

**CHURCH GOVERNMENT IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH
IN GHANA AND THE METHODIST CHURCH GHANA
IN A NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE**

BY

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DECLARATION

It is hereby declared that this thesis is the outcome of research work undertaken by the author. Any assistance obtained has been duly acknowledged. The work has neither in part nor whole been presented for another degree to any other University.

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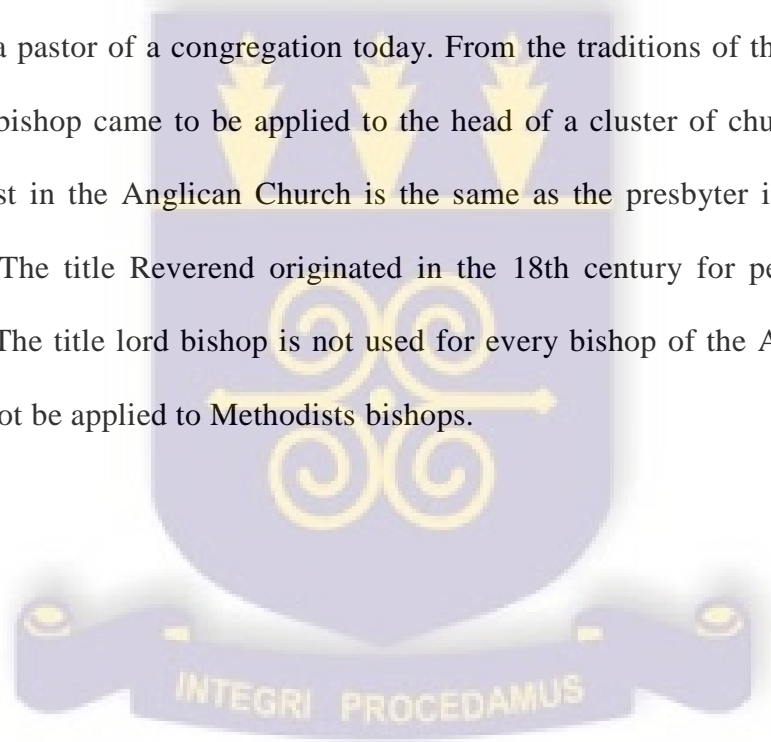
ABSTRACT

This work is concerned with the divergent opinions on church government in the Anglican and Methodist Churches. At the 1999 Methodist Church Conference, at which there was a resolution to adopt the episcopal system of church government, the 'laity' admitted that they lacked adequate understanding about the systems of church government. Also, a claim that was made by the Methodist Church Ghana during and after the discussions to adopt episcopacy was that her episcopacy is more biblical. Despite this claim, a former presiding bishop appealed at the 2002 Methodist Church Conference that the church considers the Anglican system where the bishop serves until retirement at the age of seventy. In the choice of titles, both denominations call their pastors Rev. Minister. In addition, the Anglican Church uses deacon, priest and bishop whereas the Methodist Church Ghana uses deacon, presbyter and bishop. Furthermore, the phrase 'lord bishop' is erroneously used in the Methodist Church Ghana. Also, after 2002, discussions seem to suggest that some people in the Methodist Church Ghana prefer the federal system. It is obvious that the Methodist Church is not certain of the system of church government to practice.

This uncertainty and lack of adequate knowledge about the systems of church government make it necessary for a study to be conducted to find out the nature and origins of the organisational structure of the church. The study involves a survey of the New Testament and Church History for the origins, nature and development of church government.

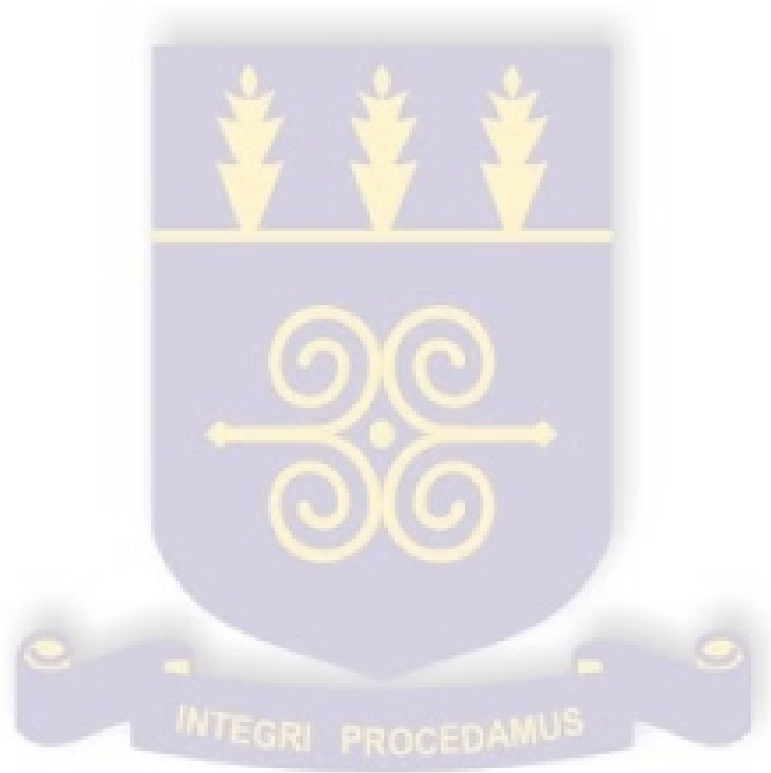
The exegetical method is used to find out the nature and origins of church government. A survey of church tradition is also made to find out the development of church government through the ages. Findings from the study show that people in decision-making bodies lack adequate knowledge of the nature of church gov-

ernment. Also, the NT does not prescribe a particular pattern of church government. Proponents of the various types of church government give biblical basis to their type of church government. The pattern of church government in the Methodist Church Ghana is biblical but not more biblical than that of other denominations. The bishop in the New Testament is head of a congregation. Evidence even points to a college of presbyters, and the word 'presbyter' was sometimes used synonymously for bishop. There was no record of a bishop serving a term of office. This may be due to the fact that the bishop in the New Testament may well be the equivalent of a pastor of a congregation today. From the traditions of the two churches, the title bishop came to be applied to the head of a cluster of churches (diocese). The priest in the Anglican Church is the same as the presbyter in the Methodist Church. The title Reverend originated in the 18th century for people worthy of honour. The title lord bishop is not used for every bishop of the Anglican Church and cannot be applied to Methodists bishops.



DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to The Late Very Rev, Joseph Wilson, under whose superintendency, I was candidated into the ordained ministry; the Rt. Rev. Dr. John Kofi Agbeti, who taught me Church History; the Rev. Dr. Benhardt Y. Quarshie and the Rev. Prof. Dan J. Antwi, who taught me New Testament Studies and Greek; and the Rt. Rev. Joseph Osei Bonsu who taught me New Testament Studies.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation of Books of the Bible

Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
Ruth	Ruth

1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Sam	2 Samuel
1 Kgs	1 Kings
2 Kgs	2 Kings
1 Chron	1Chronicles
2 Chron	2Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Job	Job
Ps(s)	Psalm(s)
Prov	Proverbs
Isa	Isaiah
Ezek	Ezekiel
Matt	Matthew
Mark	Mark
Luke	Luke
John	John
Acts	Acts
Rom	Romans
1 Cor	1 Corinthians
2 Cor	2 Corinthians
Gal	Galatians
Eph	Ephesians
Phil	Philippians
Col	Colossians
1 Thess	1 Thessalonians
2 Thess	2 Thessalonians
1 Tim	1 Timothy
2 Tim	2 Timothy
Tit	Titus
Phlm	Philemon
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
1 Pet	1 Peter
2 Pet	2 Peter

1 John	1 John
2 John	2 John
3 John	3 John
Jude	Jude
Rev	Revelation

Abbreviations of Journals, Commentaries, Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias

ABNT	Albert Barnes' Notes on the New Testament
ACC	Adam Clarke's Commentary
BCB	Baker's Commentary on the Bible
BEC	Bible Exposition Commentary
BI	The Biblical Illustrator
BKC	Bible Knowledge Commentary
EDT	Evangelical Dictionary of Theology
Exp Tim	Expository Times
IBC	International Bible Commentary
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia
JBC	The Jerome Biblical Commentary
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBR	Journal of Bible and Religion
JFB	Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary
NBC	New Bible Commentary
NIDNTT	The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology
NTS	New Testament Studies
JSNT	Journal for the study of the New Testament
TCGNT	Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament
TDNT	The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
WEONT	Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament
WWTCM	Word and Word Theology for Christian Ministry

Abbreviation of Grammatical Words

acc	accusative
cf	confer, compare
fem	feminine
fut.	future
lat	latin
masc	masculine
nom	nominative
pl	plural
pers	person
sg	singular
v.	verse

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

1.1 Introduction

The church as the body of Christ can be described as an organism which has many parts. To enable these parts to function effectively, there is the need for co-ordination. As a group, and to enable her discharge her duties, to produce harmony, peace and concord, the church needs some form of organisation to avoid chaos and anarchy. Accordingly, the church could also be considered as an organisation. Regarding the organisation of the church, there are three main types of church government. They are the episcopal, presbyterial and congregational systems of church government.

The Episcopal form of church government is also commonly referred to as monarchical or hierarchical system of church government. Episcopacy is a system of church government based on the three orders or offices of the ministry, namely, bishops, priests (from the word presbyter) and deacons. The word 'episcopal' is from the Greek word *episcopos*, which means 'overseer' (Acts 20:28) and 'bishop' (Phil 1:2; 1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:7; 1 Pet 2:25). According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the origins of episcopacy are closely tied to the idea of apostolic succession, the belief that bishops can trace their office in a direct uninterrupted line back to the apostles of Jesus.¹ According to the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, apostolic succession is a theory that arose after AD 170-200.² With the emergence of heresies and

¹ 'Episcopacy' in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago/New York/London: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1994), 4:527; *Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2011).

² 'Apostolic Succession' in W. A. Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. (Michigan: Baker Academic/Paternoster, 2001), 89.

the desire to safeguard the doctrines of the church, it became necessary to link the bishops, as custodians of the truth, with the apostles. The Roman Catholic teaching is that the Roman Pontiffs come immediately after, occupy the position, and perform the functions of St. Peter; they are, therefore, his successors.³ The claim is based on the fact that:

- a) St. Peter came to Rome, and ended there his pontificate;
- b) The bishops of Rome who came after him held his official position in the church.

It is noted that not all Christian denominations share this view of apostolic succession. Regarding the episcopal system, the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox churches best typify this type of church structure. The Anglican Church is synodically governed and episcopally led.

The second type of church government is the federal, representative form. This type is also known as the Presbyterian system. The word 'Presbyterial' is taken from the Greek word *presbyteros*, translated as 'elder' or 'presbyter'. This is the type of church government practised by the Presbyterian and Reformed churches.

In this type of government, each local church duly elects ruling elders to represent them. This elected body constitutes the church session. There is usually a distinction between types of elders. Elders of one of the groups govern, teach, preach or administer the sacraments. The other can only govern.

A cluster of sessions constitutes the presbytery. The presbytery includes all ordained ministers or teaching elders and one ruling elder from each local congregation in a given district. Pastors are elected by their own congregations but they must

³ See 'Apostolic Succession' in *Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*.

be approved by the presbytery. Presbyteries constitute the synod, which means, 'company'. The highest body is the General Assembly. Some scholars make reference to Acts 14:23 and Tit 1:5, and mention that arguments in support of the federal type include the fact that elders were appointed by the apostles. C Ryrie, for instance, cites Heb 13:7, 17 that there were obviously rulers over the churches besides the apostles. In matters of discipline the leaders gave instructions as to what to do (1 Cor 5; 1 Tim 5: 20). He also indicates that passages concerning ordination or laying on of hands imply the federal system.⁴

Lingle also suggests that the Jerusalem Council (in Acts 15) illustrates the federal type of church government. He writes that if the church at Antioch had been entirely independent it could have settled this question of circumcision for herself. The church had not as yet developed effective administrative structures. However, with such men as Paul and Barnabas present, it was abundantly able to do so. As it was, the church at Antioch referred the question to a church council at Jerusalem. The church council was composed of apostles and elders. Lingle believes that it must have looked a good deal like a Presbyterian Synod or General Assembly. This council, composed of apostles and elders, after full deliberations, settled the question authoritatively, and that the church at Antioch and other churches accepted its decisions. The apostles were regarded as authoritative in the church.

The third type of church government is the congregational, democratic form. This practice is adopted by Baptist, Congregational, Evangelical Free, Disciples of Christ and independent Bible churches. Adherents of this form of government believe that no outside person or group of persons should exercise authority over a local as-

⁴ H. L. Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible* (Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers Inc., 1984), 705.

sembly. The pastor is considered to be the single elder in the church. He is called and elected by the congregation. Deacons are then chosen to assist him in pastoring the congregation. On this position, C. Ryrie mentions that:

The arguments in favour of this form of government include the many passages that speak of responsibilities of the entire Church (1 Cor 1: 10; Phil 1: 26), the passages which seem to commit the ordinances of the Church to the entire group, not just the leaders (Matt 28: 19,20; 1 Cor 11:2,20), the apparent involvement of the whole Church in choosing leaders (Acts 6: 3,5; 15:2 30, 2 Cor 8:19), and the fact that the whole Church was involved in exercising discipline (Matt 28:17; 1 Cor 5; 2 Thess 3:14ff).⁵

C. Ryrie further asserts that under the congregational system, the pastor is usually considered to be a single head in the church. This is supported by the fact that the seven churches of Rev 2 and 3 apparently had a single leader (called the ‘angel’ but referring to a human leader). Also, in 1 Tim 3, the first part of the passage speaks of the bishop in the singular, while the latter part (vs. 8-13) mentions the deacons (in the plural). This would seem to indicate that there was only one bishop in each church although there were several deacons. This is cited by congregationalists to support the view that the bishop was the head of a congregation (the local church). This work is concerned with the divergent opinions on church government in the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana. The Methodist Church Ghana and the Anglican Church belong to a group of churches described as ‘historic churches’ or ‘mainline churches’ in Ghana. Sometimes they are referred to as ‘orthodox churches’. These ‘orthodox churches’ should be distinguished from the Orthodox Church, which is one of the three major branches of Christianity. The word orthodox (from Greek, ‘right-believing’) implies the claim of doctrinal consistency with apostolic truth. Other designations, such as Orthodox

⁵ Willmington, *Willmington’s Guide to the Bible*, 705.

Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox, are used in reference to the Orthodox Church.⁶

The Methodist Church Ghana, as it emerged from the Anglican Church in the eighteenth century, did not adopt the episcopal form of church government of the latter. Rather, the Methodist Church adopted the presbyterial form of church government. However, the Methodist Church in America started with the episcopal form of church government. In Africa, other Methodists in Nigeria and Kenya have also adopted episcopacy.

The activities of the missionaries of the Methodist and Anglican churches in Ghana resulted in the planting of churches in Ghana after the pattern of the mother churches in Britain. On 23 January 2000, the Methodist Church Ghana made a public declaration that it had adopted episcopacy.

According to Daniel Jenkins, much of the influence on churches throughout the world to adopt episcopacy came from the Anglican Church in the United States of America.⁷ The reasons posited for the adoption of episcopacy, from Methodist Church records and also by Daniel Jenkins are:⁸

1. Episcopacy is more biblical than the other systems of church government.
2. It preserves and maintains the church's apostolicity.
3. It ensures apostolic succession.
4. It is ecumenical, that is, in line with the increasing number of churches, which are turning episcopal, and is understood by the ecumenical community.

⁶ 'Orthodox', *Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*.

⁷ Daniel Jenkins, *The Protestant Ministry* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1958), 52.

⁸ Methodist Church Ghana, Thirty-first Annual Conference Agenda, Representative Session (1992), HR 15 - HR 18; Methodist Church Ghana, Thirty-eighth Annual Conference Agenda, Representative Session (1999), GPC 1; Daniel Jenkins, *The Protestant Ministry*, 52, 57.

5. It provides for effective work, that is, it unites the church and provides for a unique form of pastoral oversight.
6. The adoption of episcopacy will assist in the development of church structures and clearly distinguish our overseers from the other officers of the secular and our own church organisations.
7. The title 'Bishop' is appropriate to our age of gender consciousness. The argument put forward was that the word 'chairman', as it were, excluded women from the office. To be gender sensitive, the title 'Bishop' was preferred.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Though the authority of the bishop of the Anglican Church and that of the bishop of The Methodist Church Ghana are enshrined in their church constitutions, the Bishop of the Anglican Church appears to enjoy more autonomy than his counterpart in the Methodist Church Ghana. The first problem raised is that since The Methodist Church Ghana borrowed the idea of episcopacy from existing episcopal forms, there must be the need for uniformity, or explanations for variations.

Secondly, some members of The Methodist Church Ghana, since the adoption of the episcopal system of church government, have been wondering about the nature of the authority of the Bishop and the origin of the office of the Bishop.

Another related problem has to do with titles in the churches. The Anglican Church in Ghana employs the titles Bishop, Priest and Deacon whilst the Methodist Church Ghana uses Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon. Before January 2000, the Methodist Church Ghana addressed all pastors by the title Reverend Ministers. The Chairman of the District, after January 2000, came to be known as Bishop of

the Diocese, and was also addressed as Right Reverend. Some of the issues raised are:

- a. Are some titles more biblical than others?
- b. Is there any difference between the 'Priest' in the Anglican Church and the 'Presbyter' in the Methodist Church Ghana?

Also, in the Anglican Church, the title 'My lord Bishop' is applied to certain bishops who belong to the House of Lords. The title 'My lord Bishop' is used in the Methodist Church Ghana, though unofficially, to address all bishops. Some people are not very comfortable with the idea of referring to the bishop as 'My lord'. Some wonder whether there is any scriptural basis for such titles used in the church. This calls for research on the origins of titles used in the church and their implications.

There is also the problem of lack of education on the nature of church government in the New Testament and its implications for the Christian community in Ghana. At the 1999 Methodist Church Conference held at Koforidua at which the decision to adopt episcopal form of church government was taken, it became clear that people in the highest decision making body such as the Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana did not understand the nature of episcopacy. It was very surprising that the lay members of Conference could say without any reservation that they were prepared to accept whatever decision the ministerial members of Conference reached because they, the lay members, did not understand the nature of church government in the NT. One would have thought that the church would educate the members on the nature of church government before taking a decision on the form of church government to adopt. Even though the decision has been taken, it is still proper to offer some form of

education on the nature of church government. This information would be essential to future decisions of the church relating to the pattern of church government.

During the discussion on adopting Episcopal form of church government, the Methodist Church used the words ‘ours is a biblical pattern of episcopacy’. This can be very controversial, especially, in relating to other episcopal churches. It may imply that the episcopal patterns in other churches are not biblical. It is necessary for the Methodist Church Ghana to justify or modify this claim.

Furthermore, the office of the Bishop in the Anglican Church is a life-appointment. He serves as a Bishop till he retires at the old age of 70 years. In the Methodist Church Ghana, a Bishop serves a six-year term. Upon completion of term of office, the Bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana steps down from office and a new one, elected in the last year of a reigning Bishop, takes over the reins of government. The Bishop who has completed his or her term of office may be elected to a higher office of the Presiding Bishop or may be elected as the Bishop of another diocese or superannuate (retire) or may serve under another Bishop.

The idea of a past Bishop serving under another Bishop was an issue of concern during the discussions to adopt episcopacy. During the discussion on the adoption of episcopacy, the idea of appointing a bishop for life was rejected. It happened that all the bishops, who were nominated to contest for elections for appointment as bishops in other dioceses, lost in their bid and had to be posted to other dioceses to serve under other bishops.

In the case of the first Presiding Bishop, Most Rev. Dr. Samuel Asante Antwi, he appealed for extension of his term to coincide with his superannuation (retirement). In his closing remarks at the 2002 Biennial Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana held in Kumasi, the Presiding Bishop drew attention to the

need to reconsider the issue of term of office, that is, whether it should be a life appointment or remain as a term of six years. This was rejected and a new Presiding Bishop, Most Rev. Dr. Robert Aboagye-Mensah was elected and designated to assume office in October 2003. At the 2002 Kumasi Conference, an Ad Hoc Committee on the episcopacy was set up. The committee raised issues that were classified under three headings:

1. Constitutional Issues
2. The Biblical Episcopacy, Theological/Cultural Issues and
3. Historical/Local and Universal Contextual Issues

If one considers the fact that these issues were raised barely two years after the public proclamation of the adoption of the episcopal system of church government, then it can be said with much certainty that adequate education on the subject of the episcopacy was not done before its adoption by The Methodist Church Ghana.

The General Purposes Council (GPC)⁹⁹ of the Methodist Church accepted the recommendations and the various dioceses were directed to discuss the report from the Ad Hoc committee of 2002 at their respective synods. The views of the various dioceses were collated for further discussion and an Episcopal Review Committee (ERC) was constituted. The committee's report is discussed in Chapter Two of this work.

As it happened, the first Presiding Bishop, Most Rev. Samuel Asante Antwi, after completion of his tenure, could not accept posting to serve under another bishop. The reason he gave was 'ill-health.' He was in that condition until he su-

⁹⁹ The General Purposes Council is a council of all bishops, Synod Secretaries, Directors of various church boards and divisions, and lay representatives of the Methodist Church Ghana.

perannuated. The next Presiding Bishop, Most Rev. Robert Aboagye-Mensah completed his tenure in September 2008 but could not accept stationing as Superintendent Minister to serve under another bishop. His name was officially placed as Senior Lecturer at the Trinity Theological Seminary and Methodist University College. Two years later, he had to be posted as a circuit minister to serve under a Superintendent Minister.

Some people are of the view that it is not proper for a presiding bishop or a bishop to end his tenure after a six-year term and serve under another bishop, or sometimes serve in the much lower office of circuit minister. Comparison is made with the Anglican Church, where the bishop serves till retirement at the old age of seventy years. They buttress their view with the argument that in African culture, a leader does not step down to take a lower office. This may be seen as demeaning or a form of punishment. The call of the presiding bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana at the close of the 2002 Conference, for a consideration of the term of office of the presiding bishop, which obviously affects the term of office of the bishop, and the discussions on the episcopacy in the Methodist Church Ghana indicate that she (the Methodist Church Ghana) is not yet resolved in her attempts to contextualise the NT idea of church governance.

The Methodist Church Ghana is facing the challenge of seeking to be relevant to contemporary culture yet remain faithful to the biblical record that outlines both the nature and mission of the church. Many Christian denominations claim that the leadership of their church is based on clear biblical teaching. There has been much discussion and debate throughout the centuries about the 'bibli-

cal' pattern of church leadership.¹⁰ The difficulty lies in the fact that there are so many different leadership structures existing today, all claiming the Bible as their primary source and authority.

Concerning the social structure of the church, one can say that changes in culture may necessitate certain developments in the church. This is evident in the different forms of organisational structures and practices of the churches of Christ at present. Sometimes the structures of the churches appear to be entirely different from what we find in the NT. Under these circumstances of changes in culture, there is the tendency to turn to existing practical, political or economic conditions to evolve structures or to modify existing ones to deal with present needs. There is also a lot to be learnt from the NT and the history of the church.

An approach is to study the whole of the NT writings as well as selected passages in order to discover what the first Christians did, and the rationale behind their actions respecting the creating or establishing of offices or leading roles in the church. In so doing, one can develop a broader consistency in church leadership structures while allowing for diversity in each unique situation. Leadership principles in the Bible include the following:¹¹

1. Each believer having a ministry (the priesthood of all believers).
2. Some believers called to church leadership.
3. The appropriate legitimisation of leaders.
4. Leadership patterns that reflect in some way the prevailing culture.

¹⁰ R. Banks, 'Church Order and Government,' Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, & Daniel G. Reid (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1989), 131-132.

¹¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, 'The New Testament Church Pattern of Church Government,' http://www.biblicalfoundations.org/pdf/articles/midwestern_3.pdf accessed (6 June 2011); http://www.acu.edu/sponsored/restoration_quarterly/archives/1950s/vol_2_no_4_contents/barton.html (accessed 28 March 2010); Louis Rushmore, 'New Testament Church Government' @ Bible Info Net (accessed 28 March 2010).

5. Titles given based on function.

Although it is not the intention of this work to impose NT models on the Church in our times, by following biblical principles of leadership, strong and healthy churches can emerge in our community. In seeking to be biblical, there has been much discussion and debate throughout the centuries about the biblical pattern of church leadership. Various churches and denominations within the wider body of Christ often declare that their particular leadership structure is based on the teaching of the NT. So what is the NT pattern for church leadership?

The church is not a mere social club. One may argue that the Lord has established an ecclesiastical government by which his people are to be ruled. Just as there is civil government to ensure civil order, so must there be ecclesiastical government to preserve order in the church. A man is not free to dispense with the church's government any more than he is at liberty to disregard the civil authorities.

It is not the contention of this work that the divine order for church government extends to every detail. Some scholars have an approach to sacred truth, which is less interested in the quality of reasoning or adherence to authentic doctrine than in results. In this instance theological speculation has to be approached not in an open-mind hermeneutic of suspicion, asking what agenda various theologians may have in mind and what causes are being surreptitiously served. If the Methodist Church Ghana is aiming at a biblical pattern of church government, must it consider another denomination or the Bible? There is the need to explore the Bible and not another denomination. Thus the episcopal systems of both the Anglican Church in Ghana and the Methodist Church Ghana must be studied in the perspective of the NT. When this is done dispassionately, the Methodist Church Gha-

na will make very judicious use of the phrase ‘biblical pattern,’ regarding the pattern of church government.

1.3 Objectives

The study aims at bringing to light the nature of the organisational structure of the Anglican and Methodist churches in Ghana in the light of the NT. It also aims at a historical study to show the development of church government through the ages. In discussing the organisational structure of the Anglican and Methodist churches, the work also shows the level of knowledge and opinions of people in decision-making bodies in the Anglican and Methodist churches about church government. It must be noted that the pattern of government a church adopts is related to that church’s understanding of the nature of the church. According to Tite Tienou, African theologians have devoted comparatively little time and effort to ecclesiology. One reason is that most theologians think that the major problem lies with the need for selfhood and identity.¹² To Tite Tienou, there is the need to devote some effort to the ‘theology of the Church’ because most of the things we do in the church and for the church stem from our understanding of the ‘church’.

The objectives involve us to:

1. Examine how the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana are interpreting the NT idea of church government. This of necessity involves us in a study of the NT regarding the concept of the church and the manner the early Christian community was governed.

¹²Tite Tienou, ‘The Church in African Theology; Description and Analysis of Hermeneutical Pre-suppositions,’ D. A. Carson (ed.), *Biblical Interpretation and the Church* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), 152.

2. Examine the peculiarities in church government among the selected denominations. In the process, there is an attempt to establish a common platform by which the clergy of the Anglican and Methodist denominations under the different structures may be compared. Some of these peculiarities are the terms of office of the bishops of the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana, and also the titles used to designate various offices in these churches.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

When it comes to the source of authority for beliefs and practices of the church, the three usual 'authorities' which are appealed to in most discussions are the Holy Scriptures, human reason and community tradition. Richard Hooker, the famous Anglican theologian of the second half of the 16th century said that there are three possible sources of authority in religion, the Christian Bible, the Christian Church and Christian Reason.¹³ J. S. Pobee, in his work *The Anglican Story* also mentions Scripture, Tradition and Reason as sources of authority in the Anglican Church. The Methodist Church holds on to the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. The Wesleyan quadrilateral contains the four ingredients of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Scripture refers to the inspired and sufficient written word of God, the 66 canonical books of the Bible. Upon this foundation church traditions are adopted which agree with the biblical text, and those which are inconsistent are discarded. Next, reason is received as a gift intrinsic to the image of God. Finally, with Scripture, tradition and reason in place, human beings are prepared to experience the reality of God's love. But much as one believes that the idea of church government as it pertains in contemporary

¹³ J. I. Packer, 'Authority' in *New Bible Dictionary* (Illinois: IVP, 1965), 111-112; J. R. W. Stott, *Understanding the Bible* (London/California: SU, Regal, 1972), 181-184, 200-201; J. S. Pobee, *The Anglican Story in Ghana* (Accra: Amanza Ltd., 2009), 33-48.

churches has been influenced by the history of the church, the opinion of Eduard Schweizer must be noted that,

Church History will help in the task of interpretation, but it is not a second source of revelation. It is an interpretation which, is to be heard with the greatest respect, but which cannot absolve us from constantly returning to the source: for the history of the Church can just as easily be the history of a constantly reviewed understanding as of a constantly revealed misunderstanding. A real Church, therefore can exist only where, having regard to the problem, dangers, and promises of the existing situation, and listening in humility to previous history, we seek enlightenment afresh in the New Testament, not a legalistic reproduction of its details, but to heed, in the light of the gospel, the message that it contains.¹⁴

When it comes to a better understanding of developments in governance in the church after the NT period, church history is indispensable. But such an understanding can only be helpful when we know the background in the NT. So in this work, the background in the NT is considered first. Then a survey of the development of understanding of church government through the ages is made.

1.5 Rationale

A church that lacks order may not cease to be a church but its mission is impaired, as has been observed by Eduard Schweizer. Considering the time, energy, money and other resources that are expended on committee meetings to arrive at a decision only to question its tangibility three years later, it would be very necessary to be very meticulous to ensure that the resources of the church are not wasted.

The Methodist Church Ghana arrived at a decision to adopt the episcopal system of church government at the 1999 Koforidua Conference. In January, 2000, the Church officially adopted the episcopal system of church government. In 2003, the church was involved in discussions again whether to maintain episcopacy or to abol-

¹⁴E. Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1961), 19.

ish it and return to the federal/presbyterial system of church government which has been abandoned. Committees were appointed again at the connexional and diocesan levels to re-consider the issue of the adoption of episcopacy with its attendant problems. It is the opinion of this work that such issues must be discussed thoroughly, and those in decision-making bodies should be adequately informed to take appropriate decision. In this way the resources of the church expended on such committees could be applied to other areas of the church's ministry.

1.6 Scope of work

The work considers the systems of church government in the Anglican and Methodist churches and shows their similarities and differences. It continues, briefly, with the origins and nature of the church in the New Testament. Exegetical study of selected passages of the New Testament is made to arrive at the nature of church government in the New Testament. Owing to the fact that both churches under study also accommodate tradition and reason in the application of scripture to the churches' beliefs and practices, a survey of the history of the church to show how the nature of church government developed over the years.

1.7 Research Methods Employed

The work employs a combination of research methods. The exegetical method is employed for evidence in the NT about the nature of the organisational structure of the church. Also, the grammatical-historical method, which has been described as the sine qua non for any valid understanding of God's word,¹⁵ is resorted to in dealing with major titles applied to church officers. Words which are of

¹⁵ Bruce Corley (ed.), *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 217-234.

concern to us are apostle, bishop, elder, priest and deacon. The meanings of these words, as they are used in the NT are considered. Then a historical survey is also made to consider the changing phases or the development of the organisational structure of the church.

Our major source of information is data from the Bible. The NT and literary works on the NT are used for the work. This has to do with our attempts to explore the nature of church government in the NT. Outside the NT, there are resourceful aids in the histories of the denominations under study. The work relies on various works on the history of the church for the nature and changing phases of the system of government in the church.

After the introductory issues, the work continues with a study of the two denominations, namely the Anglican and Methodist churches in Ghana for their patterns and views of church government. The sample survey method is chosen to observe, report and analyse the views of policy-makers on church government in the two denominations under study.

1.7.1 Research design

Regarding the nature of church government in the selected denominations, there was a questionnaire on church government, which is attached as Appendix I. The aim of this was to find out the level of understanding and opinions of people in decision-making bodies of these churches about the types of church government.

1.7.2 Population

Regarding church government in the Anglican Church in Ghana and the Methodist Church Ghana, these two churches formed the population.

1.7.3 Sample and sampling procedure

Owing to the fact that the Anglican Church in Ghana does not have a conference embodying all the Anglican churches in Ghana that could be compared with the Methodist Church Ghana, two dioceses from these denominations under discussion are selected. The selected dioceses are the Accra Diocese of the Anglican Church and the Accra Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana. The selection is based on the reason of proximity and convenience. It is also the case that Accra is a cosmopolitan area and churches in this area are endowed with members who are very enlightened. When it comes to knowledge of church government, members of these churches would be more knowledgeable than members in other dioceses.

1.7.4 Instrument

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the study, survey questions were designed to get information regarding the views pertaining to the different patterns of church government.

1.7.5 Data collection and analysis

A pilot study was done using selected Anglican and Methodist congregations in Accra. The results of the pilot study helped to structure a questionnaire which was used to solicit information from the selected sample. The Synods of the selected Dioceses were used. Since these synods are the highest decision-making bodies in the respective dioceses, and members of the synods are representatives of the entire membership of the churches, the views of members of such bodies could be taken to represent the views of the churches.

After initial problems with the administration of the questionnaire, a new approach was adopted. This new approach was to get the respondents to complete the questionnaire at a meeting. The opportunity came when the Accra Diocese of

the Anglican Church had a one-day Conference on 8 May 2004. The Conference was made up of sixty-three clergy and 126 lay representatives. With the permission of the bishop, fifty members at the meeting (twenty-five clergy and twenty-five lay members), selected at random, were asked to complete the questionnaire, copy of which is attached as Appendix I. The Accra Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana had its Synod from 5 May 2004 to 9 May 2004. The Synod was made up of 165 clergy and 120 lay representatives. During the Synod, twenty-five members of the clergy and twenty-five members of the laity, selected at random, were asked to complete the same questionnaire. The data collected is analysed and discussed in Chapter Two.

1.8 Significance of work

The work will be of much help to all the Christian churches to know how their pattern of church government fits into the NT idea of church order.

1. It will enable us to reflect on the possibility that some structures in the church may not be developments but deviations from the original intent and purpose of the Christian community.
 2. Applying the principles of hermeneutics will aid us in our endeavours to adopt structures and practices suitable to the environment, and at the same time to be or remain biblical. The work will enable us to know how the Anglican Church in Ghana and the Methodist Church Ghana are interpreting the NT patterns of church government.
1. We also believe that the work will promote ecumenical relations. When people of the different denominations relate they will know the status of the various office holders because they will have a basis for comparison. The

work will enable the various denominations to understand the systems of church government in other churches. For example, members of the various denominations will understand the meanings of official titles employed in other denominations.

2. We also intend to put together data on the subject under study and make available information, which hitherto, was not available to decision-making bodies in the churches. Thus, it will provide a useful basis for future discussions and decision-making. The issues discussed are of contemporary importance and therefore relevant.

1.9 Brief literature review

Eusebius in his work *Ecclesiastical History* provides insight into the development of church government in the fourth century. He includes an appendix on the Council of Nicaea (325), which gives the background of the synod's authority, complete with some actual epistles as well as some sample letters from the Emperor Constantine I.

Also in the appendix are extracts of some of the canons of the Council of Nicaea regarding church government, and an early testimony of the primacy of Alexandria. Most important to our study, the observation is made of the role of elders.

Philip Schaff, in Chapter Ten of his work, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. I, discusses the organisation of the apostolic church. He treats briefly but factually, the scriptural and precedential portions of the first century under the themes:

1. The equality of the Presbyter/Bishop office according to scripture
2. The office of Deacons
3. Church Discipline

There is a fourth section which summarises the Council of Jerusalem as the basis for synodical precedent.

The ministerial office, Schaff observes, was instituted by the Lord before his ascension, and solemnly inaugurated on the first Christian Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, to be the regular organ of the kingly power of Christ on earth in founding, maintaining, and extending the church. Leaders in the church or church officers are called – not exclusively, but emphatically – the light of the world, the salt of the earth, fellow-workers with God, stewards of the mysteries of God, and ambassadors for Christ. And this unspeakable dignity brings with it corresponding responsibility.

Philip Schaff makes a very objective observation that nearly all denominations appeal to the NT for their church polity, with about equal right and equal wrong. He mentions that the Romanists appeal to the primacy of Peter; the Irvingites to the apostles and prophets and evangelists, and the miraculous gifts; the episcopalians to the bishops, the angels, and James of Jerusalem. Schaff adds that the Presbyterians appeal to the presbyters and their identity with the bishops; the Congregationalists to the independence of the local congregations and the absence of centralisation. He believes that the most that can be said is, that the apostolic age contains fruitful gems for various ecclesiastical organisations subsequently developed, but none of them can claim divine authority except for the gospel ministry, which is common to all. He states that it is certain that the officers of the apostolic or of any subsequent church, were not part of the original institution of the founder of our religion; that of Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon; of Metropolitan, Patriarch, and Pope, there is not the shadow of a trace in the four Gospels. To him, these offices arose gradually and developed out of the pre-existing institutions either of the Jewish synagogue, or of the Roman Empire, or of the

Greek municipalities, or under the pressure of local emergencies. Schaff mentions that Bishop and Presbyter were convertible terms, and that the body of men so-called were the rulers – so far as any permanent rulers existed – of the early church. It is certain that, as the necessities of the time demanded, first at Jerusalem, then in Asia Minor, the elevation of one Presbyter above the rest by the almost universal law, which even in republics engenders a monarchical element, the word 'Bishop' gradually changed its meaning, and by the middle of the second century became restricted to the chief Presbyter of the locality.

The ministry originally coincided with the apostolate; as the church was at first identical with the congregation of Jerusalem. No other officers are mentioned in the Gospels and the first five chapters of the Acts. But when the believers began to number thousands, the apostles could not possibly perform all the functions of teaching, conducting worship, and administering discipline; they were obliged to create new offices for the ordinary wants of the congregations, while they devoted themselves to the general supervision and the further extension of the gospel. Thus arose gradually, out of the needs of the Christian church, though partly at the suggestion of the existing organisation of the Jewish synagogue, the various general and congregational offices in the church. As these all have their common root in the apostolate, so they partake also, in different degrees, of its divine origin, authority, privileges, and responsibilities.

The government of the church in the NT, to Philip Schaff, was a labour of meekness and love, of self-denial and unreserved devotion to the eternal welfare of the people. Peter, the prince of the apostles, humbly calls himself a 'fellow-presbyter,' and raises his prophetic warning against the hierarchical spirit which so easily takes hold of church dignitaries and alienates them from the people.

Schaff indicates that the terms Presbyter (or Elder) and Bishop (or Overseer, Superintendent) denote in the NT one and the same office, with this difference only, that the first is borrowed from the Synagogue, the second from the Greek communities; and that the one signifies the dignity, the other the duty.

Schaff is of the view that the identity of these officers is very evident from the following facts:

- a) They appear always as a plurality or as a college in one and the same congregation, even in smaller cities as Philippi.
- b) The same officers of the church of Ephesus are alternately called presbyters and bishops.
- c) Paul sends greetings to the 'bishops' and 'deacons' of Philippi, but omits the presbyters because they were included in the first term; as also the plural indicates.
- d) In the Pastoral Epistles, where Paul intends to give the qualifications for all church officers, he again mentions only two, bishops and deacons, but uses the term presbyter afterwards for bishop.
- e) The interchange of terms continued in use to the close of the first century, as is evident from the Epistle of Clement of Rome (about 95), and the Didache, and still lingered towards the close of the second.

Schaff argues that with the beginning of the second century, from Ignatius onward, the two terms (Presbyter and Bishop) are distinguished and designate two offices; the bishop being regarded first as the head of a congregation surrounded by a council of presbyters, and afterwards as the head of a diocese and successor of the apostles. It is shown in this work that even in the second century, Hippolytus was not certain whether he was a bishop or a presbyter. Schaff cites J. B. Lightfoot that the

episcopate grew out of the presidency of the presbytery, or, the episcopate was formed, not out of the apostolic order by localisation, but out of the presbyters by elevation; and the title, which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them.

The presbyters, he believes, always formed a college or corporation, a presbytery; as at Jerusalem, at Ephesus, at Philippi, and at the ordination of Timothy. They no doubt maintained a relation of fraternal equality. The distinction of ‘teaching presbyters’ or ministers proper, and ‘ruling presbyters’ or lay-elders, is a convenient arrangement of Reformed churches, but can hardly claim apostolic sanction, since the one passage on which it rests only speaks of two functions in the same office.

The nearest approach to the idea of the ancient catholic episcopate may be found in the unique position of James, the Brother of the Lord. Unlike the apostles, he confined his labours to the mother church of Jerusalem. The institution of episcopacy proper cannot be traced to the apostolic age, so far as documentary evidence goes, but is very apparent and well-nigh universal about the middle of the second century.

On deacons or helpers, Schaff mentions that they appear first in the church of Jerusalem, seven in number. The author of the Acts 6 gives us an account of the origin of this office, which is mentioned before that of the presbyters. It had a precedent in the officers of the synagogue who had charge of the collection and distribution of alms. It was the first relief of the heavy burden that rested on the shoulders of the apostles, who wished to devote themselves exclusively to prayer and the ministry of the word. It was occasioned by a complaint of the Hellenistic Christians against the Hebrew or Palestinian brethren, that their widows were neglected in the daily distribution of provisions.

This work agrees with Schaff in his opinion that two of the Jerusalem deacons, Stephen and Philip, laboured also as preachers and evangelists, but in the exercise of a personal gift rather than of official duty. In post-apostolic times, Schaff continues, when the bishop was raised above the presbyter and the presbyter became priest, the deacon was regarded as Levite, and his primary function of care of the poor was lost in the function of assisting the priest in the subordinate parts of public worship and the administration of the sacraments. The diaconate became the first of the three orders of the ministry and a stepping-stone to the priesthood. At the same time the deacon, by his intimacy with the bishop as his agent and messenger, acquired an advantage over the priest.

The Christian Ministry by J. B. Lightfoot is another resourceful material. Bishop Lightfoot argues that by the third century, the episcopate had developed. The fact that he does not base his claim on biblical considerations is clearly evident in his view that as late as AD 70, there was no distinct sign of episcopal government in Gentile Christendom. Lightfoot also affirms that Clement still uses the term bishop in the older sense in which it occurs in the apostolic writings as a synonym for presbyter.

One of the sources used for this work is Church Order in the NT by Eduard Schweizer. The author's method is exegetical. Eduard Schweizer believes that there is no such thing as the NT church order. To him, even in the NT times, circumstances were varied, and it may be vital for the ecumenical dialogue that this trend must be acknowledged.

However, he is quick to point out that the fact that there is no such thing as NT church order does not mean people were free to organise the church the way they pleased. To Schweizer, it is possible to have an acceptable pattern of church order closer to the variations we have in the NT. He is of the view that the key to

understanding church organisation in the NT is to be found in the way we regard the NT as authority. He engages readers with a discussion of the authority of scripture for ordering of the church. Schweizer believes that a church that lacks order does not cease to be a church but its mission is hindered or impaired.

Eduard Schweizer examines the nature of the church order, starting with an understanding of the nature of the church in the time of Jesus Christ. To him, the Bible is not very clear that Jesus founded a church. To him, not even the institution of the Lord's Supper could serve as evidence of a foundation of the church. I will say that the very fact that Jesus called some people to proclaim the Gospel which involves transformation of lifestyles, and also instituted the Lord's Supper to be celebrated shows the coming into being of a group so distinct from others that they could be identified as a group that have turned the world upside down. It must be noted that not everybody in the world celebrates the Lord's Supper.

Another source for the current work is *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, by T. M. Lindsay. This is a very detailed work on the ministry of the church in the Early Church from the NT times to the time of Constantine I. The chief concerns of Lindsay in this work are three.

(a) Lindsay's aim is to show that there is a visible Catholic Church of Christ consisting of all those throughout the world who visibly worship the same God and Father, profess their faith in the same Saviour, and are taught by the same Holy Spirit. But the author does not insist that the church must find visible expression in a uniformity of organisation, of ritual worship or even of formulated creed. Thus, we are informed of the possibility of having variations in the organisation of the church.

(b) It is also the aim of Lindsay to show that there is and must be a valid ministry

of some sort in the churches which are branches of this one visible universal church of Christ. But ministry does not belong to a class or caste of superior office-bearers.

(c) It is to show that analogies in organisation, illustrative of the life of the primitive Christian communities can be more easily and more safely found on the mission fields.

In his presentation, Lindsay looks at the meaning of 'ecclesia' and its nature, the ministry and organisation of the church in Apostolic times and the Post-Apostolic times. He looks at the various offices, their relationship to one another and their linkage to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He considers factors of the environment that exerted some influence on the ministry and organisation of the church. The work under research shares the view that there must be a better understanding of the nature of the church to enable us deal with the issue of church government.

Another work which informs us on the nature of the church is *In God's Community*, edited by David J. Ellis and W. Ward Gasque. The work is a series of essays on the church, its nature and ministry. The work may be described as a handbook of church structure. In the book, the church is seen as the community of God in Christ. The church is examined in the light of the Bible. Some special areas treated are basis for leadership, source of authority, and Christian unity. However, the origins and meanings of offices in the church are not treated.

Another book used as secondary source is *The Church in the Bible and the World*, edited by D. A. Carson. The book is a collection of essays on various topics on the ministry of the church. In the work, very detailed discussions are made on the biblical theology of the church, and ministry in the NT. There is a

biblical view on the role of the Holy Spirit in church organisation. A critical examination of the relationship between the Spirit, office and function is made. The author did not make it his aim to discuss the origins and meanings of offices in the church. The origins and meanings of offices in the church and their relationships to OT offices are not treated.

The First Urban Christians - The Social World of the Apostle Paul by Wayne A. Meeks is another source of information for the current work. The book is a persuasive argument for the relevance of a thoroughgoing social historical perspective for an understanding of the setting, the community, the practices and the beliefs of the Pauline Christians. Among other things, the work discusses the social level of Pauline Christians, the formation of the Christian community and possible influences from the environment. The work also discusses principal practices like governance in the church. The offices in the church like bishop, elder, priest and deacon are discussed, even though the relationships between these offices are not given.

Another work to be relied on for the present work is an article. 'Finding the New Testament Church', written by Fr. Jon H. Braun. The author in his work mentions the response of the evangelical preachers, which was a reaction to the 'dated dead Protestant liberalism' in the 1960s and 1970s as 'All you need is Jesus'. To Fr. Braun, a thoughtful reflection quickly shuns such simplistic religion to be shallow and unfulfilling.

Much as Fr. Braun agrees that the type of church referred to is the NT Church, he admits that we are not in Jerusalem in AD 65. An attempt is made to trace the origins of the church from the Pentecost event mentioned in Acts 2. Concerning the government of the church, Fr. Braun mentions offices of the bishop,

presbyter and deacon. He is of the view that contrary to what some scholars propound, these offices existed from the very beginning of the church. He cites the passage in Acts 1:20, 'his bishopric let another take'. Fr. Braun argues, quite forcefully, that the offices of Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon were not later inventions but were integral part of the church as is read from the Acts of the Apostles. The author traces the history of church government through the time of the Reformation to current practice of the Orthodox Church.

Kevin Reed's Biblical Church Government will also be relied on. In this work, Reed considers the kingdom of Christ, citing Col 1:13. To him Christ has instituted civil government to ensure civil order and has established ecclesiastical government to preserve order in the church. He emphasises the importance of examining biblical principles of church polity.

Kevin Reed talks about four principles, namely, scriptural church officers, church courts, confessional standards and biblical church membership. One of the concerns of Kevin Reed is about a multitude of churches which exist and which militantly proclaim their autonomy. To him these churches arrogantly boast of no connection or common government with any other ecclesiastical assembly as though schism is a virtue. He further observes that an outgrowth of independent churches is the development of an entire industry of Para-church agencies and self-appointed ministers. He believes that a proper resort to church courts and scriptural confessionals could cure churches from these maladies of independency. Kevin Reed's work does not consider the relationships between charisma, function and office. The current work deals with these and also seeks to relate the principles in the works of Kevin Reed and others to the practice in the Anglican Church in Ghana and the Methodist Church Ghana.

The current work is also informed by *Ministry in Historical Perspectives* edited by H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D Williams. The first chapter of the work is an article by John Knox. John Knox treats the subject of ministry, showing the significance of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. With reference to Acts 1:17 and Eph 4:11-12, he draws attention to the fact that in the Acts of the Apostles, the apostolate, itself is referred to as diakonos (meaning ministry). John Knox admits that an account of the organisation of the ministry in the primitive church is confronted with insurmountable difficulties, to the effect that tracing a clear picture of the early ministry is simply beyond reach. The chronology of the early church documents and the varying nature of practices in the church in different geographic areas partly account for this.

To Knox, the supposition that the administration required in a first-century church was simpler than in a modern congregation of the same size is probably mistaken. As congregations expanded, the business of administration became more complex even in the first-century church. Such developments necessitated the adoption or modifying of structures to be able to contain the new challenges. Whatever the case, the emphasis was much more on function than office. Functions were recognised because they were believed to have proceeded from God. According to Knox, the board of elders developed like the Jewish Sanhedrin, with oversight of the church.

It appears that John Knox assumes that one form of church government is scriptural. He does not appear to consider the possibility of other systems of church government being scriptural. The current work considers such possibilities. Finally, the current work relates the principles and practices in the NT and Church History to practices in Anglican Church and Methodist Church Ghana.

The work under research also uses ideas from *The Church in God's Program* by Robert L. Saucy. In the work, one finds a solid analysis of the NT teachings about the doctrine and practice of the church. The book has detailed information on the meaning of the 'church', its nature and how it originated. The author expresses the view that Christ is building his church and that the church is the primary instrument through which he ministers in the world. The church bears the ambassadorial role for her Lord as sent ones with the message of reconciliation to the world as Christ was sent by the Father.

Saucy, however, admits that the guidelines in his work do not spell out the exact pattern for the church in all ages. Thus he is quick to add that the work is not a plea to reproduce in detail the NT churches. His aim was to explore the basic principles revealed in scripture.

The work of Saucy is very helpful to the current research in that it gives much information about church organisation in the NT. He discusses all the three main types of church government and finds evidence of their practice in the early church as found in the NT. In addition, he mentions certain ministries of the church, which relate to the organisational structure of the church.

However, the work does not give much information about the various elements of the three-fold ministry, namely, bishop, elder and deacon. The current work seeks to do a much more detailed work on these and also show the relationship between forms of ministry and the Holy Spirit. The work of Saucy does not deal with the opinions and attitudes of the members of the church to the various types of church organisation. The current work does this.

Mark Conner's work 'A New Testament Pattern for Church Leadership' is of tremendous assistance to the current work. Conner begins that many

Christians claim that the leadership pattern of their church is based on biblical teaching. At the same time, the leadership structures in these churches are different. In his presentation, Conner discusses the hermeneutical challenges to be faced in seeking to move from the diverse NT comments about leadership in the congregation to the life of the institutional church of our day.

According to Mark Conner, there is difficulty in attempts at seeking specific detailed pattern of leadership in the teachings of the NT. The trend in our times is that various church groups or denominations find ‘proof texts’ to justify their existing leadership structures. In doing so, they bring many cultural presuppositions to the Bible about the church. A better approach that Conner suggests is to study the NT writings in order to discover how the early church was governed.

To Conner, one can glean from the NT, principles that can be applied to our culture and time. One of the greatest challenges that the church in the modern world faces is the need to be relevant to its contemporary culture yet remain faithful to the biblical principles that outline both the nature and mission of the church. Conner is of the opinion that Jesus Christ said virtually nothing about how the church was to be governed. Also, the first churches were ‘house churches’ that were relatively smaller in membership and this influenced the leadership pattern of the church. Another source of influence, Conner says, was the Jewish culture. To him, ideas like servant of the synagogue and ruler of the synagogue, which were both office-bearers were borrowed into the church. Under the new dynamic of the Spirit, Conner indicates, these were transformed and the offices of bishop and deacon emerged in the life of the church. Christian elders are seen as the counterpart of Jewish elders, a group of senior men given a general oversight of the Christian

Community. These were given authority, which was part of the patriarchal culture of the time.

Mark Conner continues that with time, the church moved from charismatic church order to a more institutionalised church order. Structures, titles and patterns of leadership emerged and developed slowly. A variety of other ministries and leadership titles are mentioned which include prophets, teachers, evangelists and pastors, or more literally, 'shepherds'. Regarding the various positions of the church, Conner says that God gives some believers to be leaders in the church. He is of the opinion that the concept of ordained clergy being paid by the laity to do the ministry of the church is not a biblical paradigm. Though he sees church leadership in plurality, there seem to be an indication of one of the leadership team being the primary leader. As the community of believers became more established, there was the need for legitimisation. Conner concludes that though some of the current practices in the churches are not prescribed by the Bible, they may not be necessarily wrong.

The Church by Hans Küng is another vital source of information to the current work. Küng gives an outline of what it means to be the church, avoiding strict specifics while giving a broad outline within which there can, and should, be variations. Küng is not wary about challenging the status quo. His aim is to look at the biblical text, examining the pertinent passages, and more importantly taking a look at the church from the perspective of the whole of the NT. His basic concept throughout is that the church is not a stagnant entity, established at a certain point in history, then demanding that surrounding culture responds to it.

Hans Küng is of the opinion that every age has its own image of the church, arising out of a particular historical situation; in every age a particular view of the

church is expressed by the church in practice, and given conceptual form, post hoc or ante hoc, by the theologians of the age. He, however, acknowledges the weight of the authority of those who have gone before us, understanding as well that there is a constant factor which underlies what the church is at its essence. He discusses the foundations of the church as a part of the eschatological expectation of the coming kingdom of God. He then considers various vital images of the church, including the church as the People of God, the church as the Creation of the Spirit, and the church as the Body of Christ. From these and the perspective of the great creedal statement he concludes that the church is one, catholic, apostolic, and holy. Only with these foundations established, does Küng then seek to look at the structures of the church as seen in the offices, roles, and present government.

After establishing the historic basis of the Lord's Supper, Küng begins to look at the purpose and meaning of this gathering. He is of the view that the new fellowship which met to share meals was, according to the NT, characterised by eschatological joy (especially Acts 2:46): joy in the experience of this new fellowship, in the awareness of fellowship with the glorified Christ who would be present at the meal of the community and in their excited expectation of the approaching kingdom of God. To him, the Lord's Supper is a fellowship between the risen Christ and his present community.

Regarding the offices of the church, Küng takes up a rallying cry of the Protestant reformation which is the Priesthood of all believers. He maintains that all Christians are taught, led and supported by the Spirit directly, and they are all to live by the Spirit. Since the church is the creation of the Spirit, offices or roles must be based on the guidance of the Spirit. All believers, and not only those in offices, have roles to play. The anointing is not just given to prophets and kings, but to the whole

community, each individual being filled with the fullness of God. This means that all believers have direct access to God, allowing themselves to be a spiritual offering to God thus becoming holy in every action. Thus charisma must determine church government. Küng offers a tremendous outline for recovering fluidity in our structures, showing us the boundaries and guidelines which would let us end a rigid argumentative tendency.

We are very certain that the sources mentioned, and others cited, place us in a very confident position to be able to handle our task effectively and efficiently.

1.10 Structural organization of work

The work is in six chapters. Chapter One is the introduction and deals with a statement of differing opinions on the types of church government, that is, attempts by the Methodist Church Ghana to contextualise the NT idea of church order. This is in view of the fact that various Christian denominations have varying opinions on different types of church government. The objective of the work, the research methods employed and the significance of the work are dealt with in Chapter One.

Chapter Two, which is titled ‘Church Government in the Anglican and Methodist Churches’, discusses the historical backgrounds, patterns of church government and opinions of members of decision-making bodies in two denominations.

Chapter Three gleans selected passages of the NT for traces of evidence for a form of government for the church. In this chapter, we have briefly discussed the church's self-understanding as we read from the NT. This chapter examines what may be considered as early forms of church organisation in the NT by exegetical study of selected passages of the NT. The work examines the relationship be-

tween office, function and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Chapter Four deals with resourceful aids from the traditions of the Anglican and Methodist churches. Chapter Five is an evaluation of reasons posited for the adoption Episcopal system of church government. Conclusions and Recommendations is the title of the last chapter. As the title implies, conclusions are drawn and suggestions offered on the choice of any type of church government, its implications for the denominations concerned and ecumenical relations.

CHAPTER TWO

CHURCH GOVERNMENT IN THE ANGLICAN AND METHOD- IST CHURCHES IN GHANA

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a brief history of the two churches under discussion, and discusses their systems of church government. In addition, the chapter considers various opinions expressed by people in decision-making bodies of these denominations, and also some of the issues raised regarding church government in recent times.

2.2 Brief history of the Anglican and Methodist Churches in Ghana

The Church of England or Anglican Church is a Christian church in England, dating from the introduction of Christianity into that country.¹⁶ It is believed that the first Christian communities were probably established some decades earlier than the fourth century. Three English bishops are known to have been present at the Council of Arles in 314. Others attended the Council of Sardica in 347 and that of Ariminum in 360.¹⁷ A number of references to the church in Roman Britain are found in the writings of fourth century ‘Christian fathers’.

It was after the Norman Conquest (1066) that continental influence in England strengthened the connections between the English church and the papacy.¹⁸ The vigorous assertions of power successfully made by popes from Gregory VII to Innocent III between the late 11th and the early 13th centuries were felt in England too. Several times during the medieval period, English kings sought to limit the power of the

¹⁶J. E. Booty, ‘Anglican Communion,’ Microsoft® Student 2009 [DVD] (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008). See also ‘Anglican Communion,’ *Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*.

¹⁷J. E. Booty, ‘Anglican Communion,’ Microsoft® Student 2009 [DVD].

¹⁸ ‘Church of England,’ Microsoft® Student 2009.

church and the claims of its independent canon law, but without success until the reign of King Henry VIII.

The Acts of Parliament between 1529 and 1536 mark the beginning of the Anglican Church as a national church independent of papal jurisdiction. King Henry VIII, vexed at the refusal of Pope Clement VII to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, and to enable him marry Ann Boleyn, induced parliament to enact a series of statutes denying the Pope any power or jurisdiction over the Church of England. By so doing, King Henry VIII reaffirmed the ancient right of the Christian ruler to exercise supremacy over the affairs of the church within his domain. He received the support of the overwhelming majority of Englishmen, clerical and lay alike, chiefly because no drastic change was made in the Catholic faith and practices to which England was accustomed. In 1549 the first Anglican Book of Common Prayer was published and its use required of the English clergy by an Act of Uniformity.¹⁹

After the Restoration of Charles II in 1662, the use of the prayer book, revised to essentially its present form, was required by a third Act of Uniformity. An attack was made on the establishment of the Anglican Church when King James II attempted to reintroduce the practice of Roman Catholicism in England. King James II lost his throne to William III and Mary II in the ensuing revolution of 1688.²⁰

The Anglican Church made her presence in Ghana after the abolition of the Slave Trade and the settlement of some freed slaves in Sierra Leone. Then came the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. It was from this society that Rev. Fr. Thomas Thompson was appointed missionary to the Gold Coast (now Ghana). J. S.

¹⁹ 'Church of England,' Microsoft® Student 2009 [DVD].

²⁰ J. E. Booty, 'Anglican Communion,' Microsoft® Student 2009 [DVD].

Pobee mentions that the initiative of the arrival of the SPG missionary came from a trading company for chaplaincy needs.²¹ He indicates further that the Anglican Tradition in Ghana grew out of the Church in England, and it belongs to the Anglican Communion, which is a family of churches with the same but not necessarily identical uniform ethos.²² It was obvious that Rev Thompson had a vision of a local devolution church. It was the intention that the Africans would be trained to be in leadership positions of the church. As a result of chiefly climatic conditions, Rev. Thompson had to leave Ghana but with some three Ghanaian boys to be trained to be missionaries. Even though one of the boys, Philip Quaake, survived and returned to Ghana to work, he could not achieve much. However, a school, started by Rev. Thomas Thompson, which he continued, survived. Philip Quaake, in his time opened schools at Anomabo, Tantomquerre, Winneba, Accra, Komenda, Sekondi and Dixcove.²³ The products these schools became an African elite class with Christian background.

It was during the missionary activities of the Church Missionary Society (formed in 1799), a missionary wing of the Church of England, that Bishop Hamlyn was sent to Ghana in 1904. Pobee mentions that prior to the arrival of Bishop Hamlyn, John and Isaac Vanderpuije, with others presented a petition to Rt. Rev. Dr. Henry Cheeham, the Bishop of Sierra Leone to establish a parish of the Anglican Church in Accra.²⁴ Before the arrival of Bishop Hamlyn, Ghana (Gold Coast) had been transferred from the Diocese of Sierra Leone to the Diocese of Western Equatorial Africa. Hamlyn found Anglican congregations that had been established through individual African initiatives. Also, before the arrival of Bishop Hamlyn, chaplaincies had been

²¹ H. W. Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), 76-78; Pobee, *The Anglican Story in Ghana*, 105-106.

²² *Ibid.*, 9.

²³ *Ibid.*, 107.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

established connected to the Accra diocese. The Anglican Diocese of Accra was founded in 1909, and was split into Accra and Kumasi dioceses in 1973, and in 1981 split further into Accra, Cape Coast, Koforidua, Sekondi and Sunyani-Tamale.²⁵ The Sunyani-Tamale Diocese has become the two dioceses of Sunyani and Tamale. In 2003, Koforidua Diocese was split into Koforidua and Ho Dioceses. In 2006, Sekondi Diocese was split into two, Sekondi and Wiawso. It is noted also the Sekondi Diocese was re-designated Sekondi-Takoradi Diocese.

Methodism, on the other hand is a worldwide Protestant movement dating from 1729, when a group of students at the Oxford University, England, began to assemble for worship, Bible study, and Christian service. Their fellow students named them the 'Holy Club' and 'Methodists', a derisive allusion to the methodical manner in which they performed the various practices that their sense of Christian duty and church ritual required. The Methodist Church was founded mostly through the activities of the Rev. John Wesley. John Wesley was an ordained clergyman of the Anglican Church. He had a conversion experience on 24 May 1738 at a revival meeting at Aldersgate Street in London, after which he began to form societies out of the people who responded to the gospel call to holy living. It was in Bristol that a suggestion to divide the followers into classes was adopted to:

1. Pave the way for effective teaching.
2. Ensure that members are given adequate pastoral care.
3. Enable members to contribute financially to support the evangelistic activities of the society.²⁶

²⁵ Pobee, *The Anglican Story in Ghana*, 75.

²⁶ R. Davies, *Methodism* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 73.

With the assistance of other preachers, both ordained and lay, the Methodist Societies spread throughout England with the aim of advancing Christian perfection. By 1748, the Methodist Societies had been organised into circuits, which met once in every three months. The circuits were also organised into districts. In 1744, the Methodists had their first conference, and John Wesley began the practice of calling together his clerical supporters and preachers to a Conference, which became an annual affair.

The system of government in the Methodist Church had been the federal (or representative) type followed by the Presbyterian Church, even though different titles were used. Soon after John Wesley's death in 1791, his followers began to divide into separate church bodies. There was a Plan of Pacification in 1795 aimed at reinforcing the unity of the Methodists. During the nineteenth century many such separate Methodist congregations were formed in Britain and the United States, each maintaining its own version of the Wesleyan tradition. In 1881 a Methodist conference was held to co-ordinate Methodist groups throughout the world. Early in the twentieth century in Britain, the separate Methodist bodies began to coalesce. The Bible Christians, the Methodist New Connexion, and the United Methodist Free Churches united in 1907 to form the United Methodist Church, which in 1932 joined with the Primitive Methodist and Wesleyan Methodist churches to bring the long chapter of Methodist disunity in Britain to an end.

The Methodist Church Ghana came into existence as a result of missionary activities of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, which was inaugurated with the arrival of the Rev. Joseph Rhodes Dunwell in January 1835, in the Gold Coast (Ghana). Like the mother church, the Methodist Church Ghana was established from a core of persons with Anglican background. Missionaries had come to the Gold Coast from the

fifteenth century. Their activities, prior to the eighteenth century, did not see much success. What was left was a school established in Cape Coast by the Anglicans during the time of Rev. Philip Quaque, a Ghanaian priest. During the periods of the first two governors of the Gold Coast, Sir Charles McCarthy and Captain George Maclean, the schools in the Gold Coast were improved. It is recorded that those who passed out of the Cape Coast school had scriptural knowledge. They also had scriptural materials, which were supplied by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.²⁷ It was not surprising that one of the local Bible study groups was known by this name in addition to other names. It was a member of one of such Bible study groups, William De-Graft, who requested for Bibles through one Captain Potter of the Congo. Through Captain Potter's instrumentality, not only were Bibles sent but also a Methodist missionary. With the activities of Rev. Joseph Rhodes Dunwell and others like Revs. George Wrigley, Peter Harrop, Thomas Birch Freeman and their spouses, the Methodist Church had a solid foundation in Ghana.

By 1854, the Church had been organised into circuits constituting a district with Rev. T. B. Freeman as Chairman. However, Rev. Freeman was replaced in 1856 by Rev. William West. On 6 February 1887, Synod took steps that were confirmed at the British Conference in July, 1878, that the district should be divided into two for effective ministry. The district included areas in the then Gold Coast and Nigeria. The two districts were:

1. Gold Coast (Ghana) District, with Rev. T. R. Picot as the Chairman.
2. Yoruba and Popo District, with Rev. John Milum as the Chairman.

²⁷ F. L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 7-8; Debrunner, *History of Christianity*, 94-95.

With the granting of autonomy in July, 1961, the Methodist Church Ghana maintained the federal system of church government of the mother church. In January 2000, the Methodist Church Ghana made a declaration that she has adopted the episcopate system of church government.

2.3 The need for a form of government

There was the need for some form of government for the church, which is also seen as an organisation, for the purpose of order. This is necessary to prevent any such situation of ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us’ and ‘every man being a law unto himself’. We may describe an organisation as a group of persons banded together on certain principles. In this context we can add that the church is the creation of the Holy Spirit. However, the people in the church, that is, the many parts that have come together, share in a common approach to certain principles. As an organisation the church is very complex. The church may be said to be an institution or a group comprising individuals who co-operate with one another in a structured effort to achieve common goals.²⁸ The term ‘group’ may be applied to any number of people with similar norms, values and expectations who regularly and consciously interact. The group may also be said to be a plurality of individuals who have contact, though not necessarily direct contact with one another, who take each other into account in making decisions, and who have some sense of common identity as well as shared goals or interests.²⁹ Brinkerhoff also defines group as two or more people who interact on the basis of a shared social structure and recognise mutual dependency.³⁰ Institutions

²⁸ R.E. Gamer, *Government and Politics* (Dubuque, Iowa: WCB Brown and Benchmark Publishing, 1994), 4.

²⁹ H. P. Chalfant & E. Labeff, *Understanding People and Social Life* (New York/Los Angeles/San Francisco: West Publishing Company, 1988), 84.

³⁰ D. B. Brinkerhoff, *Sociology* (New York/ Los Angeles/ San Francisco: West Publishing Company, 1988), 110.

are enduring social structures that provide ready-made arrangements to meet basic human problems.³¹ They may also be said to be organised patterns of beliefs and behaviour centred on basic social needs.³² Institutions constitute:

1. The more or less standardised solutions that serve to direct in meeting the problems of social living.

2. The relatively stable relationships that characterise people in actually implementing these solutions.

Concerning groups, there are basically two types, namely, primary and secondary groups. Primary groups are characterised by intimate, face-to-face interaction, whereas secondary groups are those that are formal, large and impersonal.

The distinction between primary and secondary groups is not always clear-cut. Sometimes some primary groups become so large and impersonal that they no longer function as primary groups.³³ And there are some secondary groups that become informal with intimate relationships.³⁴ The church is intended to be primary but tends to have the characteristics of a secondary group. It is worth noting at this juncture that the church as an organism and as an organisation, has Jesus Christ as her head (Eph 1:28). In the interest of maximum efficiency, groups tend to have organisation. The organisation may be formal or informal. For the purpose of order every group needs a system of government.

³¹ Brinkerhoff, *Sociology*, 93.

³² R. T. Schaeffer & R.P. Lamn, *Sociology* (New York/ London/ Toronto: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1986), 130.

³³ *Ibid.*, 146.

³⁴ C. Craig, *Sociology* (New York/Toronto/London: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), 189.

Government is a complex of institutions formed to accomplish the goal of governing, directing and controlling a community.³⁵ It may be said to be an organisation comprising the individuals and institutions authorised to formulate policies and conduct affairs of the community. It entails those processes that have to do with the authoritative enacting of rules and policies that are binding and persuasive throughout a society.³⁶ Governments are empowered to establish and regulate the interrelationships of the people within their territorial confines, the relations of the people as a whole, and the dealings of the communities with other entities. Organisations and institutions like labour unions, churches and universities are broadly governmental in many of their functions. A government with the ability to direct and control the people of a nation or any community is said to be sovereign. In this instance, where the people give their governments the right to make laws and to determine how they are enforced, that government has authority.

In the prevailing theory of political science, the function of government is to secure the common welfare of the members of the social aggregate over which it exercises control. In different historical epochs, governments have endeavoured to achieve the common welfare by various means. Among primitive peoples, systems of social control were rudimentary; they arose directly from ideas of right and wrong common to the members of a social group and were enforced on individuals primarily through group pressure. Among more highly organised peoples, governments assumed institutional forms; they rested on defined legal bases, imposing penalties on violators of the law and using force to establish themselves and discharge their functions. It has been observed that just as every community needs a form of government, the church as a so-

³⁵ Gamer, *Government and Politics*, 5.

³⁶ J. W. Vander Zanden, *Sociology* (New York/London: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993), 259.

cial group also needs some form of government. J. B. Lightfoot underscores the fact that no society of men could hold together without officers, without rules, without institutions of any kind; and the Church of Christ is not exempt from this universal law.³⁷

Government is a necessary element of human society which serves to establish and maintain order. Most people would acknowledge the need for order when they try to recollect memories of their school days, and remember those times when the teacher stepped out the class for a few moments. In the absence of authority and organisation, the human nature lends support toward mischief and chaos.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that though the church is an organism, it is also an organisation, which needs order and direction of ministry, as well as authority for leadership and correction. These are main functions of church government that can easily be identified. It must be noted however, that J. B. Lightfoot mentions in connection with governance in the church that ‘The kingdom of Christ, not being a kingdom of this world, is not limited by the restrictions, which fetter other societies, political or religious. It is in the fullest sense free, comprehensive and universal.’ As to the nature and type of government the church must have, it would be necessary to make a survey of the New Testament to have an idea about the manner in which the earliest churches were governed. From there one can trace its development through the ages.

2.4 Church Government in the Anglican Church in Ghana

Starting from the grassroots, the Anglican Church is made up of congregations. The congregation is under the pastoral care of a priest called the priest in-

³⁷ J.B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry* (New York, The Trustees of the Lightfoot Fund/Macmillan Company, 1901), 2.

charge. Parish is the name given to an area with a congregation to which a priest has been assigned to be in charge and which is recognised as such by the Standing Committee of the Diocese.³⁸ The highest decision making body of the parish is called the Parochial Church Council, which is chaired by the priest in-charge. The Parochial Church Council meets at least once in a month. There is also an Annual Vestry Meeting, which involves all the members of the church. In addition, and to involve the congregations in the activities of the church, there is a quarterly meeting to deliberate on financial and other aspects of the affairs of the parish. A number of parishes in a geographic area are zoned to form the Archdeaconry.³⁹ The highest body of the archdeaconry is the Archdeaconry Board chaired by the Archdeacon. Archdeaconries are banded together to form the Diocese. In ancient times, the archdeacon was the senior deacon in the diocese. The highest decision making body of the Diocese is the Synod, which is chaired by the Bishop.

It is worth noting that the various levels of the administrative apparatus have their areas of jurisdiction. Decisions that can be taken at the lower level need not be taken to the higher level. Dioceses in Ghana are banded together as the Church of the Province of Ghana.

The chain of authority may be represented by the diagram below.

³⁸ The Anglican Diocese of Accra, *The Constitution of the Anglican Diocese of Accra*, 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

Table 1. The Anglican Church, Ghana: administrative organization

LEVEL	RULING BODY	CHAIRMAN
Parish	Parochial Church Council	Parish Priest
Archdeaconry	Archdeaconry Board	Archdeacon
Diocese	Synod	Bishop
Province	Provincial Synod	Archbishop of the Province of Ghana

As indicated earlier, the highest decision making body in an Anglican Diocese is the Synod, which is chaired by the bishop. The synod comprises the bishop, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity. The composition of the House of Laity includes the lay diocesan officials and representatives of other parishes and congregations, including the cathedral parish in the diocese determined proportionately in accordance with the annual diocesan assessment of the parishes and congregations payable to the church as synod may from time to time determine; two women elected by the Women's Desk; two youths elected by the Youth Desk; and six other lay persons appointed by the bishop.

Between synods, the business of the Diocese is undertaken by the Synod Standing Committee. The Synod Standing Committee comprises the following:

1. the Bishop (Vicar General)
2. the Provost
3. the Archdeacons
4. the Chancellor
5. the Registrar
6. one Clergy elected by the House of Clergy
7. the Chairman, Board of Finance
8. the Chairman, Projects and Planning Committee

9. the Chairman, Board of Education
10. the Chairman, Synod Action Committee
11. one representative of the Cathedral
12. one person from each District Church Council
13. the Co-ordinators of Women's Desk, Youth Desk and the Professional Guilds Desk respectively
14. the Director of Evangelism
15. one representative of the Commission on the Ministry of Clergy and Laity

The Synod (or bishop in consultation with the Standing Committee) may appoint such boards or committees as are considered necessary for the effective management and governance of the diocese. The bishop, in consultation with the Pastoral Committee, does the groupings of priests and congregations.

2.5 Church Government in the Methodist Church Ghana

The local organisation which meets as one congregation for public worship in the Methodist Church Ghana is known as society.⁴⁰ This society is divided into classes. Each class is under a class leader. The class leaders and the minister(s) in the society make up the Leaders' Meeting, which is the ruling body of the society. The chairman of the Leaders' Meeting is the minister in-charge. A number of societies in an area are banded together as a circuit.⁴¹ A circuit may consist of one or more societies under the pastoral care of one or more ministers. The ruling body of the circuit is the Quarterly Meeting, so called because the meeting is held every three months. The chairman of the Quarterly Meeting is the superintendent minister.

⁴⁰The Methodist Church Ghana, *The Constitution*, S.O. 701.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, S.O. 601.

Circuits in a geographic area are banded together as a diocese.⁴² The boundaries of a diocese are determined by the Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana. The ruling body of the diocese is the Synod, which meets annually. The Chairman of the Synod is the Bishop and General Superintendent of that diocese. It must be noted that the change from Federal to Episcopal system of church government in the Methodist Church Ghana can be seen as a change in nomenclature. The functions of the Chairman and General Superintendent (as was the designation) and that of the Bishop and General Superintendent (as is the new designation) are the same. From the close of one Synod to the commencement of another, the administration of the diocese rests with the bishop, the Lay Chairman of the diocese and the various administrative institutions of the diocese. There are presently fifteen dioceses of the Methodist Church Ghana, which meet bi-annually at a Conference. The diocese in the Methodist Church Ghana is subordinate to the Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana. Each level on the administrative ladder has jurisdiction in matters pertaining to that level. The Leaders' Meeting decides on matters at the Society (congregational) level.

The Quarterly Meeting has jurisdiction over matters at the Circuit level and the Synod, at the diocesan level. Major decisions on policies and stationing of ministers are done at the connexional (conference) level and not the diocesan level. The Conference is the governing body of the Methodist Church Ghana. The chairman of the Conference is the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana. Between the close of one conference and the commencement of another, the governance of the church rests with the Presiding Bishop, Lay President and the Administrative Bishop

⁴² The Methodist Church Ghana, *The Constitution*, S.O. 501.

of the Conference, and the various conference administrative institutions which are appointed annually. The chain of authority is presented in the diagram below.

Table 2. The Methodist Church Ghana: administrative organization

LEVEL	RULING BODY	CHAIRMAN
Society	Leaders' Meeting	Minister in-Charge
Circuit	Quarterly Meeting	Superintendent Minister
Diocese	Synod	Bishop
Connexional (national)	Conference	Presiding Bishop

The Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana consists of a Representative Session and a Ministerial Session. The Representative Session consists of equal numbers of ministers, in full connexion with or serving under the Conference, and lay persons. Members of the Representative Session include the Presiding Bishop, Lay President, Administrative Bishop and Assistant to the Administrative Bishop; Bishops of dioceses; general directors of boards, such directors of divisions of boards as conference may determine; principal or senior Methodist tutor of Trinity College; four heads of schools, colleges and institutions designated as Conference Institutions; one catechist and one deaconess; two members of the Methodist Teachers' Association, two delegates from the Methodist Church, Great Britain; and two immediate past Presiding Bishops of Conference, with two immediate past lay Presidents of Conference as ex-officio members. The ministerial Session comprises the ministerial members of Conference.

The composition of Conference, with the presence of all bishops of dioceses, in addition to lay as well as ministerial delegates ensures fair representation of both ministerial and lay members from the dioceses. The administrative institutions of Conference are:

1. The General Purposes Council (GPC).
2. The Presiding Bishop's Advisory Council (PAC).
3. The Registered Trustees (RT).
4. The Board of Education and Youth (BEY).
5. The Board of Ministries (BOM).
6. The Board of Social Services (BSS).
7. The Board of Finance and Development (BFD).

The Boards are subdivided into divisions. As indicated earlier, the Diocese in the Methodist Church Ghana is the next level below Conference. As in the case of the Anglican Church, between the close of one synod and the beginning of the next synod, the Representative Session of the Diocesan Standing Committee is authorised to act on behalf of the Representative Session of Synod.⁴³ The Diocesan Standing Committee of the Methodist Church Ghana consists of:

1. the Bishop,
2. the Diocesan Lay Chairman,
3. the Diocesan Synod Secretary,
4. the Honorary Treasurer of Diocesan Funds,
5. all Conference members in the Diocese,
6. all Circuit Superintendents,
7. all Circuit Stewards,
8. one secretary from each main committee of Synod
9. Seven other appointed persons, at least four of whom shall be women.

⁴³ The Methodist Church Ghana, *The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana* (Accra: Methodist Book Depot, 2000), SO. 514.

2.6 Knowledge of members of decision-making bodies

This section, basically, is an analysis of the questionnaire, which is appended to the work as Appendix I. In both denominations, Accra Diocese was chosen for the field study, firstly because of proximity. Secondly, membership at synods in the various dioceses are elected and in some cases appointed from a cross-section of the church that are literate because the medium of expression at the synods is English. It could thus be said that the membership of the Accra synods of the Anglican and Methodist Churches would not be too different from the other dioceses.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the Accra dioceses of both denominations are more endowed with human resources than the other dioceses. So that where there is lack of knowledge in these two dioceses about certain principles, it is not likely to be any better in the other dioceses. Regarding the administration of the questionnaire, there were 100 respondents, 50 of these were from the Anglican Church and the other 50 from the Methodist Church. In both cases, half of the respondents were clergy and the other half, 'lay persons'.

The titles used for the columns are:

AC – Anglican respondents who are clergy;

AL – Anglican respondents who are lay (not clergy);

MC – Methodist respondents who are clergy;

ML – Methodist respondents who are lay (not clergy).

The frequency is given in percentages against the respective columns.

Details of their age range are given as:

Table 3. Age Range of Respondents

Q. 3	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. 26-30yrs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
B. 31-35yrs	3	12	-	-	1	4	3	12
C. 36-40yrs	2	8	1	4	1	4	-	-
E. 46-50yrs	6	24	5	20	12	48	4	16
F. 51-55yrs	1	4	6	24	4	16	10	40
G. 56-60yrs	4	16	4	16	-	-	1	4
H. 61-65yrs	3	12	7	28	1	-	3	12
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

The table shows that the respondents were all capable of making reasonable decisions. Even though there were no respondents in the 26-30 years bracket group, there some in the 31-35 years group, which also represent the youth in the church.

The educational backgrounds of the respondents are given variously as:

Table 4: Educational backgrounds of the respondents

Q. 4	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Basic Education or Equivalent	3	12	4	16	-	-	2	8
B. SSS or Equivalent	2	8	12	48	-	-	7	28
C. Diploma or Equivalent	10	40	9	36	6	24	7	28
D. Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent	5	20	1	4	10	40	5	20
E. Postgraduate Degree	5	20	-	-	9	36	4	16
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

Commenting on the educational background of the respondents, it can be said that they range from fairly educated to highly educated. It is not the intention of this work to compare which denomination has more highly educated people in decision-

making bodies. What can be said is that they are all well placed to respond to the questions put to them. The number of years that the respondents have been members of their respective denominations is as follows:

Table 5. Number of years that the respondents have been members of their respective denominations

Q. 5	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. 1-5 yrs.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
B. 6-10 yrs.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
C. 11-15 yrs.	3	12	2	8	-	-	-	-
D. 16-20 yrs.	1	4	3	12	4	16	4	16
E. 21-25 yrs.	2	8	1	4	1	16	10	40
F. 26 yrs. >	19	76	19	76	20	80	11	44
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

All the respondents have been members of their respective churches for not less than 10 years. The very fact that they were all representing their parishes and societies and other bodies at Synod shows that the churches regard them as mature enough, both in age and knowledge about ecclesiastical matters. The number of years ministers have served in the ministry is given as:

Table 6. Number of years ministers have served in the ministry

Q. 6	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. 1-5 yrs.	12	48	-	-	6	24	-	-
B. 6-10 yrs.	10	40	-	-	2	8	-	-
C. 11-15 yrs.	2	8	-	-	8	32	-	-
D. 16-20 yrs.	1	4	-	-	3	12	-	-
E. 21-25 yrs.	-	-	-	-	5	20	-	-
F. 26 yrs. >	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-
G. Not Applicable	-	-	25	100	-	-	25	100
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

The ages of the respondents as indicated by the responses to question three, range between 31 and 65 years. Their academic background, number of years they have been members of the respective denominations and number of years spent in the ministry, in the case of the clergy, are all given from the responses to questions four to six. With the exception of 20% of the Anglican clergy, all the ministers have the academic background of diploma or above. With the non-clergy respondents, 40% of the Anglicans have diploma or higher academic background whilst 64% of the Methodists are of the same background. With such background it would be expected that the respondents would be sufficiently informed about types of church government. They have also been in their respective denominations long enough to be abreast with what pertains in the church.

Table 7. Knowledge on church government

Q. 7	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. 1	8	32	12	48	5	20	15	60
B. 2	6	24	1	4	5	20	6	24
C. 3	4	16	2	8	8	32	2	8
D. 4	1	4	1	4	3	12	-	-
E. 5 or more	3	12	-	-	3	12	2	8
F. Can't tell	3	12	9	36	1	4	-	-
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

The data from question seven shows that 56% of the Anglicans believe that there is only one pattern of church government in the NT, 32% were from the laity. With the Methodists, 60% were of the same opinion, 40% being lay. Some scholars identify as many as 13 types of church government but these can be scaled down to three main types. Those respondents who indicated less than three types of church government appear to have little knowledge about types of church government. It was no surprise that some of them indicated 'no idea' or would not respond to some of the

questions. It is obvious that there is a general lack of knowledge on the types of church government in the church, to the extent that some of the people who constitute the decision-making body of the church are ignorant of the subject.

Respondents' description of a type of church government where authority is understood to reside in the whole body of Christians, that is, the clergy and laity together is indicated as:

Table 8. Respondents' description of a type of church government where authority is understood to reside in the whole body of Christians

Q. 8	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Congregational	10	40	7	28	14	56	8	32
B. Episcopacy	7	28	4	16	5	20	-	-
C. Federal/Presbyterial	7	28	-	-	4	16	12	48
D. No idea	2	8	14	56	1	4	5	20
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

Respondents' description of a type of church government which is based on the three orders or offices of the ministry, namely, bishops, priests and deacons and where administration revolves round the bishop is indicated as:

Table 9. Respondents' description of a type of church government which is based on the three orders

Q. 9	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Congregational	-	-	2	8	4	16	-	-
B. Episcopacy	22	88	6	24	17	68	17	68
C. Federal/Presbyterial	-	-	-	-	2	8	-	-
D. No idea	2	8	17	68	2	8	8	32
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

Respondents' description of a type of church government where authority resides in individual Christians, who band themselves together as a congregation, which is completely autonomous in its operations were as follows:

Table 10. Respondents' description of a type of church government where authority resides in individual Christians

Q. 10	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Congregational	12	48	9	36	15	60	18	72
B. Episcopacy	2	8	-	-	3	12	-	-
C. Federal/Presbyterial	5	20	2	8	2	8	1	4
D. No idea	6	24	14	56	5	20	6	24
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

Most of the respondents could distinguish between the different systems of church government. A recognisable number could not draw out this distinction, which is too bad for people who constitute the decision-making body of the church. It must be noted that even some members of the clergy from both the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana could not draw out the distinction between the types of church government.

Regarding the type of church government practised in their respective denominations the responses were:

Table 11. Respondents' description of a type of church government practised in their respective denominations

Q. 11	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Congregational	4	16	4	16	-	-	1	4
B. Episcopacy	21	84	14	56	21	84	20	80
C. Federal/Presbyterial	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	12
D. No idea	-	-	7	28	4	16	1	4
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

It is very strange, no matter how insignificant the frequency is, that some of the respondents could not identify the type of church government practiced in their respective denominations.

Asked whether the church government practised in their church is more biblical than that practised in other denominations, the responses were:

Table 12. Respondents' answer whether the church government practised in their church is more biblical than that practised in other denominations

Q. 12	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Yes	16	65	13	52	7	28	6	24
B. No	-	-	-	-	15	60	16	64
C. Can't tell	9	36	12	48	3	12	3	12
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

Most Anglicans and very few Methodists believe that the system of church government practised in their respective denominations is more biblical than that practised elsewhere. A few of the respondents, apart from the Anglican laity where 48% is recorded, could not tell whether their system of church government is more biblical or not.

They were able to mention some of the practical or cultural advantages or helpful features of their system of church government as:

Table 13. Respondents' description of practical or cultural advantages or helpful features of their system of church government

Q. 13	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Authority is widely recognised & accepted	18	72	11	44	8	28	10	40
B. It is common to majority of Christian denominations	7	28	1	4	5	20	-	-
C. There is a term of office	-	-	-	-	12	48	14	56
D. Any other, please specify	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
No Response	-	-	13	52	-	-	-	-

Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100
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From the options given, the majority of the respondents indicated some of the practical advantages. Some of these advantages are ‘authority is widely recognised and accepted’; ‘it is common to majority of Christian denominations’; and ‘there is a term of office’. It must be noted that 48% of the Methodist clergy and 56% of the Methodist laity mentioned the term of office in their system of episcopacy as an advantage. It must also be noted that as many as 52% of the Anglican laity did not respond to the question.

Concerning practical defects that they find in their system of church government, they gave the following responses:

Table 14. Respondents’ description of practical defects in their system of church government

Q. 14	AC	AL	MC	ML
	Too much power with the head.	It promotes factionalism	Authority is vested in one person.	Too much time wasting on proceedings.
	It slows down development.		Tenure conflicts with culture	
	The retirement age of 70 is too long.			

It needs to be noted that some Anglican clergy indicated that there is too much power with the head. These respondents are obviously not very happy with the state of things as they find it. The comment from other Anglican clergy that the retirement age of seventy years is too long indicates that some of them may be aspiring to become bishops or that they are wishing for a change. Incidentally, the retirement age of the clergy in the Methodist Church Ghana is also seventy years but there was no response that the retirement age is too long.

We find the comment that a system of church government promotes factionalism rather strange. It came from an Anglican lay member. It is not possible to draw

any link. Perhaps, factionalism would result from the nature of man and not any particular system of church government. It is quite surprising that there is a response from the Methodist clergy that authority is vested in one person. This opinion might have come from knowledge about episcopacy from some other source and not the practice in the Methodist Church Ghana. What happened in the Methodist Church Ghana was a change in nomenclature? The authority of the bishop of a diocese in the Methodist Church Ghana is the same as it was with the chairman of the district.

About their preference for a change, that is, a revision in their system of church government, the responses were:

Table 15. Respondents' description of preference for a change in their system of church government

Q. 15	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Yes	5	20	3	12	10	40	11	44
B. No	11	44	5	20	7	28	9	36
C. Indifferent	5	20	1	4	4	16	3	12
D. Can't tell	4	16	16	64	4	16	2	8
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

The Responses to question 15 show that 40% of the Methodist clergy and 44% of the Methodist laity will prefer a change. This may appear rather strange because the Methodist Church adopted episcopacy in 2000. If the number of Methodists who are indifferent and those who could not indicate anything should be added, it would be found that those who prefer the current episcopacy in the Methodist Church are in the minority.

It becomes obvious then that the adoption of episcopacy in the Methodist Church Ghana in 2000 was not the wish of the people but an imposition. Perhaps if the members of the church had been given sufficient education on the subject and had been

allowed to decide, things might have been different. Reasons for the above were given as:

Table 16. Reasons for preference for a change in their system of church government

	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Power and authority are more vested in the bishop	10	40	3	12	5	8	5	20
B. Any other, please specify	2	8	-	-	2	8	-	-
No response	23	92	22	88	18	72	20	80
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

Majority of the respondents did not respond to the question, indicating that they could not assign any reason. Few people mentioned, ‘Power and authority are more vested in the bishop’. A handful mentioned, ‘The issue of ex-cathedra should be looked at’, ‘The need for broad based participation in decision-making’, ‘current system is good’, ‘and Candidates for election to the office of bishop must be above 50 years’. The term ex-cathedra is applied to special powers of the bishop in the Anglican Church, as general overseer over all the parishes in the diocese. The bishop in the Anglican Church is the head of the cathedral. His authority is not confined to the cathedral but extends to all congregations in the diocese. Regarding their opinions whether the term of office of Bishop conflicts with the African traditional way of leadership, the responses were:

Table 17. Respondents’ opinion whether the term of office of bishop conflicts with the African traditional way of leadership

Q. 16	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Yes	11	44	3	12	14	56	10	40
B. No	2	8	7	28	7	28	14	56
C. Can’t tell	12	48	15	60	4	16	1	4
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

Most of the respondents were of the opinion that the term of office of the bishop conflicts with the African traditional view of leadership. In Ghana, traditional rulers normally rule till death. In the Anglican Church, the bishop serves till the age of

70, whilst in the Methodist Church Ghana, the Bishop serves for six years. If this bishop is not re-elected as bishop in another diocese or is not elected to a higher office, he or she may have to serve under another bishop. The data shows that 48% of the Anglican clergy, 60% of the Anglican laity, 16% of the Methodist clergy and 4% of the Methodist laity could not tell whether the term of office of the bishop conflicts with the traditional view or not. It is interesting to note that 56% of the Methodist laity indicated that the term of office of the bishop does not conflict with the African traditional view of leadership. About their opinions whether the Bishop must have a term of office, they indicated the following:

Table 18. Respondents' opinion whether the bishop must have a term of office

Q. 17	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Yes	11	44	9	36	11	44	22	88
B. No	8	32	5	20	5	20	3	12
C. Can't tell	6	24	11	44	9	36	-	-
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

It must be observed that 44% of the Anglican clergy and the same proportion (44%) of the Methodist clergy want episcopacy with a term of office. Even though the figure is less than 50% of the total number of respondents, it is quite significant. A slightly lower figure from the Anglican laity suggests that fewer people from the Anglican Church would prefer a bishop with a term of office. In the Methodist Church Ghana, the lay members are emphatic that the bishop must have a term of office. The proportion of Anglican clergy and also that of Methodist clergy that are undecided is quite alarming. The decision-making body of a church must be informed adequately enough to be able to decide on such matters as the choice of a system of church government. The respondents gave the following reasons for their responses:

Table 19. Respondents' opinion whether the bishop must have a term of office term of office - reasons

	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Complacency and abuse of power will arise	9	36	2	8	11	44	11	44
B. It is biblical	5	20	1	4	3	12	-	-
C. It is in harmony with Ghanaian traditional view of leadership	5	20	2	8	1	4	3	12
D. Any other, please specify	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No response	6	24	20	80	10	40	16	66
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	30	120

The total figure for the lay members of the Methodist Church Ghana is more than 100% because some of the respondents chose more than one option. Majority of the respondents were of the view that the bishop must have a term of office. The reason given for this position was that, if the bishops were to rule for life, such a situation would lead to complacency and abuse of power.

Some of the respondents, 24% of the Anglican clergy, 44% of the Anglican laity, 16% of the Methodist clergy but none of the Methodist laity, were undecided. The data shows that 80% of the Anglican laity could not assign any reason for their answer to question 18.

On their opinions whether it is a problem to have different systems of church government in the various Christian denominations in Ghana, they indicated the following:

Table 20. Respondents' opinion whether it is a problem to have different systems of church government in the various Christian denominations in Ghana

	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Yes	9	36	7	28	8	32	12	48
B. No	9	36	5	20	13	52	9	36
C. Can't tell	7	28	13	52	4	16	4	16
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

It must be noted that 28% of the Anglican clergy, 52% of the Anglican laity, 16% of the Methodist clergy and 16% of the Methodist laity could not tell whether having different systems of church government in the different denominations is a problem or not. Those who said it was a problem gave the reason that such a situation would indicate that the church is divided. Those who indicated otherwise said such a situation showed unity with diversity. Regarding the reasons for their answer, 28% of the Anglican clergy, indicated not applicable whilst 24% of the Anglican clergy and 28% of the Methodist laity did not respond.

The respondents gave reasons for their answers as follows:

Table 21. Respondents' opinion whether it is a problem to have different systems of church government in the various Christian denominations in Ghana – Reasons

	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. It shows unity in diversity	3	12	3	12	13	52	9	36
B. It shows the church as divided	9	36	5	20	8	32	9	36
C. Any other, please specify	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Not Applicable	7	28	-	-	4	16	-	-
No Response	6	24	17	68	-	-	7	28
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

The above indicates that 36% of the lay members of the Methodist Church Ghana say that a situation where there are different systems of church government at

work show unity in diversity. An equal proportion of the members say it means the church is divided. The majority of the respondents from the Methodist clergy agree that such a situation shows unity in diversity. It is important to note that 36% of the Anglican clergy and 20% of the Anglican lay respondents say that such a situation shows that the church is divided. A significant proportion of 24% of Anglican clergy, 68% of Anglican laity and 28% of Methodist laity did not respond to the question.

The respondents termed a government, constitution, or polity of a community in which God is regarded as the sole sovereign and the laws of the realm are seen as divine commands and in which control is in the hands of the clergy as:

Table 22. Respondents termed a government, constitution, or polity of a community in which god is regarded as the sole sovereign

Q. 19	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Autocratic Government	1	4	3	12	3	12	2	8
B. Democratic Government	1	4	2	8	2	8	2	8
C. Theocratic Government	17	68	8	32	14	56	19	76
D. Any other, please specify	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
E. No idea	6	24	12	48	6	24	1	4
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

The respondents termed a political system under which one ruler wields unlimited power, restricted by no constitutional provisions or effective political opposition as:

Table 23. Respondents termed political system under which one ruler wields unlimited power

Q. 20	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Autocratic Government	18	72	13	52	17	68	24	96
B. Democratic Government	2	8	-	-	1	4	1	4
C. Theocratic Government	2	8	-	-	3	12	-	-
D. Any other, please specify	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
E. No idea	3	12	12	48	4	16	-	-
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

They termed a political system in which the people of a country rule through any form of government they choose to establish and which could be described as government by the people as:

Table 24. Respondents termed political system which could be described as government by the people

Q. 21	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Autocratic Government	1	4	-	-	4	16	-	-
B. Democratic Government	18	72	10	40	17	68	23	92
C. Theocratic Government	1	4	1	4	-	-	-	-
D. Any other, please specify	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
E. No idea	5	20	14	56	4	16	2	8
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

Responses for questions 19-21 show that majority of the respondents could identify a particular political system when it is described. Some did not have any idea about the different political systems and others gave wrong answers which is too bad for the clergy and lay persons who formed the decision-making body of the church. Asked to choose from options what church government must be, they indicated the following:

Table 25. Respondents' opinion about what church government must be

Q. 22	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Autocratic	-	-	-	-	1	4	1	4
B. Democratic	6	24	2	8	4	16	9	36
C. Theocratic	7	28	2	8	3	12	1	4
D. Mixture of A & B	-	-	4	16	2	8	3	12
E. Mixture of B & C	5	20	5	20	10	40	7	28
F. Any other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
G. Can't tell	6	24	12	48	5	20	4	16
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

One of the Methodist clergy and one of the Methodist laity think that church government must be autocratic. It is most unlikely that such people know about autocracy. A higher number are of the opinion that church government must be either theocratic or mixture of democracy and autocracy or a mixture of democracy and theocracy. The data also shows that as many as 48% of the Anglican laity could not tell what church government must be. The reasons for their respective choices were given as:

Table 26. Respondents' opinion about what church government must be - reasons

	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. The church belongs to God	5	20	4	16	1	4	-	-
B. The church belongs to the people	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
C. The church belongs to God and the people	9	36	3	12	4	16	7	28
D. The church belongs to God but comprises people	4	16	5	20	11	44	14	56
E. Any other, please specify...	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
F. Not applicable	6	24	3	12	9	36	3	12
No response	-	-	8	32	-	-	-	-
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

A few of the respondents were of the opinion that the church belongs to God. The majority indicated that either the church belongs to God and the people or the church belongs to God but comprises people. Regarding the types of church government, they prefer, they indicated as follows:

Table 27. Respondents' choice of church government

Q. 23	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Episcopacy	14	56	8	32	8	32	9	36
B. Federal/Presbyterial	5	20	-	-	3	12	7	28
C. Congregational	3	12	3	12	8	32	2	8
D. Indifferent	3	12	2	8	3	12	3	12
E. Can't tell	-	-	12	48	3	12	4	16
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

We observe from the above that 50% of the Anglican clergy and 32% of the Anglican laity prefer episcopacy. In the Methodist Church, 32% of the clergy and 36% of the laity prefer episcopacy. The table shows that 12% of Anglican clergy, 56% of Anglican laity, 24% of Methodist clergy, and 38% of Methodist laity are either indifferent or cannot tell which system of church government they prefer. The reasons for the above choices were given as:

Table 28. Respondents' choice of church government - reasons

	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. It is biblical/They are biblical	8	32	4	16	7	28	4	16
B. All have biblical roots	4	16	2	8	4	16	6	24
C. It is Historical/They are historical	3	12	-	-	3	12	1	4
D. It is ecumenical/ They are ecumenical	3	12	1	4	-	-	2	8
E. None of them is biblical	1	4	-	-	-	-	3	12
F. Power & authority are shared	6	24	-	-	7	28	6	24
G. Not Applicable	3	12	18	72	4	16	4	16
No Response	-	-	8	32	-	-	-	-
Total	28	100	33	100	25	100	26	100

The question demanding reasons for their response does not seek to point out those who are right or wrong but to find out the bases for their opinion. It is observed that 72% of the Anglican clergy chose "not applicable" and 32% did not respond at all. Asked which type of church government they would reject, they gave the following responses:

Table 29. Respondents' answer on which type of church government they would reject

Q. 24	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Episcopacy	4	16	-	-	7	28	9	36
B. Federal/Presbyterial	3	12	5	20	2	8	-	-
C. Congregational	2	8	-	-	4	16	3	12
D. Indifferent	12	48	2	8	4	16	6	24
E. Can't tell	4	16	18	72	8	32	7	28
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

The respondents gave the following reasons for their choices:

Table 30. Respondents' answer on which type of church government they would reject - reasons

	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Power is vested in one person	6	24	1	4	2	8	5	20
B. It promotes undue reverence or worship of the person	-	-	1	4	7	28	5	20
C. Any other	-	-	1	4	-	-	-	-
No response	19	76	22	88	16	64	15	60
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

It can be observed that only 16% of the Anglican clergy but none of the Anglican laity will reject episcopacy. A higher number will reject presbyterial system of church government. The data reveals that 48% of the Anglican clergy, 16% of the Methodist clergy and 24% of the Methodist laity were indifferent. As much as 72% of

the Anglican clergy could not respond to the question. It is observed that 24% of the Anglican clergy, 4% of the Anglican laity, 8% of the Methodist clergy and 20% of the Methodist laity will reject episcopacy because power is invested in one person. There were 28% of the Methodist clergy and 20% of the Methodist laity who were of the opinion that episcopacy promotes undue reverence of the bishop. Among the Anglican laity, one person will reject a type of church government because it promotes undue reverence.

Asked whether they find any problem(s) about the Bishop being addressed as 'lord Bishop', they indicated variously:

Table 31. Respondents' opinion if they find any problem(s) about the bishop being addressed as 'lord bishop'

Q. 25	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Yes	2	8	5	20	15	60	17	68
B. No	19	76	3	12	7	28	6	24
C. Can't tell	4	16	18	72	3	12	2	8
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

The following reasons were assigned for their choices:

Table 32. Respondents' opinion if they find any problem(s) about the bishop being addressed as 'lord bishop' - reasons

	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. We have only one Lord	2	8	5	20	13	52	12	48
B. Any other	1.	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
No response	22	88	20	80	12	48	13	52
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

Only a few Anglicans, both clergy and laity find problems with addressing the bishop, 'lord bishop'. Most Methodists, the laity especially, have problems with addressing the bishop, 'lord bishop'. The reason for this opinion is that the church has

only one Lord. It appears that most Anglicans who have no problem with the title could not assign any reason for their position.

Asked whether there are titles of the clergy that can be considered as more biblical than others, they indicated variously:

Table 33. Respondents’ opinion whether there are titles of the clergy that can be considered as more biblical than others

Q. 26	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Yes	9	36	-	-	12	48	11	44
B. No	8	32	12	48	11	44	1	4
C. Can’t tell	8	32	13	52	2	8	13	52
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

We observe that only 36% of the Anglican clergy and none of the Anglican laity believe that some titles can be considered as more biblical than others. In the Methodist Church, 48% of the clergy and 44% of the laity believe that some titles can be considered as more biblical than others. It is also noted that 32% of the Anglican clergy, 52% of the Anglican laity and 52% of the Methodist laity could not tell whether some titles can be considered as more biblical than others or not. The respondents assigned the following reasons for their choices:

Table 34. Respondents’ opinion whether there are titles of the clergy that can be considered as more biblical than others - reasons

	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. President and Chairperson more secular than religious titles, Bishop and Presbyter/Elder more religious	9	36	5	20	9	36	11	44
B. Any other please specify	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	8
No response	16	64	20	80	16	64	13	52
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

Most of the respondents were of the view that some titles are more biblical than others. As many as 52% of the Anglican laity and 52% of the Methodist laity were undecided. Many of the respondents believed that the title ‘Bishop’ and ‘Presbyter/Elder’ are more biblical than ‘President and Chairperson’. The majority of the respondents were silent on the reasons for their preferences. Those who chose any other reason could not assign any specific reason. Asked whether Christian denominations are free to choose titles of the clergy that may not be in the Bible, they indicated as follows:

Table 35. Respondents’ opinion on whether Christian denominations are free to choose titles of the clergy that may not be in the bible

Q. 27	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. Yes	1	4	12	48	6	24	3	12
B. No	15	60	-	-	13	52	17	68
C. Can’t tell	9	36	13	52	6	24	5	20
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

We note that 60% of the Anglican clergy and 68% of the Methodist laity indicated that Christian denominations are not free to choose titles of the clergy. This means that they are of the opinion that certain titles are suggested either from the Bible or the tradition of the church. Once again the problem of inability to decide is a problem. It is found that 36% of the Anglican clergy, 52% of the Anglican laity, 24% of the Methodist clergy and 20% of the Methodist laity could not tell whether Christian denominations are free to choose titles or not.

The following reasons were offered for the above:

Table 36. Respondents' opinion on whether Christian denominations are free to choose titles of the clergy that may not be in the bible - reasons

	AC	AC%	AL	AL%	MC	MC%	ML	ML%
A. The main constitution of the church is the Bible. Therefore, titles must conform to the constitution	15	60	10	40	7	28	11	44
B. The Bible does not impose any constitution	2	8	-	-	13	52	5	20
C. Any other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
D. Not Applicable	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	20
No response	8	32	15	60	5	20	4	16
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100	25	100

The data shows that there were more Methodists clergy who are of the opinion that the church is free to choose titles than it is the case among the Anglican clergy. At the same time there are more Anglican laity who believe that the church is free to choose titles. On the whole respondents who are of the opinion that the church can choose titles outside the Bible are in the minority. There is a general preference for titles that are found in the Bible. It is interesting to note that 60% of the Anglican clergy said the main constitution of the church is the Bible, therefore titles must conform to the constitution, whilst 52% of the Methodist clergy said the Bible does not impose any constitution. It must be noted that as many as 60% of the Anglican laity did not respond to this question. Those who chose can't tell in the main question could have chosen 'not applicable' in the sub-question but they did not respond. Apart from the Methodist laity where 52% indicated that the Bible does not impose titles to be used in the church, the other segments were very few.

2.7 Recent discussions on Church Government in the Methodist Church Ghana⁴⁴

After the adoption of Episcopacy, the Methodist Church Ghana appointed a committee, The Episcopacy Review Committee, to interview people, including some heads of Christian denominations, concerning their opinions about the nature of that system of church government. The 2006 Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana referred the report of the Episcopacy Review Committee to the various Dioceses to be discussed at their respective Synods. The discussions show that the Methodist Church Ghana has not yet settled some issues emerging from the adoption and practice of the episcopal system of church government. Some dioceses addressed the issues and made the necessary comments on the recommendations of the Episcopacy Review Sub-Committee as follows:

On the question how the adoption of episcopacy has impacted the structure and the public image of the Methodist Church Ghana, the Episcopacy Review Committee recommended that the Methodist Church must do away with nomenclature, symbols and attitudes that negatively impact the image of the Methodist Church Ghana, or anything that diminishes or distorts its core character, such as terminologies, garments and appointments, as well as procedures that are biblically anomalous and un-Methodist.

Reports from the dioceses show that throughout the connexion of the Methodist Church Ghana, not everyone accepts the episcopal system of church government.

⁴⁴ Information on these discussions are contained in The Report of The Episcopal Review Committee (2004), and Minutes of the 47th Annual Synod of the Accra Diocese held at St. John Methodist Chapel at New Achimota from 23rd -27th April, 2008, and also the Representative Agenda of the Fourth Expanded General Purposes Council Meeting held at the Rev. Thomas Clegg Memorial Methodist Chapel, Kaneshie from 23rd – 25th August, 2007.

2.8 Observations on differences, opinions and recent discussions

Both the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana believe that there is the need for some form of organisational structure for the church. However, in their practice, they do not subscribe to the idea of a specific rigid pattern of church government in the NT. This does not mean that churches can practise just anything. A church that lacks order does not cease to be a church but its ministry is impaired.

Both churches have a very high regard for scripture and traditions of the church. Concerning Scripture and Creeds, it is observed from articles 6-8 of the Thirty Nine Articles of the Anglican Church that the church holds the view that Holy Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation. No one should be required to believe as an article of the Faith, or to think necessary for salvation, anything that is not read in the Holy Scripture. The Holy scriptures are those canonical books of the Old and New Testament whose authority was never doubted in the church.

1. We also have a case of institutionalisation of charismata. It is seen that the fear that fanaticism would lead to the disintegration of the Gospel into something timeless and unhistorical, the church's historicity is stressed. The idea of the church as the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit is also stressed when there is the danger of too much institutionalism. There is therefore a balance between charismata and structure.
2. It must be noted that in both churches, the bishop is head of a diocese comprising a number of congregations.
3. Both churches have a kind of hierarchical form of church government with a subsidiary principle. Starting from the base, there is the congregation and parish for the Anglican Church and society for the Methodist Church Ghana. At the next level, there is circuit for the Methodist Church Ghana, which is the

equivalence of the archdeaconry of the Anglican Church. The next level towards the apex is the diocese of the Anglican Church and the diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana. At the apex in the Methodist Church Ghana is the Connexion, and in the Anglican Church, the Province. At all these levels, there is rule by a representative council chaired by a clergy appointed for the purpose of overseeing work in the territory concerned. The bishops and all ministers at various levels of administration in both denominations, rule by a church constitution. In both the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana, the various levels of the administrative apparatus have their areas of jurisdiction. Councils at the lower level have jurisdiction in matters that fall within their confines.

4. Election to the office of bishop in both denominations is by secret ballot. This ensures democracy and removes the risk of possible victimisation in the administration of the church. Every member of synod has the right to vote for the candidate of his or her choice.
5. Christian theology recognises Christ as the Head of the church. But in the administration of the church and for the purpose of order, Christ works through human leadership. These may be referred to as physical heads. Both the bishop in the Anglican Church and the bishop in the Methodist Church Ghana are recognised as the physical heads of their respective dioceses.
6. Both denominations require certain conditions to qualify for the office of a bishop. The conditions in the Bible, specifically, 1 Tim 3, are strictly adhered to. On the idea that the bishop should not be a recent convert, the Anglican Church states that a clergyman must have served for not less than six years before he can qualify for the office of a bishop. A clergyman in the Anglican

Church is commissioned as a deacon and then ordained three years later as a priest. So one must have served in the ordained ministry for nine years before one can qualify for the office of a bishop. In the Methodist Church Ghana, a clergyman must have served for not less than eight years after ordination to qualify for the office of a bishop. A clergyman in the Methodist Church serves a period of probation before he or she can be ordained. This period is three years. Thus a clergy in the Methodist Church must have served for eleven years to qualify for election to the office of a bishop.

7. Both denominations use the three principal titles of church offices as bishop, presbyter (elder, also shortened to priest in the Anglican Church) and deacon. These principal officers may be regarded as the heads or chief executives of the church. They do not rule arbitrarily but are guided by constitution. One is commissioned into the ministry as a deacon, and serves for a period of two to three years before one is ordained as a presbyter. In the Methodist Church Ghana, some presbyters may be appointed to head circuits as superintendent ministers, whilst in the Anglican Church, some presbyters may be appointed to head archdeaconries as archdeacons. The duties and authority of church heads at various levels are enshrined in the church constitution. Although the clergy are the chief executives of these denominations at various levels of the church hierarchy, decisions taken are not that of the clergy but church councils. The Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana may thus be described as being constitutional and democratic in their respective church governments.
8. Both denominations have episcopal systems that are closer to the early church practice as found in some of the writings of the early church 'fathers.' In the

NT, it is observed that the bishop is the head of a congregation, and the office is not distinct from that of the presbyter.

Notwithstanding the similarities, there are some differences to be noted.

The bishop in the Anglican Church serves till retirement at the age of seventy. The bishop in the Methodist Church Ghana serves a six-year term of office. Upon completion of term of office, the bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana steps down from office and a new one, elected in the last year of his term, takes over the reins of government. The bishop who has completed his or her term of office may be elected to a higher office of the presiding bishop or may be elected as the administrative bishop or a bishop of another diocese or superannuate (retire), or may serve under another bishop.

Though the authority of both the bishop of the Anglican Church and that of the bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana are enshrined in their church constitutions, the bishop of the Anglican Church appears to enjoy more autonomy than his counterpart in the Methodist Church Ghana. The bishop in the Anglican Church has the right to appoint chief officers like the archdeacon, vicar-general, chancellor, registrar, and assistant registrar. In the Methodist Church Ghana, such appointment to the office of lay chairperson is by election at synod. Nominations to the office of synod secretary and assistant synod secretary are made by the Diocesan Standing Committee and confirmed at synod. The final appointments are made by the Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana. Even though bishops send proposals for stationing of ministers, final postings are done by the conference. Thus the bishop cannot appoint a superintendent minister, who is the equivalent of the archdeacon in the Anglican Church.

In the Methodist Church, the Lay Chairman who is next to the bishop is elected at Synod. Though the bishop is the chairman of the Standing Committee, all other appointments and nominations are done by the Standing Committee.

The authority of the bishop in the Anglican Church may be very appealing to bishops in the Methodist Church Ghana. However, there is the need to draw attention to the fact that in the Anglican Church some people are not comfortable with the authority of the bishop, and are calling for the curtailment of such authority.⁴⁵

What can be observed is that over the years, the Anglican and the Methodist churches have evolved constitutions that are quite different from what can be described as a NT pattern of church government. The offices of bishop, presbyter and deacon are also different from those mentioned in the NT.

Both churches believe that some form of episcopacy can best help in the implementation of certain strands of NT teaching. It is argued that it is more scriptural to be connectional than to be independent. The idea is that this is the only way justice would be done to both the local church and the world-wide church being Christ's body. It is conceded that both total independency and too much centralisation can lead to local churches running the race with a handicap. Within connexionalism, it is better that at the end of the day ultimate responsibility rests in a person rather than in a committee. To have some presbyters who also have a wider responsibility than one local congregation, and for whom, for convenience, the title 'bishop' is used, should bring certain advantages.

The respondents to the questionnaire attached as Appendix I were sampled from the highest decision-making bodies of the Accra Diocese of the Anglican Church and the Accra Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana. It is expected that

⁴⁵ <http://www.reform.org.uk/london.html> (accessed 11 May 2006).

members of such bodies would be highly knowledgeable on the subject of church government. Unfortunately, there were some, including the clergy from both denominations who did not have adequate knowledge. This spells out the need for general education on church government.

The respondents were able to mention some helpful features and defects in their system of church government. Such views are not shared by all. It is our opinion that if as much as 40% of a community take a position, they must be recognised. The number may not be significant to effect change or amendment to the constitution but they should be regarded as a force to reckon with.

Anglicans, with the exception of a few of the clergy, are inclined towards episcopacy where the bishop retires at the age of seventy. Methodists prefer episcopacy where the bishop has a term of office. These may be due to long standing traditions of these respective churches. Anglicans have been under the episcopal system from time immemorial, whilst the Methodist Church Ghana adopted episcopacy in January, 2000.

There are also indications that some Methodists have problems with the episcopal system of church government. This may be the result of their knowledge of episcopacy from other sources and not from the practice in the Methodist Church Ghana. The episcopal system in the Methodist Church Ghana is just the old presbyterial system with offices given new names.

Comments from the rank and file of the entire membership of the Methodist Church Ghana were that the adoption of the episcopacy has brought in its wake a change in the constitution to make the tenure of bishops a guaranteed term. This has removed the inherent checks and balances that the old provision had when there was a

yearly confirmation of persons in such office. This has given room for some unfortunate practices such as autocratic tendencies on the part of some individuals, which otherwise would not have arisen. There is therefore the need to reconsider this provision.

There must be structured and systematic education across board in the church about the episcopacy. The outcome of the current review must initiate a comprehensive effort at educating the whole church about the way forward.

CHAPTER THREE

NATURE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

3.1 Introduction

For a better discussion on the organisational structure of the church in the NT, there is the need to have an appreciable knowledge of the origins and nature of the church of that age. So this chapter deals mainly with two things, namely, how the church in the NT understood herself, and traces of structures that could serve as evidence for a kind of church government. This is because the self-understanding a community influences the way in which that community is governed. Discussion on the church includes the meaning and origins of the church. An attempt is made to explain the fact that it was the intention of Jesus to establish the church and that the church is seen as the creation of the Holy Spirit. Regarding evidence of the nature of church government, it appears the Christians in the NT are definitely and permanently organised bodies, and not temporary and loose aggregations of individuals. There must of necessity be some form of order.

As indicated in chapter one under “Rationale,” the church that lacks order does not cease to be a church but its service is impaired.⁴⁶ It is quite impossible, for example, to regard the church at Antioch as a loose aggregation of people for a passing purpose. When one considers the letters of Paul to the churches at Rome, Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, one can only conclude that these were addressed to permanent and definitely organised bodies. It is important to note that the manner in which the church was governed depended, to a large extent, on the church's understanding of herself.

⁴⁶ Schweitzer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, 1a.

However, regarding the government of the church in the NT, Eduard Schweizer is of the view that there is no such thing as a fixed NT church order.⁴⁷ The picture of church government that can be gathered from the Corinthian Epistles may be different from that of the Pastoral Epistles. The circumstances were varied. If one begins with the idea that church government in the NT is to be seen as a development, then one has to trace this development by examining the nature of church government from the various books of the NT. Another way of determining how the church was governed is by examining the titles of officers in the church, and the meanings and implications of the titles the church used. The church in the NT consciously avoided certain titles and preferred others. The avoidance of such words by the early church makes it obvious that terminology that expresses the idea of classes of rulers and the ruled were not suitable. This was in compliance with the teaching of Jesus Christ found at Mark 9:35 and 10:42-45. By way of practical demonstration, Jesus taught that the Christian ministry is one of service and not of lording it over people.

3.2 Meaning of ‘Church’

The Greek word κυριακόν according to W. W Gasque, is used by ancient authors for the place of public worship. The old word κυροικε, contracted into Scottish Kirk and German Kirche, and softened into ‘church’, is a compound of κυριουοικου. ‘Church’ is used generally in the English versions of the NT for the Greek ἐκκλησία.⁴⁸

It is of some importance to ascertain the scriptural use of this word. It assists in discovering the nature and form of a scriptural church. One cannot explain

⁴⁷ Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, 1a

⁴⁸ R. L. Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 11.

doctrines, if one is ignorant of the words in which the doctrines are contained. And the generic meaning of every important word, which is used in a variety of acceptations must be carefully sought for by the critic.⁴⁹

The word ἐκκλησία comes from the verb καλέω meaning to call, and the Greek prefix ἐκ, which means 'out of'. The verb ἐκκαλέω, a cognate of καλέω, means to call out or summon. Thus the church can be pictured as a community, which has been called out of a wider community.

In the Septuagint, the word ἐκκλησία occurs about a hundred times. The word has a loose connection with the Hebrew word qahal, which is translated variously as congregation, assembly and company. From Willmington's Guide to the Bible, εκκλησια is used, variously, for an evil council (Gen 49:6: Ps 20:5), council for civil affairs (I Kgs 12:3; Prov 5:14), a war council (Num 22:4: Judg 20:2), assembly of angels (Ps 89:5) and an assembly at worship (2 Chron 20:5).⁵⁰ Out of the hundred times that ἐκκλησία occurs, twenty-two are found in the Deuterocanonical books and a further three have no Hebrew equivalence.

The word ἐκκλησία is also used in classical literature.⁵¹ It is attested in the writings of Euripedes and Herodotus in the fifth century BC. It denotes in the usage of antiquity, the competent, full citizens of the city. The ἐκκλησία reached its greatest importance in the fifth century BC and met at regular intervals. It is mentioned also that in Athens, for example, the ἐκκλησία met about thirty to forty times a year. The word ἐκκλησία in secular Greek referred only to an assembly or meet-

⁴⁹Colin Brown, *NIDNTT* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), I: 292; H. L. Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible*, 691.

⁵⁰ Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible*, 691.

⁵¹ Colin Brown, *NIDNTT*, 1: 291.

ing and never to the people, which composed the gathering. In Acts 19:32 a mob in uproar could be referred to as an ἐκκλησία. But after the meeting, the people are not referred to as ἐκκλησία.

It must be noted that another word that is related to ἐκκλησία is συναγωγή (meaning, bring together). This denotes quite generally, the collecting or bringing together of things, troops or people. This word was used in the guilds where it was applied to the regular, mostly festive assembly, linked with a meal and sacrifice of the guilds. These were almost without exception to be understood as cultic fellowships. The word συναγωγή also applied to the normal business meeting, and the guild itself but only rarely, late and to all appearances only in non-cultic context.⁵² It is possible to find in Classical Greek, absolutely clear attestation of the fact that συναγωγή is used to denote the place of assembly.

In the NT, ἐκκλησία is given a technical and theological designation for the ‘people of God’.⁵³ The word occurs 114 times in the NT.⁵⁴ With the exception of five occurrences, the word has the meaning of ‘the people of God’. The five exceptions are given as Acts 7:38, 39, 41; Acts 19:32; Heb 2:12.

Acts 7:38, 39, and 41 deals with Stephen's address before the Sanhedrin during which he described the nation Israel at Mount Sinai as the assembly in the Wilderness. Acts 19:32 refers to the mob in uproar at Ephesus. Heb 2:12 describes Christ's song of praise to the Father concerning all the elect, both OT and NT saints. The ἐκκλησία can be said to be those who have responded to the call of God, through Jesus Christ, to be holy. It may refer to believers in a particular city

⁵² Colin Brown, *NIDNTT*, 1: 291.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible*, 691.

(Rom 16:1-2; 2 Cor 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). Regarding the issue of those who are included and excluded, P. D. L. Avis expresses the view that the first Christians were not concerned with defining the circumference of the Church but with proclaiming its Christological centre.⁵⁵

The word ἐκκλησία may also refer to the house churches (1 Cor 16:19; Phlm 1-2). In this sense, it may be used in the plural to refer, for example, to the churches of Judea (Gal 1:22) and churches of Laodicea (Col 4:16). It is noted that ἐκκλησία is used in a general sense to refer to all churches of Christ (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 7:17). The word is used in a restricted sense to refer to the local Christian community (1 Cor 11:18; 1 Cor 16:19). It must be noted that the church in a particular place is not seen as a part of or a fraction of the church but simply the church. Also, these churches may have local leaders, but they are not churches of individuals but churches of Christ.

The word ἐκκλησία also refers to the body of Christ, composed of all believers saved from the day of Pentecost to the Rapture (Col 1:18, 24; Eph 1:22-23; Gal 1:13). It may refer to the whole body of Christ including the living and the departed believers (1Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13). From Eph 5:25-32, Paul likens the relationship between husband and wife to the relationship between Christ and the church. The purpose of the church, among other things, is to love and glorify God, to evangelise, instruct and edify believers.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ P. D. L. Avis, 'The True Church in Reformation Theology,' *Scot. Jour. of Theol.* 30 (1956): 319; See also E. G. Rupp, *The Righteousness of God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1953), 310.

⁵⁶ Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible*, 695-696.

In the NT, the followers of Jesus Christ do not refer to themselves as συναγωγή.⁵⁷ Rather, this term was used to describe the meeting place of the local Jewish community or the congregation representing the total number of Jews. In Revelation, some Jews are described as the synagogue of Satan (Rev 2:9; 3:9). On the other hand, the verb συνάγω occurs not only in its general meaning of gather but particularly also in contexts with the meaning of gathering the people of God.

What is striking about ἐκκλησία is that, with the exception of Matt 16:18 and 18:17, the word is entirely absent from the Gospels. It is also absent from 1 & 2 Pet. Its absence in Jude is less significant. It is not in 2 Tim and Tit but it is in 1Tim. It is not in 1 & 2 John but it is in 3 John. Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke, uses ἐκκλησία twenty-three times in Acts. This might suggest a conscious avoidance of the application of the term ἐκκλησία for a group that belonged to the period of Jesus' earthly activity. Later, this community regarded herself as the New Israel. C. R. Smith, referring to Rev 7 on the 144,000, mentions that the early Christians regarded the Christian community as the New Israel.⁵⁸

3.3 Origins of the Church

It is generally accepted that the church of Christ, or as some may put it, the Post-Easter church was born at Pentecost.⁵⁹ The reasons given for this position are that:

⁵⁷ Brown, *NIDNTT*, 1: 299.

⁵⁸ C. R. Smith, 'The Portrayal of the Church as the New Israel in the names and orders of the Tribes in Rev 7:5-8,' *JSNT* 22 (1990), 39: 111-118; See also J. A. Draper, 'The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles: Rev. 7:1-17,' *JSNT* 15 (1983), 19: 133-147; George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 114-115.

⁵⁹ Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible*, 691-693.

1. In Matt 16:18, Jesus spoke of the building of the church in the future. The Greek word οἰκοδομήσω is the first pers. sg fut. tense of οἰκοδομέω, meaning ‘to build’. This means that the church in question was not present at the time of the saying.
2. The death of Jesus Christ is essential because the church must be sanctified with the blood of Jesus. Rom 5:9-11; Heb 9:13-15; Heb 13:11-12; 1 Pet 1:1-2; 1 Pet 1:17-19; 1 John 1:7-8; Rev 1:5-6; and Rev 7:14 indicate that without the death of Jesus Christ there would be no sanctification, and since the church of Christ comprises those sanctified by the blood of Jesus Christ, it would mean there would be no church before the death of Jesus Christ. Much more then, as Christians, having now been justified by his blood, one shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.
3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is equally essential because the church of Christ must be built on the fact of the resurrection. If Jesus Christ had not resurrected, all his teachings and promises would have been taken as lies. His followers would then not have the boldness to congregate and preach about his resurrection and power. The basis of Christian teaching of the resurrection of the dead and of the ‘Second Coming’ is the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:12-25; 1 Cor 15).
4. The ascension is essential because the giving and operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are dependent on Christ being ascended (Eph 4:7-12).
5. The baptism of the Holy Spirit places the believer in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13). Since the descent of the Spirit, equipping the believers for their task occurred on the day of Pentecost, one can say that there would be no church before that event.

To Hans Küng, the origins of the church do not lie solely in the intention of the message of Jesus in the pre-Easter period.⁶⁰ He sees the entire action of God in Jesus Christ from birth, ministry, death and resurrection, and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as the origins of the Church. To J. Jeremias, the death of Jesus Christ was very important in the vicarious sacrifice of the suffering servant.⁶¹ Despite the various positions regarding foundation of the church, which are mentioned below, it can be summed up that Pentecost marks the birth of the church of Christ. However, it must be acknowledged that:

- a) The core members of the community that became the church in Christ were called by Jesus Christ during his ministry, that is, the core members, as a body, were present before the Pentecost event.
- b) It was the intention of Jesus to build the church.
- c) The early Christians banded themselves together as a special community, a family with Christ as their head. Relating to this notion, David G. Horrell has commented that one of the aspects of social structure commonly investigated by anthropologists is that of Kinship.⁶²

3.4 Evidence of the nature of Church Government in the NT

It is noted that a large portion of the New Testament is in the narrative literary genre.⁶³ Narratives are stories which tell us about things which happened, and also

⁶⁰ Küng, *The Church*, 73.

⁶¹ J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic words of Jesus* (London/New York: 1996), 210-229.

⁶² David G. Horrell, 'From αδελφοι to οικος θεου: Social Transformation in Pauline Christianity,' *JBL* 129/2 (2001): 293-311; See also R. M. Keesing, *Cultural Anthropology: A Contemporary Perspective* (New York: CBC College Publishing/Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981), 212-250; T. H. Eriksen, *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology* (London: Pluto, 1995), 82-94.

⁶³ Mark Conner, http://markconner.typepad.com/catch_the_wind/files/a_new_...accessed (accessed 15 May 2012).

show God at work among his people. Mention is made of four important aspects about narratives:⁶⁴

- a) Narratives are first and foremost stories about what God did to and through people. God is the hero of the story.
- b) Narratives are not allegories or stories filled with hidden meanings. We are often told what happened but not always how or why.
- c) Narratives do not always teach directly. However, they often illustrate what is taught directly elsewhere

Each individual narrative does not necessarily have a moral teaching of its own. The big picture must be kept in view. These principles, it is claimed, are common sense and appear simple enough.⁶⁵

3.4.1 Historical Books of the NT

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts are known as the ‘historical books’ of the NT. The Gospels cannot be relied on as sources of evidence for church government. Two reasons may be cited for this. In the first place, there are conditions mentioned earlier, that are required for the establishment of the church. The conditions include the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The church in Christ or the church of God in Christ must be equipped with the Holy Spirit. Until this condition had been fulfilled, the community of believers of Jesus Christ could not be referred to as a church in Christ.

Secondly, that community of believers had the Word Incarnate dwelling with them. If there is any reminiscence of church government, it would be referred to as a

⁶⁴ Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth* (London, England: Scripture Union, 1992), 75-77.

⁶⁵ Fee & Stuart, *How to Read*, 75-77.

theocracy. The 'Word-Incarnate' in their midst instructed and directed them in all aspects of their life. The Word was their only constitution. It has been mentioned by F. Coad that the teaching of Jesus Christ contains provisions for the continuity of the community of believers.⁶⁶ The following are included in F. Coad's comments:

1. The presence of the Paraclete for the continual support and increase of Church's life, and the new foundation of commandment of mutual love (John 13-16).
2. There are provisions for self-discipline of the community (Matt 18:15-22).
3. There are paradoxical rules of an anti-hierarchy (Matt 20:25-28).
4. There are ordinances expressive of its unity: the fellowship of the Last Supper and of the new covenant which it enshrines; and the command to witness and baptize significantly embodying a Trinitarian formula (Matt 28:19).

However, Coad mentions that provisions for the continuity of this community which became the church was not in an organizational structure but in the abiding of the Holy Spirit. The rites of this community do not emphasize office but fellowship and identification.⁶⁷

In the Acts of the Apostles, it is noted that the first churches were 'house churches.' The sizes of these churches were relatively small. Kevin Giles has noted that this local house church setting would have greatly influenced the leadership structure of the church.⁶⁸ They had no church buildings as is the case today and informality would have prevailed. The church was greatly influenced by their Jewish culture and roots. They borrowed many ideas from the local synagogue. Synagogues were led by

⁶⁶ F. Roy Coad, 'The Apostolic Church,' F. F. Bruce, H. L. Ellison & G. C. D. Howley (eds), *IBC*, 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Marshal Pickering/Zondervan, 1986), 1086-1093.

⁶⁷ Coad, 'The Apostolic Church,' 1086-1093

⁶⁸ Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry* (Blackburn, Victoria: Collins Dove, 1989), 12-13.

a ‘ruler’ of the synagogue and a ‘servant’ of the synagogue, both of whom were office bearers. It is claimed that under the new dynamic of the Spirit, these were transformed and the offices of ‘*episcopos*’ (overseer or bishop) and ‘deacon’ emerged in the life of the church.⁶⁹ The Book of Acts of the Apostles tells the story of the church, and offers biblical precedents of certain church practices. It must be understood that Luke’s primary purpose in writing Acts is simply to show the movement of the church as orchestrated by the Holy Spirit, not in setting forth a specific model of Christian experience, church life or a pattern of church leadership.⁷⁰

The Acts of the Apostles begin with the fact that the first leaders were the apostles Jesus Christ had chosen (Acts 1:2), with Peter as spokesperson or ‘first leader.’ James D. G. Dunn observes that the apostles were the only ones known to be in charge until the ‘seven’ were appointed in Acts 6.⁷¹ The word ἀπόστολος (apostle) is the noun form of ἀποστέλλω (to send). In older Greek the term is a nautical one denoting a freighter or a naval force with no sense of initiative or authorization.⁷² In John 13:16, ἀπόστολος is used for one who is legally charged to represent the person and cause of another. The title can refer to the commissioned representative of a congregation, as in 2 Cor 8:23 or Phil 2:25 (Epaphroditus). The word ἀπόστολος also denotes bearers of the NT message, first the twelve (Acts 1:26) sent out by Jesus himself (cf. Matt 10:2; Mark 6:30), with Peter their head and Jerusalem their centre (Acts 8:1); then the first Christian missionaries, as in Acts 14:4, 14 (Paul and Barnabas), Gal 1:19 (James), Rom 16:7 (Junias and Andronicus), and 1 Cor 15:7 (a wider

⁶⁹ R. Banks, ‘Church Order and Government,’ 132-134.

⁷⁰ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 92.

⁷¹ James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 107.

⁷² K. H. Rengstorf, ‘Apostolos’, G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds), *TDNT, Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 1: 407.

circle). Paul and Barnabas are sent by the congregation at Antioch (Acts 13:1ff.), but the apostle is properly an apostle of Jesus Christ, and this larger group shares with the twelve the common basis of a meeting with the risen Lord and commissioning by him personally. Hence Apollos and Timothy are not called apostles. But Paul's apostleship is accepted at Jerusalem (Acts 15; Gal 2:9; cf. 1 Cor 15:8ff.). Apostles, then, are not officials of the church but officers of Christ for the up-building of the church.

The rise of the apostolate begins with the first group of disciples. Externally this group resembles similar groups around other leaders. The difference lies in its genesis and outcome. It originates from the initiative of Jesus. The disciples accept his call, listen to him, and learn obedience from his revelation of God as Holy One and Father. The apostles cannot later become mere office bearers because they are under God's orders and acknowledge the supremacy of the rule of love. Only true disciples can have this authoritative part in the work of Jesus.

Jesus simply calls the twelve and sends them out with authority. Their authorization is linked with the person of Jesus. The first commission to preach the kingdom is for a limited period. The death of Jesus leaves the disciples at a loss, but the risen Lord constitutes them a community and renews the commission. The apostles are now witnesses of the resurrection. On the other hand, not all such witnesses are apostles. Mention of 'more than 500' seems to include those personally commissioned by the Lord before His death and after the resurrection. This applies primarily to the twelve (Matthias replacing Judas), who have been prepared for the task of preaching Christ as the fulfilment of OT prophecy. A number of others join with the twelve in receiving and executing this commission (cf. Acts 15:1 ff.). There is no record of the apostles leading house churches although they did visit such churches where they ministered (Acts 5:42). It needs to be emphasised that there is much cer-

tainty about the fact that the apostles were regarded as the leaders from the opening verses of Acts.

Acts 1:6

A passage that indicates the understanding of the Christian community about organisational structure is Acts 1:6. The question of the disciples - Οἱ μὲν οὖν συνελθόντες ἡρώτων αὐτὸν λέγοντες· κύριε, εἰ ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ ἀποκαθιστάνεις τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ Ἰσραήλ; gives some idea about the understanding of the disciples. The sentence is introduced by the connective Οἱ μὲν οὖν which associates the thought of v.6 with v. 5. It is claimed that in the disciples' minds, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the coming of the promised kingdom were closely associated.⁷³ When Christ told the disciples of the soon-coming Spirit baptism, they immediately concluded that the restoration of Israel's kingdom was near in time.

The question of the disciples, with emphasis on the emboldened phrase, τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ Ἰσραήλ; on the restoration of the kingdom underscores the fact that they still regarded themselves (the band of followers) as the OT people of God (Israel), expecting the fulfilment of the messianic prophecies about the restoration of God's Kingdom on earth.⁷⁴ Thus, whatever understanding of organisational structure they had would be that of the OT people of God (Israel) and not the NT people of God (the Church). E. H. Trenchard says that the disciples were steeped in OT prophecies in which the constant repeated theme is the restoration of Israel.⁷⁵ To

⁷³ Stanley D. Toussaint, 'Acts,' J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (eds), *BKC* (Grand Rapids, MI: Cook Communications Ministries, 1983/ 2000), 354.

⁷⁴ William H. Baker, 'Acts,' Walter A. Elwell (ed.), *BCB*, 890.

⁷⁵ E. H. Trenchard, 'Acts,' F. F. Bruce, H. L. Ellison & G. C. D. Howley (eds), *IBC* (Michigan: Marshall Pickering/Zondervan, 1986), 1271.

him, the fierce and unspiritual nationalism of some of the Jews did not nullify these prophecies.

Acts 1:15-20

The second place of interest in the Acts of the Apostles is Acts 1:15-20, with special note on v. 15 and v. 20.

¹⁵ Καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις ἀναστὰς Πέτρος ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἀδελφῶν εἶπεν· ἦν τε ὄχλος ὀνομάτων ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ὡσεὶ ἑκατὸν εἴκοσι·

²⁰ γέγραπται γὰρ ἐν βίβλῳ ψαλμῶν· γενηθήτω ἡ ἔπαυλις αὐτοῦ ἔρημος καὶ μὴ ἔστω ὁ κατοικῶν ἐν αὐτῇ, καὶ· τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν αὐτοῦ λαβέτω ἕτερος.

Concerning ἀδελφῶν Bruce Metzger comments that the Western text (D Cyprian, Augustine et al) has substituted μαθητῶν for ἀδελφῶν of \aleph A B C al. The reason, to him, is to prevent the reader from confusing these "brethren" with the brothers of Jesus (Acts 1:14). The word μαθητής is used nowhere else in the first five chapters of Acts. For the same reason the scribe of the Bodmer Papyrus of Acts seems to have substituted ἀποστολῶν.⁷⁶ At the end of the verse, codex Bezae adds the phrase ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ τῶν Ἑβραίων (in the ministration of the Hebrews), which is quite superfluous in view of the preceding context. Old Latin reads a *ministris Hebraeorum*, representing ὑπὸ τῶν διακοντῶν τῶν Ἑβραίων by the ministers of the Hebrews).⁷⁷ On Acts 6:3, Bruce Metzger says it was natural for scribes to add ἁγίου after πνεύματος (A C H P S al), and the word passed into the *Textus Receptus*. He adds that the shorter text is supported by \aleph B D Syriac Chrysostom.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Bruce M. Metzger, 'Commentary on Acts 6:1,' *TCGNT* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft / German Bible Society, 1994).

⁷⁷ Metzger, 'Commentary on Acts 6:1.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

The Lord Jesus was no longer with them physically to give them personal directions. However, they were not without the leading of the Lord, for they had the Word of God. In fact, the Word of God and prayer formed the foundation for the ministry of the church as recorded in the Book of Acts (6:4). Whether one translates v. 15 as ‘and in those days Peter stood...’ or ‘Peter, standing, ...’ it is obvious that Peter appears to be taking the leadership role. It could be said that he was doing the will of God. Jesus had made it clear that Peter was to be their leader (Matt 16:19; Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-17). W. W. Wiersbe notes that Peter was ‘first among equals,’ and he was their recognized leader.⁷⁹ His name is mentioned first in each listing of the Apostles, including Acts 1:13.

But should Peter and the others have waited until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost? It must be borne in mind that the Lord had previously ‘breathed’ on them and imparted the Spirit to them (John 20:22). When the Spirit came at Pentecost, it was for the purpose of filling them with power and baptizing them into one body in Christ. The Lord had opened up their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). Peter referred to Ps 69:25 and 109:8, concerning the replacement of Judas. It is claimed that it was wrong for them to select a new apostle, because Paul was the one who was meant by God to fill up the ranks.⁸⁰ It is further added that Matthias was not heard of before the election, and he was never heard of again. Peter, James and John were the closest disciples of Jesus. Of these three, James died earlier (Acts 12:2), and apart from Acts 1:13 where the disciples of Jesus are listed only Peter and John are mentioned. W. W. Wiersbe adds that Paul could not have filled up the ranks because he could never have met the divine qualifications laid

⁷⁹ W. W. Wiersbe, ‘Commentary on Acts 1:15-22,’ *BEC* (Chariot Victor Publishing, 1992).

⁸⁰ Wiersbe, ‘Commentary on Acts 1:15-22’.

down in Acts 1:21-22.⁸¹ Paul was not baptized by John the Baptist he did not travel with the Apostles when Jesus was with them on earth; and, though he saw the glorified Christ, Paul was not among the first witnesses of the Resurrection as were the original apostles.

Paul made it clear that he was not to be classified with the 'Twelve' (1 Cor 15:8; Gal 1:15-24), and the 'Twelve' knew it. If the 'Twelve' thought that Paul was supposed to be one of them they certainly did not show it! In fact, they refused to admit Paul into the Jerusalem fellowship until Barnabas came to his rescue (Acts 9:26-27). The Twelve Apostles ministered primarily to the twelve tribes of Israel, while Paul was sent to the Gentiles (Gal 2:1-10).⁸² D. A. Carson mentions that the reason for maintaining the number 12 was that there were 12 tribes of Israel.⁸³

From Acts 2-7, the witness was primarily to Israel, to the Jew first (see Rom 1:16; Acts 3:26; 13:46). Once the message had gone to the Gentiles (Acts 10-11), this Jewish emphasis began to decline. When the Apostle James was martyred, he was not replaced (Acts 12). Why? Because the official witness to Israel was now completed and the message was going out to Jews and Gentiles alike. There was no more need for 'Twelve Apostles' to give witness to the twelve tribes of Israel. It is also obvious that the descent of the Holy Spirit changed their perception of ministry from the lost sheep of Israel to the whole world. Jamieson and others share the view that Peter stood up among the rest of the disciples because he was recognised as the leader.⁸⁴ The number of the followers at that time is given as 120. It is also recorded that about

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Wiersbe, 'Commentary on Acts 1:15-22'.

⁸³ D.A. Carson, 'Acts,' in D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer & G. J. Wenham (eds), *NBC* (Illinois/England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1071.

⁸⁴ Jamieson, Fausset & Brown, 'Acts 1:20,' *JFB Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Biblesoft, Inc., 2006).

500 followers saw Jesus ascending to the Father. But it was most unlikely that all these could be contained in the upper room.

The ἐπισκοπήν in the reading of Acts 1:20 γέγραπται γὰρ ἐν βίβλῳ ψαλμῶν· γενηθήτω ἡ ἔπαυλις αὐτοῦ ἔρημος καὶ μὴ ἔστω ὁ κατοικῶν ἐν αὐτῇ, καί· τὴν ἐπισκοπήν αὐτοῦ λαβέτω ἕτερος must not be taken as an indicator of church government in the NT. The passage is cited from the OT (Ps 69:25, 109:8). It is highly inconceivable that the church at that time had bishops. It may be counter-argued that if the ‘Twelve’ were having oversight of the band of followers, and playing the roles of shepherding the flock then they could be referred to as shepherds, overseers, superintendents or bishops.

The noun ἐπίσκοπος is translated in English as bishop or overseer or superintendent. In the classical Greek world, the term means overseer, watcher, protector, and patron. The term is also used for various offices involving oversight, but not of a religious nature.⁸⁵ The only religious use is for the gods. Greek gods are personified forces. They are related to the creatures nearest to them, which are under their protection, for example, springs, groves, cities, peoples, and individuals. Gods watch over these and rule over them, giving sanctity to human life in society.

The term can be applied to various human activities, for example, watching over corpses, overseeing a ship or a business or the market or construction, looking after young married couples or ruling a house. Other meanings along these lines are protector and spy or scout. The Cynics applied the term to a divine messenger acting

⁸⁵ H. W. Beyer, ‘*Episkopos*,’ *TDNT*.

as God's agent to investigate what is good and to test people to see how far they conform to it.

The term was also applied to state officials like supervisors sent to other cities of the Attic League, and also officials with judicial functions. The Roman pontiff (with reference to the administration of the Roman Empire and not the Roman Catholic Church) is ἐπίσκοπος only insofar as he has the duty of overseeing the Vestal Virgins. An interesting use occurs in Syria in relation to the erection of a public building in which it is clear that the title is applied to supervisors of the work in the interests of the builders and perhaps with control of the funds. It has been observed that none of those called ἐπισκόποι in the ancient world could have served as a model for the Christian ἐπίσκοπος.⁸⁶

In Judaism, God is seen as ἐπίσκοπος. The Septuagint calls God ἐπίσκοπος in Job 20:29 with a clear reference to his judicial function. Philo has the same thought that nothing, good or bad, can be hidden from God. In particular, God sees into the human heart. Regarding the application of the term to men, it must be noted that there is no clearly defined office of ἐπίσκοπος in the Septuagint but the term is used for 'overseer' in various senses, for example, officers in Judg 9:28; Isa 60:17, supervisors of funds in 2 Chron 34:12, 17, overseers of the priests and Levites in Neh 11:9, overseers of the temple in 2 Kgs 11:18, and overseers of temple functions in Num 4:16. The Jewish philosopher, Philo uses the term for 'one who knows souls,' and Josephus uses it for a 'guardian' of morality.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ L. Coenan, 'Elder,' in Colin Brown (ed.), *NIDNTT*, 1:188-201.

⁸⁷ H. W. Beyer, 'Episkopos in Judaism,' *TDNT*, 1:599-622.

Adam Clarke, commenting on Acts 1:15-20, says that the number 120 was that required to form a council in any city. This shows they were organized enough to have recourse to legal requirements. Adam Clarke however, mentions that the office of Judas could not be equated with episcopate. It is argued that ‘brethren’ is the reading of ABC, a few others, with Coptic, Aethiopic, Armenian and Vulgate. ‘Brethren’ is preferred to ‘disciples’ to show that it is the whole company of believers that Peter addressed and not just the ‘Twelve.’⁸⁸ Albert Barnes prefers ‘men and brethren’ to ‘men, our brethren’ to conform to the Syriac text.⁸⁹

The κληρον of Acts 1:17 should not be taken to mean only a share in the ministry of preaching the word. Otherwise it would mean only the ‘Twelve’ had the right to preach. It is noted that Stephen and Philip were preachers of the word. As noted earlier, the reference is to conditions in the OT, and may at this place imply sitting on the twelve thrones to judge Israel than the preaching of the word to the whole world.

Acts 6

An occasion that could serve as an indicator of church government was the selection and appointment of the ‘Seven’ (Acts 6). There was the need to appoint these seven men to attend to the daily distribution of rationing meant for the widows (administrative work) so the apostles could attend to prayer and the preaching and teaching of the word. Though the Christian community selected the ‘Seven,’ they were commissioned by the apostles.⁹⁰ This was done by prayer and the laying on of hands. The practice of laying hands on others was a gesture signifying commission-

⁸⁸ Adam Clarke, ‘Acts 6,’ *ACC* (Grand Rapids: Biblesoft, Inc., 2006).

⁸⁹ Albert Barnes, ‘Acts 6,’ *BNNT* (Grand Rapids: Biblesoft, Inc., 2006).

⁹⁰ Stanley D. Toussaint, ‘Acts,’ *BKC*, 367-368.

ing and granting of authority by the church (cf. 8:17-19; 13:3; 19:6; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; Heb 6:2). But could these be referred to as deacons?

Three responses are offered on the nature of office to which these seven men were appointed. First, some say these were the first deacons. Several factors are used to support this viewpoint. The office of deacon is assumed in Paul's letters (cf. Phil 1:1). If Acts 6:1-6 is not an account of their beginning, it is argued, when and where did deacons originate? Also, several words related to διάκονος (deacon) are found here: 'distribution' ('service') in verse 1 is διακονία, and 'to wait' in verse 2 is διακονεῖν. Donald L. Norbie says the institution of the diaconate is given a lengthy explanation in Acts 6 because the synagogue had no such office.⁹¹ Andre Lemaire claims that the 'seven' in Acts 6 have nothing to do with the deacon.⁹² These men were never called διάκονοι (deacons) as such, and it is interesting to find that several lexicographers agree with Beyer by not placing the διακονία or διακονέω of Acts 6 under the special category of office of deacon.⁹³ Much later they were called 'the Seven' (21:8). Furthermore, the words 'distribution' and 'wait' do not seem to have a technical sense here. These words in the Greek NT are commonly used in a non-specialized sense.⁹⁴

Others hold the view that these were precursors to the office of πρεσβύτερος (elder). This is not a common interpretation, but it gains its support from Acts 11:30, which refers to relief money being given to the elders. If deacons handled

⁹¹ Donald L. Norbie, *New Testament Church Organisation* (Chicago: Christian Libraries, 1955), 36-37.

⁹² Andre Lemaire, 'From Services to Ministries: Diakonia in the First Two centuries,' Bas Van Iersel & Roland Murphy (eds), *Office and Ministry in the Church* (New York: Herder, 1972), 36.

⁹³ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 137-138; G. Abbot-Smith, *A Manual of Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1977), 107-108; Thomas Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries* (Minnesota: James Family, 1977), 153.

⁹⁴ Toussaint, 'Acts,' *BKC*, 367-368.

these funds earlier (Acts 6), it is argued that they must have later become the elders (Acts 11). However, the office of elder is noted by many as having its origin in the Jewish synagogue.

Another view is that these seven men held a temporary position for the purpose of meeting a specific need. This seems to be the best approach for the following reasons.

1. These men were chosen for a particular task, not an overall one.
2. They were in a temporary responsibility because of the communal nature of the church at Jerusalem.

Even so, these men do illustrate the role and function of the office of deacons. W.W. Wiersbe sees the development leading to the selection of the seven as relating to the size and composition of the church.⁹⁵ On the composition of the Church, it is obvious that in addition to the Jewish core, the church at that time had more members. From the addition of the 3000 at Acts 2:41, further addition at 2:47, which grew to 5000 men 4:4, the number multiplied at 6:1 and then multiplied again at 6:7. It was obvious that the size and composition demanded evolving structures to contain the situation. W. W. Wiersbe contemplates that it was possible that this office later developed into the diaconate.⁹⁶

The underlying fact is that the church was able to adjust their structure in order to make room for a growing ministry. When structure and ministry conflict, this gives us an opportunity to trust God for the solution. It is tragic when churches destroy min-

⁹⁵ Wiersbe, 'Acts 6,' *WEONT*,.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*.

istry because they refuse to modify their structure.⁹⁷ The Apostles were not afraid to share their authority and ministry with others. It must also be borne in mind that these were men filled with the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Greek version puts it πλήρεις πνεύματος καὶ σοφίας (full of the spirit and wisdom). They were already filled with the spirit so the laying on of hands could not be impartation of the spirit but a prayer of guidance and equipment for the new assignment, and the recognition that the church has accorded them with authority.

Acts 11:30

There is also an indicator on the nature of church government at Acts 11:30, ὁ καὶ ἐποίησαν ἀποστέιλαντες πρὸς τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους διὰ χειρὸς Βαρναβᾶ καὶ Σαύλου.

Stanley D. Toussaint mentions that Acts 11:30 is the first mention of πρεσβυτέρους (elders) in the Book of Acts of the Apostles.⁹⁸ It is the acc. pl. of πρεσβύτερος (elder). It is further noted that these elders were the administrators of the church. The word is used in classical literature to refer to an older person as against the younger, and a person more honoured.⁹⁹ In the order of society the elders receive respect and authority on the ground of their experience and wisdom. It is claimed that πρεσβύτερος had been commonly employed before its Jewish and Christian usage.¹⁰⁰ There was an Alexandrian guild of six millers called πρεσβύτεροι, which had a priest at its head.¹⁰¹ The term was used to mean ‘of greater importance’. In Egypt, it was the title of members of a committee and also religious bodies and for the annually elected

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Toussaint, ‘Acts,’ *BKC*, 382-383.

⁹⁹ G. Bornkamm, ‘πρεσβυτερος,’ *TDNT*, VI: 651-683; L. Coenan, ‘Elder,’ *NIDNTT*, I: 186-201.

¹⁰⁰ James Hope Moulton & George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 535.

¹⁰¹ Bornkamm, ‘πρεσβυτερος,’ 651.

agents of village councils, who had judicial and administrative duties. The title was also used for ambassador. However, A. E. Harvey says the term πρεσβύτερος does not become a title for the member of the γερουσία / council of the Hellenistic cities until the second century AD.¹⁰² J. B. Lightfoot believes that the title had a Jewish origin from the OT elder, Sanhedrin elder and the Synagogue elder.¹⁰³ The highest Jewish court, the Sanhedrin met in Jerusalem, and comprised 70 or 71 elders.¹⁰⁴ M. H. Shepard Jr. expresses the idea that like the Great Sanhedrin, each local Sanhedrin's primary duty was judicial.¹⁰⁵ J. A. Harvey sees grave difficulties in regarding the Sanhedrin as a whole as a proto-type of the Christian presbyterate.¹⁰⁶

In the Septuagint words derived from the root 'presh' have three main areas of meanings. They could mean:

1. Old age;
2. Elders whose roles are variously to be understood according to the historical circumstances;
3. Ambassador, negotiator and spokesman.¹⁰⁷

We find that elders are an established part of the patriarchal clan and tribal system. On the death of Jacob, elders of the household of Pharaoh and elders of the land of Egypt accompanied the house of Jacob for the burial. In connection with the institution of the Passover, Moses was to address the elders of Israel. Moses was accompanied by Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy elders of Israel, appointed upon the advice of Jethro.

¹⁰² A. E. Harvey, 'Elder,' *JTS*, 1974, 25: 320.

¹⁰³ J. B. Lightfoot, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 191.

¹⁰⁴ Simon Cohen, 'Sanhedrin,' *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* (1975), 2, 1520.

¹⁰⁵ M. H. Shepard Jr., 'Elders in the New Testament', *IDB*, 1962, 2, 73.

¹⁰⁶ Harvey, 'Elders', 323-324.

¹⁰⁷ H. W. Beyer, 'Elders', *TDNT*, II: 665.

The importance of the elders in the history and religion of the Jewish people cannot be over-emphasised. Among other significant roles, they were instrumental in the institution of the monarchy. They are mentioned as representatives of the whole people at Solomon's dedication of the Temple; kingmakers in the time of Rehoboam; guardians and representatives of the people both in exile and in the homeland. In the Inter-testamental period, there is the existence of seventy (or seventy-one) members of the Sanhedrin. They had ultimate oversight of the church over all aspects of the ministries. The Bible Illustrator refers to the well-attested famine which occurred in AD 45-46.¹⁰⁸ The fact that some Jews of Diaspora did not send the charity to Jews in Jerusalem but through the church shows that by this time the break with the synagogue was recognized by the Christian community.

In his commentary on Acts 11:30, W. W. Wiersbe is of the view that the presence of prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch indicates that there was close fellowship between these two churches. Reference to the world may well refer to the Roman Empire. It is acknowledged that there were such famines in the reign of Emperor Claudius.

- a) In the first and second years
- b) In his fourth year in Judea
- c) In his ninth year in Greece
- d) In his eleventh year at Rome

W. W. Wiersbe notes that the concern to send help was not from Barnabas and Paul but from the Christians at Antioch. The gift which was sent through Barnabas and Paul was received by the πρεσβυτέρους (elders) of the church. C. C. Ryrie and

¹⁰⁸ Joseph Exell, *BI* (London: Chariot Victor, Biblesoft Inc., 2006), Acts 11:30.

others say that the elders are the representatives of the church.¹⁰⁹ It must be acknowledged that the role of the elders has by this time come to be recognized as very important function or office in the church. These probably mean those who first believed on Christ crucified, either of the seventy disciples mentioned in Luke 10, or the one hundred and twenty mentioned in Acts 1:15, or the seven deacons in Acts 6:5. Some have divided the primitive disciples into three classes:¹¹⁰

- a) The ἀποστολοι, those who were eye-witnesses.
- b) The πρεσβυτεροι, those who were the first fruits, or converts of the apostles' preaching.
- c) The διαδοχοι, those who were the successors of the preceding, from whom they had received the doctrines of the Gospel.

It is likely that the deacons are meant, whose office it was to take care of the poor. Barnes also mentions that this is the first mention in the NT of elders, or presbyters, in the Christian church.¹¹¹ He comments that the word literally denotes 'aged men,' but in the Jewish synagogue it was merely a name of office. It is clear, however, that the elders of the Jewish synagogue are not included here, for the relief was intended for the 'brethren' (Acts 11:29); that is, the Christians who were at Jerusalem. It could be that the charity was entrusted to the aged, prudent, and experienced men in the church, for distribution among the members.¹¹² He also admits the difficulty that these elders are later recognised as officers or functionaries in the church.

¹⁰⁹ C. C. Ryrie, *Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1968), 36; J. B. Smith, *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1961), 104-107; J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 103-105.

¹¹⁰ Adam Clarke, 'Acts 11:30,' *ACC*.

¹¹¹ Albert Barnes, 'Acts 11:30,' *BNNT*.

¹¹² *Ibid*.

Acts 14:23

Another verse that could be an indicator of church government is Acts 14:23, χειροτονήσαντες δὲ αὐτοῖς κατ' ἐκκλησίαν πρεσβυτέρους, προσευξάμενοι μετὰ νηστειῶν παρέθεντο αὐτοὺς τῷ κυρίῳ εἰς ὃν πεπιστεύκεισαν.

Stanley D. Toussaint comments on Acts 14:23 that the believers were given not only edification but also organization. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church. These elders, it is observed, were not novices in the faith (1 Tim 3:6); they were probably Jews who came out of the synagogues. Such elders were steeped in the Scriptures. Thus elders from the synagogues became elders in the churches.¹¹³ W. W. Wiersbe observes that on their return trip to Antioch, the missionaries were engaged in several important ministries. One of their ministries was that they organized the churches (Acts 14:23-25). Reference is to the local church as both an organism and an organization, and that if an organism is not organized, it will die.¹¹⁴ Paul and Barnabas ordained spiritual leaders and gave them the responsibility of caring for the flock. It is argued these elders were the same that are elsewhere named as bishops. Reference is made to Tit 1:5 and 7 that the elder and bishop (overseer) refer to the same office, and both are equivalent to 'pastor' (shepherd). Finally, they reported to their 'sending church' on the work God had done (Acts 14:26-28). The missionaries are accountable to the church.

Joseph Exell claims that because the oldest men are supposed to have the greatest knowledge and experience, the most influential officers in the Church are spoken of as 'elders'.¹¹⁵ The Churches were young and inexperienced. The apostles,

¹¹³ Stousant, 'Acts,' *BKC*, 392.

¹¹⁴ Wiersbe, 'Acts 14:23,' *BEC*.

¹¹⁵ Exell, 'Acts 14:23,' *BI*.

therefore, took from their number some of the most competent to take charge of the Churches in their absence.

W. W. Wiersbe comments that the Greek word translated ‘appointed’ has a double significance: it means to designate as well as ‘to elect by popular vote.’¹¹⁶ Apparently the apostles selected the best candidates and then the whole church voted as the Spirit guided them. Wiersbe emphasises that this is the way church government ought to be and that there is nothing in the Bible about a hierarchy of church leaders. He also equates the elder and bishop and pastor, with reference to Tit 1:5 and 7, and Acts 20:17 and 28. Jamieson and others observe that the phrase χειροτονήσαντες δὲ αὐτοῖς κατ’ ἐκκλησίαν πρεσβυτέρους, means having chosen elders by show of hands, that is, having superintended such choice, and not ‘ordained.’¹¹⁷ Adam Clarke shares the same opinion that χειροτονήσαντες has the idea of extending a hand of fellowship to show approval of the selection.¹¹⁸ Albert Barnes says if there is any ‘ordination’ then either it would be in the praying and fasting after the choice had been made or the whole process of selection, approval and the prayer and fasting. Undeniably, the selection is made by the local church. Barnes contemplates that the elders were the older people who were likely to be more experienced.¹¹⁹

Acts 15

Another passage that has indications on the nature of church government is the council of Jerusalem that dealt with the issue of circumcision of the gentile Christians in Acts 15. According to Stanley D. Toussaint, the church at Antioch deemed it most

¹¹⁶ W. W. Wiersbe, ‘Acts 14:23,’ *WEONT*.

¹¹⁷ R. Jamieson, ‘Acts 14:23,’ *JFB*.

¹¹⁸ Adam Clarke, ‘Acts 14:23,’ *ACC*.

¹¹⁹ Albert Barnes, ‘Acts 15,’ *BNNT*.

expedient to discuss the matter with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. This should not be interpreted to mean subordination to the church in Jerusalem. It is rather a recognition that there were in the church in Jerusalem key figures who sat at the feet of Jesus, and who for that matter could speak the mind of Christ. Philip Schaff expresses the view that there can be no ecclesiastical jurisdiction as such nor any church discipline, except that of mutual aid and correction.¹²⁰

It was because of mutual aid and correction that they commissioned Paul and Barnabas for the task and wisely sent some other believers along as witnesses. These witnesses would protect Paul and Barnabas against being accused of distorting the facts. The gathering was not a ‘church council’ in the denominational sense, but rather a meeting of the leaders who heard the various groups and then made their decision. Though the ‘mother church’ in Jerusalem did have great influence, each local church was autonomous.¹²¹ Mention is made of the presence of the apostles, elders and other believers. It could be said that the discussion involved the entire body of Christian believers in Jerusalem. It is mentioned that James, the brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, evidently the head of the church at Jerusalem, then took the floor and issued a summary statement. According to Stanley D. Toussaint, James by beginning his speech with Peter’s experience seemed to be suggesting that the problem was in a way resolved in principle already. A contingent from Jerusalem, including Judas and Silas were sent with a letter on the decision of the council. As they travelled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the Jerusalem Council (15:23-29). D. R. Catchpole observes that Lucan theology is quite sufficient to explain the presence of

¹²⁰ P. Schaff, *The Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches* (London: SPQ, 1877), 11-15

¹²¹ W. W. Wiersbe, ‘Acts 15,’ *BEC*.

the Decree in the Acts narrative of the Apostolic council.¹²² The Decree is of the product of a process of reconciliation.¹²³ Dunn observes that it is clear enough that in Galatians, Paul is striving to assert his independence from Jerusalem.¹²⁴ B. H. Mclean is of the opinion that there is no doubt that Paul considers himself an apostle.¹²⁵ John Knox also observes Paul's customary use of the term 'apostle' to mean one who saw the Lord (after the resurrection), and was commissioned directly by him.¹²⁶ R. Bultmann indicates that Paul inserted himself into the tradition found in 1 Cor 15:5-7 in order to validate his own authority over and against the other apostles.¹²⁷ It is assumed that if Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians after the first missionary journey, but before the Jerusalem Council, the report of the decision would be strong confirmation of the gospel which he preached and about which he wrote.¹²⁸

In his commentary, W. W. Wiersbe suggests that the problem of circumcision shows that there were people in the Jerusalem church who were strong advocates of the Law of Moses but ignorant of the relationship between Law and grace.¹²⁹ He explains further that,

Several important issues are involved here, not the least of which is the work of Christ on the cross as declared in the message of the Gospel (1

¹²² D. R. Catchpole, 'Paul, James and the Apostolic Decree,' *NTS* 23/4 (July 1977): 428-444.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 428. See also T. W. Manson 'The Problem of the Epistle to the Galatians,' M. Black (ed.), *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (Manchester: 1962), 186.

¹²⁴ J. D. G. Dunn, 'The Relationship between Paul and Jerusalem according to Galatians 1&2', *NTS* 28: 4 (Oct. 1982): 461-478; See also J. B. Lightfoot, *Galatians* (England: Macmillan, 1890), 103; J. H. Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Cambridge, 1975), 136-150; B. Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Lund, 1977), 14-34; H. D. Betz, 'The Literary composition and Function of Paul's letters to the Galatians', *NTS*, (1974-5) 21: 353-79; G. Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatians* (Cambridge, 1979), 36-38.

¹²⁵ B. H. Mclean, 'Galatians 2:7-9 and the Recognition of Paul's Apostolic Status at the Jerusalem Conference: a critique of G. Luedemann's Solution,' *NTS* 37/1 (Jan 1991): 67-76; See also *Paul's Conception of Mission in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1965), 95-110.

¹²⁶ John Knox, 'The Initial Revelation,' *Chapters in the Life of Paul* (New York: Abingdon, 1950), 111-126.

¹²⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, 'New Testament Mythology,' *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* (London: SPCK, 1953), 1-44; Richardson, 'The Apostolic and Priestly Ministry', 291-336.

¹²⁸ Stanley D. Toussaint, 'Acts 15', *BKC*.

¹²⁹ W. W. Wiersbe, 'Acts 15', *BEC*.

Cor 15:1-8; Heb 10:1-18). God pronounces a solemn anathema on anyone who preaches any other Gospel than the Gospel of the grace of God found in Jesus Christ His Son (Gal 1:1-9). When any religious leader says, "Unless you belong to our group, you cannot be saved!" or, "Unless you participate in our ceremonies and keep our rules, you cannot be saved!" he is adding to the Gospel and denying the finished work of Jesus Christ Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians to make it clear that salvation is wholly by God's grace, through faith in Christ plus nothing!¹³⁰

It appears that at least four different meetings were involved in this strategic conference.¹³¹

1. a public welcome to Paul and his associates, Acts 15:4;
2. a private meeting of Paul and the key leaders, Gal 2:2;
3. a second public meeting at which the Judaizers presented their case, Acts 15:5-6 and Gal 2:3-5; and
4. the public discussion described in Acts 15:6 ff. In this public discussion, four key leaders presented the case for keeping the doors of grace open to the lost Gentiles.

Acts 20:17, 28

In his commentary on these verses, Stanley D. Toussaint, mentions that elders are also described as bishops.¹³² It is held that the term 'elders' has primarily Jewish antecedents and stresses the dignity of the office, whereas 'overseers' is mainly Greek in its derivation and emphasizes the responsibility of the office, namely, 'to look after' others.

W. Wiersbe says *πρεσβύτερος* refers to a mature person who has been selected to serve in office (Acts 14:23). These same people are called 'overseers' in

¹³⁰ W.W. Wiersbe, 'Acts 15', *BEC*.

¹³¹ *Ibid*.

¹³² Toussaint, 'Acts', *BKC*, 413-414.

Acts 20:28, which is *ἐπισκοπος* or ‘bishop.’ They were chosen to ‘feed the church’ (Acts 20:28), which means ‘to shepherd.’ Paul called the local church ‘a flock,’ (Acts 20:28-29), so these men were also pastors (the word pastor means ‘shepherd’). Thus in the NT churches, the three titles elder, bishop, and pastor were synonymous.¹³³ R. Jamieson et al indicate that the word *ἐπισκοπος* occurs five times in the NT at Acts 20:28, Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:7; 1 Pet 2:25, and that it can be equated with *πρεσβύτερος*.¹³⁴

Adam Clarke mentions that the ‘persons who examine into the spiritual state of the flock of God, and take care to lead them in and out, and to find them pasture, are termed *ἐπισκοποι*, or superintendents.’ It is observed that the office of a bishop is from God and that only a true pastor can fulfil this office. It is also observed that bishop and presbyter, or elder, were at this time of the same order, and that the word was indifferently used of both.

Albert Barnes also observes that the passage proves that the name ‘bishop’ was applicable to elders, and that in the time of the apostles, the name ‘bishop’ and ‘presbyter,’ or ‘elder,’ was given to the same class of officers, and, of course, that there was no distinction between them. Barnes says again that one term was originally used to denote ‘office,’ the other term denotes ‘age,’ and both words were applied to the same persons in the congregation. The same thing occurs in Tit 1:5-7, where those who in Tit 1:5 are called ‘elders,’ are in Tit 1:7 called ‘bishops.’ The word *ποιμαίνειν* is properly applied to the care which a shepherd exercises over his flock. It is applicable not only to the act of feeding a flock, but also to that of protecting,

¹³³ W. W. Wiersbe, ‘Acts 20:17’, *BEC*, 28.

¹³⁴ R. Jamieson, Fausset & Brown, ‘Acts 20:17’, *JFB*, 28.

guiding, and guarding it. It here denotes not merely the ‘duty’ of instructing the church, but also of ‘governing’ it; of ‘securing’ it from enemies (Acts 20:29), and of ‘directing’ its affairs so as to promote its edification and peace.

3.4.2 Pastoral Epistles

The Pastoral Epistles were written to guide church leaders in the discharge of the duties devolving upon them as Christian pastors. There were objections to Pauline authorship by Marcion and Tatian in the first centuries of Christianity, and of late by Schmidt, Schleiermacher, Baur, Renan, and others. But as far as the early church can guarantee to us the authenticity of writings ascribed to Paul, the Pastoral Epistles are guaranteed.¹³⁵ A. C. McGiffert says that it is impossible to satisfy the requirements of the situation described in 1 Tim 1:3 unless it is assumed that there was a second Roman imprisonment.¹³⁶ Cyril of Jerusalem, Ephrem Syriac, Chrysostom and Theodoret, speak of Paul's going to Spain. Jerome gives it as a matter of personal knowledge that Paul travelled as far as Spain. But there is more important evidence still in the Muratorian Canon, 1, 37. Clement also, in the epistle from the church in Rome to the church in Corinth, which was written not later than the year 96 AD, says in reference to Paul, ‘Having taught righteousness to the whole world, and having gone to the extremity of the west.’ The west here would be west of Rome since Clement was in Rome at the time he wrote.¹³⁷

The Pastoral Epistles show a presbyterial administration. The office held by Timothy in Ephesus and by Titus in Crete was, as the epistles themselves show, of a temporary character. The directions which Paul gives to Timothy and Titus in regard

¹³⁵ Marcus Dods, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1905), 167.

¹³⁶ A.C. McGiffert, *A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age* (London: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 407.

¹³⁷ John Rutherford, ‘Pastoral Epistles,’ Orr James (ed.), *ISBE*.

to the ordaining of presbyters in every church are in agreement with similar notices found elsewhere in the NT, and do not coincide with the state of church organization.¹³⁸ But the ecclesiastical arrangements in the Pastoral Epistles coincide in all points with the state of matters as it is found in the church in the time of the apostles, as that is described in the Acts and elsewhere in the NT.

Two implications emerge from the study of 1 Tim 3:1,

1. It is valid to aspire to church leadership,
2. Church leadership is a noble task.

In the Pastoral Epistles, the term ἐπίσκοπος is applied to an office that one can aspire to, and there are certain criteria to meet to qualify for it. Duane Litfin mentions that the term is one of several words used to describe church leaders.¹³⁹ Others are πρεσβύτεροι (elders), προϊστάμενοι (rulers), ἡγούμενοι (leaders) and ποιμένας (pastors). It is noted that though each of these terms may describe a different facet of leadership, they all seem to be used interchangeably in the NT to designate the same office.¹⁴⁰ However, this office is different from that of διακονοι (deacons, servants, ministers).

According to the NT, the terms ‘bishop,’ ‘pastor,’ and ‘elder’ are synonymous. Bishop means ‘overseer,’ and the elders had the responsibility of overseeing the work of the church (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1-3).¹⁴¹ ‘Elder’ is the translation of the Greek word πρεσβύτερος, which means ‘an old man.’¹⁴² It is further added that Paul used the word presbytery in 1 Tim 4:14, referring to the ‘eldership’ of the assembly that or-

¹³⁸ Theodor Zahn, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1909), 93.

¹³⁹ Duane Litfin, ‘1 Timothy,’ *BKC*, 763-739.

¹⁴⁰ Litfin, ‘1 Timothy,’ 763-739.

¹⁴¹ W. W. Wiersbe, ‘1 Tim 3,’ *BEC*.

¹⁴² *Ibid*.

dained Timothy. Elders and bishops (two names for the same office, Tit 1:5,7) were mature people with spiritual wisdom and experience.

When one compares the qualifications given in 1 Tim 3 for bishops with those given for elders in Tit 1:5-9, you quickly see that the same office is in view. Church organization was quite simple in apostolic days: There were pastors (elders, bishops) and deacons (Phil 1:1). It seems that there was a plurality of elders overseeing the work of each church, some involved in 'ruling' (organization and government), others in teaching (1 Tim 5:17).¹⁴³

The same view is held in JFB that the terms 'pastor,' 'elder,' and 'bishop' refer to the same office.¹⁴⁴ Albert Barnes believes that the terms are applied to nearly all the officers of the church in the NT, and, indeed, to Christians who did not sustain any office.¹⁴⁵ Thus it is applied:

(a) to believers in general, directing them to "look diligently, lest anyone should fail of the grace of God," Heb 12:15;

(b) to the elders of the church at Ephesus, "over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," Acts 20:28;

(c) to the elders or presbyters of the church in 1 Pet 5:2, "Feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof;

(d) to the officers of the church in Philippi, mentioned in connection with deacons as the only officers of the church there, "to the saints at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons," Phil 1:1;

(e) to Judas, the apostate. Acts 1:20; and

(f) to the great Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Pet 2:25, "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."¹⁴⁶

From this use of the term it follows that:

¹⁴³ Wiersbe, '1 Tim 3.'

¹⁴⁴ R. Jamieson, Fausset & Brown, '1 Tim 3', *JFB*.

¹⁴⁵ Albert Barnes, '1 Tim 3', *BNNT*.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

(1) That the word is never used in the NT to designate the ‘uniqueness’ of the apostolic office, or so as to have any special applicability to the apostles except in the single case of Acts 1:20. Even then it was a quotation from the OT as mentioned earlier.

(2) It is never employed in the New Testament to designate an order of men superior to presbyters, regarded as having any other functions than presbyters, or being in any sense ‘successors’ to the apostles.

(3) It is used in the New Testament to denote ministers of the gospel who had the care or oversight of the churches, without any regard to grade.¹⁴⁷

Concerning 1 Tim 5:17-19, Barnes comments that Paul here prescribes the duty of the church towards those who sustain the office of the elder.¹⁴⁸ Once again, he indicates that the word *πρεσβύτεροι* (nom pl of elder) probably refers to age, and is then used to denote the officers of the church, probably because the aged were at first entrusted with the administration affairs of the church. If one should reckon with this view of Barnes, a basic question emerges. Was every aged man referred to an elder of the church? Obviously some of them were elders, and the information is given that these elders were worthy of honour. Those who rule well were commended for double honour.

Barnes again makes reference to *προεστῶτες* that the word has to do with being placed over a group, to preside over or to have care of. He argues that the same word is applied to the bishop at Tit 1:5, 7, and to an apostle at 1 Pet 5:1. To him this word could apply to officers to whom the management and government of the church

¹⁴⁷ Albert Barnes, ‘1 Tim 5:17-19’, *BNNT*.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

was entrusted. The honour should be interpreted not only in terms of degree of respect to their age. Barnes believes that comparing 1 Tim 5:17 and 18 1 Thess 5:12-13, one gets the picture that Paul was making reference to their support or to what was necessary for their maintenance. It must be borne in mind that Paul mentioned that those who teach the word must live from the word (1 Cor. 9:1-14), making reference to Deut 25:4 and to what Jesus said at Luke 10:7. Albert Barnes however, indicates that there are no grounds for suggesting that there were ruling elders and teaching elders. This could mean that all elders would be required to do teaching, preaching and governance (ruling).¹⁴⁹

W. W. Wiersbe comments on 1 Tim 3:11 that it could refer to wives of deacons. He further indicates that there is no evidence in the NT that the early Church had deaconesses.¹⁵⁰ However, if it is noted that Phoebe is mentioned as a deacon (not deaconess), then there are grounds to suggest that there was the probability of having deaconesses in the Church, except that they were all called deacons. Wiersbe's comment on 1 Tim 5:17-25 is that Timothy was apparently having problems with some of the officers. It was likely that he had ordained some of them too quickly or had misjudged some of them. Timothy was to oversee the work of those elders in the area. It was possible also that charges could be levelled against an elder, in which case the accusation must be supported by at least two witnesses. There must not be any partiality shown in this regard. W. W. Wiersbe comments further on Tit 1:5-9 that Titus had been left at Crete to attend to the work of Christ at the place. Obviously, there were problems and that was one of the reasons why he was needed. From v. 7, Titus was not to select the elders, he was to ordain those whom the Church has chosen. The

¹⁴⁹ Barnes, '1 Tim 5:17-19', *BNNT*.

¹⁵⁰ W. W. Wiersbe, '1 Tim 17-19', *WEONT*.

phrase, ‘in every city,’ suggests that the church had expanded. The qualifications for elders are parallel to those given in 1 Tim 3, confirming that they were the same of-
fice.

3.4.3 Other Epistles

Regarding the nature of government of the Christian community, 1 Cor 12:27-31 and Eph 4:11 give some functionaries in the church without showing how they relate to governance. It could be said that in the early stages of the Christianity, the structure of church government was not very important. What was important was how the various gifted members could use their gifts for the benefit of the group. The apostle, prophet, teacher and evangelist are important because they are endowed with certain gifts that they could share with the community. People exercised authority not because of who they were but because they were gifted with certain gifts.

Some indication of church government is seen in Phil 1:1, Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος δούλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὓσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνις

According to Bruce Metzger, several witnesses, including B D K, many minuscules, arm Chrysostom Euthalius Cassiodorus Theophylact, read συνεπίσκοποι (fellow-bishops).¹⁵¹ To Bruce Metzger, this reading, which arose from dogmatic or ecclesiastical interests, is to be rejected because the construction would be imperfect, the σὺν, having no appropriate reference, and the letter is obviously intended for the whole community (τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὓσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις) (cf. 3:1; 4:1, and especially 15).¹⁵² Max Zerwick says that the plural of

¹⁵¹ Bruce M. Metzger, ‘Commentary on Phil 1:1,’ *TCNGT*.

¹⁵² Metzger, ‘Commentary on Phil 1:1,’ *TCNGT*.

ἐπισκόπος is used indicating that there was no clear distinction as yet between the elder and bishop.¹⁵³

In this passage, observes Robert Lightner, Paul, the apostle, makes special mention of the ἐπισκόποι (overseers, bishops, superintendents) and διακόνου (deacons, ministers, servants), who were included among all the saints.¹⁵⁴ A. Boyd Luter Jr. say Paul identifies himself as co-apostle with Timothy, and the epistle is addressed to all the saints.¹⁵⁵ Mention of overseers/elders and deacons imply that the church was well established.¹⁵⁶ There seems to be no definite evidence for a Christian diaconate older than Phil 1:1.¹⁵⁷ The title διακόνου and its noun derivatives are used extensively in the NT to refer to the service of deacons. It is also used in connection with the offering for the saints in Jerusalem, as an expression for the proclamation of the Gospel and the voluntary self-humiliation of the disciple.¹⁵⁸ The elders are not mentioned in this passage. Robert Lightner says that the ‘overseers’ or bishops, were also called ‘elders’ (cf. Tit 1:5, 7; and they were responsible for shepherding or pastoring the flock (cf. Acts 20:17, 28). Lightner, with reference to Acts 6, says that deacons were those church leaders who had special service responsibilities in the assembly.¹⁵⁹ Carl A. Volz is of the view that the NT has no exclusive terminology for ministry. Some churches have bishops and deacons and others do not. A second triad of ministries

¹⁵³ Max Zerwick & Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 592.

¹⁵⁴ Robert P. Lightner, ‘Philippians,’ *BKC*, 648-649.

¹⁵⁵ A. Boyd Luter Jr. ‘Philippians’, *BCB*, 1038.

¹⁵⁶ Luter Jr. ‘Philippians’, 1038.

¹⁵⁷ H. Küng, *The Church*, 400.

¹⁵⁸ H. W. Beyer, *TDNT*, II: 81-93; See also K. Hess, *NIDNTT*, I: 544-553.

¹⁵⁹ Robert P. Lightner, ‘Philippians,’ *BKC*, 648-649.

developed alongside the first, that of bishops, presbyters and deacons. At first the terms ‘bishops’ and ‘elders’ were interchangeable.¹⁶⁰

Regarding Phil 1:1, it has been observed that ἐπισκόποι and πρεσβύτεροι are used synonymously in the apostolical churches, and that the διακόνου assist them. The same persons being called ‘elders of the church’ at Ephesus, are also called ‘overseers’ (Acts 20:17, 28; Tit 1:5: cf. with Phil 1:7; 1 Pet 5:1).¹⁶¹ The commentary runs that this is the earliest letter where bishops and deacons are mentioned, and the only one where they are separately addressed.¹⁶² This accords with the probable course of events, deduced alike from the letters and history. While the apostles were constantly visiting the churches in person or by messengers, regular pastors would be less needed. However, in cases where some were removed by various causes, provision for the permanent order would be needed. Hence, the three pastoral letters subsequent to this give instructions as to bishops and deacons.

The spirit thus intimated that the churches were to look up to their own pastors, now that the miraculous gifts were passing into God's ordinary providence, and the presence of the inspired apostles, the dispensers of those gifts, was to be withdrawn. Naturally, when the apostles who had the chief supervision were no more, one among the presbyters presided, with the name 'bishop,' in the restricted and modern sense; just as in the Jewish synagogue one of the elders presided as 'ruler of the synagogue.' The apostle addresses the Church (the congregation) more directly than its ministers (Col 4:17; 1 Thess 5:12; Heb 13:24; Rev 1:4, 11). The use of plural suggests

¹⁶⁰ Carl A Volz, ‘Pastoral Office in the Early Church,’ F. G. Gaiser, Todd W. Nichol, R. W. Nysse, J. L. Boyce, & Sylvia C. Ruud (eds), *Word and Word Theology for Christian Ministry* 15/3 (1989): 359-360.

¹⁶¹ R. Jamiesson, Fausset & Brown, *JFB*, ‘Philippians 1:1’, *JFB*.

¹⁶² *Ibid*.

that there was more than one bishop or presbyter, and more than one deacon, in the church at Philippi.

Adam Clarke commenting on the ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνους says there has been a great deal of paper wasted on the inquiry, It is claimed that Philippi was a metropolitan see, and might have had several bishops.¹⁶³ The likelihood was that no such officer is meant as it now meant by the term 'bishop' today. Albert Barnes is of the opinion that ἐπίσκοπος must be translated the same wherever it occurs (Acts 20:28, Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:7; 1 Pet 2:25). It is held that the title was applied to the ministers of the gospel because they exercised the role of overseers, inspectors, superintendents over the churches, or were appointed to oversee their interests. It is a term which might be given to any of the officers of the churches, and was originally equivalent to the term presbyter.¹⁶⁴ It cannot be used to denote a diocesan bishop; or a bishop having the care of the churches in a large district of country, and of a superior rank to other ministers of the gospel, because the word is used here in the plural number, and it is in the highest degree improbable that there were dioceses in Philippi.¹⁶⁵

It is clear, moreover, that they were the only officers of the church there except 'deacons' and the persons referred to, therefore, must have been those who were invested simply with the pastoral office. In this regard Jerome, one of the early fathers of the church is cited as saying respecting the office of the bishop,

A presbyter is the same as a bishop. And until there arose divisions in religion, churches were governed by a common council of presbyters. But afterward, it was everywhere decreed, that one person, elected from the presbyters, should be placed over the others." "Philippi," says he, "is a single city of Macedonia; and certainly there could not have been several like these who are now called bishops, at one time in the same city. But

¹⁶³ Adam Clarke, 'Commentary on Phil 1:1', *ACC*.

¹⁶⁴ Albert Barnes, 'Phil 1:1', *BNNT*.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

as, at that time, they called the same bishops whom they called presbyters also, the apostles spoke indifferently of bishops as of presbyters.¹⁶⁶

On the appointment of *διακόνου*, Albert Barnes says the earliest occurrence of the term for office in the church is in Acts 6:1, though the Greek word is rendered deacon, minister or servant at different places. Barnes indicates,

It is rendered "minister" and "ministers" in Matt 20:26; Mark 10:43; Rom 13:4; 15:8; 1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 11:15,23; Gal 2:17; Eph 3:7; 6:21; Col 1:7,23,25; 4:7; 1 Tim 4:6; "servant" and "servants," Matt 22:13; 23:11; Mark 9:25; John 2:5,9; 12:26; Rom 16:1; and "deacon" or "deacons," Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8,12. The word properly means servants, and is then applied to the ministers of the gospel as being the servants of Christ, and of the churches. Hence, it came especially to denote those who had charge of the alms of the church, and who were the overseers of the sick and the poor.

Barnes then concludes that in this sense the word is probably used in Phil 1:1, as the officers here referred to were distinct in some way from the bishops. In this case the apostle here mentions but two orders of ministers in the church at Philippi. Barnes comments that this account is of great importance in its bearing on the question about the way in which Christian churches were at first organized, and about the officers which existed in them.

In reaction to the notion that there might have been a prelate at Philippi, Albert Barnes comments that,

If there were a prelate there, why did not Paul refer to him with affectionate salutations? Why does he refer to the two other "orders of clergy" without the slightest allusion to the man who was set over them as "superior in ministerial rank and power?" Was Paul jealous of this prelate? But if they had a prelate, and the see was then vacant, why is there no reference to this fact? Why no condolence at their loss? Why no prayer that God would send them a man to enter into the vacant diocese? It is a mere assumption to suppose, as the friends of prelacy often do, that they had a prelatical bishop, but that he was then absent. But even granting this, it is

¹⁶⁶ Barnes, 'Phil 1:1', *BNNT*.

an inquiry which has never been answered, why Paul did not make some reference to this fact, and ask their prayers for the absent prelate.¹⁶⁷

This work shares the opinion of Albert Barnes in his concluding remarks on Phil 1:1 that there is more than one bishop mentioned as connected with the church in Philippi. He adds that these could not have been bishops of the Episcopal or prelatical order. If Episcopalians choose to say that they were prelates, then it follows that there was a plurality of such persons in the same diocese, the same city, and the same church, which is contrary to the fundamental idea of Episcopacy.

1 Pet 5:1

Another passage worth noting under discussion of evidence of the nature of church government is 1 Pet 5:1: Πρεσβυτέρους οὖν ἐν ὑμῖν παρακαλῶ ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων, ὁ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός·

In this passage, the apostle Peter, in his appeal to the πρεσβυτέρους at 1 Pet 5:1, addresses them as συμπρεσβύτερος (fellow elder). Whether the συμπρεσβύτερος is used as an official or for old age, Peter equates himself with them. Roger M. Raymer comments that their duties have to do with both spiritual and physical guardianship. It is observed that the phrase ‘serving as overseers’ is not in some Gr. mss.¹⁶⁸

Peter was concerned that the leadership in the local churches be at its best. When the fiery trial would come, the believers in the assemblies would look to their elders for encouragement and direction. W. W. Wiersbe comments that the exhortation is addressed primarily to the pastors, and that the words ‘pastor’ (shep-

¹⁶⁷ Barnes, ‘Phil 1:1’.

¹⁶⁸ Roger M. Raymer, ‘1 Peter,’ *BKC*, 855.

herd), ‘bishop’ (overseer), and ‘elder’ (mature leader) all refer to the same office (Acts 20:17,28; 1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:5-7).¹⁶⁹ To W. W. Wiersbe, Peter did not put himself above others; rather, he called himself a ‘fellow elder’ and deliberately included himself among the church leaders he was exhorting.

Robert Jamieson and others mention that the dignity of the office is marked by the term ‘elder;’ while the duties, to tend or oversee is marked by the term ‘bishop.’ In effect, Peter was appealing to the fellow elders to do the work of overseeing (the work of the bishop).¹⁷⁰ Albert Barnes suggests that the elders were being asked to undertake episcopal duties, and that was because they were bishops.¹⁷¹

In 3 John, the author, who calls himself ‘the elder’ (2 John 1; 3 John 1), is clearly in conflict with an opponent who contests the authority he has previously enjoyed, and who seems to be acting as a monarchical bishop (verses 9-10). Here the presbyter cannot simply be an older man, nor is he a local office bearer, but he probably describes himself as elder because of his special position as a bearer of the apostolic tradition.

To conclude discussion on the relationship between the presbyter and the bishop, the views of J. B. Lightfoot cannot be ignored. To Lightfoot, priest and presbyter are the same.¹⁷² The duties of the presbyters were twofold. They were rulers and instructors of the congregation.¹⁷³ This double function appears in St Paul’s expression presbyter, pastors and teachers. He comments that presbyter and pastor describe the same office under different aspects. To him, the episcopate was formed not out of the

¹⁶⁹ W. W. Wiersbe, ‘1 Peter 5:1-4’, *WEONT*.

¹⁷⁰ R. Jamieson, Fausset & Brown, ‘1 Peter 5:1-4’, *JFB*.

¹⁷¹ Albert Barnes, 1 Peter 5:1-4, *BNNT*.

¹⁷² J. B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, 9.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 17.

apostolic order by localisation but out of the presbyterial by elevation.¹⁷⁴ The title, which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them. In some passages St James is named by himself, in others he is omitted and the presbyters alone are mentioned. It may be inferred that though holding a position superior to the rest, he was still considered as a member of the presbytery, that is, he was in fact the president of the college of presbyters.¹⁷⁵ Catholic Christendom had hitherto existed as a number distinct isolated congregations, drawn in the same direction by a common faith and common sympathies, accidentally linked one with another by the personal influence and apostolic authority of their common teachers, but not bound together in a harmonious whole by any permanent external organization. J. B. Lightfoot is of the view that it would be mistaken to maintain that at the close of the first and the beginning of the second century the organization of all churches alike had arrived at the same stage of development and exhibited the episcopate in an equally perfect form.¹⁷⁶

Having discussed passages that give indications of the nature of church government, the researcher feels obliged to mention the office of the priest. This is because there is the need to distinguish it from that of the elder as it is claimed that ‘priest’ in the church (not priest in the OT) is the shortened form of presbyter. The Greek word which is translated as priest is *ιερεύς*. It was used in classical times as synonym to the mantic (seer).¹⁷⁷ It was also used for general priesthood, that each may draw near to God in sacrifice and prayer. The priest may be head of family, leader of a race, the demarche of the community and the magistrate for the city.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 25.

¹⁷⁵ Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, 26.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 33.

¹⁷⁷ J. Bacher, ‘Priest’, *NIDNTT*, III: 32-40; G. Schrenk, ‘*Presbiteros*’, *TDNT*, III: 225-230.

Without any specialised priestly training, the layman can see to purifications and expiatory offerings. It was also used for official priesthood. The office was hereditary. It may be allotted by selection, lot or purchase. But this does not imply an exclusive priestly caste with a hierarchical sense of status such as would arise through the linking of the priest of different shrines. Piety is required for the office.

In Hellenistic Judaism, the priest must lead a blameless life.¹⁷⁸ They must follow the word and renounce the sphere of the corruptible, keep themselves free from impurity and avoid entanglements with the sensual world and fix their regard on God. Philo, for example, numbers amongst the priest, anyone who does not tread the path of sin.¹⁷⁹ Carl A. Volz cites Mal 2:4-7 that the priest teaches care of souls.¹⁸⁰ In the history of Israel, there were priests prior to the Sinai revelation (Ex 19:1-6, 22-24). Family heads could offer sacrifices. With the institution of Levitical priesthood at Kadesh, and afterward, it is read that the individual tribes had their own shrines where Levites served. During the period of the Judges and the Monarchy, the head of the household also discharged a sacrificial ministry. The Jews recognised themselves as occupying a priestly role by virtue of their purification and consecration through the law (Ex 19:1-6, 22-24; Deut 7:6; Isa 61:6).

With the development of the cultus in the Temples of the two Kingdoms of Judah and Israel from the time of Rehoboam and Jeroboam I, the priesthood was firmly established under royal protection. The development paved the way for official control under cultic ordinances and for priestly law. Throne and altar worked

¹⁷⁸ Schrenk, 'Presbiteros,' 221-283.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Carl A Volz, 'Pastoral Office in the Early Church,' *WWTCM* 23/3 (1989):352-355.

together, sometimes being antagonistic to each other. Sacrifice became more important than the instruction in the Torah.

After the return from Exile, the priesthood was re-established on the basis of codified law and became an exclusive order. With the need for expositions on the law by scholars, the office of the scribe became necessary.

In the NT, the word 'priest' is used for the old priesthood of the Jewish Order (Mark 1:44 and parallels; 2:26 and parallels; 14:53; Luke 1:5; 19:31; John 1:19; Acts 4:1, 6). It is also used for priesthood of the Gentiles (Acts 14:13). The office of Jesus Christ is referred to as priesthood. But Jesus did not apply the title 'priest' to himself or to his disciples. It must be mentioned that the Gospels never refer to Jesus Christ as Priest. It was the deep impression made by Jesus' ministry which led the community of faith to describe Jesus' death in terms of cultic image.

Hans Küng has shown the similarities and differences between the priesthood of Jesus and that of the Jewish tradition.¹⁸¹ In the first place, just as in the case of the Jewish priesthood, Jesus is a priest through not taking the honour upon himself but through the appointment by God (Heb 5:4-6). However, there is a break from the Jewish tradition. Jesus' office is not inherited. He descended from the non-priestly tribe of Judah. He follows after the order of Melchizedek, not Aaron (Heb 7:1-8).

Secondly, as in the case of the OT, Jesus represents before God, a people oppressed by sin. He shared our weakness (Heb 2:17f; 5:1-3). But Jesus, unlike the Jewish priests was without sin (Heb 7:11, 19; 9:9; 10:2) and needed not to sacrifice for his own sins (Heb 7:20; 4:15; 5:7-9; 2:18).

¹⁸¹ Küng, *The Church*, 365-366.

Thirdly, like the Jewish priest Jesus offered sacrifice of atonement for sins (Heb 5:1; 8:3; 10:11). But it was not repetitive. It was once and for all times (Heb 9:6; 10:1).

Also, the title is applied to all Christians (1 Pet 2:5; Rev 1:6; 20:6). As priests, all Christians have direct access to God (Romans 5:2; Eph 2:18; 3:12; Heb 10:22). Christians are called upon to offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet 2:5; Rom 12:1; Phil 2:17; 4:18). All Christians are called upon to proclaim the gospel of salvation. Christians are salt and light (Matt 5: 13-15), are all commanded to witness (Matt 28: 18-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 1: 17).¹⁸²

Furthermore, all Christians are called to the mediating functions (1Tim 2:1). There is no evidence to suppose that the commands to baptise (Matt 28:19), to forgive sins (Matt 18:18) and to celebrate the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19 par) are to be the exclusive preserve of the apostles or a select few. The idea of limited office of ministry might have developed from Acts 1:17, 26. Judas is mentioned as being allotted a share in the ministry. This led to the use of κληρος to mean a share in the presbyterate and later to refer to those who held clerical office as opposed to the laity (those who did not hold any office). Apart from Acts 1:17 and 26, the word is used at Acts 8:21. Peter addressed Simon the magician: οὐκ ἔστιν σοι μερὶς οὐδὲ κληρος ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ, ἡ γὰρ καρδιά σου οὐκ ἔστιν εὐθεῖα ἔναντι τοῦ θεοῦ.

Peter means that Simon cannot participate in the apostolic ministry. In Acts 20:18, it is used to refer to a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus, that is, all Christians. In Col 1:12, it is used to refer to a share in the inheritance of the saints in the Kingdom of light. This implies either the fact of being a

¹⁸² Küng, *The Church*, 365-366.

Christian or sharing in the apostolic mission which is the lot of all Christians. In 1 Pet 5:3, it is used for part of God's household assigned to one's care. Thus κληρος means the lot by which one is chosen, a place among Christians, a share in the apostolic ministry and a share in the presbyterate. Whatever it was that enabled one to participate in the ministry, there is the need to ascertain whether it was a right by virtue of being in an office, or a function assigned by a higher authority or the activity propelled by the bestowing of special gift by grace.

3.5 Qualifications for Church Office

The areas to be considered for qualifications to leadership positions in the church are 1 Tim 3:1-7, 8-13; Titus 1:5-9.

3.5.1 Elders/Bishops/Overseers 1 Tim 3

According to 1 Tim 3:1-7, if any one aspires to the office of bishop (or elder), he desires a noble task. The words ὀρέγεται, ἐπιθυμει, mean aspire and desire respectively. Max Zerwick indicates that the distinction between bishop and elder is not clear.¹⁸³ Robert Jamieson and others, Adam Clarke, W. W. Wiersbe and Albert Barnes, from earlier discussions on the two words, see them as the same office. One way for a man to attain the role of elder/bishop was to aspire to it. Since it is the duty of elders to do their work with gladness and not under constraint or for love of money (1 Pet 5:1-3), this should be thought of as a basic qualification. This does not exclude the possibility that one may be sought out and urged to become an elder. The teaching is that no pressure should be used that would result in an unwilling, half-hearted service.

¹⁸³ Zerwick & Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis*, 630. Meaning of Greek terms used in the qualification of church officers are taken from Max Zerwick & Mary Grosvenor; S. Zodhiates (ed.), *The Complete Word Study – New Testament* (Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1992. 1993).

It is necessary that such a person is irreproachable. The word ἀνεπίληπτου means irreproachable or unimpeachable.¹⁸⁴ The word is used in 5:7 about widows being without reproach and 6:14, where Timothy is to keep the commandment irreproachable until Jesus comes. The word seems to be a general word for living in a way that gives no cause for others to think badly of the church or the faith or the Lord. This tells us nothing about the sort of thing that would bring reproach on the church or the Lord. But, coming at the head of the list it puts a tremendous emphasis on what a person's reputation is. The focus here is not a person's relationship to the Lord, but how others see him. It seems that right from the beginning, the public nature of the office is in view with its peculiar demands.

The person for the office in question must be the husband of one wife (3:2). The phrase μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα is not prescribing that the person should be married but that if he is married, it should be to one woman. The word order emphasizes the word 'one'. Does this standard mean that an elder:

- a) May not be a polygamist?
- b) May not remarry after the death of his wife?
- c) May not be remarried after a divorce?

The main argument against point one is the use of the parallel phrase in 1 Timothy 5:9 in reference to widows whom the church was enrolling in a welfare and service order. She must be one man's wife (ἑνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνε). Since polyandry (a woman having several husbands at once) was simply not a practice, this very probably means that the woman had not divorced and remarried. Moreover, the phrase in 5:9 surely did not mean that the widow was excluded from the order if she had remarried

¹⁸⁴ Zerwick & Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis*, 630.

when her first husband died. For in 5:14 the younger widows were encouraged to remarry, and it is unlikely that, having said this, Paul would then later exclude them from the widows' order because they had followed his advice. So the second point is not likely either, in view of the phrase in 1 Tim 5:9 concerning widows whom Paul encouraged to remarry. Moreover, it would be strange if he rejected widowers who had married after the death of their wives in view of Paul's complete endorsement of remarrying after the death of a spouse (Rom 7:3; 1 Cor 7:39). Therefore, the most likely meaning for the standard of 'one woman's husband' is that the eldership should be composed of men who are not polygamists or have never been remarried after divorce.

The elder/bishop must be temperate (3:2). The word *νηφάλιον* (temperate) is used in the New Testament (3:11) of the women (wives of?) deacons; and in Tit 2:2 about older men in general. It is odd that it is used here, even though in 3:3 the elders must not be addicted to wine. Perhaps, here the point is more general, that is, his temperance extends over other things besides wine. Or perhaps the repetition comes because in 3:3 there begins a list of things which the elder is not supposed to be, and Paul felt obliged to include the problem of wine in the negative list as well as the positive. The standard here is one of self-control and mastery of his appetites. Wine would surely not be the only drink or food that a person can misuse.

The elder/bishop must be sensible (3:2). The word *σώφρονα* (sensible, prudent, reasonable) is used in Tit 1:8 of elders, and 2:2 of older men and 2:5 of younger women. The basic idea seems to be having good judgment, which implies seeing things as they really are, knowing yourself well, and understanding people and how they respond.

The elder/bishop must be respected even outside the Christian community. The word κόσμιον (respectable honourable) is from κόσμιος (world), and has to do with respect by the standards of the world. The idea seems to be one of not offending against propriety.

The elder/bishop must be hospitable (3:2). The word φιλόξενον means hospitable. An elder should be one who loves strangers, that is, being kind to newcomers and making them feel at home.

The elder/bishop must be skilled in teaching (3:2). The word διδακτικόν means an apt teacher, skilled in teaching. This word need not mean that the person is very good in front of a group, but that one holds firm to the sure 'word' as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it (Tit 1:9).

The elder/bishop must not be a lover of alcoholic beverages (3:3). The phrase μὴ πάροινον means not addicted to wine. The general qualification here would be like the one above under temperance, self-control, not addicted to anything harmful or debilitating or worldly.

The elder/bishop must not be a violent person (3:3). The phrase μὴ πλήκτην means not violent, pugnacious or belligerent. The point here is that the temper should be under control. He must not be given to quarrelling or fighting. He should not carry resentments or be hypercritical.

The elder/bishop must be gentle (3:3). The word ἐπιεικῆ is the opposite of pugnacious or belligerent. He should not be harsh or mean-spirited. The shepherd must tenderly tend the flock.

The elder/bishop must not be quarrelsome but a peaceful person (3:3). The word ἄμαχον means peaceable. The last three seem to go together as a unit that stresses peace-making rather than factiousness or troublemaking.

The elder/bishop must not be a greedy person (3:3). The word ἀφιλάργυρον means no lover of money or not a lover of money or not loving money. He should not be so money-oriented that ministry decisions revolve around money.

The elder/bishop must manage his own household well (3:4-5). The phrase τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον means leader or one who is over or one in charge of a well-ordered household, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way. The argument upon which this criterion rests is that if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church?

The elder/bishop must not be a recent convert (3:6). The phrase μὴ νεόφυτον means novice, newly planted or new convert. This criterion is necessary so that the elder/bishop may not be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. The condemnation of the devil seems to be the condemnation that the devil is under because of his being puffed up. So the new believer, given much responsibility too soon, may easily swell with pride. The implication is that part of Christian seasoning is a humbling process and a growing protection against pride.

The elder bishop must be well thought of by outsiders (3:7). or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. The phrase μαρτυρίαν καλὴν means having good reputation with outsiders. This does not mean that the world can set standards for the church. A Christian leader must at least meet the standards of the world for decency and respectability. The snare of the devil is referred to in 2 Tim 2:26. It seems

to involve deception and sin, since to be rescued from it is to repent and come to knowledge of the truth.

3.5.2 Elders/Bishops/Overseers Tit 1:5-9

- a) One must be blameless (1:6). ἀνέγκλητος means blameless, irreproachable, unimpeachable.
- b) One must be the husband of one wife (1:6). See above.
- c) One's children must be believers, not open to the charge of being profligate or insubordinate (1:6). πιστά, μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ ἀσωτίας ἢ ἀνυπότακτα means (having) believing/faithful honest and orderly children. The meaning is probably the same as 1 Tim 3:4-5, the well-ordered house. The children must be well-bred, orderly, generally obedient, responsible, and reliable.
- d) One must not be arrogant (1:7). See above for note on μὴ αὐθάδη. One must not be quick-tempered (μὴ ὀργίλον), not a drunkard (μὴ πάροινον), not greedy for gain (μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ), must be hospitable (φιλόξενον), must be philanthropic (φιλάγαθον), must be master of himself (σώφρονα), must be upright (1:8), must be just, righteous, clean (δίκαιον), holy (ὅσιον), must be self-controlled (ἐγκρατῆ), must hold firm to the sure word as taught.
- a) These lists in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are not intended to be exhaustive. Titus mentions piety (ὅσιον) and justice (δίκαιον) and sexual self-control (ἐγκρατῆ), but 1 Tim does not mention these in particular. On the other hand, 1 Tim mentions that the elder must not be a new convert (μὴ νεόφυτον), and that he must be respectable (κόσμιος) which Titus does not mention specifically. Neither mentions specific-

ly that one must be prayerful. Neither forbids the elders explicitly from being robbers or liars or gossips, etc. The point is that the lists are not exhaustive. Paul takes numerous virtues for granted and gives these as examples. There may be other expectations implied in the ones listed.

3.5.3 Deacons (1 Tim 3:8-13)

Deacons must be serious (1 Tim 3:8). The Greek word used is σεμνους (serious, earnest, honourable). Deacons must not be double-tongued (3:8). The phrase μη διλόγους means genuine, authentic. They should not say one thing to be true here and say the opposite at another place.

Deacons must not be addicted to much wine (3:8). μη οἴνω πολλῷ προσέχοντας means not to concern oneself with or to give attention to or to turn one's mind toward wine. So there should be a freedom from wine.

Deacons must not be greedy for gain. μη αισχροκερδεῖς (content, simplicity), is the word used in Tit 1:7 of elders and in adverb form of elders in 1 Pet 5:2. It corresponds to φιλαργον (not a lover of money) in 1 Tim 3:3. There should be contentment in God and a heavenly mindedness.

Deacons must be people having the mystery of the faith in a clean conscience (3:9). ἔχοντας τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως ἐν καθαρᾷ συνειδήσει means having deep convictions concerning the faith. The issue of conscience does not appear to be the general issue as in 1:5; 4:2; 2 Tim 1:3; Tit 1:15. But 1:19 is a very close connection: 'holding faith and a good conscience.'

Deacons must be tested and approved (3:10). The phrase δοκιμαζέσθωσαν πρῶτον means to be tested first. The test would be the life they have lived and the assessment of it by those who know them and by some appropriate body of the church.

Deacons must be blameless. The word ἀνέγκλητοι means blameless. They must be blameless in the sense that no blame is discovered that has not been settled in a biblical way. It does not mean perfect, but free from on-going guilt for some unsettled wrong.

Deacons must not be slanderers (3:11). μὴ διαβόλους means not slanderers, gossips. A woman who has itchy ears and a loose tongue will not be a good deaconess. Her words must build up. She must keep confidences and not be addicted to scuttlebutt. They must be temperate (νηφαλίους) and faithful in all things (πιστὰς ἐν πᾶσιν).

There is an issue whether 3:11 is a reference to the wives of the deacons or a reference to women who were deaconesses. In favour of deaconesses, there are the following arguments:

1. The use of "likewise" to introduce the group in the same way the deacons were introduced in verse 8 suggests a new order, namely, deaconesses.
2. The women are not mentioned in verses 1-7 where overseers are being discussed. If wives are in view, one would expect that they would be mentioned. But if women as a distinct order are in view, you would not, because the elders are given responsibilities which Paul says women should not assume. So the absence of women among the overseers and the presence of the women among the deacons suggest an order, not wives.

3. Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2 appears to be a deaconess though she is called a deacon.
4. The deacons are not charged with any duties that in themselves would contradict what Paul says is appropriate for women to do in the church.

In favour of wives there are the following arguments:

1. You would expect that they would be called 'deaconesses' instead of women or wives.
2. Paul returns to the qualifications of deacons in the next verse, which seems strange if he had begun to discuss a new order.

It seems that the decision will not be made with confidence simply from this text alone but will be made on the basis of the wider considerations of what is appropriate for women to do according to all the N T teachings.

The deacon must be husband of one wife (3:12).

Deacons must manage their children and their households well (3:12). It must be noted that unlike the case with the elders in 3:5, it does not add, 'for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church?'

The criteria laid down as qualifications for elders/bishop and deacons are indication that the church was well-established with a kind of leadership structure. It is clear that elders are in charge, with deacons assisting them. It is possible that 'bishops' emerged from elders although initially, they were all elders.

3.6 Charismata, function and office in church government

It is important to explain the place of the Holy Spirit in the creation of offices and appointment of the qualified people for such offices. Hans Küng rightly describes the church as the creation of the Spirit.¹⁸⁵ The Spirit gives us freedom from sin, law, and death. One is redeemed to serve God and in this condition, one is not in the flesh but in the Spirit. In accordance with the command of Jesus Christ people are baptised with the Spirit and with fire. It is the Spirit that makes every believer part of the body of Christ. Thus, it is just logical that the Spirit should motivate every activity, in the church. It may be said that by employing the ministry of men in governing his people, God shows a principal bond by which believers are kept together in one body. The church cannot be kept safe, unless supported by those guards to which, the Lord has been pleased to commit its safety. From Eph 4:10, there is the indication that Jesus Christ ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. Regarding the relationship between the Holy Spirit and function in the church, there is the need to explain certain Greek words used in connection with the ministry in the church. These words are $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ and $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$.

The word $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ means favour, grace, gracious care or help, goodwill-act, which one grants to another, the action of one who volunteers to do something to which he is not bound, of Christ, who gives (undeserved) gifts to men.¹⁸⁶ Doughty indicates that the $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ is of paramount importance in the understanding of Paul.¹⁸⁷ It is used in the passive form for that which one experiences from another. In Christian epistolary literature from the time of Paul, $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ is found with the sense of (divine)

¹⁸⁵ Küng, *The Church*, 150-179.

¹⁸⁶ See 'Charis' and 'Pneuma' in W. Bauer (ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

¹⁸⁷ Darrel Doughty, 'The Priority of $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$,' *NTS* 19/2 (1973): 163-165.

grace or favour in fixed formulas at the beginning and end of letters. The context will show whether the emphasis is upon the possession of divine grace as a source of blessings for the believer, or upon a store of grace that is dispensed, or a state of grace that is brought about, or a deed of grace wrought by God in Christ, or a work of grace that grows. The word $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ in secular Greek usage means ‘delight’.¹⁸⁸ It may be a state causing or accompanying joy. It is joyous being or ‘charm’.

In Hellenism $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ becomes a fixed term for the ‘favour’ shown by rulers, with such nuances as ‘gracious disposition’ or ‘gracious gift.’ $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ may also be ascribed to other dignitaries.¹⁸⁹

In the Septuagint, according to Zimmerli, $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ denotes a gracious disposition that finds expression in a gracious action, or gracious address to another.¹⁹⁰ It also relates to the process whereby one who has something turns graciously to another who is in need. It may be used for having pity on the poor (Prov 14:31) or the defenceless (Deut 7:2). It may simply denote friendly speech (Prov 26:25). The main OT development, in Zimmerli’s view, relates to God, who is the subject in forty-one of fifty-six instances.

Another related Hebrew word is *hesed*. In general, one may state that hesed (which is also translated as $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ in the Septuagint, plays the role of a substitute noun.¹⁹¹ The only difference is that it stresses free kindness within a specific relationship and does not necessarily express the movement of the stronger to the weaker or

¹⁸⁸ H. Conzelmann, $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$, *NTDNTT*, IX: 359 – 376.

¹⁸⁹ W. Zimmerli, $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$, *TNTDNT*, IX: 376 – 87.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

poorer. The social relationship controls the content, so that when it is oriented to a covenant, the particular understanding of the covenant fixes the sense.

From *χαρίΗ*, comes *χάρισμα*. Paul uses the word in Rom, 1 and 2 Cor, and the Pastorals. He relates it to *χαρίΗ* and *πνεῦμα* in soteriological contexts. It occurs in the prefaces to Rom and 1 and 2 Cor, and takes shape as gifts in Rom 12:6 and 1 Cor 12:11. The present is eschatologically determined by *χαρίΗ* as the age of the Spirit. The gift is present but its possession is provisional (1 Cor 1:8). The whole gift of salvation is *χάρισμα* (2 Cor 1:11; Rom 5:15-16). The sense is more formal in Rom 6:23 and Rom 1:11, where Paul has a spiritual gift to impart. An individualising element emerges in 1 Cor 7:7. Laying on of hands confers the *χάρισμα* of office in 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6. In 1 Pet 4:10, any act of service in love is *χάρισμα*. Endowment with the Spirit is here virtually a quality.

Formal use, according to H. Conzelmann, occurs in 1 Cor 1:14 and Rom 16:4, and for grace at meals (cf. 1 Cor 10:30).¹⁹² Thanks are due to the Creator in Rom 1:21. One sees the liturgical setting in 1 Cor 14:16-17. The plural of *χάρισμα* is *χαρίσματα*.

The word *πνεῦμα* may refer to the breathing out of air, blowing of wind, breath (even the glowing exhalations of a volcanic crater).¹⁹³ It also refers to spirit, soul, that which gives life to the body, flying upward after death, of the spirit that animated the image of the beast, and enabled it to speak and to have Christians put to death. After a person's death, his *πνεῦμα* lives on as an independent being in heaven. *Πνεῦμα* is also used for the spirit as a part of the human personality. When used with

¹⁹² Zimmerli, *χαρις*, *TDNT*, IX: 387 – 415.

¹⁹³ See 'Pneuma' in Bauer, Gingrich, & Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*.

‘the flesh’, it denotes the immaterial part (2 Cor 7:1; Col 2:5). It is further used for the source and seat of insight, feeling, and will, generally, as the representative part of the inner life of man, the pure or inner worship of God. It may be applied to the spiritual state, state of mind, or disposition of a person.

Πνεῦμα is used for a spirit as an independent being, in contrast to a being that can be perceived by the physical senses. In this case, it is applied to: God himself, good, or evil spirits or spirit-beings. The word πνεῦμα is again applied to the spirit as that which differentiates God from everything that is not God, as the divine power that produces all divine existence, as the divine element in which all divine life is carried on, and as the bearer of every application of the divine will. All those who belong to God possess or receive this spirit and hence have a share in his life. This spirit also serves to distinguish the Christians from all unbelievers, where the spirit enters a man and, in accordance with God’s will, separates him for himself. In this case it is applied to the Spirit of God, of the Lord; the Spirit of Christ. As possessor of the divine Spirit, and at the same time controlling its distribution among men, Christ is called Lord of the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18); but many prefer to translate from the Lord who is the Spirit. Because of his heavenly origin and nature this Spirit is called (the) Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁴ The word πνεῦμα stands in contrast to everything that characterises this age or the finite world. It is used in contrast to γραμμα, which is the characteristic quality of God’s older declaration of his will in the law; and also in contrast to the wisdom of men. The Divine Spirit reveals his presence in the persons whom he fills, in various ways. Unless he is frustrated by man in his natural condition, the Spirit produces a spiritual type of conduct. The Spirit inspires the men of God. The Spirit of God, being one,

¹⁹⁴ See ‘Pneuma’ in Bauer, Gingrich, & Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*.

shows the variety and richness of his life in the different kinds of spiritual gifts which are granted to certain Christians. One special type of spiritual gift is represented by ecstatic speaking. Of those who ‘speak in tongues’ that no earthly person can understand, and do so under the influence of the πνεῦμα. The Spirit leads and directs Christian missionaries in their journeys.

The term ‘Spirit of the Lord’ denotes Christ’s mode of existence and the power with which he encounters the community. In his powerful action he is equated with the Spirit, and in his lordship over it he is differentiated from the Spirit. The union of believers with Christ in his spiritual body comes out plainly in 1 Cor. From πνεῦμα comes πνευματικοῖς (dat. pl.), πνευματικὰ (nom. pl.) and πνευματικός (nom. sing.), used for spiritual, pertaining to the spirit; spiritual person, spiritual thing, spiritual gift; supernatural or spiritual. It must be noted that the significance of πνεῦμα and χάρις in the church of Christ. Though the core of the Christian community was in existence before Pentecost, they did not undertake any activity with reference to the mission of the church, after the death of Christ, until the Pentecost event. This event ushered in a radically different era of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit also brought in its trail the gifts of grace.

Using the lists of functions and ministries in the church as given in 1 Cor 12:28-30; 1 Cor 12:8-10; Rom 12:6-8 and Eph 4:11, Acts 6:2-4 and 1 Pet 4:11, it is observed that there is a relation between function, office and χάρισμα. R. Y. K. Fung classifies the gifts or functions under a twofold division as suggested by Acts 6:2-4 and 1 Pet 4:11 as: endowments for ministry in word and equipment for ministry in deed.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ R. Y. K. Fung, ‘The ministry in the New Testament’ in D. A. Carson (ed.), *The Church in the Bible and the World* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1987), 156-166.

3.6.1 Endowments for Ministry in Word

- a) Gifts of evangelistic proclamation
 - i. Apostles
 - ii. Evangelists
- b) Gifts of inspired utterance
 - i. Prophets
 - ii. Ability to discern
 - iii. Various kinds of tongues
 - iv. Interpretation of tongues
- c) Gifts of didactic speech
 - i. Teachers/Pastors
 - ii. Utterance of wisdom
 - iii. Utterance of knowledge
 - iv. Exhortation

3.6.2 Equipment for Ministry in Deed

- a) Gift of supernatural power
 - i. Miracles
 - ii. Gifts of healing
 - iii. Faith
- b) Gifts of Administrative Leadership
 - i. Administrators
 - ii. Pastors
- c) Gifts of practical assistance
 - i. Helping
 - ii. Service

- iii. Sharing
- iv. Caring
- v. Showing mercy

It is not the intention of this work to list all the gifts or services in the church. The passages above have been selected to make some observations. The word *χάρισμα*, with a single exception (1 Pet 4:10), occurs in the NT only in the Pauline Epistles, and in the plural form is employed in a technical sense to denote extraordinary gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon Christians to equip them for the service of the church. Some of the gifts enumerated cannot be said to belong in any peculiar sense to the distinctive category. 'Faith' (1 Cor 12:9), for example, is the essential condition of all Christian life; though there were, no doubt, those who were endowed with faith beyond their fellows. 'Giving' and 'mercy' (Romans 12:8) are among the ordinary graces of the Christian character; though some would possess them more than others. 'Ministry' (Romans 12:7), that is, service, was the function to which every Christian was called and the purpose to which every one of the special gifts was to be devoted (Eph 4:12). The term is applied to any spiritual benefit, as the confirmation of Christians in the faith (Romans 1:11). And as the general function of ministry appears from the first in two great forms as a ministry of word and deed (Acts 6:1-4; 1 Cor 1:17), so the peculiar charismatic gifts which Paul mentions fall into two great classes - those which qualify their possessors for a ministry of the word, and those which prepare them to render services of a practical nature.

This work shares in the observations from the NT that the different categories overlap or are closely associated. It can be found that the apostles are closely associated with the prophets in Eph 2:20. Both together contribute the foundation of the church. In Eph 3:5, both together are the recipients of the mystery of Christ. The apos-

ties were undoubtedly also teachers. Paul describes himself as an apostle and a teacher in 2 Tim 1 : 11 . The Apostles teach, but not all teachers are apostles.

The gift of prophecy also overlaps with certain gifts of didactic utterance. In 1 Cor 13:12, the possession of prophetic powers is closely related to knowing all mysteries and knowledge, so that prophecy either corresponds to knowing of all mysteries, and all knowledge, or that it involves mysteries and knowledge. Either case forges a link with the gift of *λόγος γνώσεως*. Again, both 1 Cor 14:3 and Acts 15:32 show that the prophetic activity involves an element of exhortation. It can be conjectured that the apostles probably possessed a rich variety of gifts. The apostles (Peter at least) take part in church government. Peter takes the leadership role after the ascension, at Pentecost, and was with James (the brother of Jesus) as the representatives of the Christian authorities in Jerusalem.

The charismatic missionary activity of Paul and Barnabas can be thought of as natural ministries whilst the natural services rendered to them by a companion may belong to the charismatic ministries. In the Pastorals, the administrative presbyters/bishops are themselves called to teach. In 1 Pet 4:9-11, kinds of *χαρίσματα* are revealed in preaching, and the deacon's service. The elders of James 5:14 have the gift of healing, and the leaders of Heb 13:7-17 carry out the service of preaching and ministry. In the Johannine writings, the 'elder' behind the second and third epistles is a charismatic person. Any attempt to describe Jesus as a pneumatic was almost entirely avoided by the church. The natural ministry like organising or brotherly help is just as charismatic as the function of speaking in tongues or healing. What is most important is that in a particular ministry, Jesus is confessed as Lord, and the church is built up. A natural gift for organising and natural ecstasy can both be accepted for service by God's Spirit and so become charismatic ministries. Thus a person's natural personality is ef-

faced. What is preached is God's word, but it is God's word from human persons. The fullness of grace is shown in God's taking man, together with full responsibility into his service.

In the distribution of the gifts, though they are not bestowed indiscriminately there is the possibility of one person having more than one gift. The aim of the *χαρίσματα* is to build up the church. The assertion that the gifts of grace are bestowed on all the members of the church, and that every member is called to service is constant in the NT. The service may include the right to speak in an assembly, baptising and administering the Lord's Supper.

Apart from close relationships between the gifts, the *χαρίσματα* have their origins from the work of God the Father (1 Cor 12:6), God the Son (Eph 4:7. 8-10) and God the Spirit (1 Cor 12:4, 8-11, 28). From the same passages, their distribution is traced to the will of the Triune God. The gifts and functions are to be employed in love, in the way of service and in obedience to the Lordship of Christ.

The discussion has shown that the non-spectacular gifts such as that of administrators and helpers take their place with the more spectacular gifts like healing and the working of miracles. The humbler and weaker members of the church should not be treated with contempt but with special honour. All the gifts are charismatic in that they are *χαρίσματα*. Fung sees two principles at work, namely, the truly charismatic nature of all the spiritual gifts, and the whole-hearted and single-minded exercise of one's gifts within the limits set by them.¹⁹⁶ *Χάρισμα* is seen as a manifestation of God's manifold grace.¹⁹⁷ Activities like teaching, preaching, prophesying and healing are all God's activities demonstrated through the human

¹⁹⁶ Carson, *The Church in the Bible*, 160.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 163-165.

agency. The good stewards in this context are those who use their gifts in a responsible manner, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms and not dabbling with ministries for which they are not equipped.

R. Fung further indicates that *χαρίσματα* are intertwined with the goal of the church.¹⁹⁸ The gifts are given for the purpose of equipping God's people for the work in his service, to the building up of the body of Christ. Gifts of administration and help may be the result of the intensification by the Holy Spirit of natural qualities that are dedicated to the service of the Lord. To add to this *χάρισμα* does not operate automatically. It can fall into desuetude (pass out of use) through neglect (1 Tim 4:14) and must be kept ablaze through diligent use and constant revitalisation (2 Tim 1:6).

The question, whether the various *χαρίσματα* listed and talked about denote functions or offices is a very controversial one. Some scholars like E. Schweizer, A. Von Harnack and E. Kasemann see ministry in the NT as functions. When it comes to the relations between *χαρίσματα* and ecclesiastical office and church order, some see it basically in terms of separation, tension or even opposition. E. Kasemann, for example, sees an irreconcilable conflict between spiritual gifts and all organisation of the ministry.¹⁹⁹ The exception, to Kasemann, is where the relationship results automatically from a free exercise of the *χαρίσματα*. According to E. Schweizer, every church member is a witness for Jesus Christ.²⁰⁰ No status as layman releases him from this, and no office magnifies it. Schweizer had already made the assertion that the only office-bearer in the real sense is Jesus Christ, who is described as servant, deacon, apostle,

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 163-168.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, 23.

teacher, bishop and shepherd. The basis of all ministries is the service of Jesus Christ. After asserting that the Lord does not speak through a single office-bearer or a governing body, Schweizer cites instances from the NT that the whole church is called upon to perform the ministry of admonition, and that all are taught by God.

On the other hand, there are others like Fung who see the ministry as office in a number of instances. One can build on Fung's position that even though one does not have a common church order, there is some specialised ministry in the NT with regard to church government. Out of a number of followers, Jesus chose twelve to be close companions who received special training. Thus the followers were not a mere haphazard band. It can be testified that after the ascension and at Pentecost, Peter plays a leading role. People regarded the 'Twelve' as authoritative because they had been given special insight into the mysteries of the kingdom. At a time when the NT was not compiled, the apostles, automatically, were the custodians of the 'word'. The descent of the Holy Spirit did not change this situation. Why would the Christians of Antioch seek clarification from Jerusalem on the issue of circumcision even though Paul was present in Antioch? The only reason was that the church in Jerusalem, with its leadership, was recognised as authoritative.

The work acknowledges some specialised leadership ministry. Relying on the work of Fung, the work agrees that some members of the churches, and not everybody, are mentioned as bishops, presbyters and deacons. There are other designations as προϊστάμενος (leader), ποιμένας (shepherds, pastors), and ἡγούμενοι (leaders), which are identical to those designated elsewhere as presbyters and bishops. There are also κοπιῶντας (those who labour) and διδάσκαλοι (teachers), among others. Whilst some of these were financial benefactors of the congregations, others were supported by the congregations (Gal 6:6; 1 Cor 9:4-14).

It must be noted that the presence of specialised leadership ministry does not help in identifying a ministry as either a function or an office. The trend of the debate seems to see a function as something temporary and depending on the enabling of the Holy Spirit, whilst office is seen as permanent and institutionalised. Thus not only is it a question of function or office but whether there is any relationship between either of the two or both, with the Spirit. Function in this context may be defined according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, as a 'special activity or purpose of a person or thing', and office as 'the work which it is somebody's duty to do, especially in a public position of trust and authority'. From these two definitions it can be said that function and office are not mutually exclusive opposites. The special activity can be the work, which is somebody's duty. The function can be performed in an office or outside the office. From the NT, elders are warned against abuse of authority (Acts 20:28). Teachers are warned on the practice of teaching (James 3:1). One can aspire to be a bishop (1 Tim 3:1). Phoebe, a deacon (deaconess) of the church in Cenchrea is commended to the Romans to be accepted in the Lord and assisted in a way worthy of the saints (Romans 16:1). Considering all these, it can rightly be assumed that there were offices in the church.

The work also agrees with R. Y. K. Fung in his work 'Ministry in the New Testament,' on the correlation between spiritual gift, function and ecclesiastical office.²⁰¹ With reference to the appointment of the seven in Acts 6, to serve at the table, it is noted that there was a specific need and that it became necessary to evolve appropriate structures to deal with that need. The people appointed for the task were to 'serve'. Διακονεῖν, the infinitive of διακονέω is used. It is from διακονέω that

²⁰¹ R. Y. K. Fung, 'Ministry in the New Testament,' D. A. Carson (ed.), *The Church in the Bible and the World*, 175-176.

διάκονος and διακονία are derived. This will give the meaning of διάκονος as servant, deacon and minister, and διακονία as service and ministry, as mentioned earlier. If the ‘Seven’, were called ‘to minister’ or ‘to serve’, then they may rightly be called servants or ministers or deacons. The contention is with:

1. Whether there is any correlation between the new position (or office) and the enabling of the Holy Spirit.
2. Whether the appointment to serve or to minister has a time limit.

In the first, the 'seven men' appointed to serve, according to Acts 6:3, were ‘seven men of good repute and, full of the Spirit and of wisdom’. Thus seven men of appropriate χάρισμα or χαρίσματα were appointed to serve or minister. Their having other χάρισμα or χαρίσματα is not a contradiction because it has already been observed that it is possible for a person to have more than one χαρίσματα. These people will perform their functions in the office they have been appointed to. The priority of the πνεῦμα and the χαριῖς is of utmost significance. Without the πνεῦμα which makes one a member of the body of Christ, and the χάρισμα through which one is able to perform a task, one cannot efficiently serve any function or office in the church. There is the inter-relations between spiritual gift, function and office at Acts 20:28. It is the Holy Spirit that makes people overseers to care for the church of God. At 1 Tim 4:10.11, the Christians are exhorted to employ the gifts they have received from God for one another as good stewards, and from James 5:14, the elders of the church have the gift of healing. In the Pastorals, bishops, elders and deacons are mentioned as office-holders, and several of the χαρίσματα mentioned by Paul find their counterparts in the qualifications laid down for the bishops and deacons. Fung has demonstrated that functional terms are sometimes

employed to emphasise that aspect of the ministry, but they point to the same functionaries who are elsewhere described with a more official title.²⁰²

Διακονία, meaning service or ministry (Romans 12:7) is counter-part to διακονεῖτωσαν which is the imperative of διακονέω (1 Tim 3:10). Διδασκαλία (Romans 12:7), meaning teaching, can be equated with διδακτικός (1 Tim 3:2), meaning one with a gift for teaching. Παρακλήσει (Romans 12:8), meaning exhortation or encouragement can also be equated with παρακαλεῖν (Tit 1:9), which is the infinitive. Furthermore, ποιμένας (Eph 4:11), meaning shepherds or pastors can be equated with οὐ προεστῶτες (1 Tim 5:17), meaning the leaders. Finally, the gifts of ἀντιλήψεις and κυβερνήσεις mentioned in 1 Cor 12:28, and meaning assistance and guidance respectively, can be linked with deacons and bishops. Thus, the bishops, who guide and oversee, are assisted by the deacons.

Thus, contrary to those who see office and gifts as conflicting, there is evidence that office and function can be two aspects of a person's ministry. It is the χάρισμα, not the office that creates the ministry. Διακονία is rooted in χάρισμα, since every διακονία in the church pre-supposes the call of God.²⁰³ Χάρισμα leads to διακονία since every χάρισμα in the church only finds fulfilment in service. The office is the channel through which the office-bearer may exercise the given χάρισμα for a particular function.²⁰⁴ The church's appointment of a person to an office is a sign of recognising a person's spiritual gifts.

This does not, however, mean that spiritual gifts cannot be expressed independent of office. Χάρισμα can be employed in service, either through office or

²⁰² Carson, *The Church in the Bible*, 174-177.

²⁰³ Küng, *The Church*, 394.

²⁰⁴ Carson, *The Church in the Bible*, 174-177.

apart from office. According to E. Schweizer church order can be open to God's active intervention in three ways.²⁰⁵ It can be broken through by God's giving an instruction to an otherwise uncommissioned church member. In Acts 11:27-30, the prophecy given through Agabus, one of the prophets who visited from Jerusalem, compelled the Christians from Antioch to provide for the brethren living in Judea. In 1 Cor 14:29-30, one who receives revelation from God should be listened to by all even though there were existing structures at work.

Secondly, God's initiative creates new ministries not hitherto foreseen. In Acts 6, the need stemming from the complaint of the Hellenist Christians, necessitated the creation of an administrative team of seven men full of the Holy Spirit, to see to the distribution of daily rations to the widows. In Acts 13:1-3, Barnabas and Paul were set apart for special ministry to which the Lord has called them. Because of the gift of ability to refresh the spirit of Paul and the Christians of Corinth, Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus were to be given recognition (1 Cor 16:16).

It must be noted that the variety of ministry in the church is as unlimited as the variety of $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ in the church.²⁰⁶ From 1 Pet 4:10, each one has received a gift, and the gifts must be employed for one another. Hans Küng is of the opinion that some gifts like those of exhorting, giving aid, faith, the utterance of wisdom and of knowledge and the discernment of spirits, are more private gifts and virtues given by God, which must be employed in the service of others and practised as opportunity presents itself. Hans Küng also indicates that there are other gifts like that of apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists,

²⁰⁵ Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, 241.

²⁰⁶ Küng, *The Church*, 394.

deacons, elders and bishops, which are public functions within the community ordained by God and which must be exercised regularly and constantly.²⁰⁷

Finally, it is also possible that certain ministries have proved their worth and are being continued, but that the church tries seriously later on to find out who has received from God the *χαρίσματα* that are necessary for them. In 1 Tim 3, certain qualities are mentioned as criteria for selecting or appointing officers in the church.

On the question of the temporary and permanent nature of ministry it is noted that apart from Judas Iscariot, whose place was taken by Matthias, there is no concrete evidence of persons in specialised ministries abandoning the ministry and being replaced. The call to serve is a life-long one. Thus, the issue is not a problem of function or office. The issue is how people use the office and how people function. The basis of all Christian ministries is that of Christ. Christians are called to serve and not to lord it over others.

3.7 Observations on Evidence for Church Government in the NT

Observations from the NT perspective of the organisation of the church are that Jesus said virtually nothing about how the church was to be organised or who were to lead it. The only thing he emphasised was that leaders were to be ‘servant leaders’ (or leading servants), not ‘rulers’ like the leadership style of the culture of that day. The twelve apostles gave leadership to the early church community in Jerusalem, though their primary role was to bear witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1:21).

The church was greatly influenced by the Jewish culture and roots. Members of the church borrowed many ideas from the local synagogue. Synagogues were led by

²⁰⁷ Küng, *The Church*, 394.

a 'ruler' of the synagogue and a 'servant' of the synagogue, both of whom were office bearers. It is possible that under the new dynamic of the Spirit, these were transformed and the offices of overseer or bishop and deacon emerged in the life of the church. Christian elders are very much seen as the counterpart of Jewish elders, a group of senior men given the general oversight of the Christian community.

Although there is not much certainty about the nature of church government in the NT, the titles that the church employed for office bearers and functionaries may give some indication. Among others, there were apostles, bishops, deacons, teachers, prophets and evangelists.

By the nature of their office and ministry, the apostles appear to be foremost or the principal functionaries of the church. The meaning of the title bishop suggests that office bearers with this title would be the next in command. They were the overseers of the Christian communities. The apostles themselves were in the Christian communities and it is not inconceivable that they played the role of bishops in these communities. Obviously, there were apostles before the first bishops were appointed. By the very fact that they were the closest confidants and disciples of Jesus Christ, they wielded some authority higher than that of the bishops. They were recognised as leaders in the church before the first bishops were appointed.

There is no evidence of a monepiscopate or a monarchical bishop. Timothy and Titus are apostolic delegates and should not be considered as concrete examples of the monepiscopate. Monepiscopacy is the system of church government where the decision-making or the final authority in the church is vested in one person, the bishop. It is the type of organisation where the bishop is distinguished from the elders (the presbytery) and ranks above them.

In the Pastorals, there developed a collegiality of presbyters.²⁰⁸ Elders, also called bishops, were ordained in the churches to carry out the normal government of the churches (Acts 14:23; Tit 1:5). There is no scriptural basis for exalting one man as a dictator over other elders in the government of the church. Neither is there any basis for treating the pastor as a mere hired hand who must unquestioningly serve at the arbitrary bidding of other elders. Although the elders of a church may divide the labour, according to their various gifts, each elder is still entitled to deliberate and vote in the church courts in which he serves. They are ministers of mercy to destitute members of the congregation. They visit the afflicted, and disburse funds for relief of the needy, among other functions (Rom 12:8).

Related to the collegiality of presbyters is the issue of the relationship between bishops, presbyters and deacons. In Acts 20:17, 28 and Tit 1:5, 7, the terms ‘bishop’ and ‘presbyter’ appear to be used as synonyms. The fact that bishops, presbyters and deacons are not mentioned in one breath can well be taken to mean that these cannot be inter-related along the lines of a three-tiered hierarchy. Originally, all ministries were referred to as *διακονία* with only ministers or servants in the church. This was in tune with the teaching of Jesus Christ that his followers, and specifically, those who want to be leaders should serve and not lord it over others as is practised in the ‘world’.

However, if one considers the qualifications for the offices of bishops and deacons, as mentioned in 1 Tim 3, one is tempted to accept, and with some confidence, that the two are different. In the development of the church, the deacons came to be regarded as occupying a position lower than the bishops and elders. To the elders, in-

²⁰⁸ Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, 77- 88.

cluding the bishops, are given the task to rule, which includes the shepherding duties of oversight and teaching. Deacons are not rulers. They form a subordinate class of officers who serve under the direction of the elders. Deacons assist the elders, especially by relieving them of distractions in the temporal affairs of the church.

Of course, the deacons do not act independently of the elders in this regard. But if the elders are not relieved of many time-consuming tasks related to the pecuniary affairs of the church, how much more time can they spend in the shepherding duties that more strictly belong to their office? Secondly, in the advice to the presbyters, widows and slaves, the bishops and deacons are not mentioned. One cannot in any way conclude that they were ignored or that they did not need any advice. It could be that the bishops and deacons were in the presbyterate. It may be that the bishops are appointed from the body of presbyters (members of the college of presbyters). This may account for the reason why the bishops are associated with the presbyters in Acts 20:17, 28 and in Tit 1:5, 7. Out of the offices mentioned in episcopal form of church government, only 'deacon' had its originality from the church. The rest were borrowed from the environment, possibly from Judaism. The church consciously avoided titles that suggested 'lording it over others'.

There is also the observation that in the relationship between ministry and authority, the need for obedience cannot be over-emphasised. But the obedience is not demanded but one which is given. Christians are one body, bound by one Spirit. Christians have one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father leading to unity in the same mind and the same judgement. Because of this unity of purpose also, Christians are guided by Christ revealed and shared. The apostles would thus automatically command respect. Allegiance is to the revealed 'word'.

The prophetic office fell into abeyance for about 400 years, in the period between Malachi and John the baptiser. It resumed with the ministry of John the baptiser, who prepared the way for Jesus. Scripture says that God at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets but in these last days, God has spoken to us by his son (Heb 1:12).

The Lord Jesus commissioned certain men from among his disciples to the special office of apostle, in order to spread the gospel throughout the world and to complete the foundation of the church. The apostles were aided in their tasks by prophets and special assistants, some of whom wrote books of the NT. These apostolic assistants such as Mark, Luke, Timothy and Barnabas seem to be the persons referred to as evangelists in the NT epistles (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim 4:5; Eph 4:11).

Thus the church was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20). The idea that once this foundation was completed, the temporary officers were no longer necessary in the church should be taken critically. It would seem that there are no longer apostles and prophets in the church today. In 1 Cor 13, prophecy and tongues-speaking will cease but one is not informed of the time these will cease.

Specifically, there are two ordinary offices: elder and deacon. However, the presence of the *χαρίσματα*, and the circumstances may determine the creation of additional functions or offices. *Χαρίσματα* are of utmost importance in the creation of offices and appointment of persons to serve in these offices or perform certain functions. There were cases where people were prayed for to be equipped for the office assigned them. For example, the seven officers appointed in Acts 6 to serve at the tables were found to be men of high repute, full of wisdom and filled with the Spirit. But the church prayed for them to be equipped for the new assignment. The church prayed for

Barnabas and Paul who were already filled with the Spirit to be equipped for the evangelical activities.

Church government in the NT was not a matter of relying on either the Spirit or on structures of authority. It was that, in the face of Gnostic fanaticism, there was a danger that the gospel would disintegrate into something timeless and unhistorical. The church was likely as a result of this to become a sum total of religious individualists. In such a situation the church's historicity, tradition and order had to be stressed. This is evident in the Pastorals. On the other hand, when the church tended to lean so much on institutionalism, and authority tends to be vested in one person, the self-sufficiency of the church as the body of Christ in which the Holy Spirit is very active was stressed. This is the general atmosphere of the Johannine writings.

The Pauline communities were not rigidly structured hierarchical organisations, but were characterised by *communitas*. It must be admitted that no group can exist for long on a level of pure *communitas*.²⁰⁹ So there are some structural elements in the Pauline communities. Over time, a group becomes institutionalised. The second generation of members is never as clear-sighted or totally committed as the original founders of a movement are. Charismatic openness begins to be channelled in certain expected routine. This was precisely what happened in the early church, that is, the period after the NT era. Hans Küng has given two reasons why the church ignored, in theory and practice, the charismatic structure as clericalism and legalism.²¹⁰ He adds that juridical thinking is deeply mistrustful of any movements of the free spirit of God, the Spirit which is operative in the church where and when it wills, which cannot be regimented.

²⁰⁹ Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, 21a – 21g.

²¹⁰ Küng, *The Church*, 179.

Hans Küng further mentions a common misunderstanding as assuming that there is only one particular kind of gift that is connected with a kind of ordination.²¹¹

On Ordination, there is no explicit instruction whether one leader can perform ordination. From the instruction to Titus, it appears that he alone was authorised to ordain elders in every city. Yet Paul, though a minister of superior authority, did not ordain Timothy alone. He was the chief agent in the work; and says, 'By the putting on of my hands.' He chose not to act alone, and therefore he says in another place, 'By the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.' Regarding the instructions to Titus, it can be said that the concurrence of a presbytery might not be possible in every city of Crete, where the churches had been recently planted; but where it was possible, even Paul with his apostolic authority chose not to act without it. There is, therefore, apostolic example confirming our reasoning on the subject, that where a presbytery can be obtained, its concurrence ought to be procured. The minister, who, from the direction given to Titus, takes it upon himself alone to ordain to the sacred office, assumes a power which Paul himself did not assume.

All said and done, it would be possible to do a reconstruction of the organisational structure of the church in the NT by considering the meanings and applications of titles of office bearers. If the elders/bishops worked with the apostles then it is obvious that with the death of the last apostle, the elders would be regarded as the chief leaders of the church. When the college of elders or the presbyterate meets, it is most likely that one of them may be called to chair proceedings. This might have led to the emergence of the bishop being distinguished from the other elders. This does not nec-

²¹¹ Ibid., 183.

essarily place the elders in a lower position. However, over a period of time the episcopacy developed into a monarchical one as the next chapter indicates.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESOURCEFUL AIDS TO EVIDENCE

ON CHURCH GOVERNMENT

4.1 Introduction

The chapter looks at the changing phases of government in the church after the NT era. A leap from the nature of church government in the NT to its implications to the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana will not make much sense. There would be a very wide gap of developments unaccounted for. The history of the church, especially, the early church, enables us to trace the origins and developments of certain structures in the church. When one has a much better knowledge of the developments in the church, one will be placed in a better position to make a critical evaluation of current structures in the church.

For the sake of clarity, the period under study may be divided into three main periods. They are the periods of:

- I. The Early Church (Post-apostolic times to 500).
- II. Dark and Middle Ages (501 - 1500).
- III. Modern Age (1501 onwards).

Under these ages, the work now considers the development of the episcopate system of church government in the Christian ministry.

4.2 Government in the Early Church

To be considered for pieces of evidence on church government in the early church are the First Epistle of Clement, Sources of the Apostolic Canons, the Dida-

che, the Epistles of Ignatius, and the Shepherd of Hermas. Apart from these writings, there are also some statements from some of the early church fathers.

In the first epistle of Clement to the church in Corinth in which there is evidence of decisions taken on majority count, the author, Bishop Clement of Rome (c. 95), appeals to the Christians to restore the bishops they have removed from office. Clement was probably a gentile and a Roman. He seems to have been at Philippi with St. Paul (A.D. 57) when that first-born of the Western churches was passing through great trials of faith.²¹² There, with holy women and others, he ministered to the apostle and to the saints. As this city was a Roman colony, there is no need to inquire how a Roman happened to be there. He was possibly in some public service, and it is not improbable that he had visited Corinth in those days. From the apostle, and his companion, St. Luke, he had no doubt learned the use of the Septuagint, in which his knowledge of the Greek tongue soon rendered him an adept. His copy of that version, however, does not always agree with the 'Received Text.' A co-presbyter with Linus and Cletus, he succeeded them in the government of the Roman Church. St. John, no doubt, was still surviving at Patmos or in Ephesus. Much information is given on the development of the Christian ministry. The various orders of ordained church workers have been assigned their respective duties and the layman is also bound by lay ordinances. From 1 Clement 40 and 41, mention is made of the need for preserving the order of the church.²¹³ In chapter 41, it is read,

Let every one of you, brethren, give thanks to God in his own order, living in all good conscience, with becoming gravity, and not going beyond the rule of the ministry prescribed to him. Not in every place, brethren, are the

²¹² A. Roberts & J. Donaldson (eds), *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 1: 11.

²¹³ J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius* (London: SPCK, 1959), 11; A. Roberts (ed.), *The Apostolic Fathers* (Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 1867), 36.

daily sacrifices offered, or the peace-offerings, or the sin-offerings and the trespass-offerings, but in Jerusalem only. And even there they are not offered in any place, but only at the altar before the temple, that which is offered being first carefully examined by the high priest and the ministers already mentioned.²¹⁴

Reference to practices in Judaism gives the impression of an institutional church with grades of order or offices, and of a distinction between the officials (clergy) and the laity. There is the wholesale importation of the OT order of offices as unconditional law. We are also informed from 1 Clement 42:4-5 that the apostles appointed the bishops to succeed them:

The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so] from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. And thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits [of their labours], having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe. Nor was this any new thing, since indeed many ages before it was written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus saith the Scripture at certain place, 'I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith.'²¹⁵

The passage cited gives indication that just as God sent Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ also sent the apostles. The understanding one gets is that these appointments were done in an orderly way and that they were done according to the will of God. The apostles preached as they were commissioned to do so, and the first fruits of their labour were the ones appointed as bishops and deacons. It is further stated that the appointments of bishops and deacons was done in fulfilment of prophecy.

²¹⁴ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 40.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1: 42; See also Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, 12; Roberts, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 37.

It is explained further in 1 Clement 44 that the apostles, or subsequently, other eminent men, knowing that there would be strife, appointed the bishops with the approval of the whole church. It is read that,

Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect fore-knowledge of this, they appointed those (ministers) already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. We are of opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry. For our sin will not be small, if we eject from the episcopate those who have blamelessly and holily fulfilled its duties.²¹⁶

Thus apart from the fact that the bishops were appointed by the apostles, there is the impression that it was a commandment from 'scripture', and it was because of possible strife in the future. It is indicated that the apostles, through their perfect knowledge envisaged crises centring on the leadership of the body of Christ. It is in view of this that they appointed bishops over the congregations. The idea of ejecting bishops from their episcopates was considered as a sin.

In the epistle, there is a call for respectful submission to overseers or elders. The following are noted:

- a) Images of military organization and the family are used with mention of lower and higher ranks for the members.²¹⁷
- b) Office is no longer the place assigned through the *κάρισμα* but is an established rank recognized as static and to which one must subordinate oneself.

²¹⁶ A. Roberts & J. Donaldson (eds), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:44; Stevenson, *New Eusebius*, 12; A. Roberts (ed.), *Apostolic Fathers*, 38-39.

²¹⁷ E. Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, 16 d.

- c) The sacrificial system becomes important, and is recognised as episcopal duty.²¹⁸

However, consistent with the NT, bishops are also presbyters, and these are clearly distinct from deacons.

The general background to the epistle is that it had been possible for the Corinthians to remove their presbyters (or bishops) from office. Clement mentions that the present discord was worse than the former of which the apostle Paul wrote to them. He writes in chapter 47,

Take up the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul. What did he write to you at the time when the Gospel first began to be preached? Truly, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos, because even then parties had been formed among you. But that inclination for one above another entailed less guilt upon you, inasmuch as your partialities were then shown towards apostles, already of high reputation, and towards a man whom they had approved. But now reflect who those are that have perverted you, and lessened the renown of your far-famed brotherly love. It is disgraceful, beloved, yea, highly disgraceful, and unworthy of your Christian profession, that such a thing should be heard of as that the most steadfast and ancient Church of the Corinthians should, on account of one or two persons, engage in sedition against its presbyters. And this rumour has reached not only us, but those also who are unconnected with us; so that, through your infatuation, the name of the Lord is blasphemed, while danger is also brought upon yourselves, self-control, purity, and sobriety, to the well-pleasing of His Name, through our High Priest and Protector, Jesus Christ, by whom be to Him glory, and majesty, and power, and honor, both now and for evermore.²¹⁹

There is reference to an earlier letter of Paul. Mention of parties based on the names of Peter, Apollos and Paul suggests that the letter in question is the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. Clement reiterates that it is very disgraceful to the church to be divided on the lines of personalities. The situation had worsened to such an extent that the members of the church had engaged in sedition against their own

²¹⁸ Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, 15 a-f.

²¹⁹ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 46.

presbyters. People outside the church, on hearing of such crises in the church may have had cause to blaspheme the name of the Lord.

Clement was calling on the Corinthians to re-instate the bishops and send back report on the situation. He was anticipating that the report would give cause to rejoice. He writes in chapter 59,

Send back speedily to us in peace and with joy these our messengers to you: Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Bito, with Fortunatus: that they may the sooner announce to us the peace and harmony we so earnestly desire and long for [among you], and that we may the more quickly rejoice over the good order re-established among you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, and with all everywhere that are the called of God through Him, by whom be to Him glory, honor, power, majesty, and eternal dominion, from everlasting to everlasting.²²⁰

We are not informed whether the presbyters (or bishops) removed were re-instated. The fact that can be established is that the Corinthian Church of Christ did remove their bishops from office.

It is observed by J. B. Lightfoot that the Church of Jerusalem presents the earliest instance of a bishop. Official prominence is assigned to James the Lord's brother, both in the Epistles of St Paul and in the Acts of the Apostles.²²¹ He adds that as early as the middle of the second century all parties concur in representing him as a bishop in the strict sense of the term. Hegesippus, one of the earliest church chroniclers, regards Symeon, the successor of James as holding the same office, and no less distinctly calls him a bishop.²²² As Symeon died in the reign of Trajan at an advanced age, it is not improbable that Hegesippus was born during his lifetime. Antioch is also traditionally reported to have received its first bishop Evodius from St Peter.²²³

²²⁰ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 54.

²²¹ Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, 39-43.

²²² *Ibid.*, 39.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 39-43.

Papias, who was a friend of Polycarp and had conversed with personal disciples of the Lord, is commonly designated bishop of Hierapolis; and we learn from a younger contemporary Serapion, that Claudius Apollinaris, known as a writer against the Montanists, also held this see in the reign of M. Aurelius.²²⁴ Again Sagaris the martyr, who seems to have perished in the early years of M. Aurelius, about A.D. 165 is designated bishop of Laodicea by an author writing towards the close of the same period.

It is also noted by J. B. Lightfoot that during the early years of the second century, when episcopacy was firmly established in the principal churches of Asia Minor, Polycarp sends a letter to the Philippians. He writes in his own name and also on behalf of his presbyters; he gives advice to the Philippians respecting the obligations and the authority of presbyters and deacons; he is minute in his instructions respecting one individual presbyter, Valens by name, who had been guilty of some crime. Lightfoot argues that throughout the letter he never once refers to their bishop; and indeed its whole tone is hardly consistent with the supposition that they had any chief officer holding the same prominent position at Philippi which he himself held at Smyrna.²²⁵ Based upon this, he infers that episcopacy did not exist at all among the Philippians at this time, or existed only in an elementary form, so that the bishop was a mere president of the presbyterial council.²²⁶ Moreover, the word 'bishop' is used in the older sense as a synonym for presbyter.

According to J. B. Lightfoot, Tertullian, speaking of the episcopate of Eleutherus, designates the church of the metropolis not 'ecclesia Romana,' but 'ecclesia

²²⁴ Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, 39-43.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 54, 55

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 58

Romanensis,' that is, not the Church of Rome, but the Church in Rome. The transition from a Greek to a Latin Church was of course gradual. Lightfoot draws attention to the fact that the two immediate successors of Victor, Zephyrinus (202-219) and Callistus (219-223), bear Greek names, and it may be inferred from the account in Hippolytus that they were Greeks; but from this time forward the Roman bishops, with scarcely an exception, seem to have been Latins.²²⁷ Hippolytus was a disciple of Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons (in Southern France). Irenaeus was himself a disciple of Polycarp, bishop Hierapolis who was a disciple of the Apostle John. Hippolytus is addressed as bishop of Rome or Pontianus or Portus.²²⁸ This confirms the claim that the distinction between bishop and presbyter developed after the NT era.

We also have very important information in what is called the 'Original Sources of the Apostolic Canons'. Christian families are commanded to organise themselves as a church.²²⁹ If the families numbered less than twelve, they were to ask for aid in the form of three persons from a neighbouring church to assist them in the appointment of a bishop. It must be noted that bishop and pastor are used synonymously. It is not, however, clear whether the bishop is appointed from outside or from within the families commanded to organise themselves into a church. Hippolytus mentions the prayers offered at the ordination of bishops, presbyters and deacons among others.²³⁰

T. Lindsay mentions that a list of indispensable and desirable qualifications is given to guide the selection of the bishop/pastor.²³¹ His usage of bishop/pastor seems

²²⁷ Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, 66

²²⁸ Roberts & J. Donaldson, *Ante Nicene Fathers*, 5:11,15, 350, 366, 369, 497, 497, 500, 502, 507.

²²⁹ Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry*, 177-178.

²³⁰ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante Nicene Fathers*, 5:540—547.

²³¹ Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry*, 177-178.

to indicate that the pastor and the bishop are the same. The indispensable qualifications indicate that a pastor or bishop is to be one whose character stands so high that no one may be expected to bring any charge of misconduct against him. He is not to be given in to drinking, nor covetousness, nor to foul living. He must not be a respecter of persons.²³²

Regarding the desirable qualifications, one notes that it is better that a pastor should be unmarried, but if he has a wife, he must be a faithful husband. It is advisable that he should be an educated man and able to expound the scriptures, but that is not indispensable.

On the relationship between the bishop/pastor and the presbyters, it is noted that the bishop/pastor, in conjunction with the presbyters, administer the property of the church, which consisted of gifts brought by the faithful to the meeting for thanksgiving. Such small churches were required to appoint at least two presbyters who were advanced in years and were no respecters of persons. The presbyter must be ready to assist the bishop at all times.

The appointment is also noted of at least three deacons who were to be ministers of the people in their private homes. They were to report any conduct, which might call for discipline to the elders. These deacons were to be well-esteemed and faithful husbands, with well-behaved families.

Furthermore, T. Lindsay cites the appointment of three widows. One of them assists the sick. Her services include performing night duties. The two others devote

²³² Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry*, 177-178.

themselves to prayer. They pray for all that are in temptation and also for reception of revelations.

There is also the appointment a reader who is involved with the reading and exposition of scripture, and fills the place of an evangelist. This appointment was vital where the bishop was unlearned.

There are also pieces of information from the Apostolic Constitution. The Apostolic Constitution is a collection of eight books containing ecclesiastical directives supposedly composed by the 'Twelve Apostles' and transmitted by them to Clement I of Rome. The books contain comprehensive rules for the Christian life. The first six books are similar in content to a 3rd century work known as the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. Part of the seventh book contains material based on the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (or *Didache*), written in the 2nd century. The eighth book includes the 85 canons, considered the most valuable part of the Constitutions. All eight books were probably compiled and edited by one author, sometimes referred to as Pseudo-Clement.

In the *Didascalia*, it is written,

The apostles further appointed: Let there be elders and deacons, like the Levites; and sub deacons, like those who carried the vessels of the court of the sanctuary of the Lord; and an overseer, who shall likewise be the Guide of all the people, like Aaron, the head and chief of all the priests and Levites of the whole city.²³³

From the above, there is the impression that, in addition to elders, deacons and bishops (overseers, guides), there were also sub-deacons. It appears offices were now patterned according to OT practices. There is also a confirmation that the ruler (bishop) is above the elders. It is mentioned,

²³³ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 1355.

The apostles further appointed: Let there be a Ruler over the elders who are in the villages, and let him be recognized as head of them all, at whose hand all of them shall be required: for Samuel also thus made visits from place to place and ruled.²³⁴

Mention of Samuel from the OT, and comparing an office in the church to the office of Samuel makes it obvious that the church of Christ was leaning on ideas from the OT in restructuring the organisation of the church.

Secular rulers who were not part of the hierarchical structure of the organisation of the church were still given some recognition by virtue of their secular status. One reads about giving recognition to secular authorities:

The apostles further appointed: That those kings who shall hereafter believe in Christ should be permitted to go up and stand before the altar along with the Guides of the Church: because David also, and those who were like him, went up and stood before the altar.²³⁵

In this instance also the OT is cited as a point of reference. Secular authorities who believe should be accorded the same privileges that David enjoyed. The only privilege David enjoyed which is mentioned in the passage was that he ‘stood before the altar’. It is not very certain whether this privilege was to be conferred on the Emperor or on all other secular authorities who believed.

Charismatic openness becomes institutionalised over time. Obviously, the aim was to check abuses and the chaos that are sometimes characteristic of charismatic openness. The need for some form of constitution is spelt out in the Didaskalia:

The apostles further appointed: Let no man dare to do anything by the authority of the priesthood which is not in accordance with justice and equity, but in accordance with justice, and free from the blame of partiality, let all things be done. All these things did the apostles appoint, not for themselves, but for those who should come after them — for they were apprehensive that in time to come wolves would put on sheep’s clothing: since for themselves the Spirit, the Paraclete, which was in them, was sufficient:

²³⁴ Ibid., 1: 1358.

²³⁵ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 1358.

that, even as He had appointed these laws by their hands, so He would guide them lawfully. For they, who had received from our Lord, power and authority, had no need that laws should be appointed for them by others. For Paul also, and Timothy, while they were going from place to place in the country of Syria and Cilicia, committed these same Commands and Laws of the apostles and elders to those who were under the hand of the apostles, for the churches of the countries in which they were preaching and publishing the Gospel.²³⁶

We note from the passage that the reason for some form of constitution was to prevent chaos and anarchy in the church. There were also fears of the emergence of dictators and false prophets or teachers. The apostles, in anticipation of such problems of chaos and anarchy, emergence of false teachers and prophets, taught the Christians how to conduct themselves in accordance with justice, and free from the blame of partiality. From Acts 6, it was to be free from the blame of partiality, among other reasons as devoting themselves to prayer and teaching that compelled the apostles to appoint seven people to attend to the distribution of goods to the widows.

In the Didache, elders or presbyters are not mentioned. There is the co-existence of bishops and deacons on the one hand and of apostles, prophets and teachers on the other.²³⁷ Bishops and deacons perform the same ministry as the prophets and teachers. However, unlike the prophets, they do not offer informal prayers but say the prescribed liturgical prayers. The word 'office' re-appears for the ministry of the prophets, bishops and deacons. The false prophet can be recognised by his conduct. There seems to be confusion over the duties of the apostle and the office of the prophet. This, to Schweizer, was because both are men who preach and move from church to church. Secondly, an untruthful apostle is not called false apostle but false prophet. Teachers and prophets receive payment in kind, but due to abuses, warning was given that strangers should not enjoy such benefits beyond the normal period of

²³⁶ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 1358-1359.

²³⁷ Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, 13f-15f.

three days. There is also the distinction of the ‘perfect’ and those who speak in the spirit and are supported by the church from the ordinary people. It may be summed up that though the offices of bishops and deacons are recommended, they are subordinate to apostles and prophets because the former cannot pray extempore. There is also the distinction between the ‘clergy’ and the ‘laity’ as ‘perfect’ and ‘ordinary’ people.

In the epistles of Ignatius (110-115) in which prophets are mentioned as disciples of Christ, and the church members described as bearers of God, one is informed of the free working of the Spirit. In his epistles to the church of Christ in Ephesus and Smyrna, Ignatius writes that the assembly should keep to the bishop and the presbyterate and the deacons:

Do ye, beloved, be careful to be subject to the bishop, and the presbyters and the deacons. For he that is subject to these is obedient to Christ, who has appointed them; but he that is disobedient to these is disobedient to Christ Jesus. And ‘he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.’ For he that yields not obedience to his superiors is self-confident, quarrelsome, and proud. But God, says the Scripture, ‘resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble;’ and, ‘The proud have greatly transgressed.’ (Ephesians 6).

See that ye all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as ye would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is (administered) either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude (of the people) also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid (Smyrna 8).

What can be gathered from the passage is that the authority structure of the church was well guarded so that it did not lead to chaos and anarchy. In the first place mention is made of the bishop, presbyterate and deacons. The bishop is mentioned first, and in the singular, showing that there was one bishop and that he takes precedence over the other officers of the church. Mention of presbyterate may suggest that the presbyters worked in a team or functioned as a council in the church. Then there

are the deacons. It is obvious that the deacons occupied the lowest position in the three offices mentioned in the church.

Secondly, there is the information that being subject to the officers of the church means being subject to Jesus Christ who appointed these officers. Anyone who does not obey the officers of the church is labelled proud, and it is mentioned that God resists the proud.

In the letter to the church in Smyrna, the bishop is seen as the unifying factor in the church. It is obvious that the bishop is accorded such unique position, especially, in the administration of the sacraments, to avoid anarchy and maintain order in the church. The body of Christ must be well-organised. The bishop is seen as representing Christ in the church. The church should be identified with the presence of the bishop.

It is not clear whether 'priest' is applied to bishops, presbyters and deacons or to presbyters and deacons or to presbyters only. It is apparent that the OT priesthood is being applied to offices in the church. It is obvious that there is an attempt to institutionalise charismata.

In Ignatius' epistle to the Magnesians, he shows that the deacon is lower in rank to the bishop and presbyter. It appears also that the presbyters are under the bishop. He writes in chapter two,

...Since, then, I have had the privilege of seeing you, through Damas your most worthy bishop, and through your worthy presbyters Bassus and Apollonius, and through my fellow-servant the deacon Sotio, whose friendship may I ever enjoy, inasmuch as he, by the grace of God, is subject to the bishop and presbytery, in the law of Jesus Christ...²³⁸

The presbyters are addressed 'worthy presbyters' but the bishop is addressed 'most worthy bishop'. The author, Ignatius was addressing Sotio, a deacon, as a fel-

²³⁸ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 125.

low-servant. Thus the bishop regarded all officers of the various ranks (if one may say so) as servants of Christ. The idea that the deacon is mentioned last of all and is lowest in rank, compared to the bishop and presbyter does not mean that the office is not worthy of respect. Ignatius, in his letter to the Trallians, writes concerning the deacon,

It behoves you also, in every way, to please the deacons, who are [ministers] of the mysteries of Christ Jesus; for they are not ministers of meat and drink, but servants of the Church of God. They are bound, therefore, to avoid all grounds of accusation [against them], as they would a burning fire. Let them, then, prove themselves to be such.

In like manner, let all reverence the deacon as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the Sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no Church.²³⁹

The deacon, though lowest in rank is also accorded much respect. The bishop, presbyter and deacon are all seen in this passage to be very important figures in the church of Christ. There is the impression that these work together, and without them, there is no church.

The bishop could be a very young person. This situation resulted in the tendency for disrespect from some of the presbyters. On this account, Ignatius writes in chapter three of his epistle to the Magnesians,

Now it behoves you also not to despise the age of your bishop, but to yield him all reverence, according to the will of God the Father, as I have known even holy presbyters do, not having regard to the manifest youth [of their bishop], but to his knowledge in God; inasmuch as 'not the ancient are [necessarily] wise, nor do the aged understand prudence; but there is a spirit in men.'²⁴⁰

It can be inferred from the passage that the bishop of Magnesia was a young person. In such a situation, the tendency to look down on the bishop cannot be ignored. It is possible that there were such cases or at least in the church in Magnesia,

²³⁹ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 139-140.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1: 126-127.

which compelled Ignatius to respond. The passage continues with the mention of Daniel, Samuel and Timothy who were used by God even though they were very young. The opinion of Ignatius was that people should not consider the age of the bishop but rather the Spirit of God dwelling in him. It can be said that ‘The wisdom of Solomon has nothing to do with the age of Methuselah.’

In chapter five of the epistle to the Magnesians, Ignatius refers to those who showed disrespect to the bishop as dissemblers and hypocrites. Ignatius continues with chapters six and seven, stressing the need to respect the bishop and stating that nothing should be done without the bishops and presbyters.

In his epistle to the Trallians, Ignatius mentions in chapter two that the Christian should be subject to the bishop as to Christ and to the presbyters as to the apostles of Christ. He writes that the people should be subject to the bishop as to the Lord, for he watches over souls, as one that shall give account to God. The Christians are informed that where necessary, they should do nothing without the bishop. They were also to be subject to the presbytery, as to the apostles of Jesus Christ.²⁴¹ In chapter three there is the information that apart from the bishop, presbyters and deacons there is no church. The office of deacons should be regarded as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father. The presbyters are to be regarded as the Sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no church.²⁴²

A particularly significant development is the teaching that the bishop is in his own right, an official person by virtue of his function. The charismata are not men-

²⁴¹ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 139-140.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 1: 140.

tioned. The church in Philadelphia (see also the epistle to the church of Christ in Smyrna 8 & 9) is cautioned to avoid division, cling to the bishops as Jesus, the presbytery as the apostles, and show reverence for the deacons as the commandment of God.²⁴³ For the purpose of order, there should be only one bishop in a congregation. Nothing should be done without the bishop. A particularly noteworthy development is the teaching that the presbyter is subordinate to the bishop and the deacon also is subordinate to the presbyter (Magnesians 13). There is evidence not only of a monarchical episcopate but also of a metropolitan bishop; as the bishop of Antioch, Ignatius (the author) was at the same time the bishop of Syria. There is also a distinction between the clergy and the laity.

In the Shepherd of Hermas, leaders and presidents of the church are called bishops or presbyters (Vision 2:4); bishops are always mentioned in the plural. This is an indication that there could be two or more bishops in a local church. They are regarded as guardians of the poor, and are responsible for hospitality to visitors. Apostles, teachers and deacons are also mentioned. Vision 3:5 says:

These are the apostles and bishops and teachers and deacons who walked after the holiness of God, and deacons in purity and sanctity for the elect of God, some of them already fallen asleep and others still living.²⁴⁴

Observations from the Syrian Didascalia show that the bishop takes God's place in the community. He is also regarded as the image of God and mediator between God and the faithful.²⁴⁵ They are the interpreters of Holy Scripture. Though presbyters (also called priests) are advisors and associates of the bishop, they have no claim to share by right the gifts of the community. In the absence of the bishop or in

²⁴³ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 162-163, 181-182.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1: 336-337.

²⁴⁵ H. Jedin (ed.), *History of the Church* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), II: 349.

critical situations, the presbyters could take over some of the duties of the bishop. Other offices, all below the rank of deacon were created, with growing demand.

Appointments to these offices and the offices of the priests and deacons were all done by the bishop. Though the bishop was elected by the congregation, his consecration was by other bishops who could approve or reject the election. A later development placed the election of bishops in the hands of other bishops.²⁴⁶

Polycarp (c. 69?-155), bishop of Smyrna, a contemporary of Ignatius (c.110), bishop of Antioch, in his epistle on behalf of the presbyters of Smyrna and on his own behalf, to the church at Philippi, mentions deacons and presbyters and their duties.²⁴⁷ The canons of minor synods (church councils) before the ecumenical council of Nicaea (325) and the canons of Nicaea, among other things indicated that deacons, should not administer the Eucharist to presbyters because the former are lower in rank than the latter. Bishops and presbyters should not appear in the presence of or appeal to the emperor without the consent and letters of the bishop of the province (provincial bishop), and particularly the bishop of the metropolis (metropolitan bishop). The offender would be publicly deposed. A bishop should not be ordained without the synod and the presence of the metropolitan of the province in question. Bishops, presbyters and deacons were not permitted to move from one see to another. Only the Bishop, or the person appointed for the stewardship of benefactions shall control church revenue.²⁴⁸ A presbyter or deacon deposed by one bishop shall not be received by another.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I: 73.

²⁴⁷ Roberts, *Apostolic Fathers*, 72-73.

²⁴⁸ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 267.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1: 312.

Regarding the relationship between the office of the bishop and presbyter, there is evidence from Hippolytus that there was some uncertainty about the nature of these offices. Neither Hippolytus nor his master Irenaeus had any conception that the see of Rome possesses any pre-eminent authority.²⁵⁰

4.2.1 Elevation of certain sees

In the period of the early church one witnesses the monarchical episcopacy move a step further with the expansion of the bishoprics. In connection with this development, it must be noted that even before the reign of Constantine I (313-337), the episcopates were organised along the boundaries of the state. The different grades of country bishop, city bishop and metropolitan were established in the church.²⁵¹ Antioch, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Corinth and Rome stood at the head of the hierarchy.²⁵² It is even indicated that whatever was done must be ratified by the metropolitan bishop who was above the provincial bishop and district bishops. For administrative purposes, Emperor Diocletian (284-305) had divided the empire into four parts and Constantine I followed a similar practice. Constantine divided the empire into praefectures, vicariates, dioceses (or proconsulates) and provinces. With the union of church and state during the time of Constantine I, the administration of the church followed after that of the state.²⁵³ Canons VI and VII of Nicaea (325) indicate groupings in the church in which bishops in certain areas had jurisdiction over other bishops in their area. Bishops in areas like Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and later Jerusalem were raised in their status above other bishops.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:11.

²⁵¹ The order given here is from the least to the greatest.

²⁵² P. Schaff, *History of the Church* (Edinburgh: T and T Clarke, 1889), 1: 267.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1: 268-272.

²⁵⁴ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 73, 85, 87.

In the course of time Diocese passed from political into ecclesiastical terminology and denoted at first a patriarchal district comprising several provinces, and afterwards came to be applied in the West to each episcopal district. The diocese of a metropolitan was in the East called an 'eparchy' and in the West, 'provincial'. An ordinary bishopric in the East was called 'parish' whilst in the West it was called 'parochia'.²⁵⁵ The country bishops were the lowest in rank. City bishops were known in the East as metropolitans and in the West as archbishops. Above the metropolitans and the archbishops were the patriarchs. There is a development in the restructuring of the church where distinctions are drawn, leading to well defined hierarchical structure.

In the second and third centuries, the figure of the bishop becomes very significant in the church. The bishop represented his community in its relations with other local churches or at the synodal assemblies of church leaders in the province, fostering unity in the church. In the Latin West, there were supra-provincial associations of all the sees in North Africa on the one hand and central and southern Italy on the other. The bishops of Carthage and Rome respectively, were the natural leaders because their sees were regarded as most ancient and permeating points of Christianity in the Latin West. Synods were summoned to which bishops in the respective provinces were obliged to attend. Similarly, in the East, Antioch summoned synods at which all bishops of Syria and Eastern Asia Minor had to attend, and Alexandria summoned synods, which involved all bishops in Egypt, Libya and the Pentapolis.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ Schaff, *History of the Church*, 1: 267, 269.

²⁵⁶ Jedin, *History of the Church*, II: 241-242.

In the development of church government, one encounters expansion in the territory of the bishop. Originally, the bishop was head of a congregation. In Egypt, Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria (189-232) appointed three other bishops.²⁵⁷ Later, Athanasius of Alexandria (became bishop in 328) reported that there were 100 bishops from Egypt, Thebais, Libyae (Libya) and Pentapolis, who attended a synod in about 320.²⁵⁸ At the Council of Sardica (343), there were 94 Egyptian bishops who were either actually present or who signed later.²⁵⁹ The bishop is the head of a diocese and the cathedral is the seat of the bishop. Thus, if the church could count as many as 94 bishops in Egypt alone, as early as 343, then it can be concluded that there were not less than 94 dioceses with 94 cathedrals at that time. This is because the cathedral is the seat of the bishop. It is obvious that the territory of the bishop was smaller than what is now called diocese today. It will be far-fetched and out of proportion to say that there were 94 dioceses (by modern standards) in Egypt by 343.

Subjects discussed at such synods included discipline, liturgical regulations, examination of legality of episcopal elections, and erection or division of new bishoprics. There is the emergence of diocesan bishoprics, where the bishop is the head of a group of provinces. There is the need to mention that the authority of the state was not needed to enforce ecclesiastical decrees, and the North African church distinguished itself by a high degree of independence.

To safeguard sound doctrine, attempts were made to trace the succession of bishops to the apostles. The issue of apostolic succession became very important for

²⁵⁷ C. P. Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, Vol. I to 1840 (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), 38.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, I: 38.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, I: 38-39.

the exercise of authority in the church. Hegesipus, a Jewish Christian, Irenaeus of Lyons in Southern France (became bishop in 177) and Tertullian of Carthage (born c150 and converted into Christianity in 192) linked the bishops to the apostles. Rome was given the place of honour because it was claimed that Peter and Paul were associated with Rome and died there. This was the situation in the Christian ministry at the time Constantine I became sole emperor. In the time of Constantine I, at the Council of Nicaea (325), twenty Canons regulating various aspects of the church's life were issued.²⁶⁰ These Canons, some of which have been mentioned earlier, strengthened the organisation of the church into provinces and recognised the sees of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Caesarea and Jerusalem as having superior authority.

The canons of minor synods (church councils) before the ecumenical council of Nicaea (325) and of Nicaea, among other things indicated that deacons should not administer the Eucharist to presbyters because the former are lower in rank compared with the latter. Bishops and presbyters of parishes should not appear in the presence of or appeal to the emperor without the consent and letters of the bishop of the province, and particularly the bishop of the metropolis. The offender would be publicly deposed. A bishop should not be ordained without the synod and the presence of the metropolitan of the province in question.

Later, at the Council of Constantinople (381), the bishop of Constantinople was elevated to a position next to Rome, because it was the new imperial city. By this period, one witnesses Rome more and more claiming the right to examine conciliar decisions and if necessary, to reject them if they were found to contradict the church's

²⁶⁰ T. Dowley (ed.), *Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1977), 161.

understanding of tradition and the faith. With the Monophysite Schism of 451, Rome became the head of the church in the West. It must be noted that long before this time, Victor, the bishop of Rome (189-198), was making claims to the headship of the church of Christ. He threatened to excommunicate the churches of Asia Minor on the keeping of Easter date.²⁶¹

In the relationships between the bishops, there were excommunications by Rome and appeals from a Spanish bishop and Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (c. 248-258). In one of Cyprian's letters, he states:

To the clergy and people abiding at Furni, I and my colleagues who were present with me were greatly disturbed, dearest brethren, as were also our fellow presbyters who sate (sat) with us, when we were made aware that Geminus Victor, our brother, when departing this life, had named Geminus Faustinus the presbyter executor to his will, although long since it was decreed, in a council of bishops (that), no one should appoint any of the clergy and the ministers of God executor or guardian by his will, since every one honoured by divine priesthood, and ordained in the clerical service, ought to serve only the altar and sacrifices, and to have leisure for prayers and supplication.²⁶²

Cyprian was referring to Canon XXIII of the Council of Constantinople (381).²⁶³ There are some issues from this letter, which are worth commenting on. In the first place, the letter was addressed to 'presbyters and deacons and people.' The bishop was not singled out. This is characteristic of Cyprian's letters. His letters to the Church in Rome were addressed to the clergy or presbyters and deacons, and not to the bishop of Rome. By this, Cyprian brings home the idea that his office may be considered as presbyter raised to superintend over the activities of the church, including other presbyters and deacons. The bishop was elected to that office from the presbyterate. It will not be far-fetched to say that the bishop was the chairman of the presbyt-

²⁶¹ Jedin, *History of the Church*, II: 358.

²⁶² A. Roberts & J. Donaldson, *The Writings of Cyprian* (Edinburgh: T and T Clarke, 1868), 228-230.

²⁶³ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 330.

erate. That is, from among the presbyterate, one person is elected to be the bishop. Secondly, he mentioned 'fellow presbyters' even though he himself was a bishop. This and the first observation give one the impression that the bishop was understood to be one of the presbyters, except that he was elevated above other presbyters. His position, thus, was one of *primus inter pares*.

Finally, the contents of the letter implied that Cyprian was challenging the decision of the bishop of Rome, and he mentioned that that decision was contrary to an earlier decision of a council. This also implied that it was the councils (or synods, as they were also called) that gave authoritative ruling on such issues, and not the individual bishops. After the Council of Nicaea (325), it is noticed that Rome begins to intensify the claims to headship, which was not accepted by some churches of the Latin West and all the churches of the Greek East. On the position of Rome, Irenaeus and later, Hippolytus, did not accord any such supreme role to her. They rather affirmed that Rome was the city which everybody visited from all parts, and that Christians, carried into it the testimony of all other churches. Thus it became a competent witness to the *quod ab omnibus*.²⁶⁴

Some of the churches in the Latin west and all the churches in the Greek East did not accept Rome's claim to supremacy. To them, the position of Rome was one of honouring the memory of the apostle Peter.²⁶⁵ At the Seventh Council of Carthage in September 256, there was a declaration by the North African churches:

... For no one of us sets himself up as a bishop or by tyrannical terror forces his colleagues to a necessity of obeying; inasmuch as every bishop in the free use of his liberty and power, has the right of forming his own judgement, and can no more be judged by another than he himself judge

²⁶⁴ A. Roberts & J. Donaldson, *Ante Nicene Fathers*, 5:11, 12.

²⁶⁵ J. Bettenson, *Documents of the Vatican* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 78-79.

another. But we must all await the judgement of our Lord Jesus Christ who alone has the power both of setting us in the government of His Church, and of judging of our acts therein.²⁶⁶

There is the impression that only Jesus sets people in recognised positions in the church. Apart from Jesus, one will be in office on his own and not as representative of Christ. Secondly, the idea of the Pope being the bishop of bishops was not accommodated by some of the churches. As early as the middle of the second century, this claim to supremacy was present, but challenged. When Pope Anicetus wished to introduce uniformity concerning the Quartodecimanism (dispute about the observance of Easter), he was visited by Polycarp of Smyrna (c154-5).²⁶⁷ Failing to reach agreement on the practice, the divergence was allowed to continue at Rome. This implied that even in Rome, the Bishop of Rome (the Pope) could not enforce a common practice. When Pope Victor (190) tried to secure uniformity on the same subject at a synod and wanted to excommunicate the church of Ephesus, other churches counselled moderation and the threat was not carried out.²⁶⁸ This also confirms that the authority in the universal church rested with the synods and councils and not with individual bishops. The fact that all the ecumenical councils in the period of the early church were summoned by the emperors confirms our proposition that no individual bishop had that right. One may wonder why Rome could not summon councils to deal with the Donatist and Arian controversies, if she really had that right in the church. Jerome also gives the impression that the bishop of Rome and those of other sees are equal in rank therefore the deacons of Rome are naturally below the presbyters and bishops of other sees.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, 258.

²⁶⁷ S. L. Greenslade, *Schism in the Early Church* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1953), 227-229.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 230.

²⁶⁹ Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, 258.

There is an apparent contradiction in the claims of Cyprian. In an earlier letter cited above, Cyprian claims that the clergy in Rome did not have authority over the other sees. The same Cyprian writes to the clergy about certain letters he had written to Rome to explain the circumstances under which he appointed some officers of the church. Cyprian had written to explain the ordination of Saturus and Optatus.²⁷⁰ He appears to be giving reasons for the appointment of certain functionaries in the church. The reasons were that most of the clergy were absent from their post and there was the need to replace them for effective ministry. He further indicates that the appointments made were based on an earlier general advice.

The situation on the relationship between Rome and the other sees is not very clear. Cyprian at a certain council tells Stephen, the Roman bishop, that it had been decreed by them, that those who returned from heresy into the church should be baptised, and that bishops or priests coming from the heretics should be received on no other condition, than that they should communicate as lay people. He was disapproving of Stephen's action in receiving those who were returning from heresy.²⁷¹ These exchanges of correspondence illustrate the non-existence, in the Cyprianic age, of any conception of such relations as now exist between Rome and her vassal episcopate.²⁷²

4.2.2 Priesthood of all believers in the Early Church

Outside the Bible one observes that the title priest is linked with presbyter. The word 'priest' comes via the Latin loan-word 'presbyter' from the Greek **presbyteros**, meaning elder.²⁷³ The Christian movement had initially avoided the use of the title 'priest' for a specialised ministry. In the fourth century, however, the word is

²⁷⁰ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 639.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1: 819.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 1: 896.

²⁷³ Küng, *The Church*, 378.

found in the expression of Cyprian who repeatedly quoted the OT text from Deuteronomy 17:12-13, that anyone who does not listen to the priest shall die.²⁷⁴

Cyprian's idea was that the bishops and priests of the church were the representatives of Jesus Christ in the community. There was the need to obey these as disobeying them amounted to disobeying God.

In the period of the early church one can discern a number of developments, some of which deal with organisational structure. The church, which was regarded as the brotherhood of believers or community of believers, or better still, the *koinonia*, became a community over which a bishop presided and a people united by their priest. The universal visible church became a federation of local churches, who believed in the same verities, the truth of which was guaranteed by legitimate rulers. Members of this federation yielded obedience to the bishop, and the federation excluded heretics and rebels. The bishop thus became the viceroy over the portion of God's heritage over which he superintended. He stood in the place of Jesus as the priest of God in the two rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper. He offered to God the Lord's passion in the Eucharist. Thus in the Eucharist, the priest offers a sacrifice and invites the people in actual communion with Christ. In the baptismal rite, the bishop as priest received those who were introduced into the church by baptism. He was believed to bestow the Holy Spirit upon candidates for baptism through the laying on of hands. Finally the bishop as priest of God was judge to whom belonged the power of punishing or remitting sins.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry*, 181 - 182.

²⁷⁵ Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry*, 306.

The idea of specialised priesthood paved the way for the distinction between the clergy and the laity. In this period, one notes that clergy and laity have other roots. The word 'clergy' originated from the Greek word κληρος, meaning lot or share and the Latin word 'clerici', meaning the educated by contrast to the uneducated. J. B. Lightfoot suggests a sequence of meanings, by which the clergy arrived at a peculiar sense:²⁷⁶

1. the lot by which the office was assigned;
2. the office thus assigned by lot
3. the body of persons holding the office.

He continues that the first two senses are illustrated by Acts 1:20; and from the second to the third, the transition is easy and natural. He however cautions that it must not be supposed that the mode of appointing officers by lot prevailed generally in the early Church. Besides the case of Matthias no other instance is recorded in the New Testament; nor is this procedure likely to have been commonly adopted. But just as in the passage quoted the word is used to describe the office of Judas, though Judas was certainly not selected by lot, so generally from signifying one special mode of appointment to office it got to signify office in the Church generally. If this account of the application of *clerus* to the Christian ministry be correct, we should expect to find it illustrated by a corresponding progress in the actual usage of the word. And this is in fact the case. The sense clerical appointment or office chronologically precedes the sense 'clergy.' The former meaning occurs several times in Irenaeus. He speaks of Hyginus as 'holding the ninth *clerus* of the episcopal succession from the Apostles;

²⁷⁶ Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, 105.

and of Eleutherus in like manner he says, 'He now occupies the 'clerus' of the episcopate in the tenth place from the Apostles.

The earliest instance of clerus, meaning clergy, seems to occur in Tertullian who belongs to the next generation. It will thus be seen that the use of 'clerus' to denote the ministry cannot be traced to the Jewish priesthood, and is therefore wholly unconnected with any sacerdotal views. The term does indeed recognise the clergy as an order distinct from the laity; but this is a mere question of ecclesiastical rule or polity, and involves no doctrinal bearings. The origin of sacerdotal phraseology and ideas must be sought elsewhere. Thus where there is no bench of clergy, you present the Eucharistic offerings and baptize and are your own sole priest. For according to John Chrysostom, where two or three are gathered together, there is a church (even though they be laymen). Therefore, if you exercise the rights of a priest in cases of necessity, it is your duty also to observe the discipline enjoined on a priest, where of necessity you exercise the rights of a priests.'

The word 'laity' with its Christian usage has its roots in the Greek word *λαός*, meaning people, normally used for the 'people of God'.²⁷⁷ Laity is also linked with the Greek word *laikos*, which meant the uneducated masses, and is used in this sense by Bishop Clement of Rome.²⁷⁸ *Laikos* also meant in the Jewish sense anyone who was neither a priest nor a levite.²⁷⁹ Thus the distinction between the clergy and laity came to have the sense of the highly educated and the uneducated as well as the clergy and the non-clergy.

²⁷⁷ Küng, *The Church*, 385-387.

²⁷⁸ Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry*, 265-266, 304-305.

²⁷⁹ Küng, *The Church*, 3.

This understanding of the relationship between the clergy and the laity with the background of the NT understanding of the priesthood of all believers is made clear by John Chrysostom (354?-407). Chrysostom, who was made Patriarch of Constantinople in 398, in his 'Treatise concerning the Christian Priesthood', mentions two altars.²⁸⁰ Making reference to the activities of the priesthood in the church, he mentions the altar in church and the altar at the market place. Towards the altar in the sanctuary, people show deep reverence. People bow in front of it, and decorate it with silver and gold, and cover it with precious hangings. Chrysostom mentions that there is another altar, an altar that one encounters every day, on which one can offer sacrifice at any moment. And yet towards this second altar, an altar which God himself has made, people show no reverence at all. They treat it with contempt. He refers to this altar as service to the poor, the suffering, those in need, the homeless, and all who are in distress. Chrysostom indicates that when one goes out from the church, one sees an altar on which one can offer sacrifice, a living altar made by Christ. Thus, to Chrysostom, the Christian service is not limited to activities within the church.

It may be argued that the idea of priesthood of all believers is implied. J. B. Lightfoot mentions that the church has no sacerdotal system.²⁸¹ He adds that the church interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man, by whose intervention alone God is reconciled and man forgiven. To him, each individual member holds personal communion with the Divine Head. To God immediately he is responsible, and from God directly, he obtains pardon and draws strength.²⁸² In fact, J. B. Lightfoot emphasizes that the whole Christian community is referred as a kingdom of

²⁸⁰ Roberts & Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1: 139-143.

²⁸¹ Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, 1.

²⁸² Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, 1.

priests.²⁸³ Some are ordained to serve. Others may not be in the ordained priesthood but they can still practise the priesthood in their public activities.

4.3 Church government in the Dark and Middle Ages

In the Dark and Middle Ages (501 to 1500), the organisation of the church was well established. The Popes continued to emphasise Rome's pre-eminence which was challenged by the East especially the 'New Rome' (Constantinople). With the Great Schism, and the invasion of Constantinople by Islamic forces, leading to the sacking of Constantinople by the Crusaders, Rome became the head of the church in the West. Rivalry between the Pope and the Emperor was the main cause of anarchy during the period.

The invasions and wars from the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Vandals, Mongols, Magyars and later, adherents of the Islamic religion destroyed or hindered the work of most institutions of the Roman Empire. The only universal European institution was the church, and even there a fragmentation of authority was the rule; all the power within the church hierarchy was in the hands of the local bishops. The church basically saw itself as the spiritual community of Christian believers, in exile from God's kingdom, waiting in a hostile world for the day of deliverance. The most important members of this community were found outside the hierarchy of the church government in the monasteries that dotted Europe.

According to Philip Schaff, the Greek Church protested against universal monarchy of the papacy from the basis of the oligarchical patriarchal hierarchy of the

²⁸³ Ibid., 3.

fifth century.²⁸⁴ He contends that in an age, and upon a principle of church organisation, which preceded the grand agency of the papacy in the history of the world, the evangelical church protested against it on the basis of a freer conception of Christianity. To him, the papacy, as an institution, has virtually fulfilled its mission and outlived itself. Philip Schaff is of the view that the papacy stands between the age of the patriarchal hierarchy and the age of the Reformation, like the Mosaic theocracy between the patriarchal period and the advent of Christianity. Protestantism rejects at once the papal monarchy and the patriarchal oligarchy.²⁸⁵

Philip Schaff comments also that the apostolic organisation of the first century gave place to the old catholic episcopal system (one bishop heading each church); and this, in its turn, passed into the metropolitan (one diocesan bishop over many churches), and after the fourth century into the patriarchal (one bishop over many other diocesan bishops).²⁸⁶ To Schaff, the Greek Church did not go further than this, and is governed to this day by a hierarchical oligarchy of patriarchs equal in rank and jurisdiction; while the Latin Church went a step further, and produced in the Middle Ages the papal monarchy.²⁸⁷

The Catholic Church was the only church in Europe during the Middle Ages. All others who dissented from the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church were regarded as heretics. Church leaders such as bishops and archbishops sat on the king's council and played leading roles in government. Bishops, who were often wealthy and came from noble families, ruled over groups of parishes called 'diocese'. Parish

²⁸⁴ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: PC Study Bible, Biblesoft, Inc., 2006), 3: 5.

²⁸⁵ Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3: 5.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 2: 4.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 2: 4.

priests, on the other hand, came from humbler backgrounds and often had little education. The village priest attended to the sick and indigent and, if he was able, taught Latin and the Bible to the youth of the village.

As Europe gradually emerged from the destruction of the Roman Empire, the church became one of the mainstays of civilisation. After Gregory was elected Pope in 590, he assumed the task of protecting Rome and its surrounding territory from the Lombard threat. During the pontificate of Gregory I the Great (590-604), the medieval papacy began to assert its authority. Gregory's achievement was to go beyond the claim of papal primacy in the church by beginning to establish the temporal power of the papacy. Thus Gregory was the first Pope to act as temporal ruler of a part of what later became the Papal States.

Gregory the Great also laid the foundation for the elaborate papal machinery of church government. He took the first step toward papal control of the church outside of Italy by sending a mission of Benedictine monks to convert the pagan Anglo-Saxons. The pattern of church government Gregory established in England was that bishops were supervised by archbishops, and archbishops by the Pope. This became the standard in the church.²⁸⁸

The task of establishing papal control of the church and extending The Pope's temporal authority was continued by Gregory's successors. In the eighth century, English missionaries transferred to Germany and France the pattern of papal government they had known in England. The 'Donation of Pepin', and the creating of the Papal States, greatly increased the Pope's temporal power. The papacy's spiritual and temporal power was restrained, however, with the onset of feudalism. Beginning in the

²⁸⁸ 'Gregory the Great,' Wikipedia Encyclopaedia (accessed, 23 July 2010).

late ninth century, the church, including the papacy, fell more and more under the control of secular lords and kings. The Roman Catholic Church became organised into an elaborate hierarchy with the Pope as the head in Western Europe. He established supreme power. Literacy was no longer merely requirement among the clergy. The period was characterised by conflict. Towns and cities began to grow in alarming numbers; the new towns wanted to have their own self-control. They wanted to be free of outside leadership. One result of this struggle was the intensification of political and social thinking.

Thus in the organisation of the church, the Pope is the head, followed by cardinals and then archbishops. The bishops, next in command in the chain of authority are followed by priests and deacons, in that order. The bishop retained unchallenged, even in the epoch of canon law, the autonomous right to act within his bishopric as chief priest, judge and ruler of his people.²⁸⁹

4.4 Church government in the Modern Church

The organisation of the church at the beginning of the modern period continued to be of the form mentioned above, in the Middle Ages. On June 26, 1526, the Diet of Ilanz proclaimed religious freedom in the Grisons.²⁹⁰ People were free to choose between the Catholic and the Reform religion. Ministers were to preach nothing but what they could prove from the scriptures and to give themselves diligently to the study of scriptures. The political authority of the Bishop of Coire was curtailed. Parishes were empowered to elect and to dismiss the priests or pastors.

²⁸⁹ Jedin, *History of the Church*, IV: 228 & 229.

²⁹⁰ Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 139 & 140.

Thus the episcopal monarchy was abolished and the congregational independence was introduced but without the distinction made by the English and American congregationalists between the church proper, or the body of converted believers, and the congregation of hearers or mere nominal Christians. The Pope sent a delegate to Coire and demanded the introduction of the inquisition but the attempt was defeated. It was upheld that every congregation was sovereign and elects and supports its own pastors.²⁹¹

John Calvin, the reformer, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, taught that the ministry of men which God employs in governing the church is a principal bond by which believers are kept together in the body. To Calvin, bishop, presbyter and pastor are synonymously used in the Bible.²⁹² Calvin further mentions that each church must have its own senate, and elders are not appointed by one person. But he is cautious to note that the laying on of hands is done by pastors and not all the people. Bishops have no special dignity and honour than the other presbyters. According to Calvin, no one should dream of primacy or domination in regard to the government of the church.

The Protestant reformers gradually rejected the title 'bishop'. They preferred the title 'superintendent' (meaning overseer) to 'bishop' because of the dictatorial nature of the office of the bishop, and also because they (the reformers) claimed that monepiscopacy has no biblical support.

In this period, the church in England breaks away from the Catholic Church. Henry VIII (1509-1542), who had opposed the reformation activities of Martin Lu-

²⁹¹ Ibid., 143.

²⁹² J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Chicago: Sage Software, 1996), 4: 1200, 1207, 1212.

ther, John Calvin and William Tyndale, repudiated the authority of the Pope and became the head of the church in England. The monarchy in England, and the people had for some time seeking for the independence of the church in England from papal authority. The incidence of the break-away came in the wake of the Pope's refusal to annul the marriage of Henry VIII. The diocesan episcopacy was adopted, the only innovation being that the Archbishop of Canterbury became the spiritual head instead of the Pope. It was from the Church of England (Anglican Church) that the core of the Methodist movement emerged. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, which later became the Methodist Church, seemed to have been influenced to some extent by the works of two personalities.²⁹³ These were the Primitive Church by Lord Peter King and Irenicum by Bishop Edward Stillingfleet. John Wesley's original position on episcopacy can be summed up from proceedings of the first Conference of Methodism, which commenced on 25 June 1744. Conference deliberations on June 27 showed that though obedience to the bishops was upheld, scripture remained the final deciding factor to the Methodists. It was spelt out that where there was the need for it, the Methodists would continue with field preaching even though the church order did not allow that. At the Conference of 1747, it was affirmed that the three orders of bishops, presbyters and deacons were present in the NT. However, the Methodists did not find any determinate plan of church government which is appointed in Scripture. It was rather held that, by the nature of things, God has variously dispensed his gifts of nature, providence, and grace. As such, the offices and the officers in each ought to be varied from time to time. To the early Methodists, there was no determinate plan of church government appointed in Scripture, and the plea for the divine right of episco-

²⁹³A. B. Lawson, *John Wesley and the Christian Ministry* (London: SPCK, 1963), 30-80.

pany was never heard of in the NT. The wisdom of God has a regard to this necessary variety. The idea of uniformity emerged during the time of Emperor Constantine I, and to the Methodists, there would not have been any thought of uniformity if men had consulted the word of God only.

The writings of both King and Stillingfleet convinced Wesley that in the primitive church, presbyters and bishops were of the same order but differed in function. Both admitted that, the terms 'bishop' and 'presbyter' were used synonymously, but later the office of the bishop was recognised as superior to that of the college of presbyters. Stillingfleet's influence on Wesley was greater on the teaching that there was no fixed form of government, and that the church can appoint if it becomes necessary, those officers which Christ did not appoint. Both King and Stillingfleet changed their views. It is not certain whether John Wesley knew of this.

Wesley could be said to be an episcopalian, but to him, episcopacy was not a distinct order but a distinct office (or function). To Wesley, episkopos, bishop and superintendent have the same meaning. It was obvious he would not take the title because he considered himself to be an Anglican, and it was the preserve of the bishops to consecrate another bishop. With the growth of the movement, the need for a well-structured organisation was felt. After the first conference, held in 1744, there were six ordained priests (of the Anglican Church) and four lay preachers. The movement then had a Leaders' Meeting at the society level, Circuit Quarterly Meeting at the circuit level, District Meetings at the district level and a Conference which resembled the General Assembly of the Presbyterian system.

When out of necessity, the Methodists ordained and appointed Dr. Thomas Coke on 2 September 1784, who also ordained Francis Asbury, to be superintendent in North America, it was with the understanding that bishop and superintendent were

the same but differed in office or function only. On the death of Wesley, all authority came to be vested with the Conference. The Conference and the trustees of the Church were authoritarian. They did not allow the local preachers and those without episcopal ordination to administer the sacraments. Rather, they were inclined towards the Anglican Church, which led to secessions in the Methodist movement in the nineteenth century.

4.5 Priesthood of all believers in the Modern Age

The Anglican Church cherishes the ideals of the priesthood of all believers. Concerning the priesthood of all believers, Protestants at the Reformation returned to the NT concept of priesthood of all believers. The leaders of the Reformation reacted against the Catholic institution of the priesthood by affirming the 'priesthood of all believers'. Furthermore, as Luther argued, the vocation of any Christian, by contributing to society and thus serving one's neighbour, is as fulfilling before God as any specifically religious vocation. Nevertheless, most Protestant denominations have an ordained ministry. Whereas the Roman Catholic priest is seen as acting on behalf of Christ as mediator of God's grace through his administration of the sacraments, the Protestant minister is regarded as one of the laity who has been trained to perform certain church functions (such as preaching and administering the sacraments). As a result of this belief in the essential equality of all church members, Protestant church government has been democratic in tendency, although there are wide variations. However the word 'priest' continued to be used, not in the sense of Jewish or secular priesthood but to mean presbyter.

The 'lay' in the Anglican Church do participate in the ministry. There are lay readers and other functionaries in the church. The readers include mission readers, pa-

rochial readers and diocesan readers. These go through a period of preparation and are tested and approved of, before they could be allowed to minister.

The Methodists employed the use of lay preachers and lay class leaders, demonstrating that preaching and teaching in the church are not the exclusive prerogative of the clergy. However, John Wesley would not allow the laity to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. He vehemently condemned the idea of the laity administering the sacraments. When reproached for inconsistency in allowing the lay people to preach and teach but barring them from administering the sacraments, his response was that there was no offence in that. At one time he had allowed a 'lay man' to assist him in administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper because, as he indicated in a letter written to one Nicholas Norton on 3 September 1756, that the Bible does not forbid the lay assisting the clergy. John Wesley mentions that he does not think it necessary for the lay to administer the sacraments. Thus, the lay could preach and assist in the sacraments but could not administer sacraments on their own.

In the beliefs of the Methodists as indicated in the Deed of Foundation in the Constitution, it is clearly stated regarding the ministry that ministers in the church are stewards and shepherds in the household of God. Some are called and ordained to this sole occupation and have a principal and directing part in these duties, but they hold no priesthood differing in kind from that which is common to the Lord's people and they have no exclusive title to the preaching of the gospel or the care of the souls. Others, to whom also the Spirit divides his gifts as he wills, share these ministries with them. It is the universal conviction of the Methodist people that the office of the Christian ministry depends upon the call of God who bestows the gift(s) of the Spirit, the grace, and the fruit, which indicate those whom he has chosen. Those whom the

Methodist Church recognises as called of God, and therefore receives into its ministry, shall be ordained by the imposition of hands, as expressive of the church's recognition of the minister's personal call. It is further indicated that the Methodist Church holds the doctrine of priesthood of all believers, and consequently believes that no priesthood exists which belongs exclusively to a particular order or class of persons.

However, in the exercise of its corporate life and worship, special qualifications for the discharge of special duties are required, and thus the principle of representative selection is recognised. The lay preachers, ordained and lay, are examined, tested, and approved before they are authorised to minister in holy things. For the sake of church order and not because of any priestly virtue inherent in the office, the ministers are set apart by ordination to the ministry of the word and sacraments.

Another characteristic feature of this period was the use of the title 'Reverend' by all denominations for the clergy. The title 'Reverend' came into use in the seventeenth century:²⁹⁴

1. For people worthy of deep respect or reverence on account of rank, age or character;
2. As a respectful epithet applied to members of the clergy;
3. It is also used in connection with things and places worthy of or inspiring of reverence;
4. Finally, it is connected with the characteristics associated with the clergy.

²⁹⁴ See 'Reverend,' *Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011).

It is obvious that the title was used or could have been for both the 'clergy' and the 'non-clergy'. Thus, the title 'Reverend Minister' could be applied to the non-clergy. It is not known that the church resolved at any point in time to restrict the title 'Reverend' to only the members of the clergy. The position of this work is not against the application of the title 'Reverend' to the clergy. The title 'Reverend' is added to other titles that really describe the status and function, for example, Very Reverend, Right Reverend and Most Reverend. All these are reverends but the distinction is made to show the status of each in the chain of command. However, the view is that there is the need to apply strictly pastoral titles. It was observed in Chapter Two that the church deliberately avoided titles that showed class distinctions.

The work must of necessity mention the title 'lord bishop'. Among issues in the problem statement is the application of the title lord bishop. A better understanding would be to look at the practice in the Church of England. Traditionally, some bishops are referred to as lord bishop. The Church of England comprises 44 dioceses, each led by a bishop. The diocesan bishops of Canterbury and York are archbishops, who also have oversight over their respective provinces. There are five 'great sees', namely, Canterbury, York, London, Durham and Winchester. The occupants of these sees are always spiritual peers and Lords of Parliament.²⁹⁵ The Bishop of Sodor and Man and the Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe may not sit in the House of Lords regardless of seniority as their dioceses lie outside Great Britain. Of the remaining 37 bishops, the 21 most senior (senior by date of consecration) sit in the House of Lords. The title lord is thus accorded in the Anglican Church by virtue of political status, that is, membership of the House of Lords. In Ghana, there would be an issue to contend with

²⁹⁵ 'Bishop,' *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* (accessed, 9 June 2010).

in the case a Justice of the Law is an ordained minister, and is elected bishop. In the absence of that the Methodist Church Ghana must educate the entire membership against the use of the title 'lord bishop'.

4.6 Observations on resourceful aids

There has been a survey of the changing phases of ministry and church government through the ages. The picture of Christian ministry and church government that is found in the early church is that out of all the writings of the 'church fathers', it is only in the epistles of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, that there is a three-tiered hierarchical structure. In the others the terms 'presbyter' and 'bishops' are interchangeable or are used synonymously. The monarchical episcopate becomes firmly established.

Initially, the office-holders saw their mission wholly in the light of its supernatural origin and were conscious that in the fulfilment of their task, they were guided by the Spirit. The working of the Spirit was not limited to the leaders of the congregation but it was felt everywhere among the faithful. Later, with the development of diocesan bishoprics, the bishops assumed dictatorial powers, a situation which was condemned in the NT (3 John 9, 10).

From the writings of the 'church fathers' too, it can confidently be said that no bishop had the right to intervene in the affairs of other bishoprics. There is no evidence to believe that the church in Corinth asked for the advice of the church in Rome. The Epistle of Clement, who was a bishop of Rome, though sometimes uses more decisive language, was an appeal to reinstate the bishops and not a command. From the contents, the members of the church of Corinth had been able to remove their bishops from office.

There is no doubt that the threat of false doctrines and its accompanying strife made the bishops fully aware of their duties as guardians of orthodoxy. The monarchical episcopate could have emerged from above or below. It was possible that one of the presbyter-bishops was appointed to preside and this ultimately led to the creation of an office distinct from that of the presbyterate. It could also be that apostolic delegates later assumed such position in the church. The incidence of a presiding presbyter (bishop) assisted by a council of elders may be regarded as a necessary development on the conditions that:

- a. The bishop has the charisma for ruling (or for being a guardian or for having pastoral oversight).
- b. The members of the church have the right to elect the bishops, and remove them from office if they become dictatorial, or irreligious.
- c. They rule with a council of presbyters.
- d. Their understanding of the ministry is in line with the teaching of Jesus that his followers have been called to serve and not lord it over others.

However, with the further development in the second and third centuries of the monarchical episcopacy to diocesan episcopacy, the rights of the members of the church and the presbyters were gradually usurped.

In time, the essential place of the *pneuma* by which one becomes a member of the church, and the priority of the *charis* were no more pre-requisites for church members and office-holders. It is interesting to note that some persons were elected bishops before they were baptised as Christians.

The divisions of the church into dioceses were influenced by the administrative structure of the Roman Empire.

Also, the distinction between the 'clergy' and the 'laity' gained wider acceptance even though the terms were not very appropriate for a Christian community.

The title 'Reverend' has been in use since the eighteenth century for persons (both clergy and non-clergy) and places worthy of honour.

The title 'lord Bishop' is not applied to every bishop in the Anglican Church in Britain so The Anglican and Methodist churches Ghana must understand its use before applying it.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION OF REASONS FOR CHURCH GOVERNMENT

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, there is an attempt to explain the rationale behind the choice of particular type of church government by the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana. The chapter also examines reasons given by the Methodist Church for the adoption of episcopacy, and offers suggestions regarding factors to be considered in adopting a particular type of church government.

We have noted in Chapter Two that every community needs a form of government for the purpose of order and development. The church of Christ, as a community of believers, needs a form of government for the same purpose among others. The function of government is to secure the common welfare of the members of the social aggregate over which it exercises control. In different historical epochs, governments have endeavoured to achieve the common welfare by various means. Among primitive peoples, systems of social control were rudimentary. They arose directly from ideas of right and wrong common to the members of a social group and were enforced on individuals primarily through group pressure. Unlike primitive peoples, among more civilised peoples, governments assumed institutional forms. They rested on defined legal bases, imposing penalties on violators of the law and using force to establish themselves and discharge their functions.

Among the systems of government, democracy is regarded as the best political system. However, democracy may not be very suitable for the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana. The reason can be found in the constitutions of the two denominations. Both denominations have as part of their constitutions, their doctrinal positions, which cannot be subjected to amendment. The positions of these churches

on doctrinal issues of salvation, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the priesthood of all believers, spreading of scriptural holiness and the two sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper and matters as the sovereignty of God, and the need for the baptism of the Holy Spirit cannot be voted on. One has to accept the position of the church on these or leave the church. All the three main types of church government have a mixture of theocratic and democratic ideas. It needs to be emphasised that the Bible is a major component of the constitutional framework of these churches. All other constitutional provisions must not in any manner contradict the teachings of the Bible as held by these churches.

5.2 Arguments for the three systems of church government

There are several types of church government but three of them, namely, Episcopacy, Federal/Presbyterial and Congregational are fundamental to all. The others diverge from these three in some measure. So it is possible to use these three as the major types to represent all the shades of divergence. Proponents for each of the three major types of church government claim the Bible is the authority behind their system of church government. H. L. Willmington has summed up the positions of these proponents,²⁹⁶ as indicated in Chapter One.

5.3 Reasons for episcopacy examined

In Chapter one a number of reasons were given for the adoption of episcopacy. These views are given by proponents of episcopacy but this work examines them in this chapter. The reasons given were:

1. Episcopacy is more biblical than the other systems of church government.

²⁹⁶ Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible*, 705.

2. It preserves and maintains the church's apostolicity.
3. It ensures apostolic succession.
4. It is ecumenical, that is, in line with the increasing number of churches which are turning episcopal, and is understood by the ecumenical community.
5. It provides for effective work, that is, it unites the church and provides for a unique form of pastoral oversight.
6. The adoption of episcopacy will assist in the development of church structures and clearly distinguish our overseers from the other officers of the secular and our own church organisations.
7. The title 'bishop' is appropriate to our age of gender consciousness. The argument put forward was that the word 'chairman', as it were, excluded women from the office. To be gender sensitive, the title 'bishop' was preferred.

5.3.1 That episcopacy is more biblical

The claim that episcopacy is more biblical may mean two things. The first is that the idea is more biblical. The second is that the nomenclature is more biblical. From our studies on church government in the NT, there is no evidence for moniscopacy and monarchical (also spelt monarchical) episcopacy. What could be said to be the practice was the rule of a college of presbyters/bishops. There was a case in point where in Third John, one Diotrephes was not co-operating with other workers in the vineyard who were visiting a local church. Reference was made to him as one who loves to be first (he might not have been the first). The fact that the author of Third John was to draw attention to what he was doing shows that there were some present of equal status to listen to the complaint. The complainant himself was not in the posi-

tion to impose sanctions but could only draw attention to the alleged misdeeds of Diotrepes to what may be seen as a panel or council who could hear the case and take a decision on it. It is also noted that no fixed form of organisational structure or system of government is prescribed for the church. In fact, the three main forms of church government, namely, episcopal, federal and congregational are given biblical roots by the various proponents.²⁹⁷

The position of this work is that, should any church consider innovation in the system of government, episcopacy is no more biblical than the other systems of church government. The terms episcopos, bishop and overseer are as biblical as presbyter and elder. The principles of governance can all be traced to the practice in the NT. Thus, the first reason put forward for the adoption of episcopacy is not tangible.

5.3.2 That episcopacy preserves and ensures apostolic succession

With regard to the claim that episcopacy testifies to the apostolicity and universal character of the church, it has been observed earlier that apostolic succession is reckoned by some Protestants as succession of doctrine and not of office. Secondly, with the canonisation of the books of the Bible, the identification of bishops with the apostles came to be of little significance.

With regards to the suggestion that the person of the bishop serves as a unifying factor in the church, the opinion of Daniel Jenkins must be seriously considered.²⁹⁸ The bishop is regarded as the chief liturgical figure but Daniel Jenkins is of the view that it is not the person of the bishop but the Holy Spirit who provides the real point of contact between any church in history and the apostles. The one perma-

²⁹⁷ Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible*, 705.

²⁹⁸ Jenkins, *The Protestant Ministry*, 57-62.

ment, catholic reality in the church, to Jenkins, is Jesus Christ who makes himself known to men in the Spirit. The church is united to Christ as the branches to the vine (John 15). Though there is the need to have human leadership, the ultimate head of the church is Jesus Christ (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18), in whom the church is united. Paul's appeal to the church of Corinth to agree and be united in mind and thought was for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:10). The moment other persons become so important, the church runs the risk of breeding and nurturing personality cults just as the divided church of Corinth (1 Cor 1:11). Christians are all one in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28; Rom 12:5). It is because Christians partake of one loaf that they are one (1 Cor 10:17; 12:12). Jesus is the one who has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility (Eph 2:14). The fact that the bishop himself delegates another to represent him is enough to demonstrate that the real unifying factor is the Holy Spirit. The second reason posited for the adoption of episcopacy, that is that it ensures apostolic succession and testifies to the universal nature of the church, is also not a sufficient reason.

5.3.3 That episcopacy is more ecumenical

Another reason for advocating episcopacy is to be able to relate well, and be recognised by the episcopal churches. It cannot be over-emphasised that ecumenicity has opened the way for a recovery of truly catholic ministry on the part of divided churches. However, ecumenicity does not mean a dead uniformity but an attempt by each church to repair its deficiencies and to bring its best gifts into the wider life of the churches for the enrichment of the whole.²⁹⁹ In the dialogue between different denominations, there may be exchange of ideas and practices. But it must be noted that the ultimate test of ministry is not whether it is properly authorised according to the

²⁹⁹ Jenkins, *The Protestant Ministry*, 21-22.

view of the more settled Christian communities but whether through it the power of Christ is made effectively visible and the church carried forward upon its pilgrimage in obedience to God's will for humankind. Secondly, it should be determined whether the other ministries of the church are contributing to the enrichment of life. Thus ecumenicity alone does not merit the adoption of the episcopal system of church government.

In Ghana, Christian denominations that are episcopal or are using episcopal terminology are fewer than those who are not. Moreover, there are common platforms for addressing issues of general concern. One can mention Christian bodies as the National Catholic Secretariat, the Christian Council of Ghana, the Ghana Pentecostal Council, the National Council for Christian and Charismatic Churches and the Supreme Council for Ghana Pentecostal Churches. The existence of these councils may serve to promote ecumenism.

The World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order has been engaged in dialogue on conciliar fellowship as a way of talking about organic unity designed to dislodge stuck imaginations by making reference to the ancient idea of conciliarism.³⁰⁰ These ancient councils were expressions of full unity in the faith, full communion in ministry and sacraments, and agreement about lines of authority and responsibility. The position of the Commission is that the churches united in a council would not be our familiar 'denominations'.

To Lewis S. Mudge, a council of the church has traditionally been a conference of bishops, that is, a meeting of the persons who exercise direct pastoral over-

³⁰⁰ L.S. Mudge, in the *Christian Century*, 19 September 1979: 882, www.christiancentury.org. (accessed, 22 July 2010).

sight of the church's mission. To him, the episcopal conference is not a meeting of bureaucrats, board secretaries, curial personnel or the like. It is a meeting of persons who represent the reality of the church as a believing, sacramental, ministering community. Mudge is of the opinion that if one speaks of 'conciliar fellowship' as the model for the unity of the church, thoughts turn to the idea of councils recognised by all as having episcopal functions.

This results in an inter-play between nomenclature and function. When mention is made of episcopal functions, it must not always involve episcopal titles. The Chairman in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana may be performing the same functions as the bishop in the Methodist Church Ghana.

The churches would continue in such a plan to have much diversity, but with freer passage back and forth for ministers and members, a far higher consciousness of Christians representing traditions other than one's own, an arena for mutuality in mission. One advantage would accrue from the maintenance of diversity: the institution of a 'conciliar' form of church authority, indeed a corporate episcopate, as the preferred form of ecumenical fulfilment.

It is clear as well that what one would have here is not a larger, albeit more progressive, denomination. It would rather be a council for the deployment of ministry and mission in whose hands would also be placed ordaining authority, responsibility for maintaining the truth of the faith, and so on. While the image of the large homogenised denomination is of little use in modelling the unity of the church on a world scale, this version of conciliarism has considerable potential as a model for what we might eventually seek at the global level. It would be desirable to build such a union from below. But there would be no inherent obstacle to creating a national council of episcopate on the same basis. There could be a move toward an understand-

ing whereby the continuing ‘denominational’ assemblies and conventions (now deriving ecclesial authority from their conciliar commitment) would endeavour to meet in the same city at the same time (and hence at the same intervals) the episcopal council met, thereby creating a uni- and multicameral structure graphically expressing both unity and diversity.

The conciliar gathering called into being at every level in some such way as this, Mudge believes, should be free enough from organisational housekeeping to give first priority to thinking about, and leading the church in, mission. Again he says, such councils should be free to explore the meaning of engagement between the gospel and the hopes of human beings in the geographical place and the many other ‘places’ within their pastoral care. Furthermore, the councils, to Mudge, should be free to call on the participating bodies to stride beyond the usual boundaries of their imaginations in service to humankind.

5.3.4 That episcopacy ensures effective work

It is believed that episcopacy would ensure effective work. This work maintains the view that it would not be very easy to justify the claim that episcopacy ensures effective work. The main work of the church of Christ is evangelism, the preaching of the word of God for the salvation of souls, and teaching them to obey the instructions of Jesus Christ. The main issue would be to find out how episcopacy can facilitate the achievement of this goal better than the other systems of government. It is a fact that the fastest growing church in Ghana is the Church of Pentecost. The Church of Pentecost is not practicing the episcopal system of church government. Moreover, there is no means of comparing episcopacy with the federal and congregational systems of church government. It could therefore be argued that even if it is

proven that episcopacy has been successful in some places, it does not necessarily mean it would be successful in every Christian denomination.

5.3.5 Episcopacy assists in the development of church structures

The claim that episcopacy helps in the development of church structures is disputable. The idea originated from the discussions to adopt episcopacy in the Methodist Church Ghana. The committee on episcopacy in the Methodist Church, in their presentation to the Methodist Church, did not show how episcopacy would assist in the development of church structures. In view of the absence of the explanation, which would make a case for episcopacy, the argument cannot be acceptable.

What appears to be convincing is the claim that episcopacy distinguishes ‘our overseers’ from the other officers of the secular and our own church organisations. In the secular society we have many organisations which use the titles president and chairman. For example, we have presidents of countries, presidents of social clubs, chairmen of political parties and chairmen of boards of business enterprises. Then within the churches, there are organisations, which have presidents and chairmen as heads. The use of nomenclature as archbishop and bishop, elder and deacon helps to distinguish church overseers from other heads within the churches and in the secular society.

A counter argument to the above is that the title ‘president’ may be seen as incomplete or even vague. President can be the name of an object or a brand of a product. To make it complete, one can say the President of the Republic of Ghana or the President of the Methodist Church Ghana. In the same way, we may have the Chairman of a business concern and a Chairman of a Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Thus the context would always identify and distinguish one office from the other.

5.3.6 The title ‘bishop’ is gender sensitive

There is the claim that the word ‘chairman’, as it were, excluded women from the office. To be gender sensitive, the title ‘bishop’ was preferred. It may be argued that chairman may apply to both men and women. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana had a woman as chairman and some people in the church began applying the term chairperson for her even though the constitution has chairman and not chairperson. It is obvious that chairman and chairperson would be used interchangeably by people in the church and outside the church because these people are familiar with such usage in the secular society. Some proponents of the episcopal system would see the adoption of episcopal titles a better option.

However, it must be noted that that the Presbyterian Church of Ghana which had a woman as chairman in one of the Presbyteries does not have any problem with the idea of referring to her as chairperson. The use of the designation ‘Chairman’ in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana can apply to any woman who may occupy that office. Thus gender sensitivity is not sufficient reason for the adoption of episcopacy.

5.3.7 Other factors to consider

Apart from the reasons proposed in the defence of the choice of episcopal system of church government, one can also consider two others for the choice of any system of church government. These are culture and the role of the bishop.

A. Culture

A major factor that should determine choice of system of church government is the culture of the people. Both the Anglican Church in Ghana and the Methodist Church Ghana adopted the polities of their parent churches. With the growth and development of these churches, one would expect that the leadership of the church would examine the suitability of the system of church government to the environment.

In this case the church is torn between inclination to the culture of the environment and maintaining her identity as a special people. James Wall in 'Reverence and the freedom to revise', cites Alfred North Whitehead that those societies which cannot combine reverence for their symbols with freedom of revision must ultimately decay from anarchy or from slow atrophy.³⁰¹ In this case reverence for the tradition of the church must combine with freedom to revise to suite the environment. This must be the case, or there would be the ultimate decay from anarchy or from slow atrophy.

Some people believe that episcopacy appeals to the Ghanaian culture. In the presbyterial system, one may complete his term of office as chairman just to serve under another chairman. A leader's removal from office may mean demotion, and may be seen to be a form of punishment, and is very humiliating. Thus, in keeping with culture, some advocate episcopacy.

But what is culture? Culture may be said to be a set of values, views of reality, and codes of behaviour held in common by people who share a distinctive way of life.³⁰² According to Luzbetak, you must change with the times unless you are big enough to change the times.³⁰³ Hans Küng sees the task of theologizing as working for a church of the people in which people are no longer the object of patronizing treatment but the subject of their own history before God.³⁰⁴ In this case whatever change may occur must be in the interest of the people. Culture may be described as an organism, and an organism is dynamic. It changes and it adjusts sometimes suc-

³⁰¹ J. M. Wall, *Hidden Treasures: Searching for God in Modern Culture* (Chicago: The Christian Century Press, 1997), 54-56.

³⁰² Smelser, *Sociology*, 36.

³⁰³ L.J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Culture: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 292.

³⁰⁴ Hans Küng, *Reforming the Church Today: Keeping Hope Alive* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1990), 63.

cessfully sometimes less so. At the same time, organisms have the tendency to persist, to remain what they are. Culture is such an organism, a living system, in structure as well as in its dynamic character. In any case, the nature of both organism and societies is to grow, and develop, to react and adjust, and to continue their lives. Even though individual members of society eventually leave the scene, the society lives on, perpetuating itself from generation to generation.

Culture change is the process by which new ideas regarding social behaviour are generated and adopted. We are also informed that because a culture shapes the personalities of its members, it has a lot of control over their behaviour. Our culture today is one that is constantly creating new forms of emptiness so that new insecurities are formed in people's minds, and they are constantly trying to fill these new needs via possessions, surgery, and personality adjustments. The image of the self is utterly distorted through these formations of insecurities. With the notion of control, tying in with identity, one's identity has become something based on what one controls.

In attempts at contextualisation of theology, there is the need to be sensitive both to the demands of change and to the need to meet that change in the light of the rich symbolic code that has sustained the church from its beginnings. It has been observed that the earliest Christian communities were not rigidly structured hierarchical organisations but were characterised by *communitas*. Also, no group can exist for a long time on a level of absolute *communitas*. The Christian community existed in a

wider community. And societies must be integrated to some extent or they could not be defined as societies.³⁰⁵

Change may occur through technological development, acculturation or assimilation. Acculturation involves cultural change brought about through direct contact of two or more cultures in which certain traits of one are borrowed by the other. It can be by coercion or by voluntary adoption. When acculturation occurs within a subculture of a larger society, it often becomes part of a larger process called assimilation. Over time, this charismatic group becomes institutionalised. Charismatic openness comes to be channelled through certain expected routine. The second generation of members is never as clear-sighted or totally committed as the first generation of members. Leadership becomes more concerned with positions, hierarchy, offices and conserving tradition. The organisation develops and becomes more structured. Thus the Christian community, which started as a purely charismatic group, was to be institutionalised. This process to some extent is inevitable. Authority structures are adapted to govern the community. Concerning this process, Robin Gill has said that theology acts at times as both a dependent and an independent variable within society.³⁰⁶ That is, there is the possibility that society influences theology, and theology in turn influences society. What must be avoided is the situation where the society influences theology to the extent that the Christian community loses its identity as a society within society. In attempt at evolving structures suitable to the environment, there is the need to remain faithful to the Christian ministry.

³⁰⁵ Smelser, *Sociology*, 510.

³⁰⁶ R. Gill, *Theology and Social Structure* (London: Mowbrays, 1977), 18.

Though there are other factors such as the history of the church, context and reason, the process must be informed and reformed by the word. Thus in determining the type of organisational structure for the church, which is an organism and an organisation, the most important factor is the word of God. We must be guided by the Bible, the revealed Word of God. Modernisation and socialisation may result in moulding of basic beliefs. This must be a development and not a deviation from the original intent of the gospel. Changes in the social structure of the church can be accommodated so far as they do not contradict the essentials of the Christian faith and particular trends of a particular denomination.

There are certain patterns and practices common to all cultures and we refer to these as cultural universals. Culture gives the members of a group or society a sense of belonging. But within and between groups, culture can also produce conflict by excluding outsiders or even insiders who conform to a slightly different cultural standard.

Concerning the issue that such leadership position should be for life, it should be noted that there are differences in the values of the Christian world and the global (secular) world. The Christian world is informed and reformed by the Word of God. Much as there is the need to contextualise theology, one must note that Christianity has its own culture. The fact that leadership is for life in one's culture does not warrant the importation of such practices into Christianity. Moreover, Jesus was a priest after the order of Melchizedek and not of the Aaronic order. The Christian ministry did not follow the Jewish custom, and need not be patterned according to any particular custom.

Not all Ghanaian traditional values will be appealing and acceptable to the Christian community. Jesus lived in a cultural environment but was seen sometimes

as being above culture. The story of Jesus' dispute with authority over the Sabbath is particularly significant. In challenging the observance of the Sabbath and/or the interpretation given to it, Jesus was challenging the permanent significance of Jewish culture as it stood (See Matt 12:1-14; Mark 1:21-28). When Jesus says the Sabbath was made for mankind and not vice versa, it may be inferred that reliance upon any culture to give significance and security comes under condemnation.

One encounters the same condemnation of culture for its own sake in the Sermon on the Mount. In the Sermon on the Mount, motive is both logically and psychologically more important than the action itself. Thus, the motive for keeping the law, is contrasted with the law itself. Jesus summarised the Ten Commandments into two; love of God and of one's neighbour. The same idea lies behind the words of Paul of Tarsus when he condemns discrimination on the basis of sex, class or culture (Gal 3:28). Jesus ignored these distinctions in practice.

Then, when the disciples are accused of not observing the Jewish law on ceremonial washing of hands before eating, Jesus defends them that it is not what goes into a person but rather what comes out that makes one unclean (Matt 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23). To Jesus, it is the heart and not the action itself, the spirit of the law and not the letter that is of importance. Paul makes it clear from Col 2:8 that Christians are to avoid deception by hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. This is where one can say that some of the Christian values produce conflict by excluding 'outsiders' and even some 'insiders'. If these values form part of the doctrine (the essentials of the faith), and do not simply belong to dogma (the form within which the essence is cast), then Christians cannot and should not in any way compromise. If the values or certain positions held are dogmatic, then with tangible reasons, there may be reforms.

The apostle, Paul writes that we continue doing what we don't want to and don't do what we want to. There are many people who are not prepared to accept the truth, especially, if it is not in their favour. They make up their own truth. However, there is the need to expose the truth and really delve into it. For Niebuhr the question is how the gospel, Christ, can penetrate the world, culture, without losing its distinctive character. But Christ entered history as a community, a society, not simply as a message, and the form taken by the community's life is Christ within society. The Christian movement is a culture in its own right.

B. The role of the bishop

Louis J Luzbetak, has indicated that the general mission of the church can be said to be three-fold, pastoral – a ministry to the faithful, ecumenical – a ministry to divided Christianity, and missionary – a ministry to areas where the church has not yet been planted or where it is not fully established.³⁰⁷ To this may be added administrative functions of the bishop and participation in international conferences and public functions, which have all become a regular feature of the activities of the bishop. There is also the concern that the ministry is to be exercised by the whole church, not only by the clergy but the laity as well.

It is important to note that over the years the administrative functions and attendance at and participation in conferences have overshadowed the teaching responsibilities of the bishop. Pastoral visitations are covered by the many invitations received from parishes and congregations in the diocese for the various needs of the church.

³⁰⁷ Luzbetak, *The Church and Culture*, 131.

Where necessary, bishops could shed off some of their non-essential load, especially, the administrative functions to other clergy so that they can be relieved to render effective services elsewhere. It was in the same spirit that Jethro advised Moses to appoint elders for the Israelites. It was also to have adequate time for teaching and prayer that the apostles advised for the creation of the office to take care of some of the administrative responsibilities. Governance in the church would be enhanced greatly if there could be effective delegation of authority to other clergy.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

The work has considered the issue of differences in the system of government in the Anglican Church in Ghana and the Methodist Church Ghana. The concern was that both denominations are practising the episcopal system of church government but there are differences. The Methodist Church Ghana after claiming that her system of church government is more biblical made reference to the possibility of following the Anglican system. There was the problem that even members of decision making bodies were not very knowledgeable about forms of church government.

There were differences in the forms of office of the bishop. Whereas in the Methodist Church Ghana, the bishop and Presiding Bishop serve a term of six years, the bishop in the Anglican Church serves until he reaches a retiring age of seventy years. In the case of the Methodist Church Ghana a bishop or a presiding bishop, after serving their term of office, may serve under another bishop. This has become a bone of contention.

In the titles for the clergy, the Anglican Church uses bishop, priest and deacon whilst the Methodist Church Ghana uses bishop, presbyter and deacon. The concerns were how the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana are interpreting the NT idea of Church government and also the level of knowledge of members of these churches about church government. In Chapter Two, there was a discussion on the systems of church government in both churches. There were discussion on structures of government in the Anglican Church and Methodist Church. These structures were traced to the mother churches that emerged from Britain. The missionaries and later the members of Anglican Church in Ghana and the Methodist Church Ghana adopted

the policies of their mother churches. It was in January 2000 that the Methodist Church Ghana adopted the episcopal form of church government. There was a consideration of the chain of authority and how the various offices and office holders of the churches function for governance to be effective. Basically in these two episcopacies the representative form of government could be identified. In both churches the election of the bishop was by a secret ballot. The Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana were selective of structures and titles found in the NT. Only, bishop, presbyter, priest and deacon were used. Other titles were not emphasised in their church constitutions.

A section of Chapter Two deals with analysis of the questionnaire. We learnt about the knowledge of people in decision-making bodies of the Methodist Church Ghana and the Anglican Church in Ghana on the system of government practised in their respective denominations. Among other things we discovered that from both the laity and clergy the knowledge about forms of church government is far from adequate. In both the Anglican Church and Methodist Church Ghana, there were some who expressed misgivings about the system of church government. Some expressed the need for change or review of the system of church government. The need for education about the form of church government is underscored. Further still in Chapter Two, there is mention of recent discussions in the Methodist Church Ghana and the Anglican Church regarding the nature of church government. Some misgivings were expressed by some members in decision-making bodies about some possible loopholes in the structure of church government.

Chapter Three, traces from selected passages, evidence of the nature of church government. We also discussed the relationships between various church offices or functions. The distinction between the offices of elder and bishop is not clear from the

New Testament. In fact, most of the sources cited indicated that they were the same. The office of deacon appears to be subordinated that of the elder/bishop.

It was also mentioned that there is no specific pattern of church government in the NT. The church has the right to create offices to deal with needs of the community. The priority of charisma(ta) was stressed. Where it was likely that fanaticism would lead to the disintegration of the Gospel, the church's historicity is stressed. Where there is too much institutionalism, charisma is stressed, so that there is always a balance between charisma and structure.

In Chapter Four, it was mentioned that in some of the writings of the church fathers, the terms bishop and presbyter were used inter-changeably. Later, there was the distinct three tiered ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon. The monarchical Episcopacy was firmly entrenched. It would have emerged from above or from below the hierarchical structure. The episcopacy developed into a diocesan episcopacy. It appeared that the pneuma and charis were not emphasised as pre-requisites for church members and office-holders.

We have in Chapter Five considered the main types of church government. Both the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana practice the episcopal system of church government so the work considered the reasons that emerged from discussions in the Methodist Church Ghana for the adoption of episcopacy. It was found that most of these reasons were not very tangible.

6.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

Since the NT does not prescribe a specific pattern of church government, churches are free to modify and adopt a system of church government tailored to suit their needs. In this case one is not in the position to conclude that the episcopacy prac-

tised in one church is biblical and another is not biblical. Each Christian denomination is giving its own interpretation to the practice found in the NT.

Both the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church Ghana practise an episcopal system that allows for representation of the cross-section of the society. At the parish, district or circuit and diocesan levels of the administrative ladder, there is a fair representation of people in the church. Thus these churches enjoy a kind of participatory democracy in a theocratic organisation. This should not be seen as a contradiction because the participants are Christians and the essential beliefs of the churches cannot be amended or revised by constitutional means. The interpretation of the word of God is left with people who are skilled in the knowledge of biblical interpretation.

The only major difference is that the Anglican bishop retires at the age of seventy while the bishop in the Methodist Church Ghana serves a term of office and steps down. In their interpretation, churches are to be as close to the practice in the NT as possible. In this regard, it can be said that there is no mention of bishops serving a term of office in the NT. As it is there seem to be a popular view that there is no record of bishops serving a term of office in the NT or in the history of the early church. A quick response would be that the bishop in the NT is the head of a congregation, which is not too different in status from the pastor in the Methodist Church Ghana. The office of diocesan bishop is not found in the Bible, and it would not be proper to use the nature of the office as a means of comparison. The practice of the bishop in the Methodist Church Ghana, serving a term of office should not be seen as a deviation from the NT pattern. There is no such pattern in the NT, where the bishop is the head of a cluster of churches. The Methodist Church Ghana may, in her need, have a pattern of episcopacy where bishops (pastors of parishes) serve under the overall supervision or superintendence of a diocesan bishop. Then all the diocesan bishops

are brought together in the administrative machinery by the office of the Presiding Bishop.

What we can suggest to churches contemplating on adopting a system of church government is that the system must fit into the culture of the people and at the same time be influenced by the nature of the church. A dialogue between being faithful to one's identity and being relevant to the needs of the people is important.

It is necessary to find out how the various systems of church government are meeting the needs of the people. This can be an interesting subject of inquiry. It will help, Christians to know, among other things, whether a particular system is effective or not.

APPENDIX

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHURCH GOVERNMENT

This questionnaire seeks your personal opinion on issues relating to types of church government. It is designed for Synod Members in the Anglican and Methodist Congregations in Ghana. Some of the questions require 'Yes' or 'No' answer. Where you are in doubt or not in a position to comment, choose 'I can't tell' or 'No idea' as the case may be. Do not guess. In the close-ended questions you may tick more than one option, of that is the case. The open-ended questions require very brief answers in the space provided. Strict confidentiality is assured.

1. What is your Christian denomination?
 - A. Anglican
 - B. Methodist

2. Are you a clergy?
 - A. YES
 - B. NO

3. How old are you?
 - A. 26-30yrs
 - B. 31-35yrs
 - C. 36-40yrs
 - D. 41-45yrs
 - E. 46-50yrs
 - F. 51-55yrs
 - G. 56-60yrs
 - H. 61-65yrs

4. What is your educational background?
 - A. Basic Education or Equivalent
 - B. SSS or Equivalent
 - C. Diploma or Equivalent
 - D. Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent
 - E. Postgraduate Degree

5. For how long have you been a member of your denomination?
 - A. 1-5yrs
 - B. 6-10yrs
 - C. 11-15yrs
 - D. 16-20yrs
 - E. 21-25yrs
 - F. 26yrs or more

6. If you are a clergy, for how long have you been in it?
 - A. 1-5yrs
 - B. 6-10yrs
 - C. 11-15yrs

- D. 16-20yrs
- E. 21-25yrs
- F. 26yrs or more
- G. Not applicable

7. In your opinion, how many patterns of church government could there be:
- A. 1
 - B. 2
 - C. 3
 - D. 4
 - E. 5 or more
 - F. No idea
8. How would you describe a type of church government where authority is understood to reside in the whole body of Christians, that is, the clergy and laity together?
- A. Congregational
 - B. Episcopacy
 - C. Federal/Presbyterial
 - D. No Idea
9. How would you describe a type of church government, which is based on the three orders or offices of the ministry, namely, bishops, priests and deacons and where administration revolves round the bishop?
- A. Congregational
 - B. Episcopacy
 - C. Federal/Presbyterial
 - D. No Idea
10. How would you describe a type of church government where authority resides in individual Christians, who band themselves together as a congregation, which is completely autonomous in its operations?
- A. Congregational
 - B. Episcopacy
 - C. Federal/Presbyterial
 - D. No Idea
11. What is the type of church government practised in your church?
- A. Congregational
 - B. Episcopacy
 - C. Federal/Presbyterial
 - D. No Idea
12. Do you believe that the system of church government practised in your church is more biblical than that practised in other denominations?
- A. YES
 - B. NO
 - C. I Can't tell

13. What are some of the practical or cultural advantages or helpful features of your system of Church government?
- A. Authority is widely recognised & accepted
 - B. It is common to majority of Christian denominations
 - C. There is a term of office
 - D. Any other, please specify.....
14. Kindly mention any practical or cultural defect(s), if any, that you find in your system of church government?
15. Would you prefer a change, that is, a revision in your system of church government?
- A. YES
 - B. NO
 - C. Indifferent
 - D. I can't tell

Give reasons for your answer

- E. Power and authority is more vested in the bishop
- F. Any other, please specify

16. Do you think the term of office of bishop conflicts with the African traditional way of leadership?
- A. YES
 - B. NO
 - C. I can't tell
17. Do you think the bishop must have a term of office?
- A. YES
 - B. NO

Give reasons for your answer

- C. Complacency and abuse of power will arise
- D. It is biblical
- E. It is in harmony with Ghanaian traditional view of leadership
- F. Any other, please specify.....

18. Do you think it is a problem to have different systems of church government in the various Christian denominations in Ghana?
- A. YES
 - B. NO
 - C. I can't tell

Give reasons for your answer.....

- D. It shows unity in diversity
- E. It shows the church as divided
- F. Any other, please specify.....

19. What would you term a government, constitution, or polity of a community in which God is regarded as the sole sovereign and the laws of the realm are seen as divine commands and in which control is in the hands of the clergy?
- A. Autocratic Government
 - B. Democratic Government
 - C. Theocratic Government
 - D. Any other, Please specify
 - E. No idea
20. What would you term a political system under which one ruler wields unlimited power, restricted by no constitutional provisions or effective political opposition?
- A. Autocratic Government
 - B. Democratic Government
 - C. Theocratic Government
 - D. Any other, Please specify
 - E. No idea
21. What would you term a political system in which the people of a country rule through any form of government they choose to establish and which could be described as government by the people:
- A. Autocratic Government
 - B. Democratic Government
 - C. Theocratic Government
 - D. Any other, Please specify
 - E. No idea
22. Church government must be:
- A. Autocratic
 - B. Democratic
 - C. Theocratic
 - D. Mixture of A and B
 - E. Mixture of B & C
 - F. Any other. Please specify.....
 - G. I can't tell

Give reasons for your answer.....

- A. The church belongs to God
 - B. The church belongs to the people
 - C. The church belongs to God and the people
 - D. The church belongs to God but comprises people
 - E. Any other, please specify.....
 - F. Not applicable
23. Which type of church government would you prefer?
- A. Episcopacy
 - B. Federal/Presbyterial
 - C. Congregational
 - D. Indifferent
 - E. No idea

Give reason(s) for your answer.

- F. It is biblical/They are biblical
- G. All have biblical roots
- H. It is Historical/They are historical
- I. It is ecumenical/They are ecumenical
- J. None of them is biblical
- K. Power & authority are shared
- L. Not Applicable

24. Which type of church government would you reject?

- A. Episcopacy
- B. Federal/Presbyterial
- C. Congregational
- D. Indifferent
- E. I can't tell

Give reasons for your answer.

- F. Power is inverted in one person
- G. It promotes undue reverence or worship of the person
- H. Any other, please specify....

25. Do you find any problems in the bishop being address as 'lord bishop'?

- A. YES
- B. NO
- C. I can't tell

Give reasons for your answer.....

- D. We have only one Lord
- E. Any other, please specify.....

26. Are there titles of the clergy that can be considered as more biblical than others?

- A. YES
- B. NO
- C. I can't tell

Give reasons for your answer.

- A. President and chairperson more civil than religious titles, Bishop and Presbyter/Elder more religious
- B. Any other please specify.....

27. Do you think Christian denominations are free to choose titles of clergy that may not be in the Bible?

- A. YES
- B. NO
- C. I can't tell

Give reasons for your answer.

- D. The main constitution of the church is the Bible. Therefore titles must conform to the constitution.
- E. The Bible does not impose any constitution
- F. Any other, Please specify....

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