

Beginnings of Christian Institutionalization

March 16, 2006


- Charismatic vs institutional authority
- Discomfort with hierarchy: Legacy of Jesus traditions and Paul
- Texts in the Pauline tradition: Ephesians, Pastorals, and the rise of institutionalization
- Bishops, letters, and authority
- "Church orders": Legislation under the authority of Apostles

Emerging church offices

- Bishop (*episkopos*, "oversee")
- Elder (*presbyteros*, whence "priest")
- Deacon (*diakonos*, "server," "minister")
- In some contexts: deaconess
- Other roles:
 - Widows
 - Virgins


Charismatic vs. Institutional Authority

- Charisma: [Spiritual] gift inherent in the holder
- Charismatic authority: a leader by virtue of "gift"
- Institutional authority: authority resides in role occupied (bureaucrat; President of US)
- Example of tension in an institution with any longevity:
Appointment of Pope Benedict XVI. An authorized college of cardinals, but understand the process as one of spiritual selection



Discomfort with hierarchy: Legacy of Jesus traditions

- Against the titles “rabbi,” “master,” “teacher,” Matthew 23:8–10
- “If I then, [Jesus] your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet,” John 23:14




Discomfort with hierarchy: Legacy of Paul

1 Corinthians 12–14: Charisma rather than institutions

- Spiritual gifts (charisms) (12:4–11):
- Image of the body (12:12–31): no inherent authority to “head”; hierarchy does not lead to “institutions”
- Love, prophecy, tongues (Chs. 13–14): problem of systemic *disorder*

[Will run through these; please refer to online notes]

- Women and “order” (11:2–14; 14:33b–36): Problematic role of women in a theoretically egalitarian society (cf. 1 Cor 7 on marriage)



Spiritual gifts (charisms): 1 Corinthians 12:4–11

“To *each* is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the *common* good....”: utterance of wisdom, utterance of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning spirits, tongues, interpretations of tongues



Image of the body: 12:12–31

No inherent authority to “head”; hierarchy does not lead to “institutions”

- “Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those ... that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.”
- Now God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing”



Love, prophecy, tongues: Chs. 13–14


Problem of systemic *disorder*

- Disruptive aspects of prophecy and esp. tongues for community.
- “When you come together ...” (14:26)
No leadership structure or formal liturgy)




Texts in the Pauline tradition

- Ephesians (disputed authorship): emerging hierarchy
 - Image of the body: Christ is now the head
 - Submission: wives to husbands (as Church is to Lord), children to parents, slaves to masters (as you obey Christ)
- 1 Timothy (Pastoral Epistles, authorship widely doubted)
 - Systematic submission, silence of women
 - Offices
 - Bishop: role of “management” (like household)
 - Elder (Relations to bishops, deacons here?)
 - Deacon (minister, servant)
 - Widows: an “office”? “status”? “supported group”?



Bishops, letters, and authority (i)

- Model and influence of Paul's and "Pauline" letters
- 1 Clement (If authentic, late 1 CE):
 - Apostolic succession; Apostles appointed bishops
 - Church could not dismiss presbyter appointed by Bishop "or by other eminent men"



Bishops, letters, and authority (ii)

- Ignatius of Antioch, *Letters*
 - Bishop: act in accord with Bishop's mind
 - Respect Bishop as you respect authority of God the Father; presbyters take the place of the apostolic council; deacons minister
 - Presbyters act in concert with Bishop
- Cyprian, *On Christian Unity*
 - Concern for unity as expressed by bishops, who stand in for churches
 - Cyprian's **correspondence** bears out this concern



"Church orders": Legislation under the authority of Apostles (i)

- "Apostolic" church orders (Later ones modeled on issues raised in NT letters, and apostolic council in Acts).
- Didache (ca 100?)
 - Wandering teachers, apostles, prophets, others
 - Self taxation (first fruits) support prophets who settle
 - Bishops, deacons (Are these "new"? Note that reader is reminded that these **too** minister ...)



“Church orders”: Legislation under the authority of Apostles (ii)

- Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* (ca. 200)
 - Bishops, presbyters, deacons hierarchically ranked. Rituals and practices of **ordination**
 - Note role of presbyters and **other bishops** in ordination
 - Regular, daily worship in which presb & deacons serve
 - Bishop breaks bread in banquet; “teaches”
- *Didascalia* (3rd Century)
 - Apostolic instructions **to** the Bishop
 - Ordered seating, gender segregation
 - Excommunication
 - Note deacons for men, deaconesses for women
