scripture. His argument against the multiple-elder church does not recognize the distributive use of *κατὰ* in Acts 14:23 where he says "that the congregations chose each their own pastor."⁴ Strong also follows along after Vedder.⁵

E. The Preëminence of the Pastor

Is there an order of preëminence concerning offices in the New Testament local church order? Perhaps a brief look at the history of the local church will afford some insight into the matter. The Scriptural basis of the officers of the local church will be discussed in more detail below.

¹Thomas Armitage, A History of the Baptists, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Bryan Taylor and Company, 1887, reprinted Minneapolis: James and Klock, 1977), p. 137.

²Henry C. Vedder, A Short History of the Baptists (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1897), p. 18.

³Ibid., p. 38.

⁴Ibid., p. 18.

⁵Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (London: Pickering and Inglis Ltd., 1907), p. 914.

It is sufficient at this point to say that the local church of the time of the apostles was governed by the elders with a body of deacons under them, and Christ over the elders first in the chain of command but at the same time over all members of the local church individually.

Thomas M. Lindsay, in his book on this period of the history of the church, declares:

The beginnings of the change date from the early decades of the second century; by the end of the century it was almost complete . . . every local church came to supplement its organization by placing one man at the head of the community [meaning the "community" of the local church], making him the president of the college of elders . . . at the close of the first century every local church had at its head a college or senate or session of rulers, who were called by the technical name of elders . . . there was also a body of men who rendered "subordinate service," and who were called deacons . . . at the head of this college of rulers [there was placed] one man, who was commonly called either the pastor or the bishop, the latter name being the more usual, and apparently the technical designation. The ministry of each congregation or local church instead of being, as it had been, two-fold--of elders and deacons--became three-fold--of pastor or bishop, elders and deacons. This was the introduction of what is called the three-fold ministry.¹

It appears that in the early part of the second century, the "pastor" or "bishop" was ruled by the elders from whose ranks he was chosen!² Ignatius, who died around the end of the first century, said that there should be a bishop, a session of elders, and a body of deacons.³ There was no

¹Thomas M. Lindsay, The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries (Minneapolis: James Family Publishing, 1977, reprint ed.), pp. 169-70.

²Ibid., pp. 170-71.

³Ibid., p. 196.

hierarchy above the local church.¹ By the time of Cyprian (c. 200 or 210-58), the bishop was an autocrat. Lindsay writes:

Cyprian's unscriptural and non-primitive conception of the pastor or bishop as an autocrat, claiming a personal obedience so entire that any act of disobedience was to be punished by spiritual death or expulsion from the church, contradicted the democratic ideal which the congregational meeting embodied. His principle [was that the bishop derived] his power from God directly by a species of divine right²

The church from that time on developed "metropolitans," "episcopus episcoporum" who was at "the church in the capital of the empire,"³ and other hierarchical offices.

In Philippians 1:1 the "bishops and deacons" are mentioned, but no pastor. As one of the previous sections in this paper has shown, the office of elder and overseer (bishop) are the same. At no place in the New Testament is the elder or overseer seen to be an office held by a single person, but the office of elder is held in equality of position with the other elders. The New Testament uniformly indicates that there was a plurality of elders in each local church. Armitage, the well-known Baptist historian of the last century, faithfully following the New Testament, forcefully supports a plurality of elders (or bishops) who rule in the local church.

Again, what was known as the presbytery in the Apostolic Churches was not made up of a body of elders, or pastors from the various local churches, for "Scripture

¹Ibid., p. 197.

²Ibid., p. 334.

³Ibid., p. 335.

presbytery," as Dr. Carson says, "is the eldership, or plurality of elders in a particular congregation." . . . and more, no Church is mentioned as having but one [emphasis added] bishop or elder No elders are spoken of who do not rule, who are not pastors, but all pastors are known as elders. [Quoting Neander, he says:] "It is certain that every Church was governed by a union of the elders, or overseers, chosen from among themselves, and we find among them no individual distinguished above the rest, who presided as a primus inter pares, first among equals."¹

As everyone well knows, the Baptists have gone, mainly within the last century, from the position which Armitage speaks of to a modification of the Biblical two-office position where all the elders but one have been removed. This is a violation of the Biblical precept of the plurality of elders.

The present-day struggle does not stop at the edge of the Baptist encampment. The Reformed Presbyterian Church is also debating in an effort to attain to a good Biblical position, and the problem is between the "two-office" polity and the "three-office" polity. In the Minutes of the 156th General Synod held in June of last year, there is a report of a study on this problem. The report is titled "Report of the Study Committee on Responsibility and Authority of Ruling Elders," and the Introduction reads as follows:

The request for study was made in response to (a) the concerns of the session of the Stony Point Reformed Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Va., about the parity of the elders and the implications for the polity of the local church and (b) the concerns of the Study Committee on Gifts for Ordination (as reported to the 152nd General Synod) about ministers who are not serving within the context of the collective leadership and the implications for the polity of the presbytery. It seems

¹Armitage, Vol. 1, p. 137.

that both concerns request further definition of the office of elder and the differentiation and relationship of the minister/teaching elder and the ruling elder.

Your committee is presenting to the synod a study prepared by George W. Knight III, Covenant Seminary, and A Brief for Church Governors in Church Government by Edmund P. Clowney [president of Westminster Theological Seminary], together with appendices

While your committee has submitted the requested study, it is apparent that if the Church concurs that the study presents the biblical perspective concerning the elder, the implications for the polity of our Church are significant [emphasis added].¹

The study made by Dr. Edmund P. Clowney follows the classic Presbyterian position on church polity: He states simply that,

This issue is sometimes spoken of as the choice between a "two-office" or "three-office" view of Presbyterian polity. Our Form of Government now declares, "The ordinary and perpetual officers in the church are ministers, ruling elders, and deacons" (Ch. III, 2). This position was defended by Hodge against the so-called "two-office" view that would group ministers and elders together as teaching elders and distinguish them from deacons.²

Dr. Clowney believes that the church was instituted back in the time of the Old Testament and says:

In church order, therefore, as in doctrine, we must begin with the Old Testament revelation. Only from the Old Testament as background and foundation can we understand the new form of the people of God ordered by the incarnate Christ.³

¹Minutes of the 156th General Synod (Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Reformed Presbyterian Church, June 16-22, 1978), p. 45.

²Edmund P. Clowney, Minutes of the 156th General Synod, p. 56.

³Ibid., p. 57.

Dr. Clowney then proceeds simply and logically to develop the ideas about church offices from the Old Testament terminology, using the LXX to make the transfer into Greek. Later he makes the statement that:

The church of the New Testament is the Old Testament people of God renewed by Christ. There is continuity, but continuity that is transformed by Christ. Does that transformation require us to hold that all New Testament church governors must possess the gifts of teachers?¹

From the context of Dr. Clowney's precis of church polity, it appears that he is separating the teaching elder from elders in general, viz. the ruling elders, by avoiding the implications of 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:9-11 under the discussion of the age qualification for elders. This writer firmly believes that these passages apply to all elders, not just "teaching elders" as Dr. Clowney assumes when referring to these passages: "the teaching presbyter (must) may be in view because of the importance of giving the deposit of the gospel to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also."² Further confusion is also manifested in the confusion of spiritual gifts (or enablements) with offices. It is one thing to be convinced that Scripture delineates two offices, those of elders and of deacons and that to every Christian whether an officer or not, the Spirit gives gifts to "each one severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12:11, also cf. Eph. 4:7); and quite another to believe that an office is a "function" or that the "function" describes the office. In this writer's

¹Ibid., p. 61.

²Ibid., p. 70.

viewpoint, all gifts or spiritual enablements, if nourished properly, will be manifested in good works, that is plain. BUT, "good works" do not make an "officer" of the church. An officer of the local church must be defined by his record of life, not by his gifts. This point is very important. If the premise is accepted that when a man "teaches or preaches well, let's make him into an elder" the local church is a ship without a rudder, which is the requirements of Scripture.

The study made by George W. Knight III of Covenant Seminary takes up the question differently. His conclusions can be summarized briefly: (1) Elders are the same as overseers (bishops). (2) Elders and deacons are the only two church offices. (3) Evangelists and pastor-teachers are elders in the church at Ephesus.¹ (4) The "elders" are always plural in the local church. (5) These "elders" are a unified group within the local church and share the responsibilities for teaching and ruling.² (6) All elders are pastors.³ Dr. Knight states very clearly at one point a clarification of the "teaching" versus "ruling" elder problem:

Although all elders are to be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2) and thus to instruct the people of God and communicate with those who oppose biblical teaching (Titus 1:9ff.), the 1 Timothy 5:17 passage recognizes that among the elders, all of whom are to be able to teach, there are those so gifted by God with the ability to teach the Word that they are called by God to give their life in such a calling or occupation and deserve therefore to be remunerated for such a calling and occupation.⁴

¹George W. Knight, Minutes of the 156th General Synod, pp. 48, 49.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 50, 54.

⁴Ibid., p. 49.

The position of Dr. Clowney is antithetical to that of Dr. Knight. In the impending clash of ideas, the preëminence of the pastor is at stake. If a "pastor" at the most is merely an elder ministering among other equal elders, then there is no case for preëminence. From a practical viewpoint there is a system of checks and balances, not allowing great power or great pride to grow.

The only preëminence that God allows is that of Christ, the Head of the church, both the universal church and the local church.

F. Conclusions Regarding Elders

The plan of Christ for the local church is a very simple, magnificent and practical plan. The elder of the local church is the only ruler that the New Testament recognizes, and even then the elder, except under very temporary and emergency conditions, must rule with other elders. The elder is not to have the preëminence of rule that belongs to Christ. The New Testament does not recognize a ruling pastor, except that he is also an elder. [This writer takes the position that some men may be pastor-teachers (Eph. 4:11) without necessarily being also elders.]

The individual qualifications for being an elder (bishop being the same office) are very high, are matters not of spiritual gifts or enablements, but are the result of the dedication and kind of life the man has had and continues to lead. The kind of man described in a general way is very

solid and dependable and has a record of many years of consistent living. He and his family bear a consistently good testimony before the brethren and the world. He is probably over forty and has considerable ability and expertise in handling the Word of God, to exhort the flock and ward off those who teach error.

CHAPTER II

THE DEACONS

The subject of "Deaconesses" is beyond the scope of this thesis and will not be taken up. Because the central issue of this thesis is the ruling officer in the local church and his selection, recognition and ordination, the local church deacon will be mentioned only briefly.

The qualifications concerning the deacons are just as important to the deacon as the qualifications of the elder are to the elder. 1 Timothy 3:8-16 is the principal passage which applies to the deacon. It is interesting that the deacon is not required to be "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2; Ti. 1:9-11), as is the elder. It is for this reason and the account in Acts 6:1-6 that the office of deacon is considered to be a "non-teaching" ministry of "service" under the elders. With this, the subject of deacons is set aside.

CHAPTER III

THE PRIESTS

This section will also be short, for reasons similar to the chapter on deacons. The "membership" of the local church can be divided into two groups, the unsaved and the "chosen generation, a royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:4-10). A few notes here are in order so that this not so popular doctrine may not be slighted.

1. The priest is saved.

"And coming to him as a living stone" (v. 4) is the original coming to Him at the time of salvation.¹

2. He has a service of sacrifice.

"To offer up spiritual sacrifices" (v. 5) is the precious voluntary privilege of the priest (Rom. 12:1).

3. He participates in worship.

He offers "the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to share forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:15-16).

¹Robert Johnstone, The First Epistle of Peter (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1888), p. 117.

4. He participates in a service of reconciliation.

Lewis Sperry Chafer notes here:

. . . so the priest is the people's representative dispatched to God, and since priesthood is a divine appointment, the necessary access to God is always provided . . . but [only] to all who come unto God on the ground of the shed blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19-22). Having unhindered access to God on the ground of the blood of Christ, the New Testament priest is thus privileged to minister in intercession (Rom. 8:26-27; Heb. 10:19-22; 1 Tim. 2:1; Col. 4:12).¹

Further development of the ministry of the New Testament believer-priest is beyond the scope of this thesis and is hereby set to one side.

¹Lewis Sperry Chafer, Vol. IV, p. 67.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER LEADERSHIP AND MINISTERS

Too often the local church accepts any kind of help it can persuade to do the job. Consequently, Sunday Schools are staffed by people who do not know what they are doing. Not only does the minister in this situation become tired and listless, but the whole Sunday School effort becomes a dull, boring experience for minister and pupil alike. This writer has been a Sunday School superintendent, a department superintendent, and many times a teacher. The difference between a good Sunday School and a lifeless one is in the kind of leadership performing the ministry.

The question which will immediately come forth is, are the qualifications which describe the elder or even the deacon applicable to these other ministers? This writer makes the following presuppositions: 1. The elders will watch over the other necessary ministers to ensure that their ministrations are edifying to the local church body. 2. The requirements for ministry will not be set aside or weakened for expediency. 3. The requirements will include careful training, not excluding Bible doctrine; this will take time but must be done. The Sunday School will become a training ground for more complicated ministry. 4. Ephesians 4:11-16 is the heart of good works in this area, but is outside the scope of this paper.

PART III

THE HEAD OF THE LOCAL CHURCH, CHRIST

Although the local church is not pictured in the Bible as a part of the body of Christ because it is made up partly of believers and partly of unbelievers; Christ is the Head of the universal church which is composed entirely of believers, a few of which are a part of each local church. [It is here presupposed that if a local church does not contain any believers, it is not a local church at all, but a social club of unsaved people.] If the local church is to function successfully, it must function under the direction of Christ, the Head of the universal church. To the degree that the local church is directed by the unsaved (1 Cor. 2:14) or by Christians living predominantly out of fellowship (carnally, 1 Cor. 3:1-4), the local church does not "have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:15-16). It is to the concern of continuously "having the mind of Christ" that this thesis is directed.

CHAPTER I

THE SELECTION AND INSTALLATION OF ELDERS

A. Christ Selects the Elders.

1. Christ is the Head of the church.

- a. "Over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22-23).
- b. "The Head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:15-16).
- c. "As Christ is the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23).
- d. "He is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18). Other passages are Colossians 2:10, 19.
- e. Christ is the "chief cornerstone," "the head of the corner," etc. (1 Pet. 2:4-8).
- f. In Revelation 1:4-20 Christ is pictured as the One who is presently ruling over the churches, being in "the midst of the seven lampstands" (v. 13).

2. Christ selects His servants.

a. Pre-pentecost passages

In Mark 3:14 the text reads, "And he appointed twelve" The word "appointed" is ἐποίησεν, an aorist from ποιέω; see Hebrews 3:2 for a similar meaning of ποιέω.

b. Post-pentecost passages

In 1 Timothy 1:12, the text reads "appointing me into service (or ministry)." The word "appointing" is θέμενος, an

aorist middle from τίθημι, here meaning "appoint." In 1 Timothy 2:7, the text reads "for this I was appointed." The word appointed is ἐτέθην, an aorist passive also from τίθημι. In Galatians 1:1, Paul states: "an apostle (not from men, neither through a man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)." There is no verb here, as the verb εἰμί is here understood. Here, διὰ is used with both Christ and the Father and refers to both the source and the agency from which Paul received his apostleship.^{1, 2} This is a very strong argument for Paul's apostleship. In 1 Corinthians 12:18, the text reads "But now hath God set the members . . ." also using the verb τίθημι. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12 the verse reads ". . . to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord"

The best-known verse is Acts 20:28 which reads "Take heed unto yourselves and all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which He purchased with his own blood." "Hath made" is ἔθετο, an aorist middle from τίθημι, and could have been translated "has established" or "has set" or "has appointed."

The force of these passages is clear: it is Christ the Head of the church who makes the appointments of His officers and in particular He appoints His elders; the appointment is of God, not of men.

¹Abbott-Smith, p. 105.

²Arndt and Gingrich, p. 179.

B. The Local Church Members Severally Recognize
the Selection of Christ

Undoubtedly, this feature of the appointment of elders is the most controversial part of this thesis. Many good scholars of the Bible take the view that God is "democratic" as their basic presupposition and others believe that if the congregation takes a part in it, God has somehow lost His sovereignty. This feature, not understood, poses an enigma.

1. The authority of Scripture

Acts 14:23 contains the verb χειροτονέω, which is used only in this passage and in 2 Corinthians 8:19. Another verb with a prefix, προχειροτονέω, is used in Acts 10:41. In 2 Corinthians 8:19, the verb "refers to the churches' appointment of their representative to accompany Paul to Jerusalem."¹ In Acts 10:41, the witnesses "were chosen before of God." The usages found in these two passages do not apply, so the use of χειροτονέω cannot be clarified by parallel usage.

An appeal can be made to historical and secular sources for usage of the word. The above two words, χειροτονέω and προχειροτονέω, do not occur in the LXX.² The cognate noun, χειροτονία, occurs "in Isa. 58:9 for 'stretching out the hand' in the sense 'pointing with the finger,' Hbr.

¹J. I. Packer, "χειροτονέω," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 1, p. 478.

²Ibid.

ὑψεύει τὴν χεῖρα.¹ The noun does not occur in the New Testament. In various secular Greek sources of that period the word meant "raising the hand to express agreement in a vote," "vote for," "chosen" but also "to nominate."² In Moulton and Milligan's lexicon, "stretch out the hand," then "elect by show of hands," and then "elect," "appoint," "nominated," "appointed" and later in the "ecclesiastical sense of 'ordain,'" (bishops and elders) and "election of administrators."³ Historically then, there was a gradual meaning from that of "to elect by showing of hands" in the time of the LXX to that of "to ordain" in post-apostolic times. Rackham noted that a change had occurred,⁴ while Moulton and Milligan made the mention more specific.⁵ Further investigation is required, since church polity may rest upon only a few words.

By the method of analogy, there are other avenues. In analogy, there are both similarities and diversities, so that care must be exercised. In Acts 1:23-26, 6:1-6, 13:1-3

¹Eduard Lohse, "χειροτονέω," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. IX, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 437.

²Ibid.

³Moulton and Milligan, p. 687.

⁴Rackham, pp. 236-37.

⁵Moulton and Milligan, p. 687.

there are three accounts which have similarities to the Acts 14 passage under consideration. In Acts 1 and Acts 6, the multitude participated in the decision making in some way. In Acts 6 prayer preceded the laying on of hands, and in Acts 13 both prayer and fasting preceded the laying on of hands. Acts 6 is instructive also in that the multitude made the choice. In v. 3, the future of καθίστημι is used, meaning "we will appoint," a simple future, still with an element of uncertainty until v. 5 when "they chose," the aorist of ἐκλέγομαι.

The conclusions from Scripture are not as definite as scholars would like. Scholars generally agree that it is God (or Christ) who makes the selection of the man to be an elder, but what happens after that is not always agreed upon. The Roman Catholics would like for the texts to be plain that an apostolic succession makes the choice and does the ordaining, but their line of authority has been broken, and on a practical basis their doctrine collapses. American churches, as seen against the backdrop of the secular American political system of so-called "democracy" [really a representative republic] would prefer the "congregational" system which got its start mainly among the Baptists where the local church membership does what is called "electing." But men do not "elect."

With regard to Acts 6, are the deacons here chosen by God? Prayer is not mentioned prior to "choosing for themselves," an aorist middle from ἐκλέγομαι. Acts 1:24, though,

does shed light on this problem. In this passage, they pray directly to Christ (cf. Jn. 14:14, N.I.V.) "show of these two the one whom thou hast chosen;" thus they indicate that they want the will of God in this matter. This event occurs before Pentecost. In Joshua 13:1-7, Yahweh instructs Joshua to "apportion by lots" or to "cast lots" in order to determine how the land was to be apportioned among the remaining nine and one-half tribes. (The verb used is an hiphil of לָפַד.) The use of "lots" while trusting in God for God's previously determined outcome is evident in Acts 1:24 as it was also back in the day of Joshua. But what about after Pentecost? After Pentecost, the church is God's institution through which He has chosen to reveal Himself and work in the lives of men. The use of lots does not occur again in the New Testament. Instead, God has chosen to work His will directly through Spirit-filled men, who may "have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). Since Christ is the Lord of His church, and the apostles had only recently experienced Pentecost and the earth-shaking events immediately thereafter, it is quite reasonable to assume that they had a season of prayer before any choosing was done, in order to determine the will, or the mind, of Christ. The will of the Lord would then have been expressed in the choosing done by Spirit-filled men, having the mind of Christ.

2. Conclusions regarding local church recognition

Although no single passage has within it all the

elements of a properly executed "recognition" service, the following sequence is reasonable: (1) prayer and fasting (Acts 1:24, 13:2); (2) public recognition of the will of God by a raising of hands [unfortunately called "voting"] (Acts 6:5, 14:23); (3) prayer and fasting (Acts 6:6, 13:3, 14:23); and (4) laying on of hands and commending to the Lord (Acts 6:6, 13:3, 14:23). This type of service could apply to deacons as well as elders.

The problems of "ordination" will next be taken up.

C. The Local Church as a Body Formally Recognizes the Selection of Christ

(This ceremony is known in Scripture as the "laying of hands" upon the elder or in some churches as the "ordination" of the elder.)

This section will be abbreviated without a great amount of work from the Scriptures as it is only adjunctive to the main purpose of the thesis.

When the individual recognition of Christ's work is completed, a "formal" recognition of Christ's work is required. Why is there a ceremony and what is its significance?

1. The meaning of "the laying of hands" upon the elder

In the Apostolic age there is no trace of the doctrine of an outward rite conferring inward grace, though we have instances of the formal appointment or recognition of those who had already given proof of their spiritual

qualification.¹ [See cf. Acts 6:1-6; Acts 13:2; Gal. 1:1, author applying this to elders or deacons.]

James Orr, writing concerning impositions of hands, states: "Specially the imposition of hands was used in the setting apart of persons to a particular office or work in the church."² While it may be true that the "laying of hands upon a person" was accompanied by actions of the Holy Spirit in the days of the apostles (In the apostolic age it is also found in connexion with healing, Ac. 9:12, 17; 28:8. It thus had the significance of a miraculous power . . . baptism . . . Ac. 8:18 δ(α³), the apostolic age is past and those special gifts related to the work of the apostles are no longer given to believers.

The "ceremony" of the "laying on of hands" has its roots in the Old Testament. It is the opinion of this writer, without time or space in this thesis for development, that all "laying on of hands" whether in the Old or the New Testaments is the outward formalization of unseen realities. In the case of the scape-goat, the outward formalization was one of the removal of sin from the congregation of Israel while

¹D. Miall Edwards, "Ordain, Ordination," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Vol. IV, pp. 2199-2200.

²James Orr, "Hands, Imposition (Laying on)," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Vol. II, ed. by James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1939), p. 1335.

³S. C. Gayford, "Church," A Dictionary of the Bible, ed. by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), Vol. I, p. 426.

the unseen reality was the unmerited favor of God in forgiveness, pending the work of Christ upon the cross. In the cases of Numbers 8:10, 27:18-23 and Deuteronomy 34:9, the situations are very similar to the situation where an elder has hands laid upon his head for service. No inner, unseen grace is given but there is a commitment to Christ the Head of the church, a recognition of what He has already done.

2. Commending an elder to the Lord

This phrase is used in Acts 14:23, παρέθεντο αὐτοὺς τῷ κυρίῳ, and means "they entrusted them to the Lord." The word παρέθεντο is an aorist middle from παρατίθημι and conveys the idea of "safekeeping," "care" or "protection" of the Lord.

This is the last thing that the body of believers can do, formally, for a new elder: place him in the hands of his Lord and Saviour who loves him and is able to care for him perfectly.

D. The Local Church Must Seriously Apply the Doctrine of the Selection of Elders

This writer at one time past was acquainted with a local church where the elders had been self-recognized. In consequence of this practice a number of difficulties came about, namely: 1. There was a shadow over the authority of each so-called elder because of the lack of public recognition and formalization. 2. Discipline problems within the local

church became very difficult because of lack of recognized eldership with authority to act. 3. Preaching and teaching assignments were parceled out on the basis of the negative or positive comments of personal relationships, which the presence of an eldership with authority would have avoided. 4. Personal relationships of many years' duration were more important than objective, Biblical decisions.

Another church very familiar to this writer, because of a lack of clear and objective thinking on this whole matter of elder selection, has lapsed into a position of allowing a "succession of elders," viz. each new elder is selected by the ones already in office, and so on back to the apostles. Of this type of practice, Samuel Ridout makes an interesting statement:

Man is slow to believe God It is hard to trust to and go on leaning upon an invisible arm. This unbelief on the part of God's people, this unwillingness to lean upon Him alone, have been the origin of the various substitutes which put something visible between God and the soul--some visible authority, someone having official right to speak for God. Coupled with this is the principle of succession--the power to hand down from one to another the authority originally received from God. It makes very little difference through whom this succession comes--whether through bishops as successors of the apostles, or through the ministers and elders who received their ordination at the hands of the apostles; in either case the principle of succession is established, and in favor of this principle there is no Scripture, but very much against it [emphasis added].¹

This "passing down" of the eldership from person to

¹Samuel Ridout, The Church and Its Order According to Scripture (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1915), p. 69.

person is not the "mind of Christ," but "apostolic succession." This practice, as well as self-recognition, at least partially removes the control from those precepts and examples set forth in the New Testament. Also missing, and worthy of further study beyond this thesis, is the "balance of power" which the New Testament seems to indicate is there.

The question may be raised here concerning the seeming apostolic "appointment" of elders. There are two ways of answering this problem: 1. The apostles only supervised the system set forth in this thesis and then laid their hands upon the elders and deacons.

[2] If it be argued that Paul and others appointed bishops (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), we would simply say that this was before the New Testament was available in written form in the churches. In the absence of written instructions as to the qualifications of elders, the churches had to depend on these apostles or apostolic delegates.

It should also be noted that Paul never ordained elders on his first visit to a church. Rather he allowed time for those elders whom God had ordained to manifest themselves by their work.¹ Then he singled them out for recognition by the church.

Lindsay, in writing on the history of church order, notes that church order progressed:

The vice-apostle Matthias and the Seven were elected by the assembly, a similar assembly appointed Barnabas to be its delegate to Antioch. The assembly of the local church summoned even apostles before it, and passed judgment on their conduct. The apostles might suggest, but the congregation ruled. . . . It suggests that Paul and Barnabas followed the example of their brethren at Jerusalem, and superintended an election of office bearers . . . [Regarding Titus:] His duty was to see that "elders" were

¹William MacDonald, Christ Loved the Church (Kansas City, Kansas: Walterick Publishers, 1973), p. 83.

chosen in every local church [concerning changes that had been taking place during the latter decades of the first century and continuing into the second century:] . . . every local church came to supplement its organization by placing one man at the head of the community, making him the president of the college of elders According to the conception of Ignatius, every Christian community ought to have at its head a bishop, a presbyterium or session of elders, and a body of deacons There is no apostolic succession in any form whatsoever.¹

Historically the control was gradually wrested from the selection of Christ and the recognition of the congregation to an human autocracy.

¹Thomas M. Lindsay, pp. 32, 118, 142, 169, 196-97.

CHAPTER II

THE CAPACITY TO RECOGNIZE THE SELECTION OF CHRIST

If there is a sensitive area in the life of the local church, it is in the ability to recognize the selection of Christ. Some scholars, both conservative and liberal, would make the claim that this kind of guidance is not possible. But Scripture does have some guidelines which are directive in these things.

A. The Local Church Members and the Mind of Christ

1. Examples of Spirit-Direction from Scripture

a. An example from Acts 1:24-26

This passage is an example of the apostles appealing directly to Christ in order to make a choice between Barsabbas and Matthias. Of the incident:

The case of Judas was a warning to the apostles to distrust their human judgment, and so the final decision is left to God. . . . Then to ascertain the divine choice (1) they prayed They were convinced that he had already chosen one to fill this place of ministry, as he had originally chosen the Twelve: and they ask him to make the appointment by shewing his choice. . . . The prayer of the disciples shews us the true aim of prayer. . . . that they might know his will. To learn that they then (2) cast lots.¹

This writer questions, why were only two names selected?

¹Rackham, p. 13.

W. H. Griffith Thomas suggests that perhaps there were only two of the 120 who fulfilled the qualifications. Griffith Thomas also notes that,

the Holy Ghost was not yet given . . . and bonds of O. T. tradition still understandably strong. It was after Pentecost that the Holy Spirit led the Apostles by perception and insight. N. B. We never hear of lot-casting again.¹

It may be suggested that only the apostles could be led by God "by perception and insight" as Griffith Thomas mentioned, and the rest of us in these days are locked out of receiving direct direction from God. This argument is overruled by Acts 6:3, 5 where the "multitude" in contradistinction to "the twelve" is borne out; the multitude participated in the process of recognition of the selection of Christ.

b. Acts 4:23, 31; 13:2; 15:22, 25, 28

These texts bear witness that the local church is a Spirit-directed body.

2. The believer and the direction of the Spirit

Below are some presuppositions of this writer, too large to be included in the exegesis.

a. Some definitions

(1) "Offices" are as described above, in this thesis. There are only two offices, as discussed, the office of "elder"

¹W. H. Griffith Thomas, Outline Studies in the Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 44.

and the office of "deacon." There is no "pastoral" office, excepting that the person with the "pastoral gift" is an "elder."

(2) "Gifts" are believing men given to the local churches; some may be used widely as "apostles," "prophets" and "evangelists," and some may be local as "pastor-teachers" (Eph. 4:7-16).

(3) "Enablements" (often called gifts) are abilities given to believers for the edification of the body of Christ (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12, 13, and 14; 1 Pet. 4:7-11).

(4) "Graces" are those God-given qualities of believers that result from walking with God (Gal. 5:16-26), being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18-21), and putting on Christ (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:17-29; Col. 3:5-16).

(5) "Talents" are those God-given natural abilities that all men have at birth; "talents" are used or "heightened" by God after salvation and may or may not be used in serving the Lord.

b. Requirements for Spirit-direction (outline only)

(1) The person must be "born again from above," viz. he must be a believer in Christ (Jn. 3:3).

(2) The believer must at that time be cleansed from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9).

(3) The cleansed believer must then permit the Spirit to give him direction (Gal. 5:16-26 and Eph. 5:18-21).

3. Specific direction of the Spirit and church officers

Personal, intimate direction from God the Son through the Spirit of God requires that the believer must be in order, as noted under 2b immediately above.

a. Specific direction requires the mind of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 2:2, Paul argues that οὐ γὰρ ἐκρίναμι τι εἰδέναι ἐν ὑμῖν, which translates "For I did not judge good to know anything among you" "He intentionally set aside the different elements of human knowledge by which he might have been tempted to prop up the teaching of salvation. He deemed that he ought not to go in quest of such means."¹ This reasoning can apply to more than just the gospel. In vv. 9-12, Paul states that spiritual things, the deep (βάθος, extreme depth) things of God can only be revealed by the Spirit of God. In verse 13, Paul iterates that it is not out of "man's wisdom," in v. 14 the natural man, ψυχικὸς, cannot understand "the things of the Spirit of God" because "they are spiritually discerned." The natural man, of course, is the unsaved. In 3:1-3, Paul states that "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual . . . ye are yet carnal . . . and walk as men." In other words, the non-spiritual believer is no better at understanding than the "natural" man, the unsaved, because his life is tainted with sin. The center of the whole

¹Frederic Louis Godet, Commentary on First Corinthians (reprint of 1889 ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), pp. 125-26.

question is in v. 15, where ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς is compared with the natural man. The article makes the spiritual man definite, particularized in contrast with the ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος. He discerns, ἀνακρίνει, present indicative of ἀνακρίνω, indicating he continuously discerns, not just Scripture, but πάντα, all things (πάς), meaning the whole. The wording in v. 15, δε ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται, means that he is judged by no man. οὐδενος is used as a substantive and is personal, i.e. "no man." δε is used as an adversative particle,¹ thereby making a comparison between "no man" and the spiritual man. Therefore, πάντα is not restricted to "things" but persons as well. Godet says of this passage, ". . . he is endowed with a superior tact which gives him the power of estimating men and things with certainty."²

The pièce de résistance of the argument is found in v. 16, where Paul notes that "we have the mind of Christ." In this thesis, the center of the argument lies here, δὲ νοῦν χριστοῦ ἔχομεν. Here δὲ is used also as an adversative particle, comparison going back to τίς in v. 16. νοῦν is simply the "mind of Christ" meaning "understanding" or "thoughts," ἔχομεν meaning "we hold or possess."

Robertson and Plummer write concerning this same phrase in v. 16:

We have this [νοῦν Χριστοῦ] by the agency of the Spirit of God; and the mind of the Spirit of God is known to

¹Dana and Mantey, p. 244.

²Godet, p. 161.

the Searcher of hearts (Rom. viii. 27). The mind of Christ is the correlative of His Spirit, which is the Spirit of God (Rom. vii. 9; Gal. iv. 6), and this mind belongs to those who are his by virtue of their vital union with Him¹

With application to the "recognition" of a prospective elder "we are able to discern this man's character, what he is, because we have the decision or selection of Christ as to this man's suitability for office."

b. Specific direction requires prayer.

Fortunately, the Christian is not without an example of "how to do it." Acts 1:24 reads, "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which of these two thou hast chosen" The word for prayer is προσευξάμενοι, which means merely "praying to" or "petitioning to" the Lord. The word καρδιολογῶστα is used only here and in Acts 15:8, where the usage is similar. Romans 8:27 (referred to by Robertson and Plummer above) employs the phrase ὁ δὲ ἐραυνῶν τὰς καρδίας with reference to the Holy Spirit; the phrase meaning "but the One who searches continuously the hearts," is an equivalent for καρδιολογῶστα. From the morphology of the word καρδιολογώστης, the word means "one who is an expert in the heart," specifically here, the Great Physician.

¹Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in The International Critical Commentary, ed. by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1911), p. 51.

We are then, to ask, and we are promised the answer (Jn. 14:13, 14; 15:7, 16; 16:23-24, 26). What are the requirements for an answer to prayer? John 15:7 states, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." To "abide" in Christ has been developed in 2b above and is a fundamental requirement. Much could be said about the verse, but in this thesis it is sufficient to say that the believer must not be praying to Christ contrary to Scripture, viz. "my words abide in you."

It is necessary to be narrowly specific at this point. The praying Christian is asking for the decision of Christ to be made manifest in his heart so that he may know which prospective elders he should "recognize." Is the request contrary to Scripture? No. Is it selfish? No. Is a denial of an answer best for the praying Christian? No. Is the answer to be delayed? No. (A prospective elder may not yet be ready, but in that case, the answer would be "No" anyway.) None of the usually recognized impediments apply here.

Consequently, the local church member, desiring earnestly to know the will of his Lord Jesus Christ and being personally spiritually in order, may approach the throne of grace boldly and will obtain an answer. It probably ought to be mentioned that there is nothing "mysterious" about the Lord's speaking in a "still, small voice" (K. J. B.) or "a gentle whisper" (N. I. V.).

N. B. There is a practical problem in this whole

thesis, though, that needs to be considered. The congregation must be carefully prepared so that they know the applicable Scripture thoroughly. A good decision does not come out of a vacuum.

4. Other Scriptural allusions which may guarantee the mind of Christ

Obviously other passages may allude to having the mind of Christ if the Christian is spiritually in order and knowledgeable concerning applicable Scripture. The notes below are "shadows" that this thesis does not have space to develop, but which in the eyes of this writer may be substantiated.

There is a fellowship in the Divine nature (2 Pet. 1) that transcends human comprehension where the believer (κοινωνέω) "fellowships" in the very nature of God. Is it possible to have that kind of an intimate relationship with God and for there to be no communication of His choice of men for eldership?

In Ephesians 4, there is a unity spoken of; the church has one Lord. Without communication, where is the unity?

As Samuel Ridout says:

God never intended we should get on without Him. Peter on the water, sinking and crying for help, may not have been as decorous an object as his fellows sitting in the boat, but who was nearer to the Lord? Let us never exchange His all-sufficient power for the formal proprieties of a human ministry.¹

¹Samuel Ridout, pp. 77-78.

B. The Requirements of the "Voting" Members

The last doctrinal problem germane to the thesis is the problem of church membership. Obviously, the "mind of Christ" in the matter of recognition of a prospective elder is central in thinking here. If the church is fifty percent unbelievers, great problems will be experienced in recognizing an elder as the selection of Christ. This question has been a source of problems. Kuen states: "The question of whether a person must be converted to be a church member is certainly the most important and controversial of all that concern the church."¹ The "evangelical," which this writer believes is the closest approximation to Scripture, believes that the local church is a body composed of believers. The real problem, defined in Kuen's terms, is "The Local Church: An Open or Closed Society?" He distinguishes between the two by defining the closed church as one which has "requirements" and "rules" for membership, then goes on to explain that New Testament local church membership has both "open" and "closed" membership features.²

It is necessary to be particular. Any person who truly believes in and accepts Christ as his Saviour and trusts Him only for his salvation is a member of the body of Christ, the universal church. The problem is to accept into the local

¹Alfred F. Kuen, I Will Build My Church, trans. by Ruby Lindblad (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 127.

²Ibid., p. 128.

church membership all of the saved ones who desire to be a part of that fellowship and exclude all unbelievers. But, unbelievers will be mixed into the fellowship anyway (Gal. 2:4; Jude 4; Acts 20:28-29). There is a problem with accepting anybody who claims salvation, particularly when that person may be called upon to make a decision requiring that he "have the mind of Christ." The idea of having two classes of members, "sheep members" and "goat members" is repugnant to people whose hearts are sincere and, in addition, the membership lists are subject to manipulation by those in power.

The most practical solution is to require more stringent membership requirements than most evangelical churches now require. Except for "recognition of elders" or other local church meetings involving discipline, this writer believes that those who come should be treated in every way almost as members. No rail of separation should be erected as in some exclusive brethren meetings, nor should extensive "checks" be made as to who is not coming to this meeting or that meeting. The church is gracious and not legalistic.

Does Scripture give us any indications? The early apostolic local churches did not have the same problems as the church today because almost all of the attendants were believers. Certainly there should be an interrogation in order to ascertain if that person is saved or not. Those doing the questioning should "have the mind of Christ," they should be very able Christians in handling Scripture, probably

elders only. The principles of care and graciousness found in Acts 9:26 and Romans 14:1 should be adhered to as well.

But there are other questions that should be studied. It is the opinion of this writer that there should be some form of rudimentary training in the Scriptures before membership. The basic doctrines in A2a and b above described which involve salvation, cleansing, filling of the Holy Spirit, church offices, gifts, enablements and graces should be studied and known well before membership. In this day, many Lutherans have such study, although perhaps without any testing.

The last requirement should be one of some sort of obvious fruit-bearing. The bearing of fruit is the outward indication of the heart condition. Regarding false prophets, Christ said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Mt. 7:15-20). In John 15:1-17, Christ speaks of fruit in the believer's life "that ye should go and bring forth fruit." Other passages such as John 15:1-16, Romans 1:13, Philippians 1:11; 4:17; Hebrews 12:11 and James 3:17-18 speak of fruit. Fruit is a necessary requirement for membership. Fruit is of different types, viz. the "fruit of the Spirit," "the fruit of the vine" and other types. Attitudes toward spiritual things, and love toward the brethren are also examples.

This section on "membership" is difficult, but a change in the customs of the evangelical churches where worldliness, love of money and indifference to God's Word have made

the membership soft and weak is definitely needed.

A warning against a well-mixed membership is voiced by James Gunn: "Congregational rule provides the most carnal believer with as much right to direct the affairs of the congregation as the most spiritual."¹

In closing, it should be noted that this part of the thesis covers a problem not already solved directly by Scripture, and great care must be exercised not only to allow the unrestricted leadership of Christ, but to control as easily as possible the spiritual climate of the special meetings of the local church. None of the above suggested requirements are unbearably difficult, and with some people, time may be required, with a considerable amount of very tender and loving shepherding.

¹James Gunn, I Will Build My Church (Kansas City, Kansas: Walterick Publishers, n.d.), p. 62.

CONCLUSION

The impotent modern church, of all kinds, is in a very serious condition. The problem is not with the sheep or the Shepherd, it is with the undershepherds. The control of the undershepherd's work rests in the hands of the local church elder. He must be qualified, fully, according to Scripture. No quiet yielding to a lower standard will revive the dying church. In the book of Revelation there is the church at Laodicea which is believed to typify the ordinary local church of today. Sir William Ramsay, able historian of the early church, writes concerning the church at Laodicea:

The tone of the exordium is one of thoroughness, consistency from the beginning of the creation of God to the end of all things, a consistency that springs from faithfulness and truth. In the letter itself those are the qualities in which Laodicea is lacking. The Laodicean Church is neither one thing or another. It is given to compromise. It cannot thoroughly reject the temptations and allurements of the world. And therefore it shall be rejected absolutely and inexorably by Him whose faithfulness and truth reject all half-heartedness and compromise.¹

In order to "recognize" the potential elder who is the selection of our living Lord, the requirements for membership need a thorough revision so that the selection of elders will be by Christians who "have the mind of Christ" as nearly

¹Sir William Ramsay, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia (reprinted from 1904 edition, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), p. 424.

as can be done, with graciousness and faith. No thinking Christian can look at the present churches of today without dismay. Kuen aptly describes the situation as follows:

True love does not blindly and passively accept the faults of the beloved. Unconditional devotion to the church risks degenerating into participation in her faults and even betrayal of Christ and His body. To close one's eyes to the ecclesiastical crisis of today is not a proof of one's love for the church. He who truly loves her will make an effort to find the causes of and remedies for her present difficulties.¹

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock"

¹Kuen, p. 284.

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