

Scriptures and Doctrine :: The Authenticity of Biblical Leadership

The Authenticity of Biblical Leadership - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2004/11/12 6:42

Biblical Leadership

Leadership! The word conjures up so many different connotations. Dictatorship, authoritarianism, charismatic superstar, promotion. However, what ever our own interpretation is, it must be juxtapositioned with Scripture. Is our own interpretation true? Is it biblical? Undoubtedly leadership is one of the most misunderstood ministries in the body of Christ. Some clamour and grasp for it, others shun it like the plague.

So many present leaders are disillusioned and hurt because their energy and efforts have seemed to produce so little. Many do not know whether they are truly called to the task, and are not sure how to equip and release new leaders to help them. I trust these posts will help to clarify and bring into focus biblical principles and truths that will encourage us to "teach others to teach others." It goes forth with my prayer that God will "water it and bring forth the increase".

Adapted from Dudley Daniel's manual 'Leading the Church' Part 1 July 1989

The Church is a family - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2004/11/12 6:48

Quote:
 -----Notions of hierarchy are built into everything human and church history and even our bibles versions have been infected with that concept.

Leadership Foundation
 The Church is a family:

The Church is to be seen as family, not an organisation of institution, according to Hebrew thought:

- Eph 2:19 '...and members of Gods household.'
- John 1:12 '...he gave the right to be children of God.'
- Rom 8:15, 16, 29 '...you received the Spirit of sonship...we cry Abba, Father...16 that we are Gods children...29 that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.'
- Rom 9:26 '...they will be called sons of the living God.'
- Galatians 4:5,6 '...that we might receive the full rights of sons...6 because you are sons...'
- Eph 3:15 '...from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.'
- 1 Cor 4:14, 15 '...my dear children...father...'
- 1 Cor 4:17 '...Timothy, my son...'
- Heb 2:11 '...are of the same family...to call them brothers.'
- 1 Peter 4:17 '...with the family of God.'

Our understanding of church must be rooted in family.

Bob Mumford: 'The New Testament is Hebrew thought in Greek language. Therefore it must be interpreted by Hebrew thought.'

Hebrews thought in a completely different way to others.
 In the early 1900's all theology fell into the hands of German theologians who, generally speaking, were anti-semitic.

The result is an anti-Hebrew model of church. And church leadership is a classical example of this.

The term 'Elder' in the New Testament is carried over from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament elders were like 'City Fathers' - they 'sat at the gate of the city'. Deut 21:18-21

Prov 31:23 '...is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.'
Cities had walls around them to protect the people in that city

The elders 'sitting at the gate', the only way in and out of that city, were part of that protection. They were 'protection' and had tremendous authority as well.

Deut 25:5-10 (N.B. vs. 8) '... the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him.'

You could not just stroll in and out of the church (city) as you pleased. You went through them. When you said the word 'leader' to a Hebrew he immediately thought of a 'father'. But to those who think with a Greek or Gentile mentality, 'leader' means a Managing Director, President, etc. And so in the church we have leaders who have set up their church structures just like a business!

This is an anti-Hebrew, anti-Scriptural model of church leadership. A leader is to be a 'father', who exercises his authority out of concern for the individual family member, not out of concern for his reputation!

1 Cor 4:14, 15 '...but to warn you, as my dear children. 15...you do not have many Fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your Father through the gospel.'

1 Thess 2:11, 12 'For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God...'

Out of our presupposition (assume beforehand, imply) and the influence of German theologians, we see the church as a corporation or club!

What about salvation?

Jesus said, John 14:6, 'I am the way...no man can come to the **Father** except through Me'. The church, when evangelising says. 'No man can get to **heaven**'. A place, instead of family.

The Church must be rooted in family!

Re: The Importance of Good Leadership - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2004/11/12 6:51

The Importance of Good Leadership

God uses People (Human Beings) to maintain what He does.

God's three main 'channels' are His Spirit, His Word and His Man. This takes place consistently throughout His word. Gen 1:2,26 '...Spirit... God said, let us make man... to rule...'

A great Christian leader has said: 'The Spirit prepared, the Word produced, and the man preserved. God did not bring order out of chaos without a man to maintain order. Adam was given authority over everything, he was leader of all that God formed here on earth.'

God channels the working and operation of His Spirit through people.

Two examples of this are found in:

Isa 59:21 'As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever," says the LORD.

Jn 20:21,22 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

We often underplay the importance that God places upon human instrumentality.

Humans are those who represent His work and Kingdom here on earth. Without an ambassador He has no agent to work through.

2 Cor. 5:19c-20 '...and he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf...'

People need leadership

They are sheep and need to be led.

John 10:3-5 "...and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice..."

Without leadership they cannot function together in order (as a united group) – they revert back to 'chaos'.

Zech. 13:7 – "...smite the shepherd and the sheep will scatter."

That is why if you will not lead, they will make their own leader, or leave the church.

Sobering,

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/11/12 8:28

Hi ZekeO

Thank you for starting this thread.

Quote:
----- God's three main 'channels' are His Spirit, His Word and His Man. This takes place consistently throughout His word. Gen 1:2, 26 "... Spirit ... God said, let us make man ... to rule ..."

(not sure about your references?) Absolutely, which is why it is essential to get the meaning of the word 'rule' from our bibles, not from our dictionaries and certainly not from history.

The word used **And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.** (Gen 1:26 ASV) is
raw-daw'

A primitive root; to tread down, that is, subjugate; specifically to crumble off: - (come to, make to) have dominion, prevail against, reign, (bear, make to) rule, (-r, over), take.

This is an ominous start, and particularly that preposition which follows the verb; *over*. Is God's idea of rule then some one who is 'over' someone or something else? The problem is that we are seeing a definition of the word 'rule' as it has become known to us, rather than in its first innocence. The natural mind has no concept of 'rule' other than 'rule over' and this is where many of our snares lie.

Let's see if we can re-define 'have dominion' from the clues that surround it. I don't know where Adam was created, but after his creation he was 'taken' from that place where God had prepared him and 'put' into a garden in Eden. This man has been secretly prepared, under the hand of God, for his God-given role. This must always be part of the way that God's authority works in a man and those to whom he is sent. Then he is placed, literally rested, into the place of God's choosing. This is exactly what the word 'ordination' (as in John 15:6, for example) means; to position something in a precise spot. So we are building quite a picture of 'god's man'. Secretly prepared, precisely positioned, and not an election in sight! Now, what is his function?

And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. (Gen 2:15 KJV)
His job-definition was nice and clear. He is to 'dress it' (KJV) and 'keep it' (KJV). Have you ever seen the Young's Literal translation for this? **And Jehovah God taketh the man, and causeth him to rest in the garden of Eden, to serve it, and to keep it.** (Gen 2:15 YLT)

1. to serve it! It is the old testament equivalent for 'doulos' the bond-slave. The Hebrew is עֶבֶד and the noun can be seen in one of the titles of Christ; Ebed Yahweh – the Lord's Servant; (Isa_41:8; Isa_41:9; Isa_42:1; Isa_42:19; Isa_43:10; Isa_44:1; Isa_44:2; Isa_44:21;)

Adam was to exercise his 'dominion' towards the creation by 'serving it'. True spiritual authority is always the authority to be a bond-slave. Behold man, as he was intended to be.. **Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.** (Joh 13:3-5 KJV)

What kind of a world would we have had if man's dominion had been exercised as a servant on his knees? There are times when a great grief wells up inside me as I look on this brutalised creation; what might have been? **For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject**

to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. (Rom 8:19-23 KJV)

What kind of church would we have seen on earth if its servants had served on their knees rather than from their thrones?

2. to keep; to guard and protect. Literally, to be a hedge around it. (with all the thorns turned outwards!) True spiritual leadership is never prickly towards those it is protecting.

Adam was really Eden's elder, and God was his. And the word that God used when He commissioned Adam might almost have been the ones He used through Paul to the elders at Ephesus; **"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.**

(Act 20:28 NASB)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/11/12 16:16

Quote:
-----People need leadership
They are sheep and need to be led.
John 10:3-5 "...and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice..."

Without leadership they cannot function together in order (as a united group) - they revert back to chaos.
Zech. 13:7 "...smite the shepherd and the sheep will scatter."
That is why if you will not lead, they will make their own leader, or leave the church.

Sobering,

Well they might need leadership, but do they need leaders? The New Testament does not really give us a pattern for the perfect church; it was never intended to do so. It is an account of the way in which the Spirit of God continued to lead them in His will. I seriously question whether there is anything like a contemporary Christian leader in the New Testament. Leadership is more an event than a role in the New Testament. The notion of a resident leader is absent, unless we look back with a later perspective. The unit of 'leadership' in the local assemblies was 'the oversight'; a body of elders, although in some churches there is no mention of such.

When we start to use this kind of language we have to be sure that we have a biblical definition and not a denominational one. The Bible never says that a local church has to have 'elders' but Paul risked his life to ensure that the churches he had seen emerge had them. What are elders? The first elders in the Bible are Egyptian elders; **And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,** (Gen 50:7 KJV) There are two groups of 'elders' in this verse, Pharaoh's house-elders and the nation's elders. They just appear on the scene without introduction. This verse describes a state funeral and they obviously represent Pharaoh's own household and the nation itself. The first time we meet elders they are seen in a representative capacity; this is a bit of information to save for later.

Eldership is the original form of government. In simpler society elders are still a fact of life. One of our problems in the west is that our patterns of government are very different to biblical cultures. If you ask an ordinary westerner what an elder is he will have no idea. Visit an African village and ask the question and they will have a very clear idea. Elders develop. They will need to be recognised formally perhaps at a later stage, but they will be recognised as elders because they are elders; not the other way around. It is not possible to 'make someone an elder' although this is the language we westerners use all the time. Elders are recognised, not made. The first Bible elders are Egyptian and the last are heavenly; **And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"** (Rev 19:4 NASB) I don't want to force this into too narrow a point but apparently heavenly authority functions with elders; not an apostle, prophet, evangelist, or pastor/teacher to be seen.

It's not just ancient cultures that develop 'elders', the web has developed them too. I discovered this when reading of the development of the internet. *"We reject kings, presidents and voting. We believe in rough consensus and running*

code." David Clark (MIT). The statement was created by Clark at a 1992 IETF meeting and is now informally known as the IETF Credo and has been expounded thus; *This maxim can not be read as stating that Internet culture has no authorities. Individuals of respect and standing play an important role in the aggregation of individual preferences and development of consensus within the community. Internet rulers can be most likened to Elders: those who through merit, contributions, and experience became or built institutions that affect the Net.* Of course, I'm not suggesting that we get our definition of elders from the IETF, but the organic development of the internet has created a virtual community and the virtual community has recognised its elders. Of course, this disturbs the 'control freaks' who would love to be able to legislate in all kinds of ways; but organisms are much more difficult to control than organisations.

The family of Abraham had no elders. Families don't need elders; they need Mums and Dads. When 'Israel' went down into Egypt they had no 'elders' just heads of families. When the time came for their deliverance they numbered over 2 million and those kinds of numbers require something different to Mums and Dads. A structure developed whilst in Egypt; **And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies. And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his fathers.** (Num 1:1-4 KJV) It is an interesting image. We are so used to it now that we have stopped thinking about it. We speak of the head of De Beers or Shell and forget that heads are always connected to the body that they serve. Do you have the slightest feeling of your 'head' bossing your body about? This image is organic; this head is part of the whole body and the relationship is mutually necessary. **And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.** (1Co 12:21 KJV)

There were 12 tribes and presumably 12 heads of families, but when Moses approached Sinai he took with him 70 'out of the elders of Israel' (Ex 24:1) I wonder how many elders there were? Again we see these elders acting as representatives of the whole; **And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: (Exo 3:15-16 KJV) It was to the elders that the Sinai Covenant was offered; **And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.** (Exo 19:7 KJV) Apparently there are some things that are too important to be left to the elders ;-) and the whole congregation gave their response; And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD. (Exo 19:8 KJV)**

The significant thing in all these Old Testament origins and in the New Testament is that there is never a single elder; they always function corporately. Apparently you can have leadership without a leader. Interesting isn't it?

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2004/11/12 23:58

Quote:

philologos wrote:
Apparently you can have leadership without a leader. Interesting isn't it?

Very much so. :-D My apologies Ron, time is in the next couple of days going to become very scarce, so i can't reply in detail to your points. If anyone else has some meat and vegetables for us, a good potjie has lots of ingredients. But, to let you know I have read them and am rather keen to supply some more helpful/useful :-? info.

As I have picked up from TV program,
Keep it real! ;-)

p.s. For some background on potjie vist <http://www.3men.com/Potjiekos.htm> . We're so funny. :-D :lol:

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2004/11/13 1:58

Quote:

philologos wrote:
(not sure about your references?)

Can find the info here: <http://www.blueletterbible.org>

Quote:

Secretly prepared, precisely positioned, and not an election in sight! Now, what is his function?

I am sure that you are looking already, but if you had to take those same truths and transpose them over the New Testament you would get a heart as to what God was doing in the church.

Quote:

to serve it! It is the old testament equivalent for 'doulos' the bond-slave...Adam was to exercise his 'dominion' towards the creation by 'serving it'. True spiritual authority is always the authority to be a bond-slave.

Our understandings are getting closer and closer to what it actually means to lead, and be a leader biblically.

Quote:

What kind of a world would we have had if man's dominion had been exercised as a servant on his knees?

That is truly the heart of any leader, If you are a true leader, you would never ever have to defend, qualify or hold on to your 'position' because it is ultimately given by God.

Our ideas on this particular topic are running pretty much along the same lines.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/11/13 4:59

Hi ZekeO

Yes, I don't expect any major differences as regards the disposition of leadership or its necessity. My differences will surface when the principles are developed into a methodology. BTW did you read Austin Sparks on 'leadership'? His comments on Deborah are particularly interesting.

Does your group have the same outlook on women in authority as Terry Virgo and the NF Churches?

Quote:

-----I am sure that you are looking already, but if you had to take those same truths and transpose them over the New Testament you would get a heart as to what God was doing in the church.

Yes, I am looking ahead. God's principles are eternally relevant or eternally irrelevant. You quoted the 'Hebrew' context of the OT. I think the Edenic (pre-Hebrew) context is even more important. Much that was 'Hebrew' was due to the hardness of men's hearts and 'was not so from the beginning'. I believe the church is intended to be God's new beginning.

Quote:

----- philologos wrote: (not sure about your references?)

I meant your reference "God's three main 'channels' are His Spirit, His Word and His Man. This takes place consi

stently throughout His word. Gen 1:2,26 "Spirit... God said, let us make man... to rule..." "I hadn't realised you were itemizing each 'channel'. Sorry.

That SA cooking cauldron looks interesting. I love 'bhoti'? BTW.

Re: Leadership - posted by eagleswings (), on: 2004/11/13 5:24

Zeke writes:

"If anyone else has some meat and vegetables for us, a good potjie has lots of ingredients."

Try adding a dash of "World Domination or Dominion" (Austin-Sparks)

<http://www.austin-sparks.net/english/books/001343.html>

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2004/11/14 8:09

Quote:

philologos wrote:

His comments on Deborah are particularly interesting.

Does your group have the same outlook on women in authority as Terry Virgo and the NF Churches?

Please excuse my ignorance but what is their outlook? All I know is that woman in leadership is allowed/tolerated/condoned by the team of NCMI.

p.s. What is 'Bhoti' :-?

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2004/11/14 8:55

Quote:

eagleswings wrote:

Try adding a dash of "World Domination or Dominion" (Austin-Sparks)

Thanks Eagleswings, that was good stuff, I enjoyed this comment: *We have moved into a new phase of things. 'Revival' is being sought earnestly, and certain great names in revival history are in mind, on lip, and much used to stimulate revival-mindedness or mentality. But it may be that God is not going now to allow a great work of His to be related to men's names.*

If you had spoken to any of the revival pioneers none of them would have wanted to attach their name as the man who did this, it started because I did that. Again I state my concern, that the issue is everything that he said, but added to that is the knowledge that man is involved, but not in a meddling 'domination' mentality. It is with the knowledge that we want to keep what God is doing as biblical as possible, flowing in a structure that allows for those things we find questionable

to happen. Not that God can do anything unbiblical, but in mans response to his moving. That the skeleton of church is built with the eternal word and principles of God. it must be flexible enough to keep the believers free, but rigid enough not to tolerate sin.

An Example: Evan Roberts, mightily used as a channel for God himself to change a whole nation, what killed the revival? It was when certain emphasis and extremes within the move were seen as demonic and soulish, that the problems started. I wonder how many folk who are praying for revival will actually reject it when it comes because it does not fit into their 'paradigm' of how the 'holy' God acts in his church. Its happened, and how many of those same people will go scurrying to the word to try and show that this is not how God must/can act in his church. Even Andrew Murray almost missed a move of God while ministering in South Africa.

How many of us would tolerate what happened in any of the revivals we so long for and wish could happen, in our day? God needs men who can create a wineskin that is 'exactly according the pattern shown you'. For if you look at revival history it was not that man was able to start it, ever, but he was certainly able to stop it, and that is the goal of this thread. What is the biblical plumb line for church leadership and governance at a practical level, not just at the level of the heart and essential spirituality. God has given us everything we need for life and for Godliness, and that is not just at a personal level, but at a corporate one as well.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/11/14 18:14

Quote:

-----Quote:

"philologos wrote:

His comments on Deborah are particularly interesting.

Does your group have the same outlook on women in authority as Terry Virgo and the NF Churches?"

Please excuse my ignorance but what is their outlook? All I know is that woman in leadership is allowed/tolerated/condoned by the team of NCMI.

Unlike many groups in the UK NF churches will not allow women elders or women in any place of authority in the church.

Quote:

-----p.s. What is 'Bhoti'

It is a long time since I ate it but it was quite spicy and served with mangoes I think. I obviously spelled it wrongly, or am completely mistaken, or am having 'senior moment'!

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/11/14 18:18

Quote:

-----An Example: Evan Roberts, mightily used as a channel for God himself to change a whole nation, what killed the revival? It was when certain emphasis and extremes within the move were seen as demonic and soulish, that the problems started.

I'm not sure I understand that. Are you saying that the problems were demonich and soulish or that the problem was that some things were being 'seen' as demonic and soulish?

Re: Catching up on your thought. - posted by dohzman (), on: 2004/11/14 23:33

I personally appreciate this thread. Thank you. Let me see if I have it right so far. Basically by elders you're speaking of older men and women who have distinguished themselves in their conduct and dedication to servanthood?? I'm trying to get a mind of exactly what and where you're heading. I understand the types as displayed by Jesus as servant, when he had washed the disciples feet ---the picture language here is beautiful and I thought of Paul's exhortation to encourage each other daily. Now for the million questions, sorry for my lack of patience, I sure you're going to address them anyway but here they are: 1) Is an elder appointed by God or reconized by men as such? 2) Looking at the present day church how do elders function? 3) By Ron's explanation of eldership based on the OT pattern where they sat at the gate (they basically were a representative of that town and responsible for what entered it and also that they were a hedge of protection). Can you elaborate here for me and give me some detailed examples of how elders did what they did at the gates?? Sorry to be a pain and I don't mean to make you go backwards in your thought. I have some more

e questions but will wait and watch and ask as this thread develops. God Bless bro. Daryl

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/11/15 4:39

Hi Daryl

Quote:
----- Thank you. Let me see if I have it right so far. Basically by elders you're speaking of older men and women who have distinguished themselves in their conduct and dedication to servanthood??

Close! I have not mentioned 'woman elders' and neither does the scripture. We may need to examine this in due course. The characteristics of elders/overseers/bishops are identified in 1 Tim 3 and Tit 1. I am using my words very carefully here. I did not say 'qualifications'; I don't think that is what we have in these two letters. I think Paul's words are the answer to the kind of question which says 'what kind of people are elders?'. 'These are the kind of people' says Paul. And a 75% pass rate will not do, 'an overseer' says the scripture 'must be...'. As someone said looking at this list 'only dead men need apply'. (BTW the English word 'bishop' is derived from the Greek word '*episkopos*' which literally means 'someone who watches over'.) By the end of the first century a different kind of 'bishop' had developed which further developed into the kind of bishop that '*episkopal*' - churches ruled by bishops - churches that we have today. It is important to remember that whenever we read, in the scripture, the word 'bishop' is simply means a man who is part of an oversight group known as 'elders' or 'overseers'. The single, monarchical, bishop has no place in biblical revelation.

However in many ways these characteristics could be expected in some measure in all Christians with the exception of 'apt to teach'. In other words you could have all these characteristics and the person still not be an elder. Eldership 'must be' this kind of people, but there is more I believe. In that sense the lists in Tim and Tit are more like potential disqualifications. If these characteristics are lacking, whatever else he may be able to do, he cannot be recognised as an elder.

Quote:
----- Can you elaborate here for me and give me some detailed examples of how elders did what they did at the gates?? Sorry to be a pain and I don't mean to make you go backwards in your thought. I have some more questions but will wait and watch and ask as this thread develops.

There is another 'characteristic' which I think is especially relevant to this part of your question. **And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.** (1Ti 3:7 NASB) This is an interesting and often ignored 'characteristic'. The NASB here uses the word 'reputation'. It's really the word 'witness' or 'testimony' but the NASB carries the sense. An overseer must have an 'outside reputation'. These are not men who have retreated into monasteries but who have sufficient contact with the outside world to have been 'recognized' by those outside.

Why would this be a 'necessary' characteristic whose absence would disqualify a man from eldership/overseership even though all the other characteristics were in place? (Remember, this is up to a standard not down to what we can afford).

I think it was ZekeO who first mentioned elders and the gates, but it is an important part of the development of the biblical idea of eldership. 'Sitting at/in the gate' became a title almost like a 'town councillor' in the UK or ?? I don't know the American equivalent, but it is the local governing body of a district which makes decisions relating to the locality. Originally it was the place where those in authority gathered to discuss and decide points of law and their application. (2 Sam 19:8, Est 5:13, Ps 69:12, Prov 31:23, and many other places. Perhaps the best illustration is from Ruth; **Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's:** (Rth 4: 1-3 KJV) This passage shows the 'elders' 'sitting at the gate'. For UK readers we have continuing link in the term 'alderman' which was 'elderman' or 'elder'.

These men have become, although we are not given the process, 'responsible'. They were not elected to these positions initially but their authority is essentially a moral authority. They certainly would have been men of trustworthy character.

cter but they would have also been men of experience; the older/elder brothers of the community. They would have acquired a 'reputation' for wise counsel or local knowledge or the bearers of the group history. Try to forget any official roles that folk may have in your assembly and ask the question, 'if a land dispute arose' or 'a new pattern that wasn't the traditional way of doing things' 'who would you talk to, instinctively?' Note I am not talking about 'offices' or 'titles' but 'reputation'. The person who came to your mind is probably 'an elder' irrespective of what a denomination might call him.

A family unit did not require elders. It was only as numbers and needs grew that they were required. Not every church needs elders and many get themselves into a mess by inventing them because they think it is a 'bible pattern'. There are hundreds of little 'churches in homes' which have foundered because someone decided that in order to be a 'proper' church they had to have elders. Families don't need elders, only communities need elders. Don't ask me for a 'number' it depends on the history and pattern of the group.

A family does not need an 'interface' with the outside world, but a community does. I think this is why it is essential that a characteristic of the kind of person who will be an elder is that they will inevitably be the 'official' face of the church to the outside world. I think this is why their marriages have to have certain characteristics too; the husband of one wife. For the sake of the testimony and the outside world's perception of 'church' it is absolutely 'necessary' that he be the husband of one wife (I can hear those questions starting up!)

I think there is another little cameo of 'responsibility' in Acts 20:28. These men are the 'elders of the church in Ephesus' and are said to have been made 'overseers/bishops' by the Holy Spirit. Paul reminds them that their responsibilities are for 'the all the flock'. I think this is another key indicator of 'eldership'; they are not the spokesperson for a group with the local assembly, not the young people's spokesmen, or the single's spokesman. Their responsibility is the whole flock. Personally when I begin to see this sense of care for the 'whole flock' emerging it is one of the clearest signs that God is preparing a man for eldership. The man is driven not by need to fulfil his 'ministry' but by a shepherd's heart for all.

Before anyone 'volunteers' for this role I should say that not only are they 'responsible' men within the community but they will be 'held responsible' before God for the wellbeing of the community. This is clearly seen in the OT eg Deut 21 and the implications are plainly declared in the NT **Yield to those taking the lead of you, and submit, for they watch for your souls, giving an account, that they may do this with joy, and not with grieving; for this would be unprofitable to you.** (Heb 13:17 LITV)

Quote:
----- Is an elder appointed by God or recognized by men as such?

Both. And in that order.

I think we will touch on the current operations of elders a little later.

And 'you are not a pain'. There are no dumb questions, although I cannot claim the same for my answers. ;-)

Re: - posted by Nasher (), on: 2004/11/15 8:15

Quote:
-----For the sake of the testimony and the outside world's perception of 'church' it is absolutely 'necessary' that he be the husband of one wife (I can hear those questions starting up!)

Hi Ron, just to clarify, you're not saying that an elder must be married? Are you?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/11/15 9:02

Quote:

-----Hi Ron, just to clarify, you're not saying that an elder must be married? Are you?

No. ;-)

husband of one wife - posted by dohzman (), on: 2004/11/15 13:27

How does this standard apply to thoughts in a divorce/remarriage situation who may have been saved after a divorce situation occurred. Also--in eldership what are some of the corresponding titles? names? given to elders---like bishop/deacon/pastor ect... And lastly Are true elders even in today's hodgepodge of churches still responsible for all the house of God? It seems like it would be an impossible task since there are so many different churches and all of them have different structures. Thank you bro. Ron I appreciate what I've read so far it sounds like these men are to be given completely to prayer in watching and to some degree must have a life in the world outside of the church at least in some kind of dealings in order to get a good reputation among the unsaved. Am I on track so far? Thank you---bro. Daryl

Re: husband of one wife - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/11/15 14:48

Hi Daryl

I guessed by comments about being the husband of one wife would get the hares coursing! This verse has been interpreted at just about every level. The Anglo Catholics in the UK would not allow a widowed 'priest' to remarry. In some ways this intersects with the threads on divorce and remarriage which always seem to go round and round and then stall. In my current thinking I would say it signifies 'only one wife at a time'; polygamy was widely practised in the 1st century. However, because of the outward facing testimony, I think we need to ask the question 'would a much married man who only now had one wife be an appropriate choice'?

Quote:

-----And lastly Are true elders even in today's hodgepodge of churches still responsible for all the house of God? It seems like it would be an impossible task since there are so many different churches and all of them have different structures.

Lastly?!? I don't believe you!. I think I may have misled you. I didn't mean to give the idea that having a shepherd's heart for the whole flock meant the whole church of Christ. That flock has one shepherd; Christ Himself. Elders only function in a locality though I think elders might also have a role in neighbouring assemblies. And as ZekeO that is no reason why a man should not be an 'elder at home' and something quite different elsewhere.

Re: NFI - posted by Delboy (), on: 2004/11/15 18:40

Hi Ron,
Your quote;

Quote:

-----Unlike many groups in the UK NF churches will not allow women elders or women in any place of authority in the church.

As you know I am in a new frontiers church here in Worthing,
Yes you are right about the stance with regard to women elders, but there are women in positions of authority, ie creche, kids work, etc
many prophesy in meetings although this is not authority over :-)
this discussion is great by the way

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2004/11/16 0:00

I thought Evan Roberts quit because of discouragement coming from notable pastors and thier criticism of the Welsh Re vival and thier attack on him personally??

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/11/16 3:10

Quote:
-----I thought Evan Roberts quit because of discouragement coming from notable pastors and thier criticism of the Welsh Revival and thier attack on him personally??

I think it is much more complex than this. You will get different answers from different places. My understanding is that he suffered an 'emotional breakdown' from which he never fully recovered. He spent many years living as part of the family of Jesse Penn-Lewis. Some see this as part of the problem and others see it as an attempted cure.

Jesse Penn-Lewis collaborated with/used Evans and his name appears on "War on the Saints". It is difficult to read the un-trimmed version without thinking about Evan Roberts and wondering how much of this book represents their view/judgement of the Welsh Revival, and of how much of this book represents someone's (Mrs Penn-Lewis?) diagnosis of Roberts himself.

The book divided (and probably still does) the Christians of its day. The writers saw the increase in demonic phenomena as proof of the soon coming of Christ; this was the devil's last gasp. It is sobering to remind ourselves that the book, with its expectations of the immediate return is now 70 years old.

This brief bio is a sobering read Evan Roberts

Jesse Penn-Lewis' writings are said to have influenced T Austin Sparks and Watchman Nee.

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2004/11/16 14:20

Quote:

philologos wrote:
This brief bio is a sobering read

Indeed Ron, this last paragraph struck me: ***May his life be both an example and a warning to all those who participate in revival to maintain humility; keep submissive to the Spirit; be accountable to godly men and women; remain true to their calling; use the gifts God has given, but be wise in the stewardship of their body.***

How easy it must have been, to just carry on when all heaven was breaking loose. It is very sad to see what happened to someone who really loved God:cry:

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2004/11/17 16:31

Thank you --that was a good read. I fully understand how he could have the results he had. That type of intense pressing into the Kingdom of God to obtain the blessing is still available. However, it's been my experience that in America, anyway, people don't want something that they cannot control. Experiences seem to be a slippery slope in respect to maintaining a revival. I have to believe somewhere the Word of God has to become center giving some sense of balance to the experiences. Roberts' intensity for that length of time is amazing, Jesus was perfectly balanced and knew when to withdraw from ministry. Often after long periods of fastings and prayer for the meetings I attend upon, the attack comes ever so subtle and more often than not they come in the form of feeling and spiritual experiences which neither line up with scripture nor the character of God. I don't think it has anything to do with humility, I don't believe Roberts had a pride problem, however I'd need to read more eyewitness accounts from those close to him to know for certain. I believe God allows this to hone our discernment and get us to better understand Him out of His Word. Just my thoughts. Thx Ron---God Bless, bro.Daryl

The Church...who's in charge? - posted by Holywarrior, on: 2005/1/29 13:13

Philologos wrote:

"The single, monarchical, bishop has no place in biblical revelation."

The problem is that 95% of all churches these are run by a single, monarchical figure. Reverends, pastors etc. You name it.

No modern day church is being run like the New Testament churches.

This is part of the problem of the modern day church and the problems it faces.

People quote pastors and single figures but rarely will you here : "You know...our church believes"

If the church returns back to the place where nobody (no pastor, no reverend) is above somebody else, we will have churches which is not pastor driven but driven by people who are on fire for God.

Brother on Christ
Holywarrior

Re: The Church...who's in charge?, on: 2005/1/29 13:29

Where are the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists and teachers? Should not these have their place in the kingdom of God? Well, I think they certainly do. But most who are God called and not self proclaimed do not fit well in the kingdom of a monarch pastor whose kingdom and income are one and the same.

God gave leaders for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry. I ask you, are the saints perfected for the work of the ministry? Or are they simply spectators who show up 3 times a week to relieve their self perceived spiritual obligation and hope to be entertained in the process?

Re: The Church...who's in charge? - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/1/29 14:05

Quote:

-----holywarrior wrote: No modern day church is being run like the New Testament churches.

You would have to have 100% knowledge of the whole world to be able to make this statement, and there are certainly some which are trying.

Re: The Church...who's in charge? - posted by dohzman (), on: 2005/1/29 14:37

The church by in large is in a little trouble however, from what I know of leadership, most leadership will, if a man or woman who is faithful and displays a committed lifestyle toward Jesus Christ has something of wisdom, direction, etc... from the Lord, I've seen these servants of God change or move in that direction. The important thing to remember is that they have to know the person through whom the gifting is coming. A lot of people want to church hop and be recognized immediately as some sort of super apostle and that is foolishness.

Re: The Church...who's in charge? - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/1/29 14:43

Quote:

If the church returns back to the place where nobody (no pastor, no reverend) is above somebody else, we will have churches which is not pastor driven but driven by people who are on fire for God.

My understanding on this is that within an eldership team there is one delegated leader, who is leading the team that is leading the church. For queries on presiding elder, do a quick study on the angels of John's revelation.

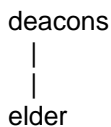
Scriptures and Doctrine :: The Authenticity of Biblical Leadership

It looks roughly like this:

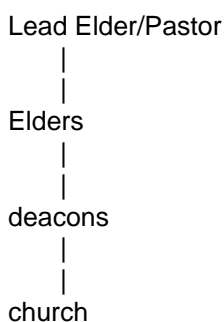
church----->deacons--->elders---->lead elder

Note that they are on the same level as each other, the only difference is that one is in front taking the hits. Paul said follow me as follow Christ, same thing in NT church model.

Some churches have this as leadership:



The deacons tell the elder/s what they want, and if they don't like the 'pastor' they ship him out. The kingdom of God is not a democracy neither is it a dictatorship like this:



The first model places a lot of responsibility on the leader, because he has to go before the people to lead them in and lead them out.

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/1/29 14:54

Quote:

Lahry wrote:

God gave leaders for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry. I ask you, are the saints perfected for the work of the ministry? Or are they simply spectators who show up 3 times a week to relieve their self perceived spiritual obligation and hope to be entertained in the process?

I'll tell you how NCMI started, it was a bunch of men who met together to build friendship and share their hearts together, out of that environment the individual giftings of the men were recognised by the rest of the team. They realised that they had a common vision to see the nations won and disciplined for Christ's return. Out of those meetings together was relationships forged which form the basis of anything that the team get involved in.

The basis for all ministry is relationship with God and with the churches into which they minister.

The goal of christian leadership is that the saints are equipped to fulfill works of ministry that God has prepared in advance for them to do. If leadership is not doing that, what are they building? It would seem a place where we gather more and more people and forget that Christ's commission is Mathew 28:19,20

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/1/29 18:12

Quote:
-----My understanding on this is that within a eldership team there is one deligated leader, who is leading the team that is leading the church. For queries on presiding elder, do a quick study on the angels of Johns revelation.

Hi ZekeO

If the angels of the Revelation churches are the presiding elders these letters are addressed to them and not to the churches over which they preside. Every rebuke and route of repentance is expressed in the 2nd person singular. This would have put a responsibility upon a single person in a way that has no similar pattern throughout the New Testament.

I don't believe the angels of the churches were presiding elders.

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/1/30 0:55

Quote:

philologos wrote:
I don't believe the angels of the churches were presiding elders.

I didn't think you would. :-D

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/1/30 6:18

Quote:

Quote:
-----philologos wrote: I don't believe the angels of the churches were presiding elders.

I didn't think you would.

I know you didn't ask but I'll tell you anyway... who I think the messengers of the churches were. :-D

You may have heard of Clement of Rome? He is almost certainly the author of a letter sent from Rome to Corinth some where around 95-100 AD. (this is the exact period of the writing of Revelation)

The Epistle of Clement To the Corinthians (also called I Clement) (more details here) can be found in collections of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, such as the Penguin Paperback Early Christian Writings, translated by Maxwell Staniforth. The letter is commonly dated around 96 AD, but recently an earlier date has been suggested.

The letter is occasioned by the fact that a group of Christians at Corinth had banded together against their leaders and had deposed them from office. Clement writes to tell them that they have behaved badly, and to remind them of the importance of Christian unity and love. He speaks at length of the way in which each kind of official in the church has his own function for the good of the whole. The letter is an important witness to the early Christian understanding of Church government, but an ambiguous witness in that we are never told precisely why the Corinthians had deposed their leaders, and therefore the letter can be read as saying that presbyters ought not to be deposed without reasonable grounds, or as saying that they cannot be deposed on any grounds at all.

The letter refers only to the presbyters of Corinth, and makes no reference to the bishop of Corinth. Moreover, there is no mention of a bishop at Rome--the letter is sent as from the Church at Rome collectively, and Clement's name does not appear. From this, some have inferred that the office of bishop had not yet developed at either Rome or Corinth, and that in both congregations the office of presbyter was the highest office known. A probable alternate explanation, however, is that the troubles in Corinth had arisen when the bishop of that congregation had died, and the congregation had split into factions, none containing both a majority of the presbyters and a majority of the congregation.

The Roman Catholics call him the third Pope, the Anglicans call him the third bishop of Rome; both designations are anachronisms. There is no evidence for papacy or monarchical episcopacy at this period of church history. Nevertheless he was clearly known to the church in Corinth; his opening words give a thrilling insight into the way these 1st century Christians regarded 'church'; *The Church of God which sojourns at Rome, to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth, to them that are called and sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from Almighty God through Jesus Christ, be multiplied.* The churches saw themselves as sojourners, temporary dwellers in a location, and the concept of territorial churches with territorial bishops is totally absent.

Clement seems to have been one of the elders in the 'sojourning church at Rome', but he must have been known to the 'church at Corinth' for this letter to have any authority. He does not write from his own Episcopal authority however, but as speaking for the whole church at Rome. He is functioning as a 'secretary'. Not the kind that makes the coffee, but the kind that undertakes the official administration of a company. We might call him a 'corresponding secretary'; he was the communications person. When Paul wrote to the church in Philippi he can't have addressed his letter to 'Philippi Christian Fellowship', 23 Alexander Street... He must have sent the letter to a link person. In fact we can see the shape of this person very dimly in Philippians. The formal address of the letter is to 'the saints which are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons', but a little later we hear him say 'I intreat thee also, true yokefellow...' (Php 4: 3) There was clearly 'someone' in Philippi to whom Paul despatched this letter. It is almost certain, I should think, that at this person was part of the 'oversight'. This anonymous person is clearly being used by Paul as the 'corresponding secretary' of the church at Philippi.

The notion of a 'presiding' or 'senior' elder is not found in the New Testament, although it is plain that different 'elders' could have different functions within the local church. The only reference to a 'senior' elder is in John's 3rd letter where he says *I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. (3Jo 1:9 KJV)* Here, clearly, someone is emerging as the pre-eminent elder with a 'love for first place' (the real meaning of pre-eminence). When Clement, writing at much the same time as 3 John and the Revelation, wrote on behalf of the church at Rome he names no such 'presiding elder' nor does he 'sign' the letter.

The word 'angel', of course, is the usual word for messenger. Paul refers to himself as a 'messenger of God' in Gal 4:14 and the Jericho spies are referred to using the same word in James 2:25. It may be that such 'corresponding secretaries' were trusted with key information passing between the churches; remember this was an underground organisation at this stage. No doubt the churches in Asia would have attempted to keep some contact with John in exile on Patmos; the natural person for such a key communication role would have been the 'church secretary'. I suggest that the most likely candidate for the 'messenger of the church at...' is this living link. Such a person fits perfectly into what we know of early church organisation at this time.

Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/2/2 6:39

Quote:

philologos wrote:

I know you didn't ask but I'll tell you anyway...

I love you man!

Quote:

-----The Epistle of Clement To the Corinthians can be found in collections of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers...

There is no evidence for papacy or monarchical episcopacy at this period of church history.

I understand your comments about 'secretary', but if he was just the secretary his writings would not have held such weight at a later stage. He was not the big shot in a corporation which seems to be the only leadership style which you feel exists and can exist only if we talk about 21st century project managers. I would venture to say that the bible has influenced 21st century project managers on the principles of leadership which God placed in his word thousands of years ago, that actually work. Team and team work being the most important. The sum of the whole being greater than the individual.

Quote:

He must have sent the letter to a link person. There was clearly 'someone' in Philippi to whom Paul despatched this letter. It is almost certain, I should think, that this person was part of the 'oversight'.

He was the leader of that team, that's who he was.:-)
This person made sure not only that the letter was read, but also implemented at a local level. Had the responsibility of not only maintaining his relationship with the team, but also shepherding the flock.

Quote:

The notion of a 'presiding' or 'senior' elder is not found in the New Testament.

I do not think that Jesus would have spoken to the messengers/secretaries in such a manner, as them just being the carrier, it seems that it is addressed to them as being part of the whole and directly responsible for the whole. He would have just addressed the whole church and excluded your understanding of them. The reference to holding them in his hand indicates that they were not just super-up messengers.

Quote:

Such a person fits perfectly into what we know of early church organisation at this time.

So what exactly do we know, or more appropriately you know about it? If we have gone over this before please show me the link. Thanks.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/2/2 7:55
Hi ZekeO

Quote:
----- I understand your comments about 'secretary', but if he was just the secretary his writings would not have held such weight at a later stage. He was not the big shot in a corporation which seems to be the only leadership style which you feel exists and can exist only if we talk about 21st century project managers. I would venture to say that the bible has influenced 21st century project managers on the principles of leadership which God placed in his word thousands of years ago, that actually work. Team and team work being the most important. The sum of the whole being greater than the individual.

You do understand that I am using the word secretary in a sense which is closer to a company secretary than to the office secretary? Actually, it's the opposite of what you suggest here. Clement is held in regard, mostly because of this letter, which is anonymous to us but almost certainly not to those who received it; he is writing on behalf of the church. This is NOT the letter of Clement to the church sojourning in Corinth; this is the letter of the church sojourning in Rome to the church sojourning in Corinth. What gave this letter its status was the esteem in which the church in Rome was held, not his personal office of the letter writer.

I would venture to say, :-) that 21st century project managers have influenced 21st century church leaders. We don't have 'teams' in the Bible we have 'fellowship'; we don't have org charts we have personal relationships.

Quote:
-----He was the leader of that team, that's who he was.
This person made sure not only that the letter was read, but also implemented at a local level. Had the responsibility of not only maintaining his relationship with the team, but also shepherding the flock.

Sheer speculation and not a fact to build it on! :-)

Quote:
----- I do not think that Jesus would have spoken to the messengers/secretaries in such a manner, as them just being the carrier, it seems that it is addressed to them as being part of the whole and directly responsible for the whole. He would have just addressed the whole church and excluded your understanding of them. The reference to holding them in his hands indicates that they were not just super-up messengers.

The 'super-up' messengers of the Communist states were the lifeline to the outside Christian world. This was the in and out port for all communication. Communication is a vital part of church fellowship. Local churches had a network not dissimilar from the internet, not single lines of contact but networks and hubs. If one of these links were broken between two churches the fellowship could always be rerouted. Clement, if it was him, was almost certainly part of the oversight in Rome, and as he was trusted to write the letter of the behalf of the church sojourning in Rome he was a man of high reputation, authority and responsibility within the oversight, BUT there is no 'evidence' that there was any primacy of one individual in the early church with the single exception of James who represented a grouping rather than a local church.

These 'messengers', or equivalents, would have been the people who travelled great distances for the early church conferences. They would be expected to be able to 'speak for' the churches of which they were part. They carried the decisions of councils back to their home settings. They were 'chief men among the brethren' and 'chosen men' (Acts 15:22-25) but they were not 'The Leader'.

Quote:

Quote:
-----Such a person fits perfectly into what we know of early church organisation at this time.

So what exactly do we know, or more appropriately you know about it? If we have gone over this before please show me the link. Thanks.

I am not as old as you think! ;-)
If you are ever able to get hold of
The organization of the early Christian churches. Eight lectures delivered before the University of Oxford, in the year, 1880
Hatch, Edwin
Publisher: New York, B. Franklin
ISBN: 0-83374-163-2 LCC: BV648 you will find the most erudite Anglican scholar whose grasp of the scene is astonishing. This was a series of lectures delivered in Oxford. His grasp of the writings of the early fathers was stunning. Some have wondered how the Anglicans could have heard this and remained unchanged, but that misses a fundamental point. Anglicanism believes in transition and that the Holy Spirit continued to guide church organisation, so they are able to separate between what they find in the Acts and first century and what things 'ought to be like'. There needs to be no correlation. They can examine the early church without the need to change their own patterns, consequently they can be more objective than some who, unintentionally perhaps, are actually looking for justification for the way they do things
.

Many of the most quotable parts were reproduced in a book called
'The Churches of God' G H Lang.

These books show the inter-dependence of the local churches, with considerable communication between them. (The Acts is an amazing travel diary - the mobility of the early Christians was considerable, hardly anyone appears in the same place twice!!)
These books also show the increasing organization and consequent control of the churches in the late first century and into the second. I don't know if you have read Ignatius, but he works so hard to convince that hierarchy is the only way that it becomes quite clear that he had his own agenda which was not the norm for the churches at that time. It may be the second law of thermo-dynamics that entropy increases, but it certainly isn't a law of organisation. Organisation increases as time passes, inevitably, almost always as a means of increasing control. The gap between early church dynamic and Catholic hierarchy is filled with lots of little steps not great leaps.
These books show that the structure was never more complicated than a group of elders mentored by individual apostles

and strengthened by the four itinerant gifts groups of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor and teachers. Organisation was spontaneous and not standardised. There is no biblical reference to a 'leading elder' concept. Eldership was always multiple, and there is no evidence for any other layers.

These books also show the wonderful variety with unity that was evident in the early church. FF Bruce once commented that the early church was designed for catastrophe. Its flexibility and powers of recovery were the consequence of a dynamic life in the Spirit not proto-project management.