

EPISKOPĒ AND EPISKOPOS: THE NEW TESTAMENT EVIDENCE

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WHILE ROMAN CATHOLICS know the term *episkopos* very well, the attention given recently to the term *episkopē* may be puzzling. It appears chiefly in ecumenical discussions as Christians seek to verbalize the fact that most churches have fixed lines of authority and supervision, but only some churches have bishops. Thus, when an episcopally structured church considers union with a nonepiscopally structured church, another question should precede the obvious question about the attitude of this other church toward having supervision in the hands of one called an *episkopos*. The first question involves detecting in the existing structure of the other church elements of *episkopē*, i.e., supervision in matters pastoral, doctrinal, and sacramental. It is necessary to realize that there can be *episkopē* without an *episkopos*, and that even in episcopally structured churches not all *episkopē* is in the hands of the *episkopoi*. Because the NT is quite instructive on this score, I have been called upon for information in several recent ecumenical enterprises. I took part in the background discussions preparatory to the report by the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs made to the National Council of Catholic Bishops on "Bilateral Discussions concerning Ministry."¹ We find there: "Episkopé (i.e., pastoral overseeing of a community) in the New Testament is exercised in different ways by persons bearing different names." More recently the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, which is involved in revising its extremely important collection of Agreed Statements on "One Baptism, One Eucharist, and a Mutually Recognized Ministry," recognized the need to amplify the treatment of episcopacy found in the ministry section of the document. In preparation for a meeting on this topic held in Geneva in August 1979, I was asked as a member of the Faith and Order Commission to do a *summary* of the NT evidence on the subject.² It may be of service to others who are discussing the topic.

¹ Published in *Interface* (Spring 1979, no. 1) with the horrendous misprint on p. 3: "... that the term [apostle] is now always to be equated with the Twelve." Read "not" for "now."

² Let me emphasize that this is a brief NT survey. If others think of items I have not mentioned, I respond only that I have listed all that I could find of importance. There is no attempt to supply in the footnotes a bibliography on episcopal ministry; one may consult A. Lemaire, *Les ministères aux origines de l'église* (LD 68; Paris: Cerf, 1971); *Le ministère et les ministères selon le Nouveau Testament*, ed. J. Delorme (Paris: Seuil, 1974); B. Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

There are several ways to approach this issue. If one considers the Greek vocabulary most directly expressing the idea of supervision in the NT,³ it is obvious that those called *episkopoi* exercised some form of *episkopē*; but so did others. Therefore I have thought it best to begin by tracing supervision by other types of people in NT times, and then finally to come to those who were called supervisors. In the NT only the Pastoral Epistles are *ex professo* concerned with church structure, and undoubtedly there was more supervision and supervisory structure than we know about. Since second-century institutions and church officers were not a *creatio ex nihilo*, studies of the post-NT period must also be made as complements to and continuations of NT studies. However, it would be extremely dangerous to assume that the second-century structures which are never mentioned in the NT already existed in the first century. We must allow for the possibility of development and of increasing structuration as the great figures of the early period became distant memories, and local churches had to survive on their own.

THE TWELVE

In Acts 1:20, Luke has Peter citing Ps 109(108):8: "His *episkopē* let another take," in reference to replacing Judas as a member of the Twelve. This means that, as Luke looked back on the early Church from his position ca. A.D. 80, the members of the Twelve were thought to have had a function of supervising. What did that consist in?

All the Gospels portray a group of the Twelve existing during Jesus' ministry, and 1 Cor 15:5 implies that they were in existence by the time of the Resurrection appearances. Therefore there is little reason to doubt that Jesus chose the Twelve. Why did he do this? We have only one saying attributed to Jesus himself about the purpose of the Twelve: he had chosen them to sit on (twelve) thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:28-30).⁴ The idea seems to have been that in the

³ The total NT occurrences of three pertinent NT words are as follows: *episkopein*, "to supervise, oversee, inspect, care for," 1 Pet 5:2, plus Heb 12:15, which is not directly relevant to our quest; *episkopē*, "position of supervisor, function of supervising, visit, visitation," Acts 1:20; 1 Tim 3:1; plus the not directly relevant passages in Lk 19:44; 1 Pet 2:12; *episkopos*, "supervisor, overseer, superintendent, bishop," Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet 2:25.

⁴ In the 1976 Declaration "On the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood" by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (USCC publication, p. 25) there is a most curious passage. In discussing "the attitude of Christ," the Declaration discounts the force of this saying of Jesus for several reasons: (1) Its symbolism is not mentioned by Mark and John. Since when is the antiquity of "Q" material called into question by its absence in Mark (since that is by definition the nature of "Q" material) or *mirabile dictu* by its absence in John? (2) It does not appear in the context of the call of the Twelve, but "at a relatively late stage of Jesus' public life." However, it has been a commonplace in scholarship, explicitly recognized in the 1964 Instruction of the Pontifical

renewed Israel which Jesus was proclaiming there were to be twelve men, just as there were twelve sons of Jacob/Israel at the beginnings of the original Israel. The Dead Sea Scrolls community of the New Covenant adopted the same symbolism, for they had a special group of twelve in their Community Council (1QS 8:1).

Besides the role attributed to the Twelve by Jesus himself, the Evangelists describe them as being given a missionary task, e.g., "to be sent out to preach and to have authority over demons" (Mk 3:14-15; 6:7).⁵ In particular, during the ministry of Jesus Mt 10:5-6 has the Twelve being sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and after the Resurrection Mt 28:16-20 has them (minus Judas) being told to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them. Nevertheless, we do not know that in fact all or most of them did this, since all the references to the Twelve as a group after the ministry of Jesus portray them in Jerusalem. Indeed, one gets the impression that little was known of most of them as individuals, and by the last third of the century the names of some of them were being confused and forgotten.⁶ Only the first four in all the lists of the Twelve, the two sets of brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John, have any significant role in the NT. With or without Andrew they are portrayed as having a special role in the ministry of Jesus (Mk 1:16-20; 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33). In Acts 3:1; 4:13; 8:14, Peter and John play a prominent role in early preaching; and Gal 2:9 shows Peter (Cephas) and John at Jerusalem in the year 49. James of Zebedee, the brother of John, died a martyr's death in the early 40's (Acts 12:2). The only one of the Twelve ever pictured outside Palestine in the NT is Peter, who went to Antioch (Gal 2:11) and perhaps to Corinth (1 Cor 1:12; 9:5). Otherwise the NT is silent on the fate of the members of the Twelve.

Biblical Commission on "The Historical Truth of the Gospels," that the Gospel material is not arranged in historical order; and so late occurrence of a statement in the existing order of Matthew and Luke tells us *absolutely nothing* about the attitude of Christ or when he said it in relation to the Twelve. (3) The essential meaning of the choosing of the Twelve is to be found in the words of Mk 3:14: "He appointed Twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to preach." These words (which are words of Mark and not of Jesus) tell us how Mark understood the role of the Twelve; they most certainly may not be used to overrule the words of Jesus himself in determining "the attitude of Christ" toward the Twelve! Fortunately it is a firm principle in theology that loyal acceptance of a Roman document does not require that one approve the reasons offered.

⁵ It is debatable whether there was a historical mission during the ministry, or to what extent the Gospel description of it has been colored by the later image of the Twelve as apostles in the postresurrectional Christian missionary enterprise.

⁶ "Judas of James" appears in the lists of the Twelve in Luke and Acts, "Thaddaeus" in the Marcan list, and "Lebbaeus" in significant textual witnesses to the Matthean list (Mt 10:3). The facile claim that these are three names for the one man may be challenged by the invitation to supply examples of one man bearing three Semitic names, none of which is a patronymic.

The image of them as carrying on missionary endeavors all over the world has no support in the NT or in other reliable historical sources. The archeological and later documentary evidence that Peter died at Rome is credible, but the rest of the Twelve could have died in Jerusalem so far as we have trustworthy information.

As for exercising supervision, there is no NT evidence that any of the Twelve ever served as heads of local churches; and it is several centuries before they begin to be described as "bishops" of first-century Christian centers, which is surely an anachronism.⁷ According to Acts 6:2 and 15:6, the Twelve exercised a type of collective influence in meetings that decided church policy. The Twelve are regarded as having a foundational role, either collectively as their names appear on the twelve foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 21:14), or in the person of Peter (Mt 16:18), or with Peter and John as two of the pillars (of the Church) in Gal 2:9. An important text for supervisory authority is Mt 18:18, where the disciples (probably the Twelve) are given the power to bind and loose, whether that means admitting to the community or making binding regulations. This power is given specifically to Peter in Mt 16:19; and in Acts 5:1-6 we find him striking down unworthy members of the community. Also in Jn 21:15-17 Peter is told by Jesus to feed or pasture Jesus' sheep.⁸ Thus there is the image of a collective policy-making authority for the Twelve in the NT; and in the case of Peter, the best known of the Twelve, the memory of pastoral responsibility. Otherwise the NT is remarkably vague about the kind of supervision exercised by members of the Twelve.

THE HELLENIST LEADERS AND JAMES OF JERUSALEM

Acts 6:1-6 is a key scene in telling us how Luke understood supervision in the early Church. The Christians in Jerusalem are becoming numerous; and a dispute has broken out whereby one group of Jewish Christians (Hebrews), who exercise control of community goods, is shutting off aid to the widows as the most vulnerable members of the other group of Jewish Christians (Hellenists).⁹ The basis of the dispute was probably

⁷ In particular, D. W. O'Connor, *Peter in Rome* (New York: Columbia Univ., 1969) 207, contends that the idea that Peter served as the first bishop of Rome can be traced back no further than the third century. We have no convincing evidence that the custom of having a single bishop prevailed in Rome before the middle of the second century.

⁸ One of the two Greek verbs in this passage, *poimainein*, involves guiding, feeding, and guarding. However, it should be underlined that Peter cannot call the sheep his own; they remain Jesus' sheep.

⁹ The likelihood is that the Hellenists were Jews (by birth or conversion) who spoke only Greek (whence the name) and were heavily acculturated in the Greco-Roman society (the totally Greek names of the seven leaders). The particular group of Hellenists described in Acts 6 had come to believe in Jesus.

theological, stemming from the negative Hellenist attitude toward the Temple (to be revealed in Stephen's sermon in Acts 7:47-51). The Twelve summon the common Christian assembly called "the multitude,"¹⁰ and they discuss the problem. According to Luke, therefore, by the mid-30's there has already developed some structure for handling the common goods and also a deliberative assembly. But now more formal administration is needed to deal with a larger and less harmonious membership.

There are three results from this scene: (1) Even to settle the dispute, the Twelve will not take over the distribution of community goods: "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God in order to serve tables." The fact that this is mentioned as a refused possibility means that the Twelve have not been taking care of food distribution. The decision of the Twelve to avoid becoming administrators of the local church confirms the statement made above that none of the Twelve is portrayed as a local church supervisor in NT times. (2) At the suggestion of Peter the Hellenists are given their own administrators, whose (seven) names are listed in Acts 6:5. The fact that this dispute has been centered on the distribution of food, described demeaningly as "waiting [*diakonein*] on table," has led to the *erroneous* designation of the Hellenist leaders as deacons, with the thought that they were the second-level church administrators mentioned in Phil 1:1 and the Pastorals. However, they seem to have been the top-level administrators for the Hellenist Christians, who not only supervised the distribution of the common goods but also preached and taught (as seen from Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 and Philip's activity in Acts 8).¹¹ They are the first local church administrators encountered in the NT. We do not know if they had a title, but aspects of the *episkopē* exercised by presbyter-bishops later in the first century resemble the tasks of the Hellenist leaders. (3) We are not told in Acts 6 that the Hebrew section of the Jerusalem community received a corresponding set of administrators, but subsequent information in Acts causes us to suspect that they did. In Acts 11:30 we find a reference to a group of presbyters (*presbyteroi*) who are in charge of the common food of the Jerusalem/Judean church—a church from which the Hellenists have been driven out by Jewish persecution.¹²

The structure of the Jerusalem church needs special attention. The presbyters are consistently mentioned alongside the "apostles" (Acts 15:

¹⁰ *Plēthos* in Acts 6:2,5 and 15:12,30 seems to be technical designation, related to Qumran terminology where the community meeting was called a "Session of the Many" (1QS 6:8ff.).

¹¹ Although the Greek text is not certain, Acts 11:19-20 implies that Hellenists, scattered in the persecution that arose over Stephen, began the mission to the Gentiles (Hellenes).

¹² Acts 8:1 indicates the selective nature of the persecution of Christians: the apostles (and presumably the Hebrew Christians) were left untouched (since they conducted no campaign against worship in the Temple), while the Hellenist Christians were scattered and pursued.

2,4,6,22,23; 16:4), a term which for Luke means the Twelve. This twin set of Christian authorities has parallels to Luke's description of a twin set of Jewish authorities: the rulers of the people and the presbyters/elders (Acts 4:5,8), or the high priests and the presbyters/elders (Acts 23:14; 25:15). While this parallelism may stem from Luke, it is not unlikely that the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem took over the idea of presbyters from the Jewish synagogue. Occasionally Luke singles out on the Jewish side a spokesman, e.g., a high priest such as Annas or Ananias, alongside the presbyters/elders (Acts 24:1; see 4:6); so also on the Christian side he singles out James in a presiding role among the presbyters (Acts 21:18). Luke does not identify this James, but surely he is the James whom Paul (Gal 1:19) locates at Jerusalem and calls "the brother of the Lord" and an apostle.¹³ His importance is clear in Gal 2:9, where he is listed ahead of Peter/Cephas and John (two members of the Twelve) among the reputed pillars of the Jerusalem church. He took a leading role in the discussions at Jerusalem ca. A.D. 49 about the admission of Gentiles as Christians without their being circumcised, and also in subsequent attempts to bind these Gentiles to Jewish food laws (Acts 15:13-21, 23-29; Gal 2:2,12). The contention that he succeeded Peter as leader of the Jerusalem church is based on the misconception that Peter was the local leader of the church in Jerusalem. According to Acts, the Twelve did exercise a type of leadership in the Jerusalem church in the early days when that church constituted all of Christendom, and Peter was the spokesman of the Twelve. But Acts 6:2 shows Peter on behalf of the Twelve refusing administration properly understood when that became necessary because of numbers and complexity. Thus it is more correct to say that from the moment that the Jerusalem church needed precise supervision, James along with the presbyters played that role. That James was remembered as a person who exercised supervision over a church is confirmed by the Epistle of James. Whether or not it was written by him, such an epistle with its instruction about behavior, teaching, and prayer life was thought to be attributable to him by the person who did write it. In the mid-30's, then, it would appear that the need was recognized for local supervision of the Hebrew and Hellenist communities in Jerusalem¹⁴ and was met in two different ways, respec-

¹³ It is not absolutely clear that the phrase "none of the other apostles except James" calls James an apostle, but that is the easier reading. He would be an apostle in the Pauline sense, where the term is not confined to the Twelve. In light of the clear distinction between the Twelve and brothers of the Lord (Acts 1:13-14; 1 Cor 15:5,7), he was not one of the Twelve and therefore probably not an apostle by Lucan standards.

¹⁴ Acts 6:1-6 is treated as having a historical substratum even by scholars not overly inclined to trust Lucan historicity. The division it portrays runs against the Lucan emphasis on one-mindedness, and it agrees with what we know about anti-Temple movements among Jewish groups.

tively, by James and the presbyters and by the seven Hellenist authorities. Each of these supervisory groups would have managed the distribution of the common funds, made decisions affecting the life style of Christians, and entered into discussion about church policy as regards converts. The urging of the common assembly by the Twelve (Acts 6:3) which led to this development is the closest the Twelve ever come in the NT to appointing local church leaders.

THE PAULINE APOSTLE

In Paul's view, inevitably refracted through his own situation, apostles were those who were sent out by the risen Jesus to proclaim the gospel, even at the price of suffering and persecution. Clearly from 1 Cor 15:5-7 "all the apostles" were a more numerous group than the Twelve, and it is likely that this notion of apostle was ancient and more widespread than the Pauline sphere. The 1 Cor 15 formula is generally considered, at least in part, to be pre-Pauline. The idea of the missionary apostle was so well established that it was applied to the Twelve by those who considered them apostles.¹⁵ For instance, Mt 28:16-20 has the risen Jesus giving to the Twelve (Eleven) a mission to the whole earth (also Acts 1:8), even though historically it cannot be shown that many of the Twelve functioned outside Jerusalem.¹⁶

If Paul is taken as an example of the missionary apostle, his letters supply many examples of apostolic supervision: he teaches, he exhorts, he reproves, and he exercises judgment against bad members of a church. In 2 Cor 13:2 he implies that, when present, the apostle could punish directly without need for consulting the community; and 2 Thess 3:14 orders anyone to be ostracized who refuses to obey the apostle's instructions conveyed by letter. Nevertheless, despite relatively long periods spent by Paul at Corinth and Ephesus, the apostle is not a local, residential church leader.

Even from the earliest days of the Pauline mission, there were local church leaders who functioned while the apostle was alive. About A.D. 50

¹⁵ There are many different views of apostles in the NT, and it is not possible to trace a universally valid linear development. But as regards the Twelve, the following is at least plausible: the Twelve were considered as apostles; then came the expression the "Twelve Apostles" in the sense that they were the apostles par excellence because they had been called by the earthly Jesus as well as commissioned by the risen Jesus; then "the Twelve Apostles" in an exclusive sense. The last stage dominates in Luke, for only in Acts 14:4,14 does Luke ever call anyone else "apostle," namely, Barnabas and Paul.

¹⁶ Whether Paul would have agreed that most of the Twelve were apostles by his missionary standards is not known (he never calls them apostles). On the one hand, he knows that they saw the risen Jesus (1 Cor 15:5); on the other hand, there is no evidence that many of them went *out* to preach the gospel. In any case, he certainly recognized Peter as an apostle (Gal 2:7).

Paul told the Thessalonians whom he had converted a few months before (1 Thess 5:12): "Respect those who labor among you and are over you [*proistamenoī*] in the Lord." Philippians (1:1) is addressed to the *episkopoi* and *diakonoi*, a proof that the title "supervisor" was already in use by A.D. 60; and 1 Cor 12:28 lists "administrations" or governance (*kybernēsis*) as a charism at Corinth. But our knowledge of local supervision during Paul's lifetime is quite limited. Among the things we do *not* know are the following: Did the local leaders at the various Pauline churches differ in terms of the authority they exercised and the roles they played? Did they all have titles and were the titles uniform? Was theirs a true office held for a set or long period of time? What precisely did they do? Were they appointed by Paul, or were they elected by the local community, or did they come forward feeling themselves to be possessors of a charism? The appearance of leaders at Thessalonica within such a short time after Paul's evangelizing makes it quite plausible that sometimes he arranged for local leadership before he left a community. The Lucan statement in Acts 14:23 that Barnabas and Paul appointed "presbyters in every church" is probably anachronistic in the title it gives and in the universality of the practice,¹⁷ but probably quite correct in that during his lifetime Paul sometimes appointed local church leaders in communities he evangelized. No matter what supervision such leaders exercised, they were still subject to the overarching supervision of the apostle, who could issue commands in all the churches (1 Cor 7:17) and had a daily care for all the churches touched by his mission (2 Cor 11:28). The supervision of the local church leader was modified in another way by the presence of other charisms in the community. In 1 Cor 12:28 the charism of administrators is mentioned only after many others: "first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, *administrators*." We do not know how such figures as prophets, teachers, and administrators were interrelated in the supervision of a community.

While the authority of the apostle seems to have been the highest (under Christ) in the churches of his mission, there is evidence that a rivalry could develop when different apostles worked in the same community. At Corinth (1 Cor 1:12) there is trouble when some proclaim adherence to Paul, others to Apollos, others to Cephas. In 2 Cor 11:5

¹⁷ One may support this conclusion from a convergence of scattered evidence: from the instructions that had to be given to Titus (1:5) in the Pastorals; from the failure to mention bishops in the Corinthian correspondence where it would have been logical to invoke their aid; from the failure to mention presbyters in any undisputed Pauline letter; from the need of Clement in *1 Corinthians* 42-44 to strengthen the episcopate/presbyterate by giving it a pedigree; from the evidence of *Didache* 15 that only gradually did bishops and deacons take over the functions of prophets and teachers (mentioned in 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11).

Paul is sarcastic about the efforts of "superapostles" in a church he founded. Such danger of conflicting authority causes him to avoid building upon another man's foundation (Rom 15:20), although others build upon his foundation (1 Cor 3:10). It becomes important, then, that the various apostles preach the same gospel: "Whether then it was I or they, so we preached and so you believed" (1 Cor 15:11). Differences of view are especially serious when they occur between an apostle like Paul and a member of the Twelve like Peter or the head of the Jerusalem church, James the brother of the Lord. Although Paul is critical of the status of such "pillars"—"What they were makes no difference to me" (Gal 2:6,9)—he recognizes that in one way or another they have enough power to render his efforts vain.¹⁸ And so it is important that these figures extend the right hand of fellowship to Paul (Gal 2:7-9). All of this means that in facing a major problem, like that of converting the Gentiles without requiring circumcision, figures with a different type of supervision (Paul, James, Peter) all had a say in the outcome. Moreover, despite agreement on the main issue, they might well continue to disagree on other issues, e.g., on the obligation of the Gentiles to keep the Jewish food laws. Peter, who had been under the influence of Paul, changed his stance when men from James challenged his behavior at Antioch (Gal 2:12), seemingly because Antioch was within James's sphere of influence as regards such matters of Christian interrelations. According to Acts 15:20,23 the policy of binding the Gentiles by Jewish food laws was advocated by James and put into force for Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. But Paul did not insist on such a policy in the churches of his mission (1 Cor 8). However, if Acts 21:23 is historical, even though Paul may have felt free to have one policy in Corinth while James had another in Jerusalem and Antioch, when Paul came to Jerusalem he may have had to follow James's policy on Jewish obligations. Thus, when we speak of supervision exercised by the three best-known figures of the ancient Church, we have to recognize that the NT itself shows different areas of competence (both geographical and topical) for Peter, the first-listed and spokesman of the Twelve, for James, the brother of the Lord and leader of the Jerusalem (mother) church, and for Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

THE PRESBYTER-BISHOPS AND THE SUCCESSION TO THE APOSTLES

If many of the Pauline churches had local leaders in the apostle's lifetime (some of whom at least had been appointed by him), the question

¹⁸ The text in Gal 2:2 certainly does not mean that his gospel would have to be acknowledged as wrong if they disagreed with him, for Gal 1:8 excludes that possibility. Rather, refusal by Peter, James, and John to accept the Gentiles without circumcision would have ruined Paul's efforts to keep the Gentile churches in communion with the Jewish churches.

of local-church leadership became a major concern in the last third of the century, after the death of the great apostles in the 60's.¹⁹ We see this in the Pastoral Epistles,²⁰ where Titus (1:5) has been left in Crete "to set in order what was wanting and to appoint presbyters in each city." To facilitate such appointments, the qualifications of an *episkopos*, "supervisor, bishop," are listed (Titus 1:7-11; 1 Tim 3:1-7). The very fact that Titus has to be told to do this means that there were not yet presbyter-bishops in all the churches of the Pauline mission and confirms the suspicion that Luke was anachronistic when he said that in the late 40's Barnabas and Paul appointed presbyters in every church (Acts 14:23). Luke was probably describing what was going on in the churches at the very time that he was writing Acts (80's).

We may begin our treatment of this period by noting that the Pastorals are meant to give authority to Timothy and Titus, companions of Paul, to structure churches, even as the apostle is disappearing from the ecclesiastical scene (2 Tim 4:6). There was, then, a period of postapostolic supervision by second-generation apostolic delegates who acted in the name of the apostle on the grounds that they had accompanied him and knew his mind.²¹ There must have been resistance to such apostolic delegates. (If the Pastorals are pseudonymous, Paul is being summoned from the grave to still the resistance.) In 1 Tim 4:12 Paul is pictured as encouraging Timothy not to let himself be despised and, in 2 Tim 1:6, to rekindle the gift of God that is within him through the laying on of Paul's hands. Such apostolic delegates would have constituted an intermediary stage between that of the apostle's great personal authority over the churches founded by him (40's-60's) and the period when the local church leaders became the highest authorities (second century). We know by name only a few of these second-generation apostolic delegates who exercised quasi-apostolic authority. Were there also third-generation apostolic delegates, i.e., disciples of the disciples of the apostles, who were not local bishops? Eventually (and certainly by the second century) there disappears the apostolic function of not being closely attached to a local

¹⁹ The only apostles about whom we have much biographical information in the NT are the three mentioned at the end of the preceding paragraph (Peter, James, and Paul), all of whom died in the mid-60's.

²⁰ Between 80% and 90% of scholarship today would regard the Pastorals as Deutero-Pauline, written after Paul's death. However, there is little agreement as to whether they belong in the late-first or early-second century. Personally, I see little reason for dating them later than the 80's and find it very difficult to believe that the situation they describe is not several decades earlier than that addressed by Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 110). The author may be saying to his times what he thinks Paul would have said were Paul alive.

²¹ There is no indication that we are to think of Titus and Timothy as presbyter-bishops; theirs is a semiapostolic role. The use of 2 Tim 1:6 ("Rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands") as evidence for the apostolic (Pauline) ordination of bishops is very questionable.

church while supervising a whole group of churches with a common heritage. It was only in a partial way, then, that the local bishops succeeded to the apostolic care for the churches. (Later, with the development of the patriarchates and of the papacy, care for a larger group of churches found again a vehicle of expression.) In all this one should note that in the NT succession in pastoral care is to the apostles in the Pauline sense. The idea that the Twelve were apostles (and eventually that they were the only apostles to be reckoned with) would ultimately lead to the understanding that they were the apostles to whom the local church leaders succeeded. In the NT, however, the Twelve are never described as being the first to bring Christianity to an area and in that sense establish a local church; and so the NT never raises the issue of succession to their pastoral care.²²

Moving on from the apostolic delegates to the local church leaders described in the Pastorals, we find that in these letters there have emerged established offices for which qualifications are given (1 Tim 3; Titus 1). Some of the qualifications are institutional, so that no matter what abilities a person may have, that person can be rejected because of stipulations that are only secondarily related to what the person will be doing, e.g., no recent convert nor a person who has been married a second time is eligible to be a presbyter. This factor, plus the idea of appointment of presbyter-bishops by an apostolic delegate, means that personally experienced or claimed charisms have ceded to community acknowledgment in determining who shall have supervision. Unfortunately, outside of these three letters which deal with apostolic delegates, we know very little about how communities at this period did determine who would have supervision. *Didache* 15:1 indicates that the community itself could select leaders; but in other areas and times it may well have been that the leaders of sister-churches intervened, or that the presbyter-bishops sought to have their own children succeed them. There is nothing in the NT literature about a regular process of ordination. (And a fortiori there is nothing to support the thesis that, by a chain of laying on of hands, every local presbyter-bishop could trace a pedigree of ordination back to "the apostles."²³) Nor do we know whether church offices were held for a limited time or for life.

Let us now turn to the designation of local church officials.²⁴ In the Pastorals there are two offices set up for the pastoral care of the

²² See, however, the discussion of 1 Peter below, n. 31.

²³ For ecumenical purposes, a study should be made on how the impression has been created (erroneously in my judgment) that such a "tactile" succession is a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.

²⁴ It is not germane to this paper on church supervision to discuss other community roles or orders recognized in the Pastorals (and other NT works), e.g., widows and virgins, since they are not recorded as having exercised "supervision."

community, a higher office and a subordinate office. If we invoke wider NT evidence, it seems that the holder of each of these offices had two designations, respectively, the presbyter (elder) or bishop, and the "younger" or deacon. One document may speak exclusively of *episkopoi*, "bishops," and *diakonoi*, "deacons" (Phil 1:1), while another document may speak of *presbyteroi*, "elders," and *neōteroi*, "younger" (1 Pet 5:1,5). Still other passages illustrate the interchangeability of the respective titles. The interchangeability of *presbyteros* and *episkopos* is seen not only in the Pastorals (Titus 1:5-7; 1 Tim 3:1; 5:17) but also in Acts 20:28, where those who have previously been designated as the *presbyteroi* of the church of Ephesus are told, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you *episkopoi* to shepherd the church of God." Similarly, in 1 Pet 5:2-3 Peter addresses himself to the *presbyteroi*, "Feed the flock, being supervisors (*episkopountes*) not by coercion but willingly."²⁵ The interchangeability of *neōteros* and *diakonos* is attested by the parallelism in Lk 22:16: "Let the great one among you become as a *neōteros*; let the one who rules become as a *diakonos*." The fact that *neōteros*, "younger," is not simply an age bracket (any more than is *presbyteros*, "elder") but another name for the subordinate office²⁶ has frequently been missed, resulting in strange combinations, e.g., while the reference in 1 Pet 5:1-4 to *presbyteroi* has rightly been understood as a designation not simply for elderly men but for the holders of presbyteral office, the next verse (5:5) is thought to shift with its *neōteroi* to the theme of youth!

If we concentrate on the higher office, it has often been suggested that one title, *presbyteros*, was in use among Jewish Christian communities, while the other, *episkopos*, was in use in the Gentile churches. However, the evidence that we have for the use of *presbyteros* among Jewish Christians comes from Acts' account of the Jerusalem community (see section above on Hellenist Leaders and James of Jerusalem), and the same book describes the officials of the Gentile Christian communities as *presbyteroi* too (Acts 14:23; 20:17). A more plausible theory is that we have here a reflection of two strains of Judaism which came into Christianity. The synagogues of Pharisaic Judaism had a group of *zēqēnīm*, "elders," the Hebrew equivalent of *presbyteroi*, forming a council whose members set policy but were not pastors responsible for the spiritual care of individuals. In addition to such *zēqēnīm*, the Dead Sea Scrolls community of the New Covenant had officials who bore the title *mēbaqqēr* or *pāqīd*, synonymous words meaning "supervisor, overseer," the Hebrew

²⁵ The *episkopountes* is textually dubious, since it is missing from Codex Vaticanus and from the original hand of Sinaiticus.

²⁶ A seminal treatment of this subject is that of J. H. Elliott, "Ministry and Church Order in the NT: A Traditio-Historical Analysis (1 Pt 5, 1-5 and plls.)," *CBQ* 32 (1970) 367-91.

equivalent of *episkopos*. These functionaries, assigned one to a group, did have pastoral responsibility. The higher of the two Christian offices described in the Pastorals may have combined the group of presbyters from the Pharisaic synagogue with the supervisor of Jewish sectarianism, so that the presbyters served also in a supervisory capacity. This origin would explain why in Titus 1:5 *presbyteroi* are spoken of in the plural, while in 1:7, obviously referring to the same office, the author describes the *episkopos* in the singular. Furthermore, while our NT evidence points to a general interchangeability between the titles *presbyteros* and *episkopos*, it is possible that not all the presbyters of a community assumed the title and role of the supervisor. In 1 Tim 5:17 we are told that a double honor is due to "those presbyters who rule well."²⁷ Does the author mean that, while all the presbyters rule, only some rule well, or that only some presbyters rule? The latter seems more plausible, since he goes on in the same verse to single out those presbyters "who labor in preaching and teaching," which surely means that not all had those tasks. The body of presbyters, then, may have divided up among themselves tasks once handled by people with different charisms, e.g., by the teachers and administrators of 1 Cor 12:28. It is well known that Ignatius of Antioch gives witness to the (recent) emergence of a threefold-office structure in certain communities: one *episkopos*, under him a group of *presbyteroi* and a group of *diakonoi* (a structure nowhere clearly attested in the NT), so that the title *episkopos* is now no longer widely interchangeable with *presbyteros*. However, in light of the discussion above, attention should be paid to Polycarp, *Philippians* 5:3, for there *neōteroi* are told to be subject to both presbyters and deacons. Just as ultimately presbyters became subject to bishops, so *neōteroi* became subordinate to *diakonoi*; and it seems that at least for a brief period the two sets of terms yielded four offices or roles.

That the term *diakonos* could be applied to a woman is known from Rom 16:1.²⁸ In the passage on deacons in 1 Tim 3:8-13, rules are laid down for women in 3:11, and some have argued that these are the wives of the deacons. (However, the clear reference to the deacon's wife in 3:12 may be introducing a new but related topic.) Whether they are or not, they surely serve as deacons, since the author speaks of the rules for them as similar to the rules for (male) deacons. In view of the high plausibility that there were men and women deacons in the churches of the Pastorals, and that *neōteros* was another term for *diakonos*, a passage in 1 Tim 5:

²⁷ "Rule" is the participial form *proestōtes*, from *proistēmi*, the verb used for church leaders in 1 Thess 5:12.

²⁸ In my judgment, it is better to speak of female deacons than of deaconesses, a term which can be confused with a later church institution that did not have the ordained status of the deacon.

1-2 raises the question of whether there were also both men and women presbyters.²⁹ The apostolic delegate is told by "Paul" how to treat presbyters and "youngers": "Do not rebuke a *presbyteros* but exhort him as you would a father, and the *neōteroi* as you would brothers; *presbyterai* as you would mothers, and *neōterai* as you would sisters." It is most often assumed that age brackets are meant, and indeed *neōterai* refers to younger women who are widows in 5:11,14. Nevertheless, every other passage dealing with *presbyteros* in the Pastorals is taken to refer to officeholders, including two passages in this same chapter of 1 Timothy (5:17,19). This argument is offset by the fact that the parallel passage in Titus 2:1-6 (which speaks of the male *presbytēs* and *neōteros* and the female *presbytis* and *nea*) deals with age groups. But we can say that if there were women presbyters as there were women deacons, it should be remembered that not all presbyters seem to have ruled (i.e., served as an *episkopos*). The prohibition in 1 Tim 2:12, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over men," may have been thought all the more necessary if women held an office that allowed many of its male occupants to teach and rule.

What were the precise supervisory roles of the presbyter-bishops and the *neōteroi*-deacons? Only the qualifications, not the activities, of the deacons are given in 1 Tim 3:8-13; and so we know nothing about what they did.³⁰ Since the name *diakonos* describes a servant, perhaps the deacon in NT times really did not exercise much supervision. As for the presbyter-bishops, we know that some or many taught (1 Tim 5:17). In particular, they are associated with refuting false doctrine and protecting the purity of community faith (Titus 1:9). From the insistence that the presbyter-bishop must be able to manage his own household, being no lover of money (1 Tim 3:3-5; also 1 Pet 5:2, "not for shameful gain"), and from the rhetorical question, "If someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for the Church of God?" (1 Tim 3:5), we may suspect that presbyters had responsibilities toward the common goods of the community. The image of the shepherd appears frequently for the presbyter-bishop (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2), and so his supervising authority was like that of a shepherd over sheep, feeding, guiding, and protecting. It is scarcely accidental that in the Dead Sea Scrolls community of the New Covenant similar roles were assigned to the "supervisor" (CD 13:7-19): he is like a shepherd over sheep; he manages the

²⁹ Aquila and Prisca offer the example of a man and a woman in roles that might be considered presbyteral, e.g., they have a house church in their home (1 Cor 16:19) and they "took" Apollos and instructed him in the way of God (Acts 18:26).

³⁰ That the deacons waited upon table is an idea stemming from the false assumption that deacons were involved in Acts 6:1-6. The deacon Phoebe is an apostolic "helper" (Rom 16:2: *prostatis*—see n. 27 above) to Paul and others.

common goods; he is a teacher and inspector of the doctrine of the members of the community.

No cultic or liturgical role is assigned to the presbyter-bishops in the Pastorals. The closest to that in the NT is James 5:14-15, where the presbyters of the church are called in to pray over the sick person and anoint him in the name of the Lord, so that "the prayer of faith will save the sick person." This passage in James confirms the existence of presbyters in a non-Pauline church of Jewish origins where the name of James (the brother of the Lord) was venerated, and may be related to the information found in Acts about James *and the presbyters* at Jerusalem. Another work, 1 Pet 5:1-4, addressed to Gentile churches of northern Asia Minor, shows the existence of presbyter-bishops in an area where evidently Peter was looked upon as an authority.³¹ The idea that Peter spoke as a "fellow presbyter" telling presbyters how to behave is not unlike that of Paul in the Pastorals giving the qualifications for presbyter-bishops. Thus, in churches associated with the three great apostolic figures of the NT, Paul, James, and Peter, presbyters were known and established in the last third of the century.

In the letters of Ignatius of Antioch the bishop has unique authority in relation to baptism and the Eucharist, but we find no word of this in the NT. In comparison with the silence as regards presbyter-bishops, various figures are said to baptize, e.g., members of the Twelve (Mt 28:19; Acts 2: 41; 10:48), Philip the Hellenist leader (Acts 8:38), and Paul the apostle (1 Cor 1:14-17—but "Christ did not send me to baptize"). As for the Eucharist, we know virtually nothing of who presided in NT times. The instruction "Do this" in commemoration of Jesus is given to the Twelve in Lk 22:19 (1 Cor 11:24), but not in Mark/Matthew. According to Acts 13:2, in the church of Antioch prophets and teachers "liturgize" (*leitourgein*). This finds an echo in *Didache* 10:7, "Allow the prophets to 'eucharistize' [*eucharistein*] as they will."³² Between the NT position, where prophets and teachers have a liturgical role, and the Ignatian position, where bishops and presbyters have that role, comes (logically and perhaps chronologically) the situation in *Didache*.³³ In the church addressed by that work there are still prophets and teachers, with prophets conducting the Eucharist; yet the author urges, "Appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons. . .for they are your honorable men together with prophets and teachers" (*Didache* 15:1-2).

³¹ Letters of pastoral concern, closely similar to Pauline style, attributed to Peter, portray him as having an apostolic care for specific churches and confirm the observation that of the Twelve Peter came closest to the Pauline notion of an apostle.

³² Association of the prophet with the Eucharist is not so strange when we realize that the NT prophets, men and women, often know and predict the future; and the Eucharist was thought to proclaim "the Lord's death *until he comes*" (1 Cor 11:26).

³³ A chronology that has considerable plausibility in my mind is ca. 80-90 for the Pastorals, ca. 100 for the *Didache*, and 110 for the Ignatian letters.

We have spoken about churches that did have presbyter-bishops toward the end of the first century; for other NT churches of that period, we do not know how supervision was structured. Matthew has clear ideas on how authority is properly exercised (18:15-18) but tells us nothing about the officials in the church who might be doing this. He knows of Christian prophets (10:41) and of Christian scribes (13:52); and so some have surmised that Matthew's was a community with prophets and scribes, but not yet presbyter-bishops and *neōteroi*-deacons. This would be a stage of structure less developed as regards office than that attested in *Didache*, a work that has Matthean affinities. In any case, Matthew will not let those who teach be called rabbi, for there is only one teacher, Christ. Nor will he let community members be called leaders (pl. of *kathēgētēs*), for Christ is the only leader. Nor is anyone to be called father (Mt 23:8-10). In this he differs from some other NT texts where there are human teachers (1 Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 2:7) and an apostle who describes himself as a father toward his community (1 Cor 4:15). The fascination with developing structure and offices in the late first century had its dangers, and Matthew was alert to these.

SUPERVISION IN THE JOHANNINE COMMUNITY

Also alert to the danger of human authorities were the Johannine writers.³⁴ Jn 21, which most think of as a late Johannine addition to the Gospel, ascribes the role of shepherd to Peter but *not* to the Beloved Disciple. This probably means that the role of the human shepherd had not been part of the community's religious tradition and was only now coming in from the outside (whence the need to assure the readers that Jesus authorized it). For an earlier stage in the community history, the image of Jesus as the shepherd (Jn 10) was sufficient.

The author of 2-3 Jn (who probably wrote 1 Jn as well) calls himself "the presbyter," but in the three Epistles he does not exercise an authority similar to that of the presbyters described in the Pastorals and Acts, who teach and who ostracize those who advocate false doctrine. The Johannine epistolary author is facing false doctrine on the part of those who have seceded from the community (1 Jn 2:19), but the author cannot *teach upon his own authority* that they are wrong. He tells his readers that they have no need of teachers and should know what is false on the basis of anointing by the Spirit (2:27). The secessionists have left, but there is no suggestion that the author was able to expel them. And in 3

³⁴ Increasingly the view that two different writers were responsible for the Gospel and the Epistles is gaining ground, with the possibility that the epistolary author was the final redactor of the Gospel. A very high percentage of critical scholars thinks that no Johannine work was written by one of the Twelve or by the Beloved Disciple. The identity of the latter remains a mystery, although it is plausible that he was a companion of Jesus, an influential force in the community's history, and a source for the Evangelist.

Jn 10, where the presbyter deals with Diotrephes who rejects his authority, the most he can do is to threaten "to bring up" before the community what Diotrephes is doing. All of this makes sense in light of Jn 14:26, where the Paraclete is the one who teaches the Christian all things, and every Christian possesses the Paraclete. The author of the Epistles can speak as part of a "we" who are the witnesses to the Johannine tradition (1 Jn 1:1-4) and thus join himself to the witness of the Beloved Disciple; but he cannot present himself as a teacher, as his opponents seem to be doing. And if his opponents also claim to possess an anointing by the Spirit, all he can respond is, "Test the Spirits" (1 Jn 4:1). When evidence for stricter authority appears in the Johannine writings, namely, in 3 Jn, that authority is in *opposition* to the presbyter. The Diotrephes of 3 Jn 9-10 is making himself first in the local Johannine church, seemingly along the lines of the episcopal style advocated in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch; and he is not allowing the presbyter to send emissaries into the church. Some have thought that Diotrephes was propounding false doctrine; but the epistolary author, who is so hard on the secessionists, offers no doctrinal critique of Diotrephes. The latter may have been on the same side doctrinally as the presbyter, but may have realized that the presbyter's trust that people would be led to the truth by the Spirit was not working (as 1 Jn 4:5 concedes). Thus, from 3 Jn and from Jn 21 (Peter as the shepherd) we may suspect that greater supervisory power of the presbyter-bishop type, although foreign to the theological genius of the Johannine community, was introduced over opposition into segments of that community in order to resist false teaching.

This survey shows that the manner and exercise of supervision varied greatly in the different places and different periods within the first century or NT era. Only at the end of the century and under various pressures was a more uniform structure of church office developing. The death of the great leaders of the early period in the 60's left a vacuum; doctrinal divisions became sharper; and there was a greater separation from Judaism and its structures. By the 80's-90's the presbyter-bishop model was becoming widespread, and with the adjustment supplied by the emergence of the single bishop that model was to dominate in the second century until it became exclusive in the ancient churches. Many of us see the work of the Holy Spirit in this whole process, but even those who do must recognize that the author of *1 Clement* is giving overly simplified history³⁵ when he states (*1 Clem.* 42) that the apostles (seemingly the Twelve) who came from Christ appointed their first converts to be bishops and deacons in local churches.

³⁵ There are other instances of this in *1 Clement*. Although the author seems to know most of the Pauline letters, and although Paul speaks with scarcely veiled contempt of "the so-called pillars" of the Church (James, Cephas/Peter, John), *1 Clem.* 5:2-4 does not hesitate to designate Peter and Paul as "most righteous pillars" of the Church!