

center that the empirical unity of the Church must in the end be restored—how, we do not yet know.

Secondly, since the Church is constituted solely by the relation of its members to Christ—their relation simply as men, to him who is the Man, the Adam of a new humanity—the possibility is given of a genuine universality such as was contemplated but could not be realized while the People of God was one nation among others. In terms of the old Israel the limits of God's people might be defined, either exclusively, by a progressively narrowing definition of the qualifications of the faithful "remnant," or comprehensively, by the addition of increasing numbers of proselytes to the Jewish community. There are signs that both of these principles—the exclusive and the comprehensive—were in the minds of members of the early Church, but neither proved workable. Paul swept both aside with his maxim: "In making all mankind prisoners to disobedience, God's purpose was to show mercy to all mankind." It is possible to fix the center about which the new People of God is constituted, but not to draw its circumference. No attempt to define the limits of the Church, either exclusively or comprehensively, proves workable—as we have so often discovered in our discussions about reunion—and in fact no such definition can hold good which stops short of the totality of the human race. The unity of the Church is the unity of mankind. God has purposed, we read, "to sum up all things in Christ." This is the transcendent purpose to which the Church is dedicated. In serving that purpose, and not in seeking any lesser ends of its own, it finds the ultimate meaning of its calling and election as the People of God.

## 3

## The Ministry in the New Testament

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One who approaches this subject after such scholars as—to name only a few—T. W. Manson,<sup>1</sup> Eduard Schweitzer,<sup>2</sup> and Hans von Campenhausen,<sup>3</sup> cannot hope to find much to glean in a field that has already been efficiently and comprehensively reaped. I hope, however, in the following pages to collect some of the most important data and to indicate some of the principles by which they are related to one another.

It has often been pointed out that it is a mistake to consider the ministry in isolation. It ought to be viewed in connection with and, indeed, as an aspect of the Church. This is true. It is, however, possible and desirable to go further than this. Neither ministry nor

<sup>1</sup> *The Church's Ministry* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 1948); *Ministry and Priesthood: Christ's and Ours* (London: Epworth Press, 1958).

<sup>2</sup> *Church Order in the New Testament* (English translation; Studies in Biblical Theology No. 32; London, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> *Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 14; Tübingen, 1953).

Church is an entity capable of standing by itself; each emerges against the background of the New Testament *εὐαγγέλιον* the testimony borne to the creative divine act which catches up the past of Israelite history and initiates the new creation, a testimony in which the powers of the age to come are already at work.

The language I have used to describe the New Testament gospel is eschatological, and its appropriateness would be recognized by all students of the New Testament today. The earliest New Testament theology is an eschatology, and it is within the setting of New Testament eschatology that the New Testament Church and the New Testament ministry must be studied. This is true, for example, with reference to such notable ministers as the apostles themselves, as I have tried to show in two earlier articles.<sup>4</sup> As early as Paul's letter to the Galatians it is possible to trace the primitive eschatological understanding of those "who were reputed to be pillars" (Gal. 2:9; cf. 2:2, 6a, 6c), and the way in which this primitive appraisal of apostleship was giving place to a view which regarded them rather as administrative authorities than as eschatological figures.

[Paul] is prepared to grant, indeed he cannot deny, the unique eschatological status of James, Cephas, and John as "pillars"; they are the indispensable connecting links between the historical Jesus and the community of the New Age. As such they must be consulted, and fellowship with them must be maintained, at almost any cost. Upon them rested the primary responsibility of bearing witness to the resurrection. This responsibility and privilege could never be taken from them; but there was grave danger lest this, their peculiar dignity, should be not enhanced but obscured by their growing authority within the Church, or at least within the Jewish wing of the Church. To this their position as "pillars" gave them no right; it rested upon a misunderstanding of their eschatological office, which should have pointed away from their own human dignity to the crucifixion and resurrection on the one hand, and on the other to the future coming of Christ and the fulfilment of his purposes for men in the kingdom of God.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "Paul and the 'Pillar' Apostles," in *Studia Paulina in honorem J. de Zwaan* (Haarlem, 1953), pp. 1-19; "The Apostles in and after the New Testament," in *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* xxi (1956), pp. 30-49.

<sup>5</sup> *Studia Paulina*, pp. 18-19.

So far we see apostleship as a primarily and originally eschatological function capable of misunderstanding and perversion. It is possible to examine this process—de-eschatologization, if the word is tolerable—on a wider field, both by extending one's attention to the apostles in general and by going beyond the limits of the New Testament. I have suggested that there are two lines along which this de-eschatologizing takes place, a Gnostic line and a Judaistic line. The former when it reaches a full-blown, Valentinian stage can be described as follows: The apostles were men who accompanied the Savior on earth.

But after his death he appointed them to a new status. He did away with the material part of their life, and kindled to a flame the divine spark which resided within them, as within all true gnostics. In this capacity they became the zodiacal powers, lords over destiny, and were thus able to confer on men, or at least on the elect, a regeneration that meant deification. They were, after Christ, the revealing deities who opened and led the way to the supra-lunary sphere, and to spiritual—that is, non-material—union with God.<sup>6</sup>

The Judaistic line of development, on one of its bifurcations, leads to a surprising conclusion: The apostles disappear, being replaced by blood relatives of Jesus, who appear in the role of priest-kings. In a different branch of the Judaistic line the apostles become, after Jesus, the starting point of a chain of tradition.

These observations about the developing conceptions of apostleship will provide us with a starting point. The primitive conception was rooted in the primitive Christian eschatology, and the understanding of apostolic ministry was modified, and sometimes perverted, as the primitive eschatology was modified and perverted. What is true in regard to the apostles and their ministry is true also in regard to the New Testament ministry in its various forms, and if this chapter has any connecting thread to give it unity and coherence it is this: The correspondence between the varying eschatological conceptions of the various New Testament books and

<sup>6</sup> *S. E. A.* xxi, p. 37.

the development of the ministry. If time permitted (and the theme is one to which I hope to return) it might be possible on these lines to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate lines of development.

The thesis that the development of the ministry is dependent on the flux of Christian eschatology is not a new one, and I may introduce it with a reference to Martin Werner,<sup>7</sup> who has applied Albert Schweitzer's *konsequente Eschatologie* to the elucidation of the history of Christian doctrine as a whole. Werner has a chapter on "The change in the conception of the Church" due to the effect of de-eschatologizing. Both Jesus and Paul expressed themselves in terms of the idea of the community of the saints which was to appear, with the ultimate manifestation of the heavenly Messiah, as the predestined number of those who had part in the glory of his kingdom. "According to Paul, the Messianic Community, which emerged as a historical entity consequent on the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, was constituted simply of those of the *last* generation, who were elected to participate in the Messianic Kingdom, and this was the generation of the Apostolic period."<sup>8</sup> Naturally this conception of the Church was upset by the delay of the *parousia*. What had been supposed to be the last generation was not the last generation after all. The messianic community developed in historical continuity as an empirical Church.<sup>9</sup> This fundamental change brought many others in its train; for example, in the understanding of the Pauline phrase the Body of Christ, in the sacraments, and in belief about the holiness of the Church. Changed sacramental beliefs and a developing system of ecclesiastical discipline carried with them implications for the ministry. A suitable hierarchy was required both for the dispensing of sacramental grace and for the mediating of forgiveness to penitents. The outstanding example of de-eschatologizing may be found in Callistus' use of Matt. 16:18-19, which was "originally

<sup>7</sup> *The Formation of Christian Dogma* (London: A. & C. Black, Ltd., 1957).

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 271.

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 272.

spoken of the eschatological kingdom of God and of the Messianic Community, which would be revealed at the end of time," in defense of "the episcopal claim to jurisdictional authority in the Church."<sup>10</sup>

I shall not go further with Werner, though I am convinced that his view of the history of doctrine deserves more serious attention than is sometimes given it. I have two comments to make, which will lead us to the next stage of our study.

1. The first is a theological point. I have no difficulty in believing that many in the first generation of Christians were surprised to find themselves succeeded by a second. It seems to be true that they believed that the *parousia* of Christ and the visible establishment in glory and power of the kingdom of God would happen when they did not in fact happen; namely, in their own lifetime. I do not find it so easy to believe that God was equally surprised—that, like the tower builder in the parable, he proved unable to complete the work he had begun. It is compatible with trinitarian theology to maintain that Jesus himself in his earthly life looked for a speedy consummation of the eschatological process, but that God's plans were cast in a larger mold and on a longer perspective than could suggest themselves to a first-century Palestinian Jew. The theological ferment produced by the delay of the *parousia* was, we may suppose, part of the theological revolution as God himself had all along intended it. The whole process, after all, was marked by reversals of human expectation. The cross itself, the failure of Jesus' public ministry, was one such reversal. The delay of the *parousia*, the failure of eschatology, was another. We cannot say that all the consequences of the delayed *parousia* were directly and absolutely the will of God any more than we can say that all the features of the crucifixion were directly and absolutely the will of God, but we should not treat everything before the delay became apparent as Jesus' and Paul's mistake, and everything that came after it as a merely human attempt to make the best of a bad job, and botch up God's failure. The whole

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 280.

process, including the delay and the adjustments required by the delay, constitutes the New Testament event.

2. The second point is related to the first, but takes shape as a simple historical observation. Werner dealt with second- and third-century writers on Church and ministry and noted the effect on them of changing eschatology. But the problem caused by the delay of the *parousia* was felt already within the New Testament period, and its effect can be seen in such writers as Matthew, Luke, and John. This is a proposition that seems scarcely open to doubt; must we go further and agree that these—and other—New Testament writers, like Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and later ecclesiastical writers, are witnesses to "primitive catholicism" (*Frühkatholizismus*)?<sup>11</sup> Much here depends upon the definition of terms. That the way in which these New Testament writers look upon the ministry is connected with their changed eschatological perspective is true, but this does not in itself serve to identify Luke with Clement, or John with Ignatius, in regard to the ministry, to eschatology, or to anything else. There is a view of the ministry that is a legitimate development from the first Christian generation, and there is also an illegitimate view. We shall see something of the distinction between the two at the close of this chapter. For the present we may embark upon a historical sketch of the evidence.

There can be little doubt where we ought to begin if we are to gain a historical account of the development of the ministry (and all I have said hitherto has been intended to suggest that such a historical account is theologically as well as historically significant). The only material we can treat with confidence as early is that which we owe to Paul's pen. The gospels are the literary deposit of a later age; they contain traditional material, and some of this, no doubt, is early and sound, but the whole has been seen through the eyes of the post-Pauline generation. The same is true of Acts; however much early material the book may contain, all has been seen in the light of later developments. We are driven back upon

<sup>11</sup> For a brief account of this question, see my *Luke the Historian in Recent Study* (London, 1961), pp. 25, 70-76.

Paul. We must not assume that he gives us a complete picture of the whole of the primitive Church; nearly all the data he gives us are given incidentally. But the Pauline material has the advantage of being contemporary with the circumstances it describes—or, more often, alludes to—and of being firsthand.

Modern discussion of Paul's apostleship may be said on the whole to assume the truth of Anton Fridrichsen's dictum:

When Paul in Romans introduces himself as *κλητὸς ἀπόστολος* he characterizes himself as an eschatologic person. He is a man who has been appointed to a proper place and a peculiar task in the series of events to be accomplished in the final days of this world; those events whose central person is the Messiah, the Christ Jesus, crucified, risen, and returning to judgment and salvation.<sup>12</sup>

To this statement, however, should be added that every Christian is an eschatologic person; if any one (*τις*) is in Christ, there is a new creation (II Cor. 5:17). This is not to say that every Christian is an apostle; apostles have a place of their own in the eschatological process of salvation; but each man has his own place, and no place is a place of privilege free of obligation, service, or ministry. The ark of salvation carries no passengers.

There is thus a universal ministry of all Christians, of which the mark is the universal possession of the Spirit. If any one (*τις*) does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him (Rom. 8:9). The Spirit is both the qualification and the equipment for service in the building up of the community. His own manifestation of the Spirit is given to each man with a view to the common good (*ἐκάστῳ δίδοται . . . πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον*, I Cor. 12:7). Such qualifying and enabling bestowals of the Spirit are called *χαρίσματα*; and when in Rom. 12:6 Paul writes *ἔχοντες δὲ χαρίσματα* it is clear that he is addressing the whole Church, not a spiritual élite or aristocracy. To this observation, however, it must be added that the *χαρίσματα* are described as *διάφορα*; every Christian has a gift, but all Christians do not have the same gift. There are distributions of *χαρίσματα*, Paul says (I Cor. 12:4), though there is but one Spirit, and these

<sup>12</sup> *The Apostle and His Message* (Uppsala, 1947), p. 3.

issue in distributions of ministries (*διακονία*), though there is but one Lord who is served through them all. It is this distinction among gifts and services that makes it possible to speak of "ministry" in the familiar, technical sense.

Rom. 12 and I Cor. 12 are well known as the places where Paul goes into greatest detail in describing gifts and services. It is interesting to note that in each passage his terminology shifts, though in opposite directions. In Rom. 12 he begins with gifts and moves on to persons exercising gifts: *προφητεία, διακονία*; then *ὁ διδάσκων, ὁ παρακαλῶν, ὁ μεταδιδούς, ὁ προϊστάμενος, ὁ ἐλεῶν*. In I Cor. 12 he begins with persons, and moves on to gifts: *ἀπόστολοι, προφῆται, διδάσκαλοι*; then *δυνάμεις, χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήψεις, κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν*. The form as well as the content of the two lists indicates the very close connection between gift and function.

A different kind of analysis will show that the ministries or services Paul has in mind fall into three groups: (1) Those operated through speech—prophecy, teaching, exhortation, glossolalia; (2) Services of love to the needy—service (*διακονία*), the healing of disease and working of miracles, sharing out money and other ways of showing mercy (probably the obscure word *ἀντιλήψεις* is to be reckoned here); (3) The activity of taking the lead, presiding, (with *ὁ προϊστάμενος* in Romans we should put *κυβερνήσεις* in I Corinthians). These three groups of services correspond to fundamental features of the pattern of Christian existence: (1) The gospel, which must be rightly preached, taught, and understood; (2) Action in love, *ἀγάπη*, the indispensable mark of Christian life; (3) Discipline, through which Christian obedience is contained and becomes concrete. The sacraments have no place in this list, probably because Paul did not think it the special duty of any particular class of persons to administer them. He himself did not regularly baptize his converts (I Cor. 1:13-17), and there is no hint in I Cor. 11 that the Lord's Supper required a president—rather the contrary (especially 11:33, and see below).

The activities listed in Rom. 12 and I Cor. 12 can be paralleled in various places in the Pauline letters, but for our purpose it will

be more interesting to follow up the hint at the end of the last paragraph, and consider one or two things that are noticeably absent from the Pauline letters.

The most striking, suggestive, and perhaps surprising observation is that Paul never uses the word *πρεσβύτερος* "presbyter" (elder). This is the more striking view of the fact that the word was a familiar one in Jewish society in which Paul had been brought up. How far it was current in Palestinian and Hellenistic synagogues cannot be discussed here; its frequent use for Jewish leaders in the gospels is significant. Von Campenhausen has argued that it is not only the word that is missing. "With the institution of elders we enter into a sphere of ecclesiastical thought of a fundamentally different kind, which cannot readily be introduced into or derived from the Pauline picture of the community."<sup>13</sup> A similar view has been expressed by H. Greeven.<sup>14</sup> The point is that the Jewish presbyterate is an essentially backward-looking office which preserves and transmits tradition and applies it to the life of the community. The Christian churches, however, did not live in the past, but in the present and for the future, a present controlled by the work of the Spirit and a future controlled by the hoped-for coming of Christ. Such communities did not value most highly their links with the past, and the special contribution that their oldest members, with the longest memories, could make. It is true that they were interested in the historic figure of Jesus of Nazareth, but for them he was scarcely a figure of the past. His life, death, and resurrection were parts of the present in which they lived. As the Lord, he was their contemporary.

To take this view is not to imply either that the Christian presbyterate, when it did appear, was, like the Jewish, primarily a link with the past, or that the Pauline communities were completely devoid of leadership. A few passages come under consideration here, including the references to the *προϊστάμενος* in Rom. 12:8

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>14</sup> "Propheten, Lehrer, Vorsteher bei Paulus," in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 44 (1952-53), pp. 1-43, especially pp. 40-41.

and to κυβερνήσεις in I Cor. 12:28. With these we may consider the following:

I Cor. 16:15-18: . . . οἴδατε τὴν οἰκίαν Στεφανᾶ, ὅτι ἐστὶν ἀπαρχὴ τῆς Ἀχαΐας καὶ εἰς διακονίαν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἔταξαν ἑαυτούς· ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ὑποτάσσησθε τοῖς τοιούτοις καὶ παντὶ τῷ συνεργοῦντι καὶ κοπιῶντι . . . ἐπιγινώσκετε οὖν τοὺς τοιούτους.

I Thess. 5:12-13: Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοὶ, εἶδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νοθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἡγεῖσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπερεκπερισσῶς ἐν ἀγάπῃ διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν.

There are close linguistic parallels between these passages. The common use of the important Pauline technical term κοπιῶν will be observed. The unusual εἶδέναι in the latter corresponds to the imperative ἐπιγινώσκετε in the former (not to the indicative οἴδατε). The ὑποτάσσησθε in I Cor. 16:16 is explained by the ἡγεῖσθαι ἐν ἀγάπῃ in I Thess. 5:13, and the προϊσταμένους of I Thess. 5:12 by εἰς διακονίαν ἔταξαν ἑαυτούς in I Cor. 16:15.

The context in each epistle is also important. The exhortation of I Thess. 5:1-11 ends with the words: παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε εἰς τὸν ἕνα, καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε; and vs. 14, addressing the same "brothers" as are addressed in vs. 12, continues: νοθετεῖτε τοὺς ἀτάκτους, παραμυθεῖσθε τοὺς ὀλιγοψύχους, ἀντέχεσθε τῶν ἀσθενῶν, μακροθυμεῖτε πρὸς πάντας. What this means is that all Christians engage in mutual exhortation and admonition and in loving service to the community, but some Christians do this better and more abundantly than others. This is the meaning of διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν; not "Hold them in love because of their office" (though this is how the words are often taken), but "Hold them in love on account of what they have actually done and are doing."

It has often, and correctly, been remarked that in First Corinthians there is no trace of organized leadership. To secure order at the Lord's Supper Paul bade his readers to "wait for one another" (11:33)—not to wait for the presiding minister. When he dealt with the tumultuous prophesying and ecstatic speech that went on in the Corinthian assemblies he made no appeal to a

leader or chairman to see that things are done decently and in order (14:40); it was the business of the church as a whole to see to it that not more than two or three speak with tongues and to test what the prophets said (14:27, 29). Apparently there was no one to whom he could appeal to look after the funds in his absence; each member of the church had to keep what he has saved παρ' ἑαυτῷ (16:2).

Von Campenhausen wrote: "The most striking feature in the Pauline conception of the community is the complete absence of any juridical order, the exclusion on principle of any kind of formal authority within the local community."<sup>15</sup> This is an important observation and one that carries conviction; it is, however, important to add that this conclusion rests not on the absence of ministries (unless this word is taken, as I do not take it, to mean hierarchical ministry), but on the character of the ministries that are in fact visible in the Pauline communities.

We have seen that the word πρεσβύτερος is absent from the Pauline letters, and we need not linger long over the ἐπίσκοποι and διάκονοι of Phil. 1:1. Older interpreters commonly took the former word in the sense of the presbyter-bishops of the Pastorals, and there is much to commend this view in the fact that when, much later, Polycarp wrote to Philippi he mentioned πρεσβύτεροι and διάκονοι, but not ἐπίσκοποι. It is, however, perhaps more likely that the two words denote financial officers—the officials perhaps of the poor fund, from which a contribution had been sent to relieve the apostle (Phil. 2:25; 4:10-20).<sup>16</sup> It is true that P. H. Menoud argues that in a brief epistolary greeting Paul would not have spared two words for one financial reference, and that the ἐπίσκοποι are to be thought

<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>16</sup> The argument is no *e silentio*. The absence of the word πρεσβύτερος could not prove that the Pauline churches had no elders, nor could the fact that Paul never describes the appointment of church officials prove that no such formal appointments took place (though there is a strong presumption to that effect). Paul's references to leaders take the form of an appeal for recognition of a ministry that has already proved itself in spontaneous service, Christian character, and effectiveness (cf. E. Schweitzer, *op. cit.*, §7k, and note 387). This observation corresponds with the Pauline doctrine of the Spirit.

of as teachers;<sup>17</sup> but we do not know how the funds were administered at Philippi, and if Paul had no reason to mention any other group in addition to the saints as a whole, he would doubtless feel that he had room enough for the two relevant titles.

I have mentioned Menoud's opinion here partly in order to follow him to one further passage, Gal. 6:6, which appears to refer to paid, or at least rewarded, teachers. The interpretation of the passage is disputed,<sup>18</sup> but it probably refers to the same sort of person as is described in I Cor. 12:28 under the word διδάσκαλος. The opening verses of the chapter have emphasized the common pastoral responsibility of all Christians (Gal. 6:1), and their mutual as well as their individual obligations (6:2, 5). There is, however (δέ), a special case: κοινωνείτω ὁ κατηχούμενος τὸν λόγον τῷ κατηχοῦντι ἐν πᾶσιν ἀγαθοῖς (vs. 6). The learner has a special duty to his teacher. This should be regarded as a special case of the principle stated as a dominical ordinance in I Cor. 9:14: ὁ κύριος διέταξεν τοῖς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον καταγγέλλουσιν ἐκ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ζῆν.

We must look back over this Pauline material that we may be ready to take a further step. The Pauline conception of the Church is full of "ministry" in the general sense of the term; the Church is Christ's body, and every member of the body has its own *πρᾶξις* (Rom. 12:4); diverse *χαρίσματα, διακονίαι, ἐνεργήματα* (I Cor. 12:4 ff.) are operative. All these activities are functions of the eschatological situation of the new community and bear witness to its possession of the Spirit, in itself the mark of its position "between the times," in the accepted hour, God's day of salvation (II Cor. 6:2). The fact that there is much evidence in Paul of a ministry of the word, of a *διακονία* of loving service to the needy, and some evidence that some Christians are outstanding in the service they render to the saints, but no evidence of an organized hierarchical ministry, is theologically significant. The Church's ministry at large, like the ministry

<sup>17</sup> *L'Église et les Ministères* (Cahiers théologiques de l'actualité protestante 22; Neuchâtel and Paris, 1949), p. 45.

<sup>18</sup> See H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, 10th ed.; Göttingen, 1949), *ad loc.*

of the apostles in particular, belongs to the category of *event*.<sup>19</sup> It is not a function of continuous history but of the unique moment of divine activity. The primary object of all this ministerial activity is witness.<sup>20</sup> The word of the community, which is the primary form of witness, and its deed, which is essential though secondary, point to God's love for men in Jesus Christ and the work he has done on their behalf. What is more, they are actually part of this divine event. This Paul stated most plainly of his own apostolic sufferings in Col. 1:24: *χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, καὶ ἀνταναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐκκλησία*. Paul went on to say, *ἣς* [that is, of the Church] *ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ διάκονος*. Since the Church has other *διάκονοι* (in the primary sense) we may suppose that this sharing in the afflictions of Christ is the lot of all Christians, and this, in fact, is stated, or implied, elsewhere. The same point is made from another angle in Rom. 10:14, where there is a plain inference that Christ himself is heard in the word of his preachers. The spread of the gospel and the growth of the Church are themselves part of the eschatological event.

Paul himself was aware of attempts to exalt the ministry, or rather particular ministers, attempts which, because they disregarded this point, reduced what they sought to magnify. It is from this point of view that we should consider his treatment of the false apostles in II Cor. 10-13. There is a large and complicated problem here, and I must be content to pick out one or two special features. Unlike Paul, whose apostleship was marked rather by suffering and shameful treatment than by any visible marks of distinction and success, his adversaries appealed to visible signs to legitimize their ministry. It is true that Paul could often appeal to the same signs and privileges if he wished, but it was very seldom, and only for a special purpose, that he allowed himself to do so. They were Hebrews, Israelites, of the seed of Abraham. They were good speakers. Their ministry had universal recogni-

<sup>19</sup> Cf. J. L. Leuba, *L'institution et l'événement* (Neuchâtel and Paris, 1950).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV, iii, 2, especially pp. 610-14.

tion, and this was acknowledged by the fact that the churches contributed to their support. Thus encouraged, they behaved arrogantly in the churches in which they ministered. They had visions and received revelations. When Paul chose to be a fool he could match their claims, but when he was himself he boasted only of his weakness, in which the invisible power of Christ, secretly anticipating the age to come, was made known. It was they, not he, who illustrated the Jewish *shaliakh* pattern, and represented Jewish traditionalism and authoritarianism on Christian soil.

The importance of this for our subject is admirably brought out by E. Käsemann:

If we may understand the Corinthian intruders on the basis of this Jewish model, their whole appearance, both the openness of their opposition to Paul and the juridical tone of their indictment, gain color. As apostles, they are at the same time inspectors commissioned by the primitive Jerusalem community, which felt itself to be the legal heir of the Jewish central body and of its claims to the authentic transmission and interpretation of the sacred tradition. And on this basis the Corinthian conflict appears as the collision of two concepts of ministry (*Amtsauffassungen*) on the soil of primitive Christianity.<sup>21</sup>

The Pauline letters were written in the fifties and sixties. We must traverse approximately a generation before we encounter the next great burst of Christian writing, in the eighties and nineties. It is not surprising that it differs in several ways from Paul, not least in the picture it offers of the ministry. The Pauline churches were young; they were dominated by their experience of the Spirit of God; they looked for a speedy consummation of their hopes in the Lord's return. The apostle himself was at hand to drive away false doctrines. They felt little need of any other permanent leadership. A generation later the situation was changed. The apostle himself was gone, and this meant both that a new protection against heresy was called for and that the hope of an eschatological consummation within the first Christian generation was shattered. There was a growing awareness that the Church has a stake in the

<sup>21</sup> "Die Legitimität des Apostels," in *Z.N.W.* 41 (1942), p. 57 (p. 37 of the reprint: Darmstadt, 1956).

past, its own past, as well as in the future. We must now consider what the Church made of this new situation, so far as it affected the ministry. We must begin by considering the question analytically, looking at the different blocks of Christian literature that belong to the period.

Some take us very little beyond the Pauline position. This is true, for example, of Hebrews, an epistle which certainly belongs to the second generation, for the author distinguishes himself and his readers from those who heard the Lord (2:3). The apostles had passed on, though they were not forgotten. The Church of Hebrews has perhaps a rather more clearly defined class of leaders than the Pauline churches had. In the last chapter the *ἡγούμενοι* of the Church are mentioned three times (13:7, 17, 24). The last of these references is no more than a greeting. From the others we learn (1) that the *ἡγούμενοι* speak the word of God; (2) that their faith provides an example for imitation; and (3) that other Christians should be obedient to them, since they keep vigilant watch over men's souls. These leaders thus combine in themselves the three kinds of ministerial activity which earlier we saw to be fundamental in Paul's thought. It is, however, right to add that Hebrews, which has by no means lost the eschatological outlook, also assumes that all Christians will perform ministerial activity. All are to provoke one another to love and good works (10:24); all are responsible for the drooping hands and the weak knees of their brethren (12:12), and this common Christian responsibility is described by the word *ἐπισκοπεῖν* (12:15: *ἐπισκοποῦντες μή τις ὑστερῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ*). The whole church should exercise oversight, and the whole church is rebuked because its members still need teaching when they ought to be ready to teach others (5:12). Hebrews takes us to nothing more explicit than that "capacity for leadership" which "is indicated by readiness to serve."<sup>22</sup>

First Peter also marks no great advance. It is doubtful whether the epistle even mentions presbyters in the technical sense. The word *πρεσβύτερος* occurs at 5:1 and may refer to "elders"; there are how-

<sup>22</sup> Manson, *The Church's Ministry*, p. 55.



ever two good reasons for supposing that it should be rendered "older men." (1) In 5:5 we meet a second group, consisting of νεώτεροι, who are introduced by the word ὁμοίως: ὁμοίως, νεώτεροι, ὑποτάγητε πρεσβυτέροις. There was certainly no order of "younger men," and the fact that πρεσβυτέροις in the Greek does not have the article suggests that the sense is: You younger men should pay due respect to those who are your seniors. (2) In 5:1 the author describes himself as συμπρεσβύτερος. This is difficult on any view of the authorship of the epistle, unless we may suppose that the reference is to age rather than to a particular ministerial office.

We cannot read out of 4:11 (εἴ τις διακονεῖ) a specific reference to deacons. We should however note in this verse a clear statement of the two basic forms of Christian service: "whoever speaks . . . whoever renders service." The witness is borne in word and deed. The epistle insists, as all parts of the New Testament do, on the universality and mutuality of Christian service. After the reference to older and younger men—who naturally must express their Christian obedience in different ways—the author adds, "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another" (5:5, cf. 3:8).

It makes no great difference whether we take πρεσβύτερος in First Peter to refer to an office or not. Undoubtedly the presbyterate was developing at the time when First Peter was written, and it probably did develop out of the older end of each congregation, notwithstanding the fact that some old men can be very silly and that occasionally you find an old head on young shoulders. Again, "readiness to serve" is the qualification or condition of leadership (ἐκουσίως, 5.2).

Jas. 5:14 has a clear reference to the πρεσβύτεροι τῆς ἐκκλησίας, which again is interesting, though in a minor way. The elders are to be sent for in case of illness; we may compare here Baba Batlira 116a: "If anyone has a sick man in his house, let him go to a teacher (*hakam*), that he may seek mercy for him." The elders, in fact (whatever the origin of the Epistle of James may be), correspond closely to Jewish officials; we should not have been surprised if James had used here the word he uses in 2:2 and had

spoken of the elders of the "synagogue" (assembly). It is worth adding to this that James did not suppose that elders occupy all the ministry of the Church. After saying that elders should be sent for in case of illness, he went on, ἐξομολογήσθε οὖν ἀλλήλοις τὰς ἁμαρτίας καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων, ὅπως ἰαθῆτε (vs. 16a).

With Hebrews, First Peter, and James all too briefly dealt with, we must turn to three divisions of the New Testament that are of outstanding importance in this, as in other respects.

Of these, the first is the Johannine literature, which contains the most profound treatment in the New Testament of the twin problems of eschatology and Gnosticism. Neither in the gospel nor in the epistles is there any attempt to ascribe administrative authority to the apostles, and there is little that bears directly and positively on the development of the ministry, at least as far as its outward ordering and organization are concerned. Indeed, so far as "ministers" appear in the epistles they do so in no very favorable light. It is likely that those who "went out from us," though they were never really "of us" (I John 2:19; 4:1-6), were, or would have liked to be, leading members of the Christian society, perhaps therefore (if the word in this sense is not anachronistic) ministers. They are false ministers, however, because they do not maintain the truth of the apostolic gospel of Jesus Christ, God's Son come in the flesh. In the third epistle (III John 9) we meet ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων Διοτρέφης, in whom some have seen the prototype of the monarchical bishop. This may or may not be true; the important thing is that, bishop or not, he excludes himself from the Christian ministry rightly understood by his flouting of the plain word of Christ. He should have sought to be not first but last of all (Mark 9:35; cf. 10:42 ff.) He contrasts unfavorably with the household of Stephanas, who appointed themselves for service (I Cor. 16:15). Whatever his hierarchical status, Diotrephes is a false witness because he does not love.

From these negative points we may return to the positive contribution to our subject made by the Johannine literature. The emphasis of the Johannine books upon the theme of witnessing

has often been remarked and is of central importance. The opening paragraph of the first epistle (I John 1:1-4) is not without grammatical obscurity, but its substance could not be plainer. The writer's purpose is to announce the eternal life that was manifested in and through the historic person, Jesus Christ. In the communication of this message are communion with God and perfect joy. This testimony is the primary work of the apostles—*ὁμοῖς μαρτυρεῖτε, ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς μετ' ἐμοῦ ἔστε* (John 15:27). By this apostolic word the Church lives, and it is the touchstone of discipleship: *ἐὰν ὑμεῖς μείνητε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ, ἀληθῶς μαθηταὶ μου ἔστε* (8:31).

At the same time there is another mark of Christian ministry in the love that stoops to the menial task of feet washing, and even to the giving of life itself: *ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκονται πάντες ὅτι ἐμοὶ μαθηταὶ ἔστε, ἐὰν ἀγάπην ἔχητε ἐν ἀλλήλοις* (13:35).

There is nothing new in this command, nor in the idea of witnessing. If we ask what is new in the Johannine material, two points—so closely related that they might almost be described as one—may be made.

1. John suggests how the testimony of the apostles came, in the new generation, to be at once the testimony of the whole Church and of the individual witness. With little space at my disposal I cannot do better than quote E. C. Hoskyns:

In the perspective of the Johannine writings, the first person plural means primarily the original disciples of Jesus, and . . . it is precisely this plural that is capable of expansion to a general "we" and of contraction to a particular "ego." This expansion and contraction is, however, possible only within the sphere of those who, though belonging to a later generation, have been so completely created by apostolic witness and formed by apostolic obedience that they are veritably carried across into the company of the original disciples of Jesus and invested with the authority of their mission.\*\*

2. Though the apostles bear witness (15:27, quoted above),

\*\* Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, edited by F. N. Davey (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1947), pp. 100-101.

for John the primary witness is the Holy Spirit who continues his work in the Church until the return of Christ. Here we may turn back to 15:26 (*ἐκεῖνος [ὁ παράκλητος] μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ*), and refer also (among other passages) to I John 5:7, *τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ μαρτυροῦν*. It is because the Spirit is always present that a continuing human witness, and thus a continuing human ministry, is possible.

There is a close kinship between the Johannine writings and the Lucan. In the latter also the apostles are primarily witnesses (e.g., Acts 1:8), and their witness, or word, is that which creates the Church. This is true not only of the word spoken by apostles but also of the activity of humbler evangelists (e.g., Acts 11:19-20). As in John, behind this apostolic testimony, given in the first instance by the eyewitnesses but also by other *ὑπηρεταὶ τοῦ λόγου* (Luke 1:2), lies the testimony of the Holy Spirit himself: *ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν μάρτυρες τῶν ῥημάτων τούτων, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ὃ ἔδωκεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς πειθαρχοῦσιν αὐτῷ* (Acts 5:32).

Luke thus joins John in setting forth the gospel, committed originally to the apostles but not as their exclusive property, as the creative life of the Church and the staple feature of its witness to the world. Equally, though in a different way, he stresses the importance of the Church's witness through practical love, for it may fairly be said that two of the great turning points—(perhaps the two greatest turning points—in his narrative depend on this theme. The Hellenist movement, originating with Stephen and issuing in the foundation of the mixed church at Antioch and the Gentile mission, began with the appointment of seven men to supervise the already existing administration of charity to the poor. Similarly Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, the outcome of which was his journey to Rome, was motivated by the desire to bring alms to the poor (cf. also Acts 11:27-30). Acts, further, shows us a Church where there is always someone to assume responsibility and render service—that is, in the Christian sense, to exercise leadership.

Indeed, Acts is full of ministers of one kind and another, and it is impossible here to list them and to discuss all the problems

which their names and descriptions raise. In Acts the *πρεσβύτεροι* come into their own. It is even stated in 14:23 that on the return stretch of their first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas appointed *πρεσβύτεροι* for the churches. In view of the silence of the epistles this can hardly be accepted as historical; if it is we must understand the work of the *πρεσβύτεροι* in terms of what is said in the epistles about those who preside.<sup>24</sup>

If Luke slips at Acts 14:23, he is probably right when he speaks of elders in the church at Jerusalem (11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 21:18). It is likely that the church in Jerusalem, conscious of being now the true Israel of God, should organize itself on the same lines as the old Israel which it was supplanting, and the Jerusalem elders resemble to some extent the Jewish council.

The picture given in Acts 20 of the elders in the church at Ephesus is somewhat different, and recalls the pastoral epistles. These *πρεσβύτεροι*, unlike those in Jerusalem, are also described as *ἐπίσκοποι* (20:28), and it is their responsibility to shepherd God's flock. There can be little doubt that in Paul's speech to these men Luke is holding up to the ministers of his own day what he regards as the true ideal of ministry. It is their duty to continue the work of proclamation, testimony, and teaching that Paul himself has carried out, both publicly and privately (20:20-21, 24, 27, 31). The work of preaching is supported by works of charity, the principle being expressed here in a word of Jesus unrecorded in the gospels: *μακάριόν ἐστιν μᾶλλον δίδόναι ἢ λαμβάνειν* (20:35).

I do not think it profitable here to discuss the appointment of the Seven (Acts 6), since Luke appears to regard them as an *ad hoc* institution; it will be noted that he does not call them deacons.<sup>25</sup> I must also pass over his use of the words "prophet," "teacher," and "evangelist." Luke's main theological service to the idea of ministry, like John's, lies beneath rather than on the surface. He is the Christian historian, and his theological contribution to the

<sup>24</sup> That is, they would be outstanding servants of the Church, recognized as such by their brethren; similarly the elders of Acts 20.

<sup>25</sup> At 21:8 he calls them "The Seven," corresponding to "The Twelve."

New Testament is to be found in his perception that there was and would continue to be Christian history to record. It was, he saw, possible to hold fast to the essentials of Christian eschatology and at the same time to trace the story of a Christian community evolving through the generations within the framework of space and time. It was part of this process that a continuous ministry, not simply a product of the unique circumstances of the last generation of this age, should come into being within the Church. That which gives continuity to the ministry is the Holy Spirit; Luke has no reference to any apostolic or ministerial succession—an astounding omission on the part of the first Christian historian if such a succession is, in fact, essential to the life of the Church. But it is the Holy Spirit who makes men *ἐπίσκοποι* in God's flock (20:28), and the Holy Spirit is always *there*, and not to be confined within any particular channel. In fact, and to put the matter positively, it is Luke's reinterpretation of eschatology in terms of the Holy Spirit so as to include a serious and significant history of the new people of God that leads him to his view of the ministry, which continues the apostolic mission by preaching the apostolic gospel and reproducing the apostolic witness in word and deed.

As early as the Muratorian Canon<sup>26</sup> it was recognized that the pastoral epistles, though having the form of personal letters, were properly used in *ordinationem ecclesiasticae disciplinae*. No other part of the New Testament deals so explicitly with church order, and the epistles will thus provide a suitable stopping place for our sketch of the ministry in the New Testament.

Two points may be very briefly mentioned, for they would command very widespread agreement. (1) The epistles were not written by Paul. This means that their historical setting is fictitious, and we cannot build a historical reconstruction upon the picture of Timothy and Titus they provide. Even if we could we should be obliged to observe that Timothy and Titus were not irreplace-

<sup>26</sup> See for example B. F. Westcott, *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament* (7th ed.); London, 1896, pp. 535, 546.

able "apostolic delegates"—cf. Tit. 3:12.<sup>27</sup> (2) Though the Pastorals show us a more developed situation than any other part of the New Testament, even here ministerial terminology is fluid. That the words *ἐπίσκοπος* and *πρεσβύτερος* are applied to the same persons is a widely held and, I believe, correct view. Moreover, Timothy can be described as a *διάκονος*, and both he and Paul have a *διακονία* (I Tim. 1:12; 4:6; II Tim. 4:5). *διάκονος* is not an exclusively technical term.

What the Pastorals understand by the ministry is best seen by considering the nature and function of the Church, the "pillar and bulwark of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). This does not mean that the truth (or gospel) is dependent on the Church, but that the Church exists to serve it. What the Church is is made clear in II Tim. 2:19. It rests upon a firm foundation which bears a twofold inscription: "The Lord knows his own" and "Let every one who names the name of the Lord depart from evil." The Church is God's elect community called through the gospel, and since every member of it must avoid evil, it must exercise discipline. The Christian gospel and Christian discipline—these are the business of the Church, and it looks primarily to its ministers to supply and apply them.

The Pastorals say nothing about the duties of ministers in relation to the sacraments; they stress repeatedly the central importance of preaching in the minister's task (see, for example, I Tim. 4:11, 13, 15-16; 6:2, 17; II Tim. 2:2, 14-15, 25; 4:1-2, 5; Tit. 2:1, 7, 15). The minister must teach by example as well as by precept (I Tim. 4:12; Tit. 2:7) and must take steps to hand on to others the message he has himself received (II Tim. 2:2). He is equipped and enabled for his work by a special "gift" that accompanies the laying on of hands (I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6). Ministers receive pay-

<sup>27</sup> It might be argued that though the picture of Timothy and Titus is fictitious, the fictitious picture itself bears witness to the existence, at the time when it was drawn, of "apostolic delegates"—diocesan bishops, or metropolitans, whose authority covered a considerable area. There is some substance in this view, but it misreads the picture. Timothy and Titus are still (in the fiction as presumably in fact) travelling missionaries. See Manson, *The Church's Ministry*, pp. 60-64; Von Campenhausen, *op. cit.*, p. 117; Schweitzer, *op. cit.*, note 321.

ment (I Tim. 5:17), though this does not necessarily mean that they have no employment at all in addition to their ministry.

Ministers also preside over the church (I Tim. 3:4-5; 5:17), exercising the necessary discipline, even to the extent of excluding heretics and troublemakers from the church (I Tim. 1:3; II Tim. 2:15; Tit. 1:13; 3:10-11).

The work of ministers—and for that matter the lives of all Christians—are made more difficult by the context in which they are set. They live in the latter age of human history in which error and wickedness multiply (I Tim. 4:1 ff.; II Tim. 3:1-5; 4:3-4). Their task lies in a difficult and discouraging time; their encouragement is that their work is God's work and that, even though they may be bound, his word is not (II Tim. 2:9).

I have in this chapter given a good deal of attention to the trees, and it is time now to stand back and take a quick look at the wood. It seems to me that our investigations justify the conviction that the New Testament reveals a constant conception of the service of God which is rendered in and through the life of his people. It splits into two parts: A service in word, and a service in action. Men serve God and each other by hearing and believing his word, and then in turn proclaiming it that others may hear and believe it. Each of the verbs I have used—hear, believe, proclaim—is to be understood in a wide sense. "Hear" includes obey; "believe" includes understand; proclaim includes teach and explain. There is no accident in this concentration upon the word; it is a theological concentration and arises out of the fact that God himself has spoken—indeed, has sent to men his personal Word, his own Son.

He who was and is the Word of God spoke to his disciples and gave them the word. He also served them in love, giving his life as a ransom for them, and this service in love also became a part of their ministry—theological in its origin, though absolutely practical in its execution. These are the fundamental forms of Christian ministry which appear throughout the New Testament.

These are the two basic forms of Christian ministry, and we have seen how in the Pauline churches they were distributed in

a great variety of individual gifts through the whole membership of the community. We have seen also, emerging alongside them, a third dimension of ministry, in which some members of the Church were moved and equipped to carry to a higher level or over a wider field gifts which were by no means their exclusive property. Sometimes, and naturally, the first and most experienced converts exercised this additional gift of holding the whole community together through their firmer grasp on the gospel and more whole-hearted dedication to the labor of love. Here are the roots of "the ministry" as we know it, but there is still no clear differentiation. The circumstances did not call for organization; the very lack of it was eloquent testimony to the eschatological situation of the Church, which was witnessing the last moments of transition from this age to the age to come, whose word was still Christ's word, whose love was his love, whose suffering was his suffering. The ministry, such as it was, had no purpose but to point away from itself to Christ and to make clear the eschatological event of which it was itself part. I do not wish to suggest that the Church in Paul's day was perfect, but something like this appears to have been the apostle's ideal for it.

Time went on and the eschatological perspective changed till, by the end of the century, it had become much what it is today. It would be as wrong to decry the Church of this period as to idealize that of Paul's age, but it is at least clear where its temptation lay. The Church was settling down in the world; it had a considerable past behind it, and who could tell how long a future before it? Many of its leaders were good men, well aware of their twofold duty in word and service. Others, however, not without thought of their own advantage, helped the Church in the process of settling down by accommodating the gospel to the current Gnostic speculation and their behavior to the standards set by the world. All this can be clearly seen from evidence inside and outside the New Testament.

The situation was taken firmly in hand by the author of the Pastorals; less explicitly by Luke and John. Quite plain moral de-

mands must be laid upon ministers; they apply to all Christians, but if the ministry fails here the body is stabbed in the heart. There was, however, a theological task to achieve as well as a moral one. It is not for the ministry to help the Church to settle down in this age; its calling is precisely the reverse. It must have an eye for the past, for its message—and the Church's life—are rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It must not, however, handle the past as an heirloom, as the rabbis handled their traditions. The Christian witness fails if it does not make clear that now and always the Church lives in the last times; that Jesus Christ, who came but yesterday and will come tomorrow, is always our contemporary; that through the Spirit we live forever in the accepted time, the day of salvation. The ministry is one of God's means of reminding us that we cannot settle down in the traditions we draw from the past and the plans we make for the future, that we are strangers and pilgrims and seek a city out of sight.

It remains only to pick up the thread left loose at the beginning of this chapter. The changing pattern and pressure of eschatology affected the development of the ministry—as of other Christian themes and institutions—not in one way but in two. On the one hand, as time continued and the *parousia* of Christ was deferred the ministry came to be regarded as continuous and successive in an organizational, and authoritative in an administrative, sense. At its best it developed along this line into a tradition-bearing agency; at its worst it became the anchor by which the Church attached itself to this world and the screen by which it protected itself from the urgent immediacy of the present God. On the other hand, where the New Testament theologians found a means of retaining the urgency of primitive eschatology in the continuity of Church history the ministry appears, more or less clearly, as an agent of this eschatological present, rooted in the Word, created by the Spirit, and pointing away from human institutions to the Son of man.