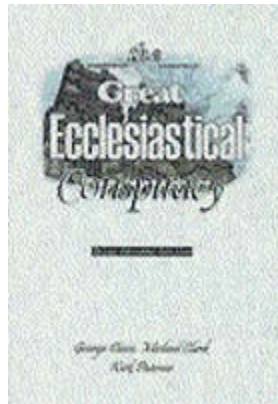


The Great Ecclesiastical Conspiracy



By George Davis and Michael Clark

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Introduction

This article was written as an expose' of an 1800 year old conspiracy. It is intended to define the conspiracy, leaving you to judge for yourself. Consider it a primer, covering only the basic elements of the subject.

This article is not intended to be exhaustive, since the total truth of this matter could not be told in such brevity. It is written with the utmost confidence that its readers will be its perfecters. It is the result of a million prayers, asking, "Why? Why Lord, is the Church before me so unlike the one I read about in the Bible? Why O God is there so much failure and defeat in what is supposed to be the representation of you in the earth?" This book may present more questions than answers, but questions are not to be feared. God is not like the haggard parent who resents the seemingly unending barrage of questions proceeding from the inquisitive child. God is eager and attentive to them all.

While not written for everyone, this book is dedicated to those analytical ones who have dared to ask the forbidden question, "What is wrong with the church?" It is dedicated to all those who are willing to pay the price to see Christ's Ekklesia restored. The reformation is not over. In fact it is just begun, and this book is dedicated to all reformers everywhere. It is dedicated, as we are, to the restoration of all things. It is written to those who willingly suffer the loss of all things for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ. It is written in the deepest respect and honor for those of whom the world is not worthy, who laid down their very lives to expose this conspiracy. What qualifies us to write such a work? Nothing, except perhaps an indescribable burden, a passion that can only be characterized by the heart of a Father yearning to see His children set free from their oppressors, and a desire for the final deliverance of His family from the conspirators' hands.

Chapter 1

The King's New Bible

History is brimming with men whose hearts were forged in times of religious tyranny. The abuses increased until someone came forth with God's cry for freedom. Men like Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, John Hus, Savonarola, Martin Luther, Huldreich Zwingli, and John Calvin, to name a few. Some of these gave their very lives for that declaration.

These were men crying for reformation. The word reformation implies that the church to be reformed was deformed or malformed. What was in need of reformation? What was wrong? Some things seemed obvious, but average people had no way of proving or disproving their suspicions. If they did speak up their lives would be endangered by the very institution that claimed to speak for the God of love. The terror that plagued the hearts and minds at the very mention of the word heretic kept them silent, for the end of everyone who was given the title was the same--burning at the stake.

There was one that would not keep silent. His keen mind had been honed in the finest schools of 15th century England. William Tyndale was a graduate of Oxford and Cambridge, a Greek scholar. He was a man moved by compassion for the plight of the people of England. He despised the tyranny of the papal Church, showing his contempt by referring to its priesthood as scribes and Pharisees.

"Moreover, because the kingdom of heaven, which is the scripture and word of God, may be so locked up, that he which readeth or heareth it, cannot understand it: as Christ testifieth how the Scribes and the Pharisees had so shut it up (Matt 23) and had taken away the key of knowledge (Luke 11) that their Jews which thought themselves within, were yet so locked out, and are to this day that they can understand no sentence of the scripture unto salvation, though they can rehearse the texts everywhere and dispute thereof as subtly as the popish doctors of dunce's dark learning, which with their sophistry, served us, as the Pharisees did the Jews..." (Tyndale's New Testament, Preface 1534)

Furthermore, he accused them of altering the scriptures to suit their own purpose.

"I thought it my duty (most dear reader) to warn thee before and to show thee the right way in, and to give thee the true key to open it withal, and to arm thee against false prophets and malicious hypocrites whose perpetual study is to leavn the scripture with glosses, and there to lock it up where it should save thy soul, and to make us shoot at a wrong mark, to put our trust in those things that profit their bellies only and slay our souls." (Ibid, Preface)

Later George Fox wrote:

"Master Tyndale considered this only, or most chiefly, to be the cause of all mischief in the Church, that the Scriptures of God were hidden from the people's eyes; for so long the abominable doings and idolatries maintained by the pharisaical clergy could not be espied; and therefore all their labor was with

might and main to keep it down, so that either it should not be read at all, or if it were, they would darken the right sense with the mist of their sophistry, and so entangle those who rebuked or despised their abominations; wresting the Scripture unto their own purpose, contrary unto the meaning of the text, they would so delude the unlearned lay people, that though thou felt in thy heart, and wert sure that all were false that they said, yet couldst thou not solve their subtle riddles." (Foxe, pp. 141-142).

Tyndale's assessment of the problem was that the scriptures were hidden from the eyes of the people. As a result, the people could not solve the priest's subtle riddles. The clergy covered up their abominations and idolatries by hiding the scriptures from the people's eyes and darkening the right sense of the scriptures by their fallacious arguments. This went well beyond mere verbal deceit to tampering with the scriptural text.

Tyndale set himself to solve this problem by producing the world's first English New Testament, translated from the original Greek into the common vernacular of the people. In doing so, he exposed what we call the great ecclesiastical conspiracy that was at the heart of all the abuses. The church had something to protect and protect it they did, and in their usual manner they began to plot the death of the heretic.

Michael Scheifler tells of the general sense of ill will toward Tyndale by those of the papal church, and why.

"Sir Thomas More, had this to say about Tyndale- he calls him 'a beast', as one of the 'hell-hounds that the devil hath in his kennel', discharging a 'filthy foam of blasphemies out of his brutish beastly mouth'...

"So what had Tyndale done in his translation that was so heretical? According to David Daniell, Tyndale had translated the Greek word for 'elder' as 'elder' instead of 'priest', he had translated the Greek word for 'congregation' as 'congregation' instead of 'church', the Greek word for 'repentance' as 'repentance' instead of 'penance' etc. Why were such differences important to the church? The Roman Church has priests, not elders. A congregation implies a locally autonomous group of believers guided by the Holy Spirit and not a hierarchical unified church subject to a Pope. The Roman Church is built on penance and indulgences to the priest and Church, not repentance to, and forgiveness from God. In trying to faithfully render the Greek into English, Tyndale's translation exposed the errors of the church to the people which quickly brought the wrath of the church down on him." (Michael Scheifler, *William Tyndale - Heretical Blasphemer?*)

Even the casual reader of history will discover that there was in fact an attempt by the Church of Rome to adulterate the scriptures. An attempt to replace the Greek and Hebrew text with Latin to keep the true meaning of the scriptures from the people, concealing them in a dead language that only scholars knew. It was a conspiracy conceived in hell.

Let us digress for a moment.

By 600 AD Latin was the only language allowed for scripture. The scriptures were thus subject to Papal interpretation and were most certainly altered to suit the church's ecclesiastical paradigm. This explains the hatred for the Hebrew and Greek texts, since the original texts exposed their façade.

Albert Gilmore explains,

"The languages of the early Bibles, Hebrew and Greek, were no longer of interest. So marked did this lack of interest become that when, after the Renaissance, Cardinal Ximenes published his Polyglot edition with the Latin Vulgate between the Greek and Hebrew versions of the Old Testament, he stated in his preface that it was 'like Jesus between two thieves" (Gilmore, *The Bible: Beacon Light of History*, Boston: Associated Authors, 1935, p. 170).

Tyndale was right. They were wresting the scriptures unto their own purposes. How far had the church fallen from its original norm? Suffice it to say that it was nothing like its founder (Jesus) intended. Amazingly enough, the Bible itself was the primary tool for deception. By the adulteration and misrepresentation of the scriptures, ambitious men justified their jobs in a system ruled by despotic pontiff kings and their hireling bishops. This is no less than a conspiracy that continues to this very day.

The following questions may help us see the depth of this conspiracy.

How did the Greek word *Ekklesia*, meaning a called out assembly, come to be translated *church*, a word that is neither Greek or English but is of doubtful Latin or perhaps Scottish origin and implies temple worship? Some believe it to be of pagan origin. Regardless, what is a word that is neither Greek nor English doing in a Greek to English translation?

Why did the Greek words *presbytery* (the elderly), *apostle* (envoy or sent one), and *deacon* (servant) remain untranslated into their Anglicized form? Why was the Greek word *presbuteros* (older or elderly) translated *priest*? Why indeed! There is little doubt that these words remained untranslated so the clergy could redefine them, interpreting them with the strongest institutional and hierarchical connotations. Was this mere ignorance, or a means of creating a ruling class of super saints? It is clear to us that down through the years the scriptures have been subjected to papal tampering. There even remains evidence that some of the early manuscripts were altered.

"But almost all authorities on the text agree that they preserve a better text than the standardized 5th century one, which shows clear signs of having been edited." (*Erdmans Handbook to the Bible*, pp. 73)

It is also clear that this tampering was to promote and justify a system of church government ordered after the government of "the kings of the Gentiles," which Christ had strictly prohibited, saying, "But you shall not be so." (See Luke 22:25-26). Whatever happened to the servanthood that Jesus and the early Church modeled? How did these servants of the first century give way to the pontiff kings of the fourth and fifth centuries? Had Christ's declaration, "But you shall not be so," been forgotten?

The early believers followed the Lord's example and instructions on this all-important matter, and they viewed servanthood as the highest vocation. But by the close of the first century, the subtle signs of the rise of the bishops began, ever so cunningly, to corrupt the simplicity of the faith and to defile the example of the lowly Christ. As absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely, so the corruption began. Like a dead corpse rotting away, in time the Church bore only a vague resemblance to what was once living and vibrant.

In the third century, the wound worsened by the full marriage of this apostate church to paganism. This new "Christianity" became the imperial religion of the Roman Empire. It was

there at Constantinople that the very first Christian temples were constructed. They were merely christianized pagan temples. The priesthood was fashioned after a mixture of the Old Testament and pagan priesthoods. Finally, Rome had done it. If they could not add Christ to the pantheon, they would bring the pantheon to Christianity. The Romans had long since tried to further unite their empire by uniting all its gods in one temple, the pantheon. There the worship of the Son was mixed with the worship of the sun, so much so that a third century mosaic from a tomb found under Saint Peter's in Rome depicted Christ as the sun god in his chariot. It was not until the fifth century that the worshipers in Rome stopped bowing to the sun before entering Saint Peter's basilica.

"Pope Leo 1, in the middle of the fifth century, rebuked worshippers who turned around to bow to the sun before entering St Peters basilica." (*Erdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*, pg. 131)

The deception reigned unchecked for 925 years, until William Tyndale challenged this religious institution with the light of the truth. He revealed part of the conspiracy that had enslaved the family of God in this twisted, abnormal thing, which the pharisaical clergy called the church.

Although he revealed some of the conspiracy, changing history forever, it none the less remains. The light sent it scurrying into the shadows only to return in a more subtle, congenial form, an anglicized form. It now smiled as it placed the dagger between the fourth and the fifth rib. A tame beast is still a beast, and though defanged and declawed, it can still cripple and maim.

After Tyndale was martyred for his efforts, and all but two of his Bibles destroyed, several important events occurred. First, Henry VIII evicted the Catholic Church from England because the Pope refused to annul his marriage with Catherine of Aragon and sanction his illicit relationship with Anne Boleyn. The break with Rome came in 1534, when Parliament passed the Supremacy Act, making Henry head of the Church of England. Henry was somewhat sympathetic to Luther's views, which opened England as never before to Protestant influences, including translating, printing and importing Protestant Bibles. Some men, such as Coverdale, were inspired to continue in the spirit of Tyndale's work. There was also the Geneva Bible, which effected great changes throughout Europe. In the tradition of Tyndale, these Bibles no longer promoted the divine right of kings and ruling bishops, but instead recognized the priesthood of all believers. To kings and bishops who exercised absolute authority over the masses, this was intolerable. More than anything else, this set the stage for the translation of a new Bible. The king's new Bible was translated to solidify the station of both king and bishops, preserving and advancing a system of Church government that stood in antithesis to Christ's example and teachings and continues to do so until this very day.

We believe in the inspiration and accuracy of the koine Greek texts of the New Testament. However the translations that have followed are not as reliable for a number of reasons, not the least of which is ecclesiastical ambition. Historically, this love letter from God that we call the Bible was shaped into a scepter of power in the hands of popes, kings and would-be kings to further consolidate their power over the masses. Undoubtedly this very ambition has tainted the translations from Jerome onward. This reached new heights at a time when bishops sought the approval of kings to authorize translations that had been purposefully skewed toward their ecclesiastical paradigm.

It is ludicrous to many that the Protestant Church could be guilty of carrying on any of the traditions of the Catholic Church that it so loudly objected to. To some, the idea of an ongoing conspiracy is even more unbelievable, because they already possess the unadulterated truth. They hold it in their hands, professing that it is the ultimate authority, the only true Bible, the authorized Bible, the King James Bible. Authorized by whom? No less than King James himself! King James did his part in preserving the conspiracy.

An understanding of the political climate of the early 16th century is crucial if we are to comprehend the motives and logic behind the king's new translation. King James was a staunch advocate of the divine right of kings, as facilitated by puppet bishops. This was the Anglican answer to papal succession, in which active resistance to pope or king was considered a sin worthy of eternal damnation. In his *Basilicon Doron*, in the second sonnet entitled "The Argument of the Book" (written to his son), we catch a glimpse of James' exaggerated appraisal of kingship.

"GOD gives not Kings the style of Gods in vain,
For on his throne his Scepter do they sway:
And as their subjects out [sic] them to obey,
So Kings should fear and serve their god again."

Using similar language, in his first address to the Parliament, James defended his doctrine of the divine right of kings. He did not mince words regarding his intention to be an absolute monarch over England. He presented the following logic as grounds for his supremacy.

"The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth, for kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth and set upon God's throne, but even by God himself they are called gods."

True to his words, James dissolved Parliament and for ten years thereafter he ruled England without it.

Considering James' overstated view of kingship and his disregard for the parliamentary style of leadership, it is understandable that he would also have apprehensions regarding Presbyterianism. This style of church government was developed by Calvin in Geneva, and had no place for kings or bishops.

In his excellent book entitled *In the Beginning*, Alister McGrath tells of a particular event that took place in Scotland, which shaped James' views on this matter.

"His views on this matter were shaped to no small extent by some unpleasant experiences with Scottish presbyteries, particularly under Andrew Melville, a Scottish Presbyterian who had taught at Geneva Academy, and formed a close personal relationship with Calvin's protégé, Theodore Beza. At a heated encounter between the king and senior churchmen at Falkland Place in October 1596, Melville had physically taken hold of James and accused him of being "God's silly vassal." Melville pointedly declared that while they would support James as king in public, in private they all knew perfectly well that Christ was the true king of Scotland, and his kingdom was the Kirk - a kingdom in which James was a mere member, not a lord or head. James was shaken by this physical and verbal assault, not the least

because it suggested that Melville and his allies posed a significant threat to the Scottish throne." (*In The Beginning* - pg. 140)

James also developed a dislike for the Geneva Bible, which was widely read and promoted by the Puritans. At that time it was in fact the most popular Bible in England. James' disdain for the Geneva Bible was not so much due to the translation itself but primarily because of its marginal notes that promoted the notion that all believers comprised the New Testament priesthood and that they, not the king, were God's anointed.

The Geneva Bible notes on Psalms 105:14-15 read,

- Psalm 105:14 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprove kings for their sakes;
- (g) That is, the king of Egypt and the king of Gerar, (Ge 12:17,20:3)
- Psalm 105:15 [Saying], Touch not mine anointed (h), and do my prophets (i) no harm.
- (h) Those whom I have sanctified to be my people.
- (i) Meaning, the old fathers, to whom God showed himself plainly, and who set forth his word.

The anointed that should not be touched were not kings. In fact, God reproved kings for their sake. The anointed consists of *all* those whom God has sanctified to be His people, not a king or a special breed of ruling ministers. The Geneva Bible notes on Luke 22:24 reads,

Luke 22:24 8 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

- (8) The pastors are not called to rule but to serve.

Gary DeMar comments further.

"In 1620 the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth with their Bibles and a conviction derived from those Bibles of establishing a new nation. The Bible was not the King James Version. When James I became king of England in 1603, there were two translations of the Bible in use; the Geneva Bible was the most popular, and the Bishops' Bible was used for reading in churches.

"King James disapproved of the Geneva Bible because of its Calvinistic leanings. He also frowned on what he considered to be seditious marginal notes on key political texts. A marginal note for Exodus 1:9 indicated that the Hebrew midwives were correct in disobeying the Egyptian king's orders, and a note for 2 Chronicles 15:16 said that King Asa should have had his mother executed and not merely deposed for the crime of worshipping an idol. The King James Version of the Bible grew out of the king's distaste for these brief but potent doctrinal commentaries. He considered the marginal notes to be a political threat to his kingdom.

"At a conference at Hampton Court in 1604 with bishops and theologians, the king listened to a suggestion by the Puritan scholar John Reynolds that a new translation of the Bible was needed. Because of his distaste for the Geneva Bible, James was eager for a new translation. 'I profess,' he said, 'I could never yet see a Bible well translated in English; but I think that, of all, that of Geneva is the worst.'" (Gary DeMar, *The Geneva Bible: The Forgotten Translation*)

This helps us to better understand why the Geneva Bible was so despised by King James. It is not an overstatement to say that much of James' conduct as king of England was reactionary,

done to counter an unacceptable turn toward egalitarianism. There is little doubt in our minds but that a clandestine scheme lay at the heart of James' decision to translate his new Bible.

After James came to England and was crowned king, a bishop by the name of Richard Bancroft, soon to become archbishop, sought to save the church and the nation of England from the puritan "false prophets." Bancroft was aware of James' exalted view of kingship and used that knowledge to promote his own agenda. In presenting the Puritans as a threat to the crown, Bancroft solicited the king's help in suppressing this greatest threat to his position and power and in so doing made himself the highest authority in the Church of England, second only to the King himself. There can be little doubt but that the true motive behind Bancroft's intrigue was a desire to preserve the power of the unbiblical bishoprick.

Alister McGrath explains Bancroft's strategy.

"Bancroft's strategy for coping with James was simple. He would persuade James that the monarchy was dependent upon the episcopacy. Without bishops there was no future for the monarchy in England." (*In The Beginning* - page 152)

This political cunning played a significant role in the decision to translate a new Bible, an Authorized Version that would make all other versions unauthorized. From all appearances, the new translation was a calculated initial step toward ridding England of the despised Geneva Bible and its marginal notes. This new Bible would preserve and promote the divine right of kings and bishops to rule. Bishop Bancroft was placed in charge of the translation. This move was akin to a CEO entrusting the company finances to a known embezzler! There is little doubt that Bancroft stacked the translation panel with a goodly number of translators who shared his views.

Mr. McGrath explains,

"A further point that helped win Bancroft over to the new translation was that he was able to secure for himself a leading personal role in selecting the translators, and then in limiting their freedom. Bancroft had realized that it was better to create a new official translation that he could influence than to have to contend with the authorization of the Geneva Bible. It was decidedly the lesser of two evils. He was in a position to exercise considerable influence over the new bible, by laying rules of translation that would insure that it would be sympathetic to the position and sensitivities of the established church of England. And finally he would be in a position to review the final text of the translation, in case it needed any judicious changes before publication..." (*In The Beginning* - page 164)

Determined to ensure that the translation process was prudently guided, Bancroft limited the freedom of the translators by drafting fifteen rules of translation, which were approved by King James.

Two of these rules are of special importance.

1.) "The ordinary Bible read in the church, commonly called the Bishops Bible, was to be followed and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit."

3.) "The old Ecclesiastical words to be kept, vis. The word Church not to be translated Congregation &c."

The Bishops Bible was a revision of the Great Bible, which was expressly translated in hopes of replacing the Geneva Bible. Archbishop Matthew Parker commissioned this revision. A company of bishops did the translating - thus the name "The Bishops Bible." Archbishop Parker faced considerable opposition from the Puritans for his insistence upon the use of robes and his writings that held to the old line.

Ironically the Bishops Bible, which until that time had been ineffective in accomplishing its original purpose of replacing the Geneva Bible, would now, in the hands of another ambitious bishop, be used to that very end. In order to preserve their precious power base, King James and Bishop Bancroft took a giant step backwards in order to negate the Tyndale, Coverdale, and Geneva Bibles.

Rule number three was clearly designed to insure that Tyndale's translation of the Greek word *ekklesia* as congregation instead of church would not be used in the King's new Bible. Tyndale had translated the Greek word *ekklesia* as congregation, and revealed his contempt for the word *Church* by using the word *churches* in Acts 19:37 to refer to heathen temples. Could he have been trying to tell us something?

Clearly, an accurate translation was not the objective of Bancroft and his team. As if that were not enough, when the translation was complete, Bancroft took the final draft into his home and further altered it before giving it over to the king to be published.

Alister McGrath explains:

"Having completed their recommendations for revision (of the work of the translators of the king's new Bible), the text was passed on to Miles Smith and Thomas Bilson, who were charged with the adding of the finishing touches. It is not clear whether their role was to review the overall text of the translation, or simply to comment on the specific changes proposed by the editorial committee that had met at Stationers' Hall. Then, in an apparently unscripted development, Richard Bancroft reviewed what had been hitherto regarded as the final version of the text. It would be one of his final acts; Bancroft died on November 2, 1610, and never lived to see the translation over which he had held so much sway (by order of the king). Smith complained loudly to anyone who would listen that Bancroft had introduced fourteen changes in the final text without any consultation. Yet we remain unclear to what those alleged changes might have been." (*In The Beginning* - page 188)

This is only a sample of the kind of political jockeying that was going on behind the scenes and the ambition that sponsored the translating, editing and publication of the king's new Bible, which could not escape being tainted by such ambition.

King James prohibited his translators from removing the old ecclesiastical words that had taken generations to weave into the text. He had to make a special emphasis in order to keep them, since any honest translator would have translated them out. Bancroft and King James intended to keep them no matter what the translators discovered.

"I am convinced that the King James Translators, laboring under an 'institutional church' mentality, selected the strongest words possible which conveyed the idea that the people must submit to the authority of the clergy. In this way King James could control the people through the Church, of which he was Supreme Ruler." (Dusty Owens - quote taken from "It shall not be so among you" by Norman Park)

Chapter 2

Twisted Scriptures

Now let us begin to look at a few of the passages that we believe were altered to advance the authority of king and clergy, some of which are not translations at all but are either paraphrases or outright fabrications!

Deacons

Although the KJV is called a translation, we should note that in some places it is not a translation but a paraphrase. We should be leery of all such portions of scripture. A word for word translation would have left the readers to decide the truth for themselves, but that was unacceptable. This brought about use of entire phrases to redefine one Greek word, in order to promote the ecclesiastical paradigm. One such case is found in 1Timothy 3:13.

"For they that (1247) have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The words *have used the office of a deacon* were all used to define one Greek word, *diakoneo*, which is defined as:

"To be a servant, attendant, domestic, to serve, wait upon..." (Strong's)

The words *have used the office of a deacon* are a paraphrase of one Greek word (*diakoneo*), which simply means *to serve*. It is only translated *have used the office of a deacon* in first Timothy 3:13. Throughout the rest of the New Testament, *diakoneo* never implies office or rule, but the service of a slave to his master. The words *have used the office of a deacon* were clearly an attempt to redefine what was once descriptive of the loving service of a slave and make it a hierarchical office.

W.E. Vine explains,

"...the R.V. rightly omits "office" and translates the verb *diakoneo* to serve."

Let's take a look at how the Greek word *diakoneo* is used in other scriptures in the New Testament, as it will give us a better understanding of its true meaning. Here are a couple of examples.

Matthew 8:15: And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered (*diakoneo*) unto them.

Matthew 20:28: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered (*diakoneo*) unto, but to minister (*diakoneo*), and to give his life a ransom for many.

Let's use the KJV definition of the Greek word *diakoneo* in 1st Timothy 3:13 - *have used the office of a deacon* in the above scriptures.

Matthew 8:15: And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and used the office of a deacon unto them.

Matthew 20:28: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to use the office of a deacon, and to give his life a ransom for many.

You can substitute this definition throughout the scriptures wherever the Greek word *diakoneo* is found and it will sound just that silly. Why? Because the act of serving is not an office, it is not a clerical job, nor a seat of authority, but the labor of love, of a life laid down.

Romans 16:1 is one of the most revealing passages.

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant (*diakonos*) of the church which is at Cenchrea..."

To translate the Greek word *diakonos* as servant when applied to a woman--Phebe--when it was normally transliterated *deacon* when applied to a man reveals the translators' bias. For to them a woman could not hold an office, and the idea of an office was what they were trying to justify. The Greek word *diakonos* should be translated *servant* in every instance.

Office

Throughout the entire New Testament, the word *office* is found nowhere in the Greek text in connection with the *ekklesia*. Yet it is so used five different times in the KJV.

One instance in which the King James translators tried to preserve their old Ecclesiastical words and imply office rather than service is Romans 11:13.

"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office (*diakonia*)."

Nowhere else in all of the New Testament is this word (*diakonia*) translated *mine office*.

Let us look at a few other passages in which the Greek word *diakonia* is used, as this will give us a greater sense of its meaning.

In Luke 10:40 *diakonia* is translated as "much serving."

"But Martha was cumbered about much serving (*diakonia*), and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."

Was Martha magnifying her office, or was she just serving? What was the nature of her service? Was it domestic or clerical?

Diakonia is translated "my service" in Romans 15:31, "to do you service" in 2 Corinthians 11:8 and "service" in Revelation 2:19. As you can see, *diakonia* speaks of service to others, not official tenure.

Another instance is found in Romans 12:4.

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:"

The Greek word that was translated "office" here is *praxis*, which has absolutely nothing to do with office. *Praxis* means a doing, deed and the above passage is descriptive of the functioning of the individual members of the body of Christ. Not every member has the same function. *Praxis* in no way implies an elite cast of official ministers defined by title or office. This was a very clever mistranslation designed to overwrite relational body ministry with hierarchy.

This is the only instance in which *praxis* is translated office. We find this extremely interesting, especially considering that this obvious mistranslation is in the context of the every-member-participation of the Body of Christ.

Praxis is correctly translated in Romans 8:13.

"For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds (*praxis*) of the body, you will live." (NKJV)

Again, the word *office* is never used in relationship to the *ekklesia*. Neither the Greek noun *hierateia* (a priest's office, Luke 1:9; Heb. 7:5), nor the Greek Verb *hierateuo* (to officiate as a priest, Luke 1:8) are used regarding the community of Christ in the original text. The concept of office or a special priest cast is alien to the purpose and nature of the body of Christ, where differences are defined by function, not by managerial positions. The arm has a different function than the leg but does that make one better than the other, thus ruling over the operation of the other?

According to the teachings of the New Testament, the old covenant priesthood has been discarded, and in its place is the priesthood of *all* believers - a priesthood that functions relationally rather than hierarchically.

True first century serving was not done in the context of a religious service; it was done in the context of life in general. In the homes and on the streets, wherever the needs were, there the faithful in Christ served. There was no altar, pulpit or pew, no starting time or final benediction. There were no clergy, and no laity or spectators, but a royal priesthood consisting of all believers. They were not building a church; they were serving Christ, and encouraging others to do so, and in that, Jesus built the church.

We do not deny that there were those whose lives were set aside to serve the saints in the first century church. However, when they said the word *diakonia* it meant something different to them than it does to us today. They were simply following the example of Jesus who "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant..." (Philippians 2:7). They had

seen it with their own eyes--God on his knees washing human feet. Jesus came to serve and leave us with a supreme example. We cannot, even with a wild stretch of the imagination, believe that the early believers saw their service to be official or hierarchical.

Another instance of the baseless use of the word office can be found in 1 Timothy 3:1.

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."

What in the world is a bishop? We thought it was a piece on a chessboard! There is that word office again! Does it make you suspicious? Us too! Here once again, the King James translators, in obedience to Bancroft's fifteen rules of translation, were preserving the old ecclesiastical words, even the ones that were not in the original Greek text, such as "office."

W.E. Vine explains,

"...the word "office" in the phrase "the office of a Bishop," has nothing to represent it in the original."

John Bland further explains:

"The translators, under the king's injunction to keep the main terms of the Church of England's ecclesiastical form, make two main errors. The first is adding a word to the text that doesn't appear in the Greek, i.e. "office". There is neither a word in the text for office NOR the idea of office outside their own paradigm. The second is an error in translation. The word translated "Bishop" is episkopos. The word means to "oversee", to "tend". Vine defines it thus: "EPISKOPOS, lit., an overseer (epi, over, skopeo, to look or watch), whence Eng. "bishop"..." The passage in 1st Timothy actually reads, "If a man wants to oversee, he desires a good work" (John M. Bland, *Men Who Would be Kings*)

The expression "to oversee" does not imply office in the sense of one being superior to another. It is a job description, not an office title. It describes those who have the God-given ability to see the needs of others and to tend to those needs. They are caregivers, not overlords.

The literal Greek stresses "a good work" of serving the community of Christ, not an illustrious office called Bishop. Please note this difference: the latter is spawned out of the desire to be first, the former is motivated by love. Which do you think was the meaning of the author who laid his life down, in service and in martyrdom, for Christ's sake and the sake of his body, the *ekklesia*? If Paul had sought to promote an office and himself as an officer, early church history would be a much different. The truth is that he loved not his life unto death, and thought little about his own promotion. He had a job to finish, a course to run, and his thoughts were preoccupied with its faithful completion. History bears this out.

The meaning of the Greek word *episkopos*, in a Christian context, is watch over, not as a superintendent but as a caregiver. *Episkopos* does not refer to an authoritarian position within the church but is a description of the function of those who have advanced in maturity, both naturally and spiritually. That maturity is manifest in their selfless and godly care for all

believers. We should listen to such individuals, but this does not mean they are our lords and we are to render them unquestioned obedience. Such men and women are not distinguished by titles and robes, but by their loving devotion and service to Christ and His Body.

Where then did we get the concept that bishops are rulers? Perhaps a lesson in history would help the modern reader to better understand how it is that we inherited the current hierarchical system of church leadership.

From the first century until now, the political mindset of each era of history was adopted by the church of that particular era. Hence the concept of ruling bishops evolved, with each generation and nation adding its own peculiar twist. When the church falls to the level of a mere institution it will always adopt the political style of the nation where it resides. Generally speaking, the bent of the natural man was to make the word "bishop" a title of a ruling position instead of the function of a caregiver and servant, such as the godly elderly of the early church. It was somewhat due to the influence of Ignatius in the 2nd century that this concept arose. It was Ignatius who held the concept that the Bishop (overseer) was a different person from the elder (which means an older wiser one). Ignatius was received well because of his affiliation with the Lord's aged disciple John. He over-emphasized obedience to bishops and stressed the unbiblical clergy-laity distinction, which was already spreading throughout the world.

Eventually the concept of a head Bishop over the other bishops in each city began to evolve, which developed further into a mother church concept in that a bigger city held reign over its smaller surrounding cities and villages. This eventually led to the invention of such grandiose titles as archbishop, cardinal, and pope. None of these titles are found in the scriptures or in the writings of the early church fathers. After this the local character of the *ekklesia* was lost because there was now one worldwide hierarchy, with the pope at the top. The concept of one Catholic (meaning universal) church was brought into full swing, divided into administrative districts known as dioceses, another concept that was borrowed from the Roman government.

Then there was the European influence. The prevailing political and economical system of Europe was the feudal system. The lands were all owned by either the king or his lords. The common man was permitted to live on that land that surrounded the castle of each lord, and the peasants were taxed on what they produced as well as paying rent to the lord. In exchange, the serfs could run to the shelter of the castle and its moat if there was an invasion of the land by another army, or they could turn to the gerefafa, the scirgerafa (sheriff, who also doubled as tax collector) to keep the thieves at bay and maintain order.

The Roman model of the church coat-tailed on this system. The bishop or archbishop reigned from a cathedral. These were very political positions often occupied by members of the ruling class. The right of primogeniture was part and parcel of the feudal system. The king and his lords gave the entire inheritance to the oldest son. As a result the younger sons, disgruntled and rejected, often sought power and identity by gaining office in the church. These two systems worked hand in hand to maintain control over the serfs. One used the threat of an army and sheriffs; the other threatened the heavenly displeasure of God Himself. The very possibility of being branded a heretic and having to face the torment of the church's inquisitors and their various methods of torture often kept would-be dissenters at bay. After all, the church could

always depend on the armies of the kings to back it up in time of need, just as Herod and Pontius Pilate came to the aid of the Jewish Sanhedrin when it came time to crucify Jesus.

It is interesting to note that the cathedrals had a second desired effect besides giving the bishop and his servants a place reign from. These structures were an engineering feat and very intimidating. Compared to the thatched roofed mud huts of the common serf, these giant structures that dominated the skyline were like putting a man on the moon in terms of the technology of the day. The common man was humbled by the very structure itself and was prone to think that the one who was the "pilot" of such a building as this must be like unto God Himself.

The American Church is an amalgamation of all of the above influences, and adds its own unique cultural bias to the mix. Hence the American church is run like a corporation and its leadership is modeled after the entrepreneurial CEO.

None of these influences can be found in the Lord's teachings or the example of the early church. The presence of such societal values in the church indicates that the world has been more influential in shaping the church and its leadership than has the Spirit of the lowly Christ, who said, "my kingdom is not of this world."

Bishoprick

Now let us consider another old ecclesiastical word that has been used to advance this notion of office. *Bishoprick* is a strange sounding word that appears only once in the New Testament, in Acts chapter one, verse twenty.

"For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick (*episkopes*) let another take."

One of the definitions of *episkopes* is visitation, which we feel comes closest to capturing its true meaning. *Visitation* speaks of a work, not an office. Nevertheless, the term *bishoprick* sure sounds official.

It is important to note here that the word visitation throughout the Old Testament primarily applies to the judgment of God upon the nations. Even Jerusalem, the city of peace, would know such judgment. Standing on a hill, overlooking this beloved city, Jesus wept as he spoke the following words:

"If you, even you, had known today the things which belong to your peace! But now, they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come on you, when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, surround you, hem you in on every side, and will dash you and your children within you to the ground. They will not leave in you one stone on another, because you didn't know the time of your visitation (*episkope*)." (Luke 19:42-44 WEB)

Jesus selected the apostles for this specific purpose. Just as He stood before the high counsel as a divine testimony against them, so these men He selected stood before the governors and kings of the nations for a testimony against them.

"And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles." (Matthew 10:18)

They were to attest to a New Kingdom with a new King. This could explain why they were not long upon this earth. They were as ill treated as their Savior was. They were not called to execute judgment upon the *ekklesia* but to lift the standard of the gospel of the kingdom before all, including governors and kings. They filled up the measure of Jesus' sufferings. It was a thankless job, rewarded by stripes and imprisonment and finally death. They had been called to suffering. The Lord spoke to Ananias regarding this call on Paul's life saying, "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16 NKJV). Paul commented on this further in 1 Corinthians 4:9 saying, "For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men."

Jesus spoke about this to Peter in John chapter twenty-one.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me." (John 21:18; 19 NKJV)

They knew the fellowship of his sufferings. They drank deeply from his cup. Let everyone who aspires to be an apostle fully understand the job description. It is not an opportunity to be first and rule over God's saints, but to glorify Him in being set forth as last, appointed to death, as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things, as a testimony and a witness. Do you still want the job?

Elders

The Greek word translated *elder* by the KJV translators is *Presbuteros*. According to W.E. Vine, *Presbuteros* is "an adjective, the comparative degree of *presbus*, an old man, an elder....of age, whether of the elder of two persons...the eldest...of a person advanced in life, a senior..."

How is it that the Greek adjective *presbuteros*, ("older" or "elderly") mysteriously became a noun, represented in the English text by two official sounding titles, i.e., presbyter and elder? Among 54 translators in the KJV panel, at least one of them should have known the difference between an adjective and a noun.

They changed the translation of the Greek word *presbuteros*, which was formerly translated *priest* by the papacy, to *elder*, Tyndale's translation of the word. They did, however, do all that was within their power to give the term *elder* the same priestly and hierarchical connotation.

In his book entitled *The Royal Priesthood*, Carl Ketcherside exposes this conspiracy, revealing how the Catholic Church, through sophistry, sought to make presbuteros (elder) into a priestly office, aloof from the rest of the believers.

"The original word which is mistranslated "priests" by the Roman Catholic version is the Greek "presbuteros" which literally means "an aged person." The word for priest is "hiereus." Nothing can be more palpably misleading than the deliberate translation of a word to justify a practice; thus changing the Bible to suit a human system, rather than changing such a system to suit the Bible. To prove this grave charge I cite the very book of Acts, from which Dr. O'Brien quotes. There were both "priests" and "elders" among the Jews. Since Rome translates the word "presbuteros" (an aged man) by the term priests in Acts 14:22, what does she do when the words for both "priests" and "elders" occur in the same verse? Notice the Douay Version at Acts 6:23: "And being let go, they came to their own company, and related all that the chief priests (archiereis) and ancients (presbuteroi) had said to them." In Acts 23:14, the Douay Version reads: "Who came to the chief priests (archiereusin) and the ancients (presbuterois)." In Acts 25:15, "When I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests, and the ancients of the Jews, came unto me." Why did the translators from the Latin Vulgate not render the above by "chief priests and priests"? They knew that it was obvious that there were both priests and elders among the Jews, and an arbitrary translation of priests for "presbuteros" would be easily detected. Therefore they translated it by the word "ancients," which can be and is used in both an official and non-official sense in the New Covenant scriptures. Why then did they not translate Acts 14:22 in conformity with their translation elsewhere, to read: "And when they had ordained to them ancients in every church, they commended them to the Lord in whom they believed"? Rome had to get her priestcraft in, even if she violated all laws of interpretation and forfeited all claims to consistency. Of such fragile, fanciful tissue is the great fabric of priestcraft woven."

The difference between the orthodox model of leadership today and the first century model is that one says, "Do as I say," while the other said, "Do as I do." One is positional and the other is relational. The world is starving for examples; people are desperately looking for heroes, someone to show them the way. The first century elderly understood that the only power they possessed to influence others was the power of love and of their example. Perhaps you are asking, but doesn't the Bible say that elders are responsible to rule over the flock?

It is amazing how much one little word can change the meaning of a passage of scripture. Such is the case with this word *over*. Take for instance, Paul's words to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28 which reads:

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over (*en*) which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

This is a deliberate mistranslation. It could be nothing else for it required that the simplest Greek preposition, *en* (in or among), which is used 2,700 times in the New Testament and is nowhere else translated *over*, should be translated *over* only here and that in the context of leadership.

Peter instructed the *presbuteros* of his day regarding the nature of their work, reminding them of the perimeters set by the Lord Himself.

"Neither as being lords over (*katakuriuo*) God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:3)

The Greek word *katakuriuo* translated *lords over* in the above passage is a compound verb consisting of *kata*, down, and *kurieuo*, to exercise lordship. *Katakuriuo* describes how a lord typically relates to a minion. He relates down (*kata*) because he is thought to be above or over. It is certain that Peter was remembering the words of Christ, who said "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over (*katakuriuo*) them ... It shall not be so among you..." Jesus forbids His followers to lord-down upon each other. Instead, he reminds us that he who would be great must be a servant and whoever would be first must be a slave, even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (See Matthew 20:25-28.)

In his commentary on 1 Peter 5:3, William Macdonald wrote:

"Elders should be examples, not dictators. They should be walking out in front of the flock, not driving them from behind. They should not treat the flock as if it belonged to them. This strikes at the very heart of authoritarianism! Many of the abuses in Christendom would be eliminated by simply obeying the three instructions in verses 2, 3. The first would abolish all reluctance. The second would spell the end of commercialism. The third would be the death of officialism in the church."

The first century *presbuterion* were the elderly who followed in Christ's example of servanthood and were recognized (See Philippians 3:17). These men were not lords over or controllers of God's heritage. They were, "...examples becoming (*ginomai*) the flock..." (*Morris Literal Translation*). *Ginomai* is the Greek word from which we get our English word *generate*. It is a primary verb, meaning to cause to be ("gen"-erate) or bring into being. *Ginomai* speaks of the power of example, the power to energize and inspire what they modeled. What we are talking about is the power of a life laid down. "Greater love has no man than this," and as sacrifice begets greater sacrifice, the body of Christ is energized toward greater and greater service. This is the example Jesus left us. He came to serve. Not to receive service as a king, but to give service as a slave. In this up-side-down kingdom, there is no thought of ruling over another; no thought of promotion, for if the King came as a servant, what then are we to do?

Have you ever known someone who so inspired your admiration, that you caught yourself taking on their manners, their gestures, even talking like they talk? What you experienced, for good or bad, was the life altering power of an example.

When I, Michael, was a young man, my aunt pointed out to me one day that I laughed and smiled like my dad. One day in my adolescent years I even caught myself walking like he did. That was strange, because my father had an artificial leg that made him walk with a slight limp.

If Jesus, the ultimate example, the one who is altogether lovely, the one who suffered the horrors of Calvary on your behalf, should stand before you right now, you would become like him. You could not do otherwise. For it is in seeing Him that we are transformed. The scriptures say that when He appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (2 Corinthians 3:18). When

the power (*ginomai*) of example is gone, all you have left is the tyranny of demanded conformity.

Because the true church is relational, not institutional, it makes sense only in a social context, a family context. In every truly healthy family, there is second and third generation communion. You have the grandchildren, the parents, and the grandparents. In that context, the grandparents are the elders. They possess the wisdom of years, and if godly, are in a position to teach by their words and example as no other family member can. Satan has done all he can possibly do to destroy the very concept of family, and to encourage the young in disrespect for the elderly, ignoring their counsel. Thus, we have witnessed the breakdown of the family and the church. The church is a family. It began in the heart of a loving Father who sent his only Son to bring many sons to glory. Oh, what manner of love the father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God!

Paul wrote to Timothy, telling how he should relate to the elderly (*presbuteros*) in the family of God:

"Rebuke not an elder, (*presbuteros*) but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder (*presbuteros*) women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity." (1 Timothy 5:1-2)

The context of this scripture is completely relational, not institutional, and makes sense only in a family context. There is the mention of father, mothers, sisters and brethren. This sounds like a family to us. In the Greek, *presbuteros* is used for both old men and old women. In an attempt to institutionalize, all of these dear family terms became offices in the papal church. And since they could not recognize any title without ordination, everything that was once relational and family was displaced, and all but lost in the institution. Leadership gradually became more and more hierarchical until the supreme leader of this fallen church bore both the temporal and spiritual swords, sitting on a luxurious throne in extravagant robes wielding the kingly scepter of power and rule. Such men have bequeathed to us much that is called Christian leadership today.

I (Michael) am reminded of a story that a brother in Christ told me. One day a pair of Mormon missionaries came to his door and they introduced themselves as Elder Jones and Elder Smith (not their real names). My friend said that the oldest one could not have been more than twenty years old. Finally my friend, who was much older than them, asked, "Elder to what?" They were totally flustered.

In the New Testament we have Timothy, who some call an apostle and others call a pastor (the scripture calling him neither), being instructed to relate to the elderly man as he would his father, with honor and respect. There is something unnatural about the young rebuking the elderly. In an ecclesiastical, hierarchical context, where authority is positional rather than relational, the issue of age is irrelevant. It all depends upon who has the title and position. In today's institutional churches it would be perceived as a compromise of a pastor's authority to relate to any untitled individual as his senior. However, in the family esteeming others as better or superior to yourself is normal, or at least it should be. (Philippians 2:3) The church itself has become the greatest

enemy of the family by its institutionalized example. This was a masterstroke of the enemy. God wants his family back!

Presbytery

Paul wrote to Timothy:

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (presbuterion)." (1 Timothy 4:14)

Since it is one of the transliterated words we referred to earlier, *Presbytery* should be suspect. For what reason did it go untranslated? In what way would that make the passage clearer?

Did Timothy receive a gift by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery? Yes he did! But what in the world is the presbytery? Oh, it has come to mean something to us through word association, as you can teach a baby that a cat is a rat by simply calling the cat a rat. And if you did it long enough, no one could convince him otherwise. Such is the power of tradition.

In his *Non-ecclesiastical New Testament*, Frank Daniels interpreted presbuterion as the elderly.

"Do not neglect the gift that is in you which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands of the elderly." (1 Timothy 4:14)

We recognize that being elderly does not necessarily make one Godly. There are old sinners as well as young ones. The elderly in reference here are the godly elderly who laid down their lives for the flock, who followed in the footsteps of the serving Christ.

Had the King James translators translated the Greek word *presbuterion* correctly it would have been a direct violation of the King's rules of translation. This was one of the key dominos that, if tipped, would bring down all the rest. They did, however, add their ecclesiastical translation in the margins as "council of elders." If the 16th century reader had known what a true elder was, that might have helped. To them an elder was someone who advanced his own brand of orthodoxy at the expense of the people. They knew nothing of the kind of love that motivated the godly elderly of the first century.

"While older members (presbyters) owe a special responsibility to the younger members in teaching and example, the church is without officers to rule or make decisions. It is a body of loving interaction and full participation." (Dr. Norman Park, *It Shall Not Be So Among You*)

The House of God

The people of God are the *ekklesia*, not a church building or a system of worship. The called out *ekklesia* is the household of God. This brings us to a verse that is among the most misleading passages in the entire New Testament.

"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God (*Oikos*), which is the church (*ekklesia*) of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15)

There is a very simple conclusion that Bishop Bancroft and King James hoped that the reader would make. House of God = the church = a temple with its priesthood and ceremonies. The use of the term *house of God*, which was used exclusively of the temple in the Old Testament, was very crafty on their part.

Although the Greek word *oikos* is often translated *house* or *home*, it most often refers to the occupants of a house, i.e., the household or family. *Oikos* speaks of a family, not a building, a household rather than a material house. If you look at its usage throughout the rest of the New Testament, you cannot avoid this conclusion.

The literal translation of *oikos* is *household, family, those who live in the same house*. (*The Bible Library CD*) There is a great difference between the houses that we live in and our households. There is an old saying, "a house does not make a home." Neither does a church building make those who enter it the *ekklesia* of God. Our houses are dispensable but our families are not. The important thing is the family. Let us advance a new equation. *Oikos* = Household of God = congregation of God = family of God. *Oikos* is always associated with family, not a material building or temple. It does not refer to the place or building where the *Oikos* or family meet, but of the family itself, the household.

Where, in this new dispensation, is God's house? The scriptures make it quite clear; that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. We, the body of Christ, are his temple made of living stones, Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone as well as the foundation (see 1 Corinthians 3).

If 1 Timothy 3:15 were translated properly it would read as follows:

"But if I am gone long, you may know how you should conduct yourself among the household of God, his dwelling place, which is the congregation of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth." (Our own translation)

Below are a few of the passages where the Greek word *oikos* applies to family rather than a physical house.

Acts 10:2: A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house (*oikos*), which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

Acts 11:14: Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house (*oikos*) shall be saved.

Acts 16:15: And when she was baptized, and her household (*oikos*), she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house (*oikos*) and abide there. And she constrained us.

Acts 18:8: And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house (*oikos*); and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

This brings us to the question of where the *ekklesia* of the first century met.

Did they meet in temples? Did they meet in church buildings? Where did they gather? Where is the logical place for a family to meet? Where does your family gather on a daily basis? The family of God in the first century met in homes. Where else would a family gather? Here are some of the verses that bring this out.

Acts 8:3: As for Saul, he made havock of the congregation [1577] (*ekklesia*,) entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

Romans 16:5: Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

1 Corinthians 16:19: The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

Colossians 4:15: Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

Philemon 1:2: And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house:

Acts 12:12: And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

With the exception of Solomon's porch, where the early believers gathered to hear the apostles teach and which was available to them for only a short time, there is no mention of a routine gathering place other than their homes.

"...how I didn't shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, teaching you publicly and from house to house..." (Acts 20:20 WEB)

Paul lists two primary places where he taught, in public and in homes. In all of the New Testament there is not one mention of Paul or any other apostle teaching or preaching in a church building. This came much later, as the full apostasy of the church started to take hold.

Rule Over

You may be asking by now, "Don't the scriptures say that elders are to rule over the *ekklesia*?"

It is apparent that the selection of the English word *rule* was with design, to promote this ecclesiastical conspiracy. The use of the words *rule* or *have the rule over* to lend weight to the argument that the church is hierarchical was a masterstroke that we are still reeling from today.

What is the English definition of the word *rule*?

To exercise dominating power or influence...(*The New Century Dictionary*)

(n.) The right and power to govern or judge:

- authority
- command

- control
- domination
- dominion
- mastery
- might /li>
- power
- sway
- force
- weight
- supremacy

Words that mean the opposite of rule include the following:

- servility (antonym)
- servitude(antonym)
- weakness (antonym) (*The American Heritage Dictionary*)

You will note here, that the English definition of the word *rule* is devoid of any connotation of service, as the word servitude is listed among its antonyms. This alone should arouse our suspicions, considering that Christ-like leadership is servanthood.

The King James translators have Paul telling Timothy:

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." (1 Timothy 5:17 KJV).

Referring to this, Dr. Norman Park wrote:

"These writers made short shrift of the claim that elders have the authority to 'rule.' They knew the history of the 1611 version and the determination of King James to confer on both bishop and king the divine right to rule: 'No bishop, no king.' Hence his demand that the Greek word *proistemi* be rendered 'rule,' though it actually carried no connotation of authority, power, or governance. It merely meant that elders should be 'foremost' in zeal, knowledge, quality of life, and concern for the welfare of the church - a quality which rightfully should be embodied in all saints. In a very real sense, then, 'ruling' was not the preserve of the few, but the duty of all." (Dr. Norman Park, *It Shall Not Be So Among You*)

How is it that the word *rule*, which in the mind of the English reader bore dictatorial overtones, found its way into the text? Paul wrote:

"Not that we have dominion over (*archo*) your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand." (2 Corinthians 1:24, NKJV).

Paul counted himself as a fellow worker, not as one who ruled over the flock of Christ, knowing that one stands by faith in God, not by the scaffoldings of domineering men.

Now we will examine three verses that are the favorites of those who desire to rule over the *ekklesia* of God:

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." (Hebrews 13:7, KJV).

It is important to note that this verse is in the past tense but has been translated to read as though it were in the present tense. It is referring to those who have died in the faith, not to living individuals presiding over the body of Christ. The word *over* in this verse has nothing to represent it in the original. So, as usual, we will dismiss this word and all that it implies. The words, "them which have the rule over" are a paraphrase of one Greek word - *hegeomai* (2233) - a verb - meaning to lead, to go before as a guide. In a Christian context *hegeomai* is descriptive of the act of guiding, going on ahead, leading the way as an example, not sitting as overlords.

Hebrews chapters eleven and twelve are filled with accounts of those who have gone before us as examples, starting with Abel and ending with Jesus Himself, Godly examples of those who have walked by faith. The reader is exhorted to remember such, to reflect on their faith, calling to memory "the end of their conversation."

Hebrews chapter eleven is a memorial to those exemplary guides who had gone before. By faith these heroes overcame kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped lions' mouths, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, became strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, made the armies of strangers give way. Women received their dead again by resurrection, and others were tortured, not having accepted deliverance, that they might get a better resurrection. Others underwent trial of mockings and scourgings, and of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, sawed in half, tempted, and killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, evil treated, "Of whom the world was not worthy." They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caverns of the earth. These were some of the exemplary guides, the *hegeomai* that were to be remembered. (See Hebrews 11:33-40)

Then there were the early Christian martyrs such as Stephen and James, who loved not their lives unto death.

Regarding Hebrews 13:7, Clarke's Commentary states:

"Remember them which have the rule over you."] This clause should be translated, Remember your guides, who have spoken unto you the doctrine of God. Theodoret's note on this verse is very judicious: "He intends the saints who were dead, Stephen the first martyr, James the brother of John, and James called the Just. And there were many others who were taken off by the Jewish rage. 'Consider these, (said he,) and, observing their example, imitate their faith.'" This remembrance of the dead saints, with admiration of their virtues, and a desire to imitate them, is, says Dr. Macknight, the only worship which is due to them from the living. Considering the end of their conversation] "The issue of whose course of life most carefully consider." They lived to get good and do good; they were faithful to their God and his cause; they suffered persecution; and for the testimony of Jesus died a violent death. God never left

them; no, he never forsook them; so that they were happy in their afflictions, and glorious in their death. Carefully consider this; act as they did; keep the faith, and God will keep you."

Having remembered those who had gone before them, the author of Hebrews turned to the *hegeomai* still living out the example of Christ among the early believers, those who continued in the example of those who had gone before. Following on the heels of Hebrews 13:7 is a verse that at first seems out of context, but upon careful consideration must be viewed as a transitional thought. This verse ties the exemplary guides of the past to those of the present in a continuum, revealing the fashion and style of leadership in the *ekklesia*. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." The *hegeomai* of the first century followed in the example of Christ, filling up "that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ," (Colossians 1:24) "being made conformable unto his death..." (Philippians 3:10).

These contemporaries of the writer of Hebrews also were tortured, refusing the deliverance that was offered to them if they would but deny their Lord, that they might get a better resurrection. They too underwent trials, mockings, scourgings, bonds and imprisonment. They also were stoned, tempted, and killed by the sword, destitute, afflicted and evil treated. They did not live in luxury. They did not receive large salaries or sit in offices with honorific titles on the door.

Obey

Now, let us look deeper into the damage done by the King James translators in promoting a ruling class among the *ekklesia*. Hebrews 13:17 is another verse that seems to be loaded in the favor of those who would rule over the saints.

The English words *rule* and *ruler*, in a Christian context, can only rightly refer to Christ. He is our sovereign, our king and ruler. He is our Lord! Those among us who are so impudent and deluded that they can refer to themselves as rulers should blush. *Ruler* does not roll well off the Christian tongue. Even the most dictatorial among us intuitively knows that the idea of ruling over others stands in stark antithesis to the example and teachings of the serving Messiah.

With this in mind, let us look at Hebrews 13:17.

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13:17).

Note: The word *over* is not in the original Greek, but was added, so we should dismiss it and all that it implies.

The King James scholars translated key words in this passage with supposed English equivalents that bear much more autocratic overtones than did the Greek.

For instance, the Greek word *Peitho* that was translated *obey* appears only 55 times in the New Testament. It is only translated *obey* seven of those times. It would sound ridiculous to use the

English word *obey* in most of the other passages where the Greek word *Peitho* appears. You be the judge.

The word *Obey* (*peitho*) is in the passive voice and simply means be persuaded.

"Peitho: To persuade, i.e. to induce one by words to believe. To make friends of, to win one's favour, gain one's good will, or to seek to win one, strive to please one. To tranquillise. To persuade unto i.e. move or induce one to persuasion to do something. Be persuaded. To be persuaded, to suffer one's self to be persuaded; to be induced to believe: to have faith: in a thing. To believe." (Thayer and Smith *Greek Lexicon*)

"peitho, to persuade, to win over, in the Passive and Middle voices, to be persuaded, to listen to.... (Acts 5:40, Passive Voice, "they agreed"); The obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion." (W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*)

Consider the following verses.

Matthew:28:14: And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade (*pietho*) him, and secure you.

Acts13:43: Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded (*pietho*) them to continue in the grace of God.

Acts14:19: And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded (*pietho*) the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

Acts18:4: And he (Paul) reasoned [*Dialegomai*...'To think different things with one's self, mingle thought with thought. To ponder, revolve in mind. To converse, discourse with one, argue, discuss'. (Thayer and Smith, *Greek Lexicon*] ...in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded (*pietho*) the Jews and the Greeks."

Christian leaders are those who possess the spiritual where-with-all to influence others for Christ. Here Paul is reasoning with Jews and Greeks in the synagogue. He did not command them to obey him. Rather, he reasoned with them. In this way, they were persuaded (*pietho*). We cannot imagine Paul being concerned with securing the loyalty and submission of the hearer to himself. He was not there to advance Brother Paul's ministry. He was not building Brother Paul's Church! He was not there to represent himself as an apostle. Nonetheless, he was "one sent" (the meaning of apostle) to represent Christ. We are confident that he did this very thing. This is possibly the best illustration of Christian leadership in the Bible. How is it that Paul was so persuasive? The answer is quite simple. Paul himself was totally and utterly persuaded. He was thoroughly convinced of what he spoke. Remember, we are still dealing with the Greek word *pietho* that was translated obey in Hebrews 13:17.

"For I am persuaded (*pietho*), that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". (Romans 8:38-39)

It was Paul's passion to persuade others for Christ. So effective was he that the idol makers of Ephesus were feeling the crunch due to their lost revenues.

"...this Paul hath persuaded (*pietho*) and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands." (Acts:19:26)

When Paul stood before King Agrippa reasoning with him, he was so convincing that Agrippa's response was, "Almost thou persuadest (*pietho*) me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).

From time to time, Paul expressed his confidence in other brothers in Christ. Here is one such instance.

"And I myself also am persuaded (*pietho*) of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." (Romans 15:14)

Here are a few more scriptures where the Greek word *pietho* was translated *persuade* or *persuaded*.

2Corinthians 5:11: Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade (*pietho*) men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

Galatians 1:10: For do I now persuade (*pietho*) men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

2Timothy 1:5: When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded (*pietho*) that in thee also.

2Timothy 1:12: For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded (*pietho*) that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Hebrews 6:9: But, beloved, we are persuaded (*pietho*) better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

The Greek word *pietho* speaks of God-given grace to effect change. "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." (John 3:27) If a man possesses God-given influence, he has no need, nor desire, to demand obedience.

We find a great illustration of this in the life of Peter. God gave Peter a dream that shook his belief-system to the core. God sent him to the house of a devout Gentile to declare the gospel. When he returned to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision, who clung to the teachings of Judaism, contended with him, saying, "You went into uncircumcised men and ate with them." (Acts 11:3). What can we learn from Peter's response? Did he remind them that he was an apostle, i.e., "God's Anointed"? Did he ignore them as though he were above such questioning? Was he short with them? No to all the above. There is not a hint of offense in Peter's response. He treated them with the utmost respect, explaining in detail the events leading up to his trip to the household of Cornelius the centurion. Peter persuaded them to the degree that his critics were silenced and began to give glory to God. Peter did not demand blind consent. Because of the grace and humility Peter handled this situation with, what potentially could have caused a great schism in the Jerusalem Church resulted in an occasion for glorifying God. This story profoundly

reveals Peter's posture toward the rest of Christ's disciples. He did not see himself as above question nor above those who questioned him. He simply exercised godly influence and those who heard him were persuaded.

Most abuses are the result of men trying to force their preconceived ideas on others by the use of mistakenly perceived power, without the slightest means of grace.

What about this word *submit* in Hebrews 13:17? "... submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls."

We have heard the words *submit* and *submission* over the last thirty years in relationship to those who desire to make disciples of Christ by the overt power of their own wills. We have also heard men teaching that wives are to submit to their husbands, even the ones who are physically and mentally abusive. Consequently, the words *submission* and *submit* have left a foul taste in the mouths of most Christians because of the abuse in the church.

The Greek word that was translated submit in verse seventeen above is *hupеiko*. It simply means yield. It is closely related to *hupotasso*, of which we will speak more shortly. *Hupеiko* in no way infers any kind of outward force being placed on the person yielding. It is a voluntary act in this case of a person yielding to those who truly care about them in godly love. In the body of Christ you cannot demand that someone submit to your authority. If you do, it proves that you really do not have authority. He is not fit to lead who is not capable of guiding.

The following translation comes closest to capturing the true meaning of Hebrews 13:17.

"Be persuaded by your leaders, and be deferring to them, for they are vigilant for the sake of your souls, as having to render an account, that they may be doing this with joy, and not with groaning, for this is disadvantageous for you." (Hebrews 13:17 - Concordant Literal New Testament)

As you can see, there is nothing in this verse that would imply super-ordination or hierarchy.

The third most favorite verse of those who desire to rule over the *ekklesia* of Christ is found in Hebrews chapter thirteen verse twenty-four.

"Salute (to draw to one's self) all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you." (Hebrews 13:24, KJV).

The Greek word *hegeomai* is once again translated *them that have the rule over*. This is not a translation but a redefinition of one Greek word. Another important thing to note here is that this letter was not written to the *hegeomai*, but to the *ekklesia* as a whole. This is in direct conflict with modern leadership theory, where it is considered inappropriate to write anything, especially something as doctrinal as this letter is, without going through the chain of command, i.e., the ones who are ruling over and who censor all such documents for correctness.

Along these lines Norman Park wrote,

"The Apostle Paul's example in writing to the churches in Galatia and Corinth is in direct conflict with modern elder theory. There were serious doctrinal, fraternal, and disciplinary problems in both places. Yet, Paul did not write the elders to straighten out these problems, he wrote the members and put the burden on the many. It is highly significant that in his letters Paul practically never mentioned elders. He looked to congregational responsibility and congregational action. Once more we note in modern "eldership" theory, Paul's appeal to congregational autonomy is an example to be avoided. It has been replaced by eldership autonomy." (Dr. Norman Park, *Jesus Versus "The Eldership"*)

As you can see these passages have nothing to do with obeying mere men who desire to control and rule over God's heritage from their pseudo offices like so many Gentile kings. What they DO refer to is following the godly example of those who have paid with their lives and those who continue to lay down their lives, exemplifying the servant Christ before His saints. There is a big difference!

Submit

Nowhere in all the scriptures is the *ekklesia* referred to as an army. The mistaken idea that God governs His family in a military manner has been the source of much sorrow and abuse. To view God's family in a military sense logically implies rank. Rank is someone ruling over someone else, outranking them.

"Likewise, younger ones, be subject (*hupotasso*) to older ones, and all being subject to one another. Put on humility. For God resists proud ones, but He gives grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5 MKJV - Green)

Strong defines *hupotasso* as follows:

"Hupotasso: A Greek military term meaning, "to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader." In non-military use, it was "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden." (*Strong's*)

The Greek word *hupotasso* has a military and a non-military usage. They are as different as night and day. The one speaks of submission to a commander, while the other speaks of the willing deference of a loving family.

According to Kenneth S. Wuest, "The word proud (in the above verse) is the translation of a Greek word which means literally to show above, and thus describes the proud person as one who shows himself above others. The word humble is the translation of the Greek word rendered lowly in Matthew 11:29, where it describes our Lord's character. The word is found in the early secular documents where it speaks of the Nile River in its low stage in the words, 'it runs low.' The word means 'not rising far from the ground.' It describes the Christian who follows in the humble and lowly steps of his Lord."

In his "Fuller Translation," Wuest translated 1Peter 5:5 as follows:

"Moreover, all of you, bind about yourselves as a girdle, humility toward one another, because God opposes himself to those who set themselves above others, but gives grace to those who are lowly."

Contrary to popular opinion, Peter is not asking the believers to submit to a hierarchical rank and file. Nor is he, as some suppose, accusing those who refuse to submit to such ecclesiastical overlords of being rebellious or proud. Pride is NOT the act of non-submission to a hierarchy. It is the act of ignoring Christ's lowly example and exalting one's self above others. Pride is not the refusal to come under but an ambition to rise above. Even though Jesus was God, He did not seek to rise above men. Pride is the act of setting oneself above others, not the refusal to submit to those who have wrongfully done so. Humility then is embracing the lowliness of Christ, who, although He was God, humbled himself and made Himself of no reputation. If humility is to make oneself of no reputation, what then is pride?

Even Paul would not elevate himself above others.

"Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand." (2 Corinthians 1:24)

A Lesson from our Past

In the early 70s there was a movement called Discipleship. The leaders of this movement were sincere, upright and godly men. However, they collectively missed God's mark. Embracing the military usage of Greek words like *hupotasso*, they carrying their newfound philosophy to its logical conclusion. The result was a sheepfold that strangely resembled a concentration camp. In some cases, the most mundane daily decisions of the faithful were abdicated to someone called "my shepherd." They also ascribed to this man the title of Covering, saying of him, "He is my covering." They spoke of the Pillars of Heaven, headship, the covering, delegated authority, kingdom taxes and covenant loyalty. These things, taught in a military, hierarchical context, served as walls to confine those who submitted. Consequently, many forfeited freedom itself, only to discover at last that their trust was misplaced. There are many Christians still reeling from the residual affects of this twisted teaching. Many still don't understand what happened to them. All they know is that they trusted men who were in control and were hurt.

One of these leaders, whom we still hold in high regard for his humility and honesty, in the aftermath of this experiment gone awry, said,

"Discipleship was wrong. I repent. I ask for forgiveness... discipleship resulted in unhealthy submission resulting in perverse and un-Biblical obedience to human leaders... for the injury and shame, I repent with sorrow and ask for your forgiveness." (Bob Mumford)

In a publication entitled *The Raleigh World*, Steve Eastman writes of Bob's current posture toward the errors of the past.

"Bob Mumford is perhaps best known for the Discipleship teaching he practiced along with the other members of Christian Grown Ministries in the 1970's. He admits the old teachings were

often implemented in a militaristic manner on the local level. "That became the whole control issue and it, itself, promoted the eternal childhood of the believer."

In 1977, Michael Harper insightfully expressed his concerns regarding the discipleship movement in his book entitled *Let My People Grow*.

"The master-disciple relationship is, of course, used frequently to describe the relationship that Jesus had with others on earth, and, therefore, can equally describe our relationship to the Lord today. . . . But it is never in the New Testament used to describe the relationship which Christians have with one another. . . . It is best not to use the "discipling" terminology at all. Not only is it biblically unsound, but it also injects into this area an authority factor which is inappropriate."

Why are men so eager to repeat the mistakes of the past? Someone said, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, expecting a different result." In spite of the injury and shame that occurred in the discipleship movement, a new generation has been deceived into thinking that, with a few alterations, they can get it right this time.

It is apparent that many Christians, while viewing Christ in his glorified ruling position, seated next to the Father, have forgotten his earthly example as a servant. They have forgotten his words, "As the father has sent me so send I you." He has been given a name above every name, but we have not. We are not kings, in spite of the fact that we are children of the King. All authority is His, not ours. He has given us authority over all the works of the enemy, but that authority is attached to His name, not ours. Moreover, He has given us that same authority to serve others just as He did. It is not an authority to rule over, but authority to serve. Do not be deceived! He did not come serving, only to leave in his absence the stark anti-type of a ruling clergy.

In Mathew 28:18 the Lord said, "All authority has been given me in heaven and upon earth." Note the word *all* here. This does not give any place for men to have ownership of any authority. It is true that the Lord Jesus lives in each one of His believers and so His authority may pass through us at times, but it is not permanently ours. Nor does the Lord even give it out as a rental! This is why the scripture says we must submit to one another in the fear of Christ because authority can and does express itself from time to time in and through the words and deeds of fellow believers in the Body relationship. (Sometimes it flows without them even knowing it!) But our obedience is not to any mere member of the body. Our obedience is to the Head, and only Jesus Christ is the Head!

In a Christian context, the Greek Word *hegeomai*, meaning to lead, to go before, to be a leader, does not carry the connotation of ruling over.

What is true leadership? It is nothing more than going on ahead.

Again, let us look to our divine model of leadership.

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Hebrews:2:10)
"... That prince who was to lead them into salvation." (Knox)

The word *captain* (author) describes one who goes ahead to prepare the way. It speaks of one who is a leader in a horizontal row or file, a captain riding on ahead, into the jaws of death.

We must have our minds renewed to view leadership as going on ahead, rather than presiding above. Do we walk the path, or, rule the roost? Are we going on ahead or attempting to be the head? If we are following the captain, we will inadvertently lead, but we will not lord over the faith of others nor exercise authority and dominion upon them.

Chapter 3

Two Models of Leadership

1.) HORIZONTAL

2.) V

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Horizontal leadership is going on ahead, following the captain of our salvation, out in front of the flock, leading or guiding, not driving them from behind. Vertical leadership is one person presiding over another. The very word over creates a mental picture of one above, and another beneath. One involves climbing up the ecclesiastical ladder of success, while the other is simply following on to know the Lord and assisting others along the way. Jesus gave us the first and only model of horizontal leadership. It was so radical in comparison to the vertical that without divine help the disciples could not imagine such a thing. The vertical, pecking-order model of leadership has no place in the Christian community. Referring to this vertical model, Jesus said; "But you shall not be so..."

"And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest (*meizon*) among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief (*hegeomai*), as he that doth serve (*diakoneo*). For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth (*diakoneo*)." (Luke 22: 24-27)

The Greek word *meizon* here translated *greatest* simply means older, or senior. Those who have gone ahead in age have usually gone ahead in experience, and so have much to teach. Here Jesus is contrasting the relational and social guidance of elderly family members to the kings of the Gentiles who exercised lordship over. He even takes it one step further in saying that the elderly of the family should willingly become as the younger, that they should become servants. So not

only were they not to be like the kings of the Gentiles but they were also not to posture themselves as heads of the family. They were to be as the youth, or servants in the family.

So in answering the strife of which one of them would be the greatest, Jesus brought the disciples two giant steps down. He reduced them from kings, to elders, and from elders to household servants. Consider what that must have done to their egos!

Hear us dear reader! Jesus said, "It shall not be so among you." This is an emphatic statement in the Greek. "It cannot be so among you!" What is the Father's norm for his family? What shall be so among us?

John Wesley gives us our answer.

"But ye are to be benefactors to mankind, not by governing, but by serving."

Here are a few scriptures for your perusal. You be the judge. Did Jesus endorse the vertical hierarchical model of leadership or the horizontal form?

Then he said to them, "Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes my Father who sent me. Whoever is the least among you is the greatest." (Luke 9:48, The New Living Translation)

Therefore, anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 11:4, The New Living Translation)

Don't ever let anyone call you 'Rabbi,' for you have only one teacher, and all of you are on the same level as brothers and sisters. And don't address anyone here on earth as 'Father,' for only God in heaven is your spiritual Father. And don't let anyone call you 'Master,' for there is only one master, the Messiah. The greatest among you must be a servant. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. (Matthew 23:8-12, The New Living Translation)

Also consider the following quotation.

"Of how little avail has this condemnation of "lordship" and vain titles been against the vanity of Christian ecclesiastics?" (Author unknown)

Love's Gentle Persuasion or Forced Orthodoxy

In our society, we incarcerate parents who use their children as objects for sexual gratification, serving themselves at the child's emotional and physical expense. In the institution called the church (note: we do *not* refer to the body of Christ here) a similar condition exists. The abuses are much more subtle, but equally painful. The heart is ravished, not the body. The predators who continue to inflict untold pain upon God's Children are not locked up but praised and esteemed instead. I (George) have stood beside the victims; I have witnessed their tears. I heard them say, "I feel like I've been raped!" How else should they have felt? They had been violated. They were expected to perform without being truly loved. They had become the playthings of ambitious overlords, who cast them off when they failed to perform up to expectations.

Even God himself will not violate the wills of men. He is set to win them by love. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son..." This shows the depth of God's commitment and love toward us. Jesus laid down his life as the evident token of that love. Upon this backdrop, how is it that men, purporting to be leaders in Christ's church, should do spite to the very Spirit of Christ by resorting to tyrannical means to secure obedience? In an attempt to police a forced orthodoxy, they violate the very sanctum that God has made off-limits to all but love's persuasion. Obedience for any other reason than love is unacceptable to God. God beckons, He woos, but He does not force. Forced obedience is something akin to rape, - entering or thrusting oneself upon another without invitation. Imposing one's will and desires upon the unwilling is our definition of tyranny. It is also the definition of rape.

We find a prime example of forced orthodoxy in 3 John 1:9-10. A man by the name of Diotrephes sought to impose himself and his will upon the Body of Christ, seeking the preeminence that only rightly belongs to Christ – the One True Head of the body. John wrote:

"I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."

Here we have the first sign of apostasy. A man raised himself up, desiring the preeminence, casting brothers who did not go along with his overt grab for power out of the church. This sounds like the first denomination to us. John wrote something to the congregation, not to a select team of leaders but to all of the *ekklesia*, but the one desiring to be first intercepted it. I am sure as John was writing this, the words of Jesus were echoing through his mind, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

Even Jesus Himself does not use this kind of control over His church! In John chapter ten we see His opened handed kind of leadership.

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10:9-10, NKJV).

Did you get that? Jesus is a door! Doors not only let people in, but let them out as well. "...and [they] will go in and out and find pasture." Jesus came to set the captives free and to break every yoke of slavery. Contrast that with the following verse, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." There is nothing here about giving or creating life, but rather exerting overt and illicit power. The way of the thief is bondage and death.

How often have you heard it preached from the pulpit that you were not to go elsewhere to be fed, but you were to stay put for your own good? We have heard it many times. This sectarian spirit is not the Spirit of Christ, who is so confident in the liberty He gives HIS sheep that He readily leaves the 99 and seeks out the one that goes too far astray.

True leadership in His kingdom is very open handed. His sheep are completely confident that no one shall pluck them out of His hand. The parable of the Prodigal Son is a wonderful example of a father who not only allows his son to leave, but gives him his inheritance when he asks for it. He knows that holding the son captive against his will is the sure way to lose him. He believes that once the son has seen the final fruit of his rebellion, he will come back to the one who truly loves him. Anyone who does not truly love Jesus' sheep does not have this kind of confidence. Do you want to see a body grow? Love builds up.

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love." (Ephesians 4:15-16, RSV).

What is this Thing Called "the church"?

Note at the outset that there is no biblical justification for the institutionalized version of Christianity that now covers the globe. In fact, there is no pattern in the scripture for setting up a church institution of any kind.

The model for the current church is a mixture borrowed from the governmental style of the kings of the Gentiles and the corporate structures of today's business world. It provides the mechanism for controlling the people and keeping them submissive to the institution and its clergy/kings/CEO's. Today, the church infrastructure provides these benefactors with employment and power. They are paid for their services just like the employees of any other business or organization. With one exception: they often set their own salaries. This is what T. Austin Sparks called "the present disorder."

We should note here that Paul referred to these rudimentary principles of religion as "the world."

"But far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom [the] world is crucified to me, and I to the world. For [in Christ Jesus] neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision; but new creation." (Galatians 6:14-15)

The word *world* here is a translation of a Greek word *kosmos*, which means a system. In context, Paul was speaking of the religious system at that time. We are not being trite when we say, Christianity is not a system, it is not of the *kosmos/world*. Christianity is a person and that person is Christ! Although Judaism and the law originated with God, in the hands of the enemy it became a system used to usurp and distract mankind from God's eternal purpose in Christ and was even used to crucify the very Offspring of God Himself. The same is true of the Christian system where the fruit of living union with Christ, the Vine, has been supplanted by a codified and systematized "Christianity." This is the sad world to which all true believers are dead. For they are not preoccupied with principles or Christian ethics but are new creations living by the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Hence the true church is a living organism, *not* an institution or system. It is *not* of this *Kosmos*.

Chapter 4

The Example of Christ

The example of Jesus is the most powerful argument against the idea of a ruling clergy. Did he model one thing, only to build another? We think not! Did He come serving only to elevate His anti-type later? The spirit of antichrist speaks not only of anything that replaces Christ, but also of what is the opposite of Him. Christ's likeness in a thing determines its legitimacy. Does it reflect Him or not? If not, it is not His and it is most certainly against Him. As it is the Father's will that His Son might fill all things, whatsoever does not reflect him, is most certainly not His. If it is not His doing, reflecting His image, His character, is it then His workmanship, His *ekklesia*?

Christ came as a servant. His servanthood is the new standard of greatness in the kingdom of God.

"But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: exactly like the Son of man came not to be served (*diakoneo*), but to serve (*diakoneo*), and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:25-28)

Here Jesus is contrasting the idea of Gentile ruling with serving, the idea of dominion and authority over others is contrasted by His own example. He did not come to demand service, as a king, but to serve. The example of Christ cries no! A thousand times no! "It shall not be so among you!" Historically, the church has looked nothing like the serving messiah. It has traded the servant's towel, for clerical robe and is above the washing of feet, as kneeling has become so far beneath the priestly and kingly status of its clergy. How far we have fallen from the divine standard only God fully appreciates.

Forgive us Father, for ever wanting other than Your Son as our example, our Divine mandate! Set before our eyes the image of the Lord of heaven on his knees serving. Washing the road-worn feet, dirty, perhaps smelly. Love constraining. Love bowing low. Love wrapped in a servant's towel (see John 13:1-18)!

This is what the first century elderly modeled. This is what they handed down. They were examples, not of some legal standard of perfection as modeled by a lofty priesthood who says to itself, "If Jesus is now ruling and reigning, then we can too." He has not left us to rule and reign, but to serve just as He did. He contrasted the servant leadership that He modeled, with that of the Scribes and Pharisees, comparing the heart motivation and outworking of each.

"The thief [the Scribes and the Pharisees of chapter nine] does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John:10:10)

Jesus is making a comparison here. Thieves and robbers come to steal and take life. He came to give life. Here we see the glaring difference between the Pharisee/clergy and Jesus.

"All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers." Abbott holds that the idea is, "All who came, not entering through the door, but claiming to be before me, having the precedence, independent of me, are thieves and robbers." This seems to harmonize with the context, and is probably the Savior's meaning. He included the Jewish rabbis, the Greek philosophers, the pretended prophets, and the "Infallible Pope." These all refuse to bow to his authority."

Such are hirelings who cared not for the sheep. (See verse 13.)

"I lay down my life for the sheep," Jesus said, and history attests to the truth of it. Time is measured both before and after the servant life of Christ, as if to pause in reverence, separating what was BC, "before Christ," from what is AD anno Domini,"In the year of our Lord."

All who come before (pro) Christ, in His place of eminence, are the same as thieves and robbers, driven by ambition and self-interest. They were and are motivated by private ambition. The money is good. They love the recognition. They love the feeling of power and control. Jude warned, "These are hidden rocky reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you, shepherds who without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn leaves without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots" (Jude 1:12). They are hirelings, shepherds feeding themselves. They flee when the sacrifice of caring for the sheep becomes too great.

Here is the hireling's test. If you can pass it, you may not be a hireling. Care for the sheep at no expense to the sheep. Don't receive a wage; do it for nothing. Go beyond that and serve Christ's sheep at your own expense. Do this for three years and you will have passed the hireling's test. You will be walking in the footsteps of greatness, the footsteps of the ONE who came to serve and lay down His life for His sheep.

Christ's sheep have been corralled, mistreated and imprisoned by thieves and robbers for the last 1700 years or more. Confined and abused, they have viewed the Father's greener pastures from afar. Beyond the walls of the sheep pen the green pastures beckon, but they must not go forth. They remember the stories, like urban legends told around a campfire, of the uncertain fate of those that left and never returned, and the horrors of the many and mysterious dangers lurking beyond the walls. Warned of the rebellion of feeding outside the confines of the sheep pen, and handed yet another stale liturgical biscuit, they wither away, somehow convinced it is their duty to so.

They say that if you put a grasshopper in a jar, at first he will hop and bang his head on the jar lid a few times. Finally, he will quit hopping. You can even take him out of the jar and put him back in the field, but he will never hop again for fear of bumping his head. So many in the church today are like that fabled grasshopper.

A Shake-up in Judea

His popularity was soaring, especially since the news of the miracle had spread abroad. To raise to life again a corpse that had been entombed four days, was unthinkable. The religious leaders, fearing the loss of their status, were charged with nervous energy. They were upset. "The world is gone after him," they said, as thoughts of murder filled their minds. Even Greeks came saying, "We want to see him, We would see Jesus."

The feast of Passover was at hand, and He must go, for this year the fulfillment of the feast would be dependent upon his participation. First, there was something he must do, something he desired very earnestly. He would draw away from the crowds, and gather the twelve, to eat the last Pascal meal; a meal teeming with types and shadows, the fulfillment of which were only hours away. He yearned to reveal the prophetic significance of this meal to His disciples, and it would soon be manifest before their eyes.

When Supper was over, Jesus got up from the table, and the disciples, thinking he was performing the usual ceremonial hand washing, kept their seats. But something was wrong. Why was Jesus straying from the traditional format? Perhaps He had grabbed that servant's apron by mistake. Why is He filling that water basin? There are servants for that! Now what is He doing? Why is He doing that? Surely not! He knelt before them One by one, until every dirty foot in the room was clean. Then He said, "Do you know what I have done to you?" They were speechless. Never before had they seen a King wash His servant's feet. They saw with their eyes what we can only imagine, "God with us," washing human feet.

The model of leadership in the *ekklesia* is not the CEO but the household slave.

For from His knees in the upper room, Jesus said, "For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you." (John 13: 15 WEB)

Father, set this example before us like frontlets between our eyes!

Jesus did leave us an example to follow - one that stands in stark antithesis to the current notion of Church Leadership. This model from heaven, like oil, will not mix with the waters of historic ecclesiastical despotism.

CONCLUSION

"LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU"

It is interesting to note all the instances in which Jesus avoided even the appearance of the ruling class. From his birth to his grave, he chose the most humble means. He really was born in a barn. His baby clothes were swaddling clothes, mere rags wrapped about him. His crib was a feeding box for livestock. Common shepherds came to pay Him honor, while the local who's who chose to ignore His lowly birth. At the Jerusalem dedication, his parents could only afford a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons, which was the offering of the poor. He grew up in the household of a working carpenter in the lowest of all the towns in lowly Galilee. He made himself of no reputation. Isaiah prophesied that He had no form nor comeliness, nor anything about Him that would attract carnal men. That final week of His life on earth, He chose to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, not as a conquering king on a great horse. He washed the feet of his disciples that last night. He died in the most shameful way possible, the death of a criminal with two common thieves, although He was innocent. They even buried His body in a borrowed tomb!

Those who posture themselves to rule have forgotten something very important, the mind of Christ. Christ, who was equal to God, did not cling to His prerogatives as the Son of God. On the contrary, he emptied himself, and took upon himself the slave's apron.

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:5-8 RSV)

". . . But the surest way for this to be a better world is for people to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. The model for Christian leadership in America today is not the entrepreneur, not the CEO - it is the suffering servant, Jesus Christ." (Richard Halverson)

Dear fellow believers, we invite you to pray with us, that God would inspire those with integrity of heart, like Tyndale, who are free from the ecclesiastical paradigm, to translate a new Bible, minus the old ecclesiastical words, so that this love story can no longer be used as a scepter of power in the hands of would-be kings.

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- Frank Daniels, *Non-Ecclesiastical New Testament*
- John M.Bland, *Men Who Would Be Kings*
- Alister McGrath, *In The Beginning*

All scripture quotations are from the King James version unless otherwise specified.