

## MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERNING PAUL AND THE 'CHURCH'

© 2007 William Finck

So many men look at the oppressive behemoth which calls itself the Roman Catholic Church, and then foolishly place the blame for the creation of this monster and its offspring upon Paul of Tarsus, as if he ever developed such a thing. In doing so, these men are only repeating the romish church's lies by which it claims an apostolic founding, and giving them credence as if they were true, which they certainly are not!

It should be evident to nearly anybody that the apostles probably wrote many more epistles than those which we have in our Bibles, that if we possessed them, we may possibly have a more complete picture of their ideal model for the function and structure of the truly Christian community. However, not out of line with that spirit of simplicity of life which is an object of Christian teaching, it may very well be that we need none other than the scant instruction which we do have. Here we shall examine precisely what the New Testament books, and especially the letters of Paul, really do say concerning the organization and management of a Christian community.

In the apocryphal books are found some writings, in the so-called epistles of Ignatius for instance, which do attempt to clarify or enhance the instructions in our Bibles (i.e., those of 1 Timothy). These writings must be rejected, viewed with suspicion not only because they often conflict with Paul's writing, but also because they bear full support for the organized romish church structure as we know it. They are most certainly mere forgeries, and many commentaries have professed as much. All such post-apostolic writing shall be ignored here.

Both the prophet Daniel (7:8, 20-26) and Yahshua Christ Himself (Rev. 13:11-18) recorded beforehand the troubles that the romish church leadership would cause for us. Once one obtains a sound knowledge of history, the meanings of these prophecies and many others become astonishingly clear. Yet this foreknowledge by Yahweh of the romish church surely is not a divine blessing of such an organization, that it may somehow be considered righteous and legitimate (note Luke 4:5-7), for the prophecies themselves put forth a declaration quite to the contrary. Rather, it must be understood that the children of Israel were to be punished for seven times for their disobedience (Lev. 26). A "time" in prophecy being 360 years, seven times is 2520 years. This period began with the Assyrian invasions and deportations of Israel, which occurred from 741 to 676 B.C. (the 65 years of Isa. 7:8). The two beasts of Rev. 13, entities which are also outlined in Daniel chapter 7, are the succession of ancient world empires (also discussed in a different way in Daniel chapter 2) ending with the Roman, followed by the popery of the romish church. Each of these beasts was to last for about 1260 years (Revelation 13:5 dates the first, Daniel 7:25 the second) which is 3-and-a-half "times" ( $3.5 \times 360 = 1260$ ), or 42 "months" of years ( $42 \times 30 = 1260$ ), a day being a year in prophecy (i.e. Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6). A study of history surely does reveal that each of these beasts did indeed endure for about 1260 years. It is certainly evident that both the succession of ancient empires and the romish church were a part of

Yahweh's means of punishing the children of Israel for their disobedience. There is much more that could be said here, however it suits not the purpose of this discussion.

It is evident that the organization of the romish church was very closely patterned after the imperial Roman government, and also incorporated the major elements of pagan Roman religion. The popes were very much like the Roman emperors in many respects, and exercised authority over the kings of Europe for many centuries. The title "pontiff", from the Latin *pontifex*, is derived from the Latin *pontis* or "bridge". The title was used of pagan Roman priests and implies that the holder of the title was the bridge to their god. The title "Pontifex Maximus", which belonged to the pagan Roman religious figurehead from early times, was taken by the emperors for themselves. "Priests" and "church" edifices (temples), "nuns" (vestral virgins), and many of their ceremonies and rituals, along with the colorful costumes and other symbols, are all derived directly from the pagan religions of old Rome. The "canonized" so-called "saints" replaced the pagan Roman pantheon, which included a collection of idols taken out of the nations conquered by Rome. The idea of a "patron saint" of anything, such as a place or an occupation, comes directly from Greco-Roman paganism, where gods or demons were given those same roles throughout pagan poetry. The "college of cardinals" is a shadow of the Roman senate. The diocesan system is quite like a system of provincial government, each bishop a proconsul or procurator. The title "cleric" signifies an "allotment holder", the word being derived from the Greek κληροῦχος meaning "*one who held an allotment of land, especially to citizens in a foreign country*" (Liddell & Scott, hereinafter L&S). By the very language used, the romish church lays claim to the entire world! Of course, none of this has any support in the New Testament, neither in the Gospels, nor in the letters of Paul, nor anywhere else. Studying the epistles of the apostles, a very different picture of the intended "church" life emerges.

Wherever the word "church" appears in the standard translations of the New Testament, the Greek word is ἐκκλησία (1577, *ekklesia*). Difficult to discern from those translations, and poisoned by false concepts of the word "church", the ἐκκλησία is "*an assembly of the citizens regularly summoned*" (L&S), which does not in any way denote an edifice or any systemized organization with a professional hierarchy, but is rather simply the *assembly*, those of the children of Israel summoned by Yahweh (i.e. Isa. 42:16; 43:1-7; 44:6-7, 21-23; 48:12-14; 49:1-7; Joel 2:32; Matt. 15:24; John 10:3), that body of true Israelite Christians either in the world or in any particular community, depending on the scope of the context. They are called the ἐκκλησία whether or not they happen to be currently assembled together (i.e. Acts 8:3; 9:31; 1 Cor. 14:23). Many in Israel Identity would prefer to translate ἐκκλησία from its components, "the out-called" or "the called-out ones", which should not be deemed incorrect.

Early Christians gathered not to participate in any rigid program of rituals, scripted and repetitious from week to week. Nor did they gather merely to participate in the "Lord's supper" (i.e. 1 Cor. 11:22), which the romish church has also made into a vain ritual (see 1 Cor. 11:17-26). Yahshua set the example of communion for us – in a private home at dinner with His loved ones. We should follow His example. Paul's one

recorded example of communion is at Acts 27:33-36 (compare Luke 24:30), where praising and offering thanks to Yahweh he broke bread and shared it with his fellows, without pomp or ritual. Rather, early Christians gathered to learn. The primary teaching instrument was the Word. Since books were scarce, being very costly to produce, they had to gather in order to receive the Word (Acts 17:2, 11; Rom. 15:4; 16:26). Paul mentions the scriptures often in his letters, and the record shows that he fully expected every Christian to be able to access them. By contrast, the romish church purposely withheld the scriptures from the common people for nearly a thousand years, even putting to death those who dared to translate them from Greek or Latin so that the common people may understand them. Paul would certainly not have approved of such behavior! Until the 1960's the romish church ceremony and ritual was always conducted entirely in 'church' Latin, which the great majority of its attendants never understood, a practice which is absolutely contrary to Paul's very own words at 1 Cor. 14:9, 19.

Matthew 16:18 notwithstanding, nowhere in the New Testament is it mentioned that there is any one head over the assembly (any particular body of Israelite Christians), except Yahshua Christ Himself, and nowhere in scripture is it mentioned that any local assembly of Christians would be subject to any other authority (i.e. Eph. 5:21 ff.). Paul himself disowned lordship over anyone's faith (2 Cor. 1:24). The popes have always claimed the title *Vicarius Filii Dei* (which sums to 666, counting the value of its letters in the Latin system), which means *Substitute for the Son of God*. In contrast, Paul wrote at Gal. 3:28 "... all you are one in Christ Yahshua", and at Eph. 5:23 "Christ is Head of the assembly ...", where the verb is in the Present tense, and not past or future. Where Paul said at Col. 1:24 "Now, I rejoice in these sufferings on your behalf, and I substitute for those deficiencies of the afflictions of the Anointed with my flesh on behalf of the body itself, which is the assembly", the term "Anointed" is simply another term for the children of Israel, as demonstrated in my recent pamphlet *Yahweh's Anointed: The Children of Israel*. Paul never wrote anything about Yahshua Christ needing any substitute! It should be apparent that **dead men** need successors as **substitutes**! Yahshua Christ, who lives, certainly needs no such thing! There is no support for popery anywhere in the New Testament – and especially in the letters of Paul – unless one wants to consider a small number of statements which are disjointed, misinterpreted, and taken out-of-context to be such support!

Concerning Matthew 16:18 and the changing of Simon's name to "Peter", this is mentioned in Mark 3:16, Luke 6:14 and John 1:42, however only Matthew's gospel has the statements attributed to Christ in Matt. 16:18-19. Even so, there is no indication that these statements could be an interpolation and they should not be considered as such. They must, however, be examined more closely. The A.V. translates Matt. 16:18 in part: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (πέτρος), and upon this rock (πέτρα) I will build My church ...", and there is a distinction between πέτρος and πέτρα (*petros* and *petra*) which is lost in translation. Liddell & Scott define πέτρος "a stone, distinguished from πέτρα", and πέτρα "a rock, a ledge or shelf of rock ... Properly, πέτρα is a *fixed rock*, πέτρος a *stone*". Consequently, I would render this part of Matt.

16:18: "... you are a stone, yet upon this bedrock I will build My assembly ...", in order to maintain the distinction, while at the same time demonstrating the false claims of the romish church to be but vanity. Even the A.V. rendering of πέτρος at John 1:42 indicates the correct meaning of the word, "stone", where John gives the Hebrew equivalent, spelled "kephas" in English, and its Greek meaning. Certainly Peter, as he subsequently became known, is but a stone, and is not the rock upon which Yahshua Christ builds His ἐκκλησία (assembly). Even Peter saw this distinction, where in his own epistle he in turn calls his readers "living stones" and refers to Yahshua Christ as the "chief cornerstone" (1 Pet. 2:5-6). Paul describes Yahshua Christ as the foundation of His own building (1 Cor. 3:9-11). The authority given to Peter by Yahshua (Matt. 16:19) was also given to the other disciples (Matt. 18:18).

The romish pope-cult claims an unbroken chain of succession from Peter and Paul through a line of bishops of Rome down to today, and claims his authority from Peter, being the "rock" upon which the romish catholic church is built. An examination of history would reveal that the first claim is a lie: the early bishops of Rome were martyred in the persecutions, and most later bishops were mere political opportunists. An examination of scripture, including Paul's epistles, reveals that the second claim is also a lie. In reality, the romish church is built upon the bones of the saints, both figuratively (i.e. Dan 7:25; Rev. 6:9; 12:17) and literally: for the cult's foremost temple, called "Saint Peter's Basilica", is built upon a large necropolis (see *Archaeology Odyssey*, March - April 2001, p. 60, "City of the Dead")! From the edicts of Justinian, and armed with the forged so-called "Donation of Constantine", the romish church gained dominion over all of the Christian assemblies of the οἰκουμένη (the Adamic world), and persecuted all those who refused to prostrate themselves before it, such as the Waldenses (Vaudois) and the Celtic church of the British Isles. The romish church has been but a tool for the dragon in his war against the woman, true Israel.

Paul wrote not to the popish "one true church" at Rome, but to "all those in Rome who are beloved of Yahweh, called saints" (Rom. 1:7), who were actually distributed among several different assemblies, or "churches" (i.e. Rom. 16:5), as they were in other places also (i.e. 2 Cor. 8:1; Gal. 1:2). Nowhere did Paul recognize any single leader of the Roman Christians. In the Revelation, Yahshua Christ sent messages to seven different assemblies, all independent, and not to "one true church" (Rev. 1:11), and Rome was not even considered among these seven! How could even the enemies of popery or "churchianity" possibly blame the romish catholic beast on Paul? Here it shall be endeavored to examine precisely what Paul did say regarding the organization of the assemblies to which he wrote. Hopefully then it may be realized that Paul cannot in honesty be blamed for the romish catholic church behemoth.

Paul was reckoned as an ἀπόστολος (652, *apostolos*), which is "*a messenger, ambassador, envoy*" (L&S). In spite of his modern critics, there is no indication that the original eleven apostles ever denied Paul this title, but rather they respected him as such (i.e. Acts 15, 2 Pet. 3:14-16). Once the "lost" nations of Israel received the gospel, there was no longer a need for such an office, and no successor "apostles" were ever appointed. Yet Paul also counted himself as a mere "servant" or "minister",

i.e. 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 6:4; Eph. 3:7; 1 Tim. 1:12, even though his unique concern as an apostle was for all of the assemblies (2 Cor. 11:28), many of which the record shows that he himself founded. Paul had no subordinates, only colleagues: Rom. 16:3, 7, 21; 1 Cor. 3:5, 21-23; 4:1; 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:19, 24; 6:1-4; Phil. 4:3; Col. 1:7; 4:7 ff.; 1 Thess. 3:2; Ph'm. 1, 2, 24; and partners: 2 Cor. 8:23; Ph'm. 17. The Greek word συνεργός (4904, *sunergos*) is “*working together, joining or helping in work*, and as Substantive a *fellow-workman, help-mate ...*” (L&S). The A.V. rendered it “helper” at Rom. 16:3 and 2 Cor. 1:24, but more correctly “fellow laborer” at Phil. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:2 and Ph'm. 1 and 24, since “helper” may imply subordination to some, which the Greek συνεργός does not imply. Certainly Paul did not think well of self-promotion (i.e. Phil. 2:3, 7-8), and always wrote in the spirit of the words of Yahshua Christ such as are found at Luke 13:30 and 22:26-27. Evidently, individual members of an assembly communicated with Paul directly (i.e. 1 Cor. 1:11), and his letters were written to be read to the entire assembly, not being merely summarized or interpreted by some “priest”, but read in full (1 Thess 5:27; 2 Thess. 2:15), and even read to other assemblies besides those who were initially addressed (i.e. Col. 4:16), which surely also encouraged the copying and distribution of those letters. Paul probably wrote many more epistles than those which we now possess, and the ones which we have themselves indicate that others are missing, i.e. 1 Cor. 5:9 and Col. 4:16.

While Paul in his ministry had allocated resources both human (i.e. 1 Cor. 4:17) and monetary (Rom. 15:31; 2 Cor. 8 and 9), he coerced no one (i.e. 1 Cor. 16:12). His “service to the saints” at Jerusalem must be understood in the context of the social climate there at the time, and it does not provide a reason or excuse to beg support for “missionary” work in foreign lands to alien peoples as so often witnessed in this age. The example Paul set for himself was to work for his wages in order to support himself (i.e. Acts 18:3; 1 Cor. 4:12), which he also recommended others to do (1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:9-12; 1 Tim. 5:8). Paul left no model for a professional priesthood which lived off the fat of the community like parasites (Matt. 23:14; Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47), which we see in the romish church and all of its offspring. There is not even a mention of any word meaning “priest” in connection with a New Covenant assembly in any of Paul’s writings! Only the most ignorant and unjust men could blame Paul for that monster which the romish church became, or for modern judeo-churchianity, things certainly not found in any of Paul’s instructions.

Here we have mentioned some of the various assemblies (ἐκκλησίαι) which Paul wrote to. Paul founded Christian assemblies throughout the cities of the Greco-Roman world, as the records in Acts and his epistles attest. Note that Paul did not found the assemblies at Rome, which he wrote to before ever visiting. That the assemblies which Paul founded in Anatolia were valid Christian assemblies is verified both by Peter who wrote to them (1 Pet. 1:1), and also by Yahshua Christ Himself (Rev. 1:11; 2:1 - 3:22) who addressed and even commended some of them. So anyone who questions the validity of Paul’s work also questions the validity of 1 Peter, of 2 Peter (3:14-16) and of the Revelation. Only a **fool** could do such a thing. Hence, all Paul-bashers, of their own volition, make themselves **fools**!

Paul left no successors [unlike romish pope succession], and warned the assemblies that they were on their own after his final departure, clearly illustrated at Acts 20:17-38. Here Paul tells the leaders of the assemblies gathered to him that they themselves are overseers (ἐπίσκοπος, 1985, *episkopos*, the word from which “bishop” comes) of the “church of God” (the assembly of Yahweh), and no one else! Anyone who reads this account in Acts and then blames Paul for popery and the romish church beast is terribly **foolish**! Since Paul himself would not rule over the assemblies of Christ (2 Cor. 1:24), surely neither would he recommend that anyone else do so, except Yahshua Christ Himself, for whom there is no substitute (i.e. 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18)! So it is evident that Paul left behind him a collection of independent, autonomous Christian assemblies, which both Peter and Yahshua Christ also recognized and acknowledged. Now the internal structure of the local assembly, from the epistles of Paul and elsewhere in the New Testament, shall be examined, beginning with a compilation of the terms used to describe governance within the assembly, or Christian community. The usage of these terms outlined here may be verified with a Strong’s Concordance.

ἐπίσκοπος (1985, *episkopos*) is a noun, and the very word from which the English word *bishop* is derived, by way of the Vulgar Latin *ebiscopus* and Medieval English *bisceope*. ἐπίσκοπος appears five times in the N.T. and in the A.V. it was translated only once, at Acts 20:28, as “overseers” in the plural. Otherwise it appears as the borrowed “church” word *bishop* at Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7 and 1 Pet. 2:25. An ἐπίσκοπος is properly “one who watches over, an overseer, guardian ... a public officer, intendant ...” (L&S). The related noun ἐπισκοπή (1984, *episkopê*) is “a watching over, visitation ... the office of ἐπίσκοπος ... generally, an office ...” (L&S). In the A.V. ἐπισκοπή is “the office of a bishop” at 1 Tim. 3:1, “bishoprick” at Acts 1:20 (compare Psa. 109:8), and “visitation” at Luke 19:44 and 1 Pet. 2:12.

Verbs related to ἐπίσκοπος are ἐπισκοπέω (1983, *episkopeō*), and ἐπισκέπτομαι (1980, *episkeptomai*). The verb ἐπισκοπέω is in the A.V. the “looking diligently” of Heb. 12:15 and “taking the oversight” of 1 Pet. 5:2. ἐπισκέπτομαι is in the A.V. to “look out” at Acts 6:3, and to “visit” on ten other occasions.

My own translations have rendered the word ἐπίσκοπος either *overseer* or *supervisor*. The word ἐπισκοπή is either *office* or more fully *office of supervisor*. The transliteration “bishop”, which is not a translation but is instead a borrowed word interjected into the language for devious “church” purposes, I have cautiously avoided.

πρεσβύτερος (4245, *presbuteros*) is the comparative form of πρέσβυς which is “an old man ... Comparative πρεσβύτερος ... *elder* ...” (L&S), and appears over 60 times in the N.T. as a noun, an *elder(s)*, as it usually is in the A.V. The related noun πρεσβυτέριον (4244, *presbuterion*) is “a council of elders” (L&S). The A.V. renders πρεσβυτέριον as “elders” at Luke 22:66, and “estate of the elders” at Acts 22:5. However at 1 Tim. 4:14 the A.V. merely transliterates the word, using another “church” word merely borrowed from Greek: “presbytery”.

διάκονος (1249, *diakonos*), a noun, is “a servant, waiting-man, Latin minister ...” (L&S) and appears 30 times in the N.T. In transliteration, it is the source of the

borrowed “church” word *deacon*, Old English *diacon* and Late Latin *diaconus*. διάκονος is in the A.V. “minister(s)” 20 times, and “servant(s)” 7 times, and either of these translations are acceptable, so long as the term *minister* is understood to mean *servant* and not taken as some position of authority, which the Greek meaning of the word surely does not bear. On 3 occasions the A.V. renders this word as “deacon(s)”, at Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8 and 12, which is not acceptable since those renderings manipulate the word so as to somehow support the artificial structure of the organized “church”. διάκονος in those passages should not be distinguished from the other 27 passages in which the word appears.

The related noun διακονία (1248, *diakonia*) is “*the office of a διάκονος, service ... 2. attendance on a duty, ministration ...*” (L&S) and appears 34 times in the N.T. The A.V. has rendered the word “administration(s)” twice, “to minister” once, “ministering” three times, “ministry” or “ministration” 22 times, “relief” once, “service” three times, “serving” once and “office” once.

The verb διακονέω (1247, *diakoneō*), is “*to minister, serve, do service ... II. to furnish, supply ...*” (L&S) and appears in the A.V. 37 times. The A.V. has rendered the word twice *to administer*, ten times *to serve* and 23 times *to minister*, and all of these are acceptable, as long as one understands the word *minister* as a verb in the sense of performing a service to the assembly, or for the assembly, and not ruling over it, a perception which the Greek meaning of διακονέω does not support nor convey. Yet like διάκονος, the A.V. rendered διακονέω as “to be a deacon” twice, at 1 Tim. 3:10 and 13, which following the “church” Liddell & Scott also mentions, but which is omitted from the definition given above. Of course, διακονέω may mean *to be a διάκονος*, but “deacon” is a “church” word borrowed from Greek for artificial “church” purposes, and not an English word.

In my own translations, διάκονος is usually *servant*, but nearly as often *minister*. διακονέω is usually *to serve*, but nearly as often *to minister*. διακονία is most often a *service*, but also in various contexts an *administration, attendance, ministering, ministry, office, or supply*.

It must be mentioned, that in the A.V. a diverse group of 12 other Greek words have on a total of 28 occasions been rendered “(to) minister (-eth, -ing, -s, -try)”, none of which should be taken to imply the holding of any office or position within the assembly, and so they shall not be discussed here.

Now that the basic terms describing offices within an organized Christian assembly have been defined, and the manner in which the A.V. has treated those words has been observed, their application in the New Testament may be discussed, once the meaning of one more Greek word has been examined.

χειροτονέω (5500, *cheirotoneō*) only appears twice in the N.T., however it is a very important word. Its interpretation determines whether a Christian assembly should select its own leaders, and thereby remain autonomous, or whether some outside, **supposed authority** selects those leaders, where the assembly then becomes subject to that **supposed authority**.

Liddell & Scott define χειροτονέω “*to stretch out the hand, for the purpose of voting ... II ... to vote for, elect, properly by show of hands ... Passive to be elected ... χειροτονηθῆναι, election, was opposed to λαχεῖν, appointment by lot ...*” and this is the natural meaning of the word, since its components, χεῖρ and τόνος, are *a hand* and *a stretching* respectively. This definition was derived from the 7th edition of the Liddell & Scott *Greek-English Lexicon*. The 9th edition of Liddell & Scott does add “*appoint*” to the word’s definition, yet it is obviously following the “church” since it cites both N.T. passages where the word appears, but no secular authority in order to show that the word was ever actually used in such a manner.

The A.V. rendering of Acts 14:23, “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed”, contains **several errors** which shall not be reviewed at length here, but which are discussed in the notes for this passage in my own translation of Acts, part of my forthcoming edition of *The Records of Luke*. My own translation of Acts 14:23 reads thusly: “And elders being **elected** by them in each assembly, praying with fasting they presented them in whom they had confidence with the authority.” The important issue to note here is that χειροτονέω is rendered “**elected**” (appearing here in the past tense), **and NOT “ordained”**.

The second occurrence of χειροτονέω in the N.T. is at 2 Cor. 8:19, a verse rendered in part by the A.V.: “And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us in this grace ...”, language which is quite **ambiguous**. From my own edition of Paul’s epistles, this same pericope reads: “and not only, but our fellow traveler has also been hand picked by the assemblies to be endued with this favor...”, and “**hand picked**” may just have well been “**elected**”. The assemblies chose who was going to represent them by traveling to Jerusalem with Paul to present their gift to the needy there; Paul himself did not make the choice. This is even more evident reading the previous verse, 8:18, which I have read: “And we have sent along with him that brother of whom there is approval in the good message throughout all of the assemblies”.

There are many Greek words which may be rendered *appointed, chosen, or ordained* in English. The use of χειροτονέω by Luke and Paul in these two passages very clearly shows in both context and definition that the leaders and servants of a Christian assembly should be **elected** by that assembly. The assembly chooses its own leaders. No one sets leaders over them, as so-called “churches” do today, and there is no other passage in the New Testament which gives credence to such an idea. The romish church built its authority upon the decrees of Justinian and its own false claims, and the ignorant masses were led to believe them, just as so many still do today. Only the most foolish of men could blame this on Paul of Tarsus.

In the definitions of the words used in the N.T. given previously, we have seen what appears to be two positions of authority within the Christian assembly. These are ἐπίσκοπος (*overseer or supervisor*) and πρεσβύτερος (*elder*). That these are legitimate positions within the assembly is found not only because Paul uses the terms in such a context, but Peter, James and John do likewise, and their so doing verifies many of



Paul's statements for us (i.e. 1 Peter 5:1, 2; James 5:14; Rev. 4:4, 10 et al.). That these two offices are actually one and the same is fully evident from the discourse in Acts chapter 20, at vv. 17 and 28, and at Titus 1:5-7 and 1 Pet. 5:1-2. Where the A.V. has "ordain" at Titus 1:5, the Greek word is καθίστημι (2525, *kathistâmi*) which may mean "to ordain, appoint" but also "to establish" (L&S). While the meaning of this one word here may be argued, we have already seen the manner by which elders were to be selected, by election of the assembly at Acts 14:23 and 2 Cor. 8:19 (though the election there was for a different purpose), so here I must read καθίστημι as *establish*.

Peter discusses the role of an elder at 1 Pet. 5:1 ff., where he states that they should lead by example, and not lord (*become a dictator*) over the assembly. Likewise, Paul discusses the role of supervisor ("bishop" in the A.V.) at 1 Tim 3:1-7. That "elder" and "supervisor" are one and the same role, Joseph Thayer discusses at length in his *Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament* under πρεσβύτερος (4245): "That they [οἱ πρεσβύτεροι, elders] did not differ at all from the (ἐπίσκοποι) bishops or overseers (as is acknowledged also by Jerome on Tit. i. 5 ...) is evident from the fact that the two words are used indiscriminately, Acts xx. 17, 28; Tit. i. 5, 7, and that the duty of presbyters is described by the terms ἐπισκοπεῖν, 1 Pet. v. 1. sq., and ἐπισκοπή, Clem. Rom. 1 Cor. 44, 1; accordingly only two ecclesiastical officers, οἱ ἐπίσκοποι and οἱ διάκονοι [overseers or supervisors and ministers or servants] and are distinguished in Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1, 8. The title ἐπίσκοπος denotes the function, πρεσβύτερος the dignity; the former was borrowed from Greek institutions, the latter from the [Judaean]" [brackets mine, but not parentheses]. James also mentioned elders in his epistle (5:4), and they are discussed again by Paul at 1 Tim. 5:17 ff.

So we see that overseer or supervisor (A.V. "bishop") and elder are one and the same office, and we have seen that the men of the assembly are elected to this office by the assembly, as previously discussed referring to Acts 14:23 and the verb χειροτονέω. From the instructions given by Paul at 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and 5:17-24 and elsewhere, it is also evident that an assembly may have more than one elder at any given time. It is also evident that the assembly should consider men who have at one time or another served in the capacity of a teacher of scripture (a function performed by a minister) when filling a position of elder, as Paul instructs at 1 Tim. 3:2. The elder is a leader of and an example to the assembly, but not its lord or ruler (1 Pet. 5:3). Yahshua Christ is the one and only Head over one and all in every Christian assembly: 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18 et al. There is no prescription for popery in the New Testament, and especially in the letters of Paul. In the temporary absence of Yahshua Christ, scripture is the only valid authority: Acts 17:2, 11; 18:24, 28; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 11:2; 14:37 (v. 2 Pet. 3:15-16); Gal. 2:5; 6:6; Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:15-17; 4:2 et al.

As we have also seen Thayer agree, the only other office in the Christian assembly is διάκονος, minister or servant (sometimes "deacon" in the A.V.). From the definition of διάκονος discussed previously, we have seen that minister, servant and deacon are all one and the same. Paul discusses the qualifications of ministers at 1 Tim. 3:8-13. Note that in 1 Tim. 3, Paul's instructions disqualify every single romish

catholic cardinal, bishop and priest, along with many of the ministers of other denominations, from being legitimate servants of the assembly of Yahweh.

Any person at any time may serve as a minister to an assembly, and even voluntarily (1 Cor. 16:15), although it is clear from 1 Tim. 3:8-13, in conjunction with other statements of Paul, that minister may also be an office in the assembly to which one or more persons may be elected, each performing some specified function for an extended period of time. These may be teachers, or messengers, or caretakers of the elderly, or any other capacity which the community of Christians may require or even desire. Eph. 4:11-12 lists some of the functions which a minister may be chosen to perform, and other functions are evident elsewhere, such as at Acts 6:1-7; Rom. 16:1; 2 Tim. 2:2 and 1 Pet. 4:10-11. So a minister is one who serves the assembly in a certain task, or even multiple tasks, depending upon his or her abilities. A minister is a servant, not an authority figure, and surely his work must be monitored by the overseers. Various gifts beneficial to the assembly are discussed in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. At Rom. 12:7 διακονία, *ministering* or *administration* is listed as one of these gifts, for which note also 1 Cor. 12:5. Yet 1 Cor. 14:26 ff. reinforces the notion that any member of the assembly, and not just a selected minister, may share his gifts, insights or abilities with the assembly.

While women may serve the assembly in certain capacities, and were even counted by Paul as colleagues (Rom. 16:1, 3; 1 Cor. 16:19; Phil. 4:3), they are forbidden to speak in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:34), and forbidden from teaching or being chosen as elders or having any position of authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12). So while women may hold positions as ministers, there are certain limitations which by necessity must be imposed.

All men of age (20 years: Num. 1:3 et al.) in a Christian community are equals (i.e. 1 Cor. 12:12-26; James 2:1 ff.), with a certain amount of deference given to those who are older than us who are upright members of the community (1 Pet. 5:5). As we have seen, an elder or overseer is not a lord or boss, but a leader who teaches by example. The verb rendered *to rule* in the A.V. at Rom. 12:8 and 1 Tim 3:4, 5 and 5:17 is προϊστημι (4291, *proistâmi*) and means merely *to lead, govern, preside, direct, manage*, etc. It is most literally *to stand before* and not “rule” (for which there are many other Greek terms) as the organized ‘church’ would have it of their appointed “bishops”, something Paul would certainly not recommend. We have also seen that a minister is not an authority figure, but is a servant. A minister is not a “preacher” but may be a teacher, or a proclaimer of the Word, or an administrator of some other task. Yahshua Christ, and by extension His Word in scripture (New Testament and Old), is the only authority. All matters should be brought before the assembly and judged by the Word, which shall be discussed at greater length below. One important difference from the Old Testament judges-era model is explained in 1 Cor. 5: those who have erred terribly should at the most be excluded from the community, rather than condemned (stoned), and Yahweh will see that they are judged.

Surely the above advice given by Paul at 2 Thess. 3:14, 1 Tim 6:3 and Tit. 3:10 must be applied to every and any member of the assembly, including ministers and

elders, and therefore 1 Tim. 5:19 allows for an impeachment process of those officers who go astray. This must necessarily be conducted before the assembly, which would decide the issue. Officers elected by the assembly must therefore be answerable only to the assembly. My own translation of 1 Tim. 5:19 reads thusly: "An accusation against an elder you must not receive publicly, except 'by two or three witnesses'," and the main difference with the A.V. is in reading the Greek word ἐκτός (1622, *ektos*), which is discussed at length in the notes to my edition of Paul's letters. Of course Paul's admonishment here, where he cites Deut. 19:15, should stand for both elders and any other member of the assembly.

The Christian assembly, being autonomous and answering to no other authority except the Word, must therefore assume responsibility for itself and not turn to secular authorities to fulfill its needs. Those who look to the governments of man to solve their problems invite the government to become involved in every facet of their lives. The government becomes their god. One may deny the veracity of such a broad statement, yet this is the very dilemma which we in America suffer today. The Christian assembly provides for its own members and resolves its own social problems. Such is clear in the examples given at Acts 2:44-46; 4:32-37 and 6:1-7. Note also in chapter 6 of Acts, when the apostles recommended that men be selected to serve the assembly by managing a particular necessity, that the people chose the men, and not the apostles. This example, and those given here previously, show again that the people of the assembly choose their own leaders and ministers. Not even Peter, James or John would dictate by appointing these men over the assembly. Why should any organized 'church' (at the time of the apostles or since, or even in the Identity assemblies of today) assume that they have a right to do otherwise? Certainly Paul wouldn't have, as we have already observed here. These examples of Christian social life set forth in Acts are also evident in Paul's epistles, for example at 1 Tim. 5:1-16.

The Christian assembly providing duties of community to its own members, the members must look only to the assembly for those services. This is explained by Paul concerning matters of justice at 1 Cor. 5 and 6, (chapters poorly translated in the A.V.). Since the secular authorities disdain the laws of Yahweh, they cannot judge righteously, nor provide for a community righteously, and should therefore be avoided by Christians. My own translation of 1 Cor. 5:12-13 reads thusly: "<sup>12</sup> What is it to me to judge those outside? Not at all should you judge those within you. <sup>13</sup> But those outside Yahweh judges; 'you will expel the wicked from amongst yourselves'." The Christian assembly must expel wrongdoers, and not "judge" (i.e. condemn) them, trusting that Yahweh Himself will see to it that they are treated in accordance with their deeds. Again, my own translation of 1 Cor. 6:1-11 reads thusly: "<sup>1</sup> Dare any of you, having a matter against another, have it decided before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? <sup>2</sup> Do you not know that the saints will judge the cosmos? And if by you the cosmos is judged, are you unworthy of the smallest trials? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that we will judge Messengers, let alone the things of this life? <sup>4</sup> So then if you should have trial of things pertaining to this life, those who esteem themselves least in the assembly, those will be set to judge. <sup>5</sup> I speak from respect to you. So is there among you not

even one wise, who would be able to decide among his brethren? <sup>6</sup> But brother is brought to trial by brother, and this before those not believing! <sup>7</sup> So then already there is altogether discomfiture among you, seeing that you have matters for judgment among yourselves. Why would you not still more be wronged? Why would you not still more be defrauded? <sup>8</sup> You would rather do wrong and defraud, and this of a brother? <sup>9</sup> Or do you not know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of Yahweh? Do not be led astray: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor rapacious shall inherit the kingdom of Yahweh. <sup>11</sup> And these things some of you may have been, but you have cleansed yourselves; moreover you have been sanctified, moreover you have been deemed fit, in the name of Prince Yahshua Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."

In 1 Cor. 6:1 Paul tells the assembly not to sue for justice before "the unrighteous", or non-Christian, secular authorities. In 6:2-3 Paul tells the assembly that "the saints", Israelites who have accepted the gospel and have returned to Yahweh, separating themselves from the evils of the "world" and from the unrighteous, shall judge the "cosmos" or "world" (Adamic society), and so they certainly should be able to settle their own matters among themselves. In 6:4 Paul advises that they select "those who esteem themselves least", i.e. men who are of a humble disposition, in order to judge such matters. In 6:5-6 Paul expresses his own shock and disbelief that no one among the assembly would be able to judge such matters, and that one Christian would venture to sue another before a non-believer. In 6:7-8 he continues to admonish them for having such problems among themselves at all, and also warns them that they would probably only be wronged even further by the secular authorities. Just think of all the jews, mamzers, and other assorted heathens who sit as judges in America today! And not one of them could ever be righteous before Yahweh!

The local ἐκκλησία, assembly or Christian community, answers to no authority except the Word. There is no basis for a single, one-world command structure such as the romish catholic "church" is organized. Paul certainly never recommended such a thing! For this reason, and much of what follows is of my own opinion, I believe that much latitude is given to the local assembly, to organize and regulate itself based upon its own custom and economic status. I would think that the number of elders (supervisors) elected, the number of ministers (servants), whether or not compensation is granted for time spent in service, or if any of these positions are "full-time" or "part-time", are all dependent upon the size, economic status, and desire of each particular assembly. The assembly itself should decide the authority of its elders, powers delegated to them, functions of ministers, and any other manner of government. Because the children of Israel have not yet been fully restored from their state of punishment, secular authorities should be obeyed (Rom. 13; 1 Pet. 2:11-17; Matt. 22:21 [Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25]; John 19:11), but not placed before Yahweh (Acts 5:29). Surely it may sound as if the function of the Christian assembly is "democratic", but this is certainly not the case since the governing authority (or constitution) is the

Word, and therefore the will of the masses is restricted. The assembly has no authority to disobey or circumvent the Word for any reason!

Are elder, or overseer, and minister, or servant, full-time positions? Should these officers receive compensation from the assembly, living off the good will of the assembly? Although such need not be encouraged, it is not unlawful, i.e. Rom. 15:27 and 1 Cor. 9:1-18 (where Paul also explains why he did not marry, and that he need not have lived in poverty – both contrary to romish church dogma). The example which Paul made was to preach the gospel without burdening the assembly, without cost to the hearers, i.e. 1 Cor. 9:18; 10:33; 2 Cor. 11:7; 12:13; 2 Thess. 3:8; and also to work at labor in order to support himself: Acts 18:3; 1 Cor. 4:12. He recommended to his followers that they follow his example: 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:9-12; 1 Tim 5:8.

While Paul explains in 1 Cor. 9:1-18 why he and Barnabas chose not to marry, he instructs that elders and ministers of the Christian assembly not only **should** be married, but they **must** be married. This is not hypocritical on Paul's part. It has been previously explained here that the office of apostle was quite unique, and required much travel from those who held it, who also endured much hardship. All of the apostles were very young when they were selected, including Paul (Acts 7:58), and evidently at least several of them put their mission ahead of the prospects of marriage. Traveling with a family would impose a great burden and expense on a man. Paul traveled for nearly 30 years! Neither could a mere laborer afford both to travel and support a family with a home. To properly conduct the office of apostle in a simple Christian lifestyle, having a family along would be greatly inhibitive.

The A.V. usually translated the imperative form of Greek verbs as "let...", rather than "must...". My own translation of 1 Tim. 3:1-13 reads as follows: "<sup>1</sup> Trustworthy is this saying. If anyone strives for an office of supervisor, he is desirous of good work. <sup>2</sup> Therefore it is necessary for that supervisor to be irreproachable, a husband of one wife, sober, discreet, orderly, hospitable, inclined to teach, <sup>3</sup> not a drunkard, not a brawler but reasonable, not contentious, not loving money, <sup>4</sup> governing his own house well, having children in subjection with all reverence, <sup>5</sup> (now if one does not know to govern his own house, how would he care for an assembly of Yahweh?) <sup>6</sup> Not a neophyte, lest blinded with pride he would fall into condemnation of the False Accuser. <sup>7</sup> Now it is necessary also to have a good accreditation from those outside, lest he fall into a reproach and a trap of the False Accuser. <sup>8</sup> In like manner reverent ministers, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not shamefully desirous of gain, <sup>9</sup> holding the mystery of the faith with a clean conscience. <sup>10</sup> But even they must be scrutinized first, then being void of offense they must minister. <sup>11</sup> Likewise reverent wives, not slanderous, sober, trustworthy in all. <sup>12</sup> Ministers must be husbands of one wife, governing their children and their own houses well. <sup>13</sup> For they that are ministering well obtain for themselves a good degree and much liberty in faith which is in Christ Yahshua." Again it must be mentioned, these remarks by Paul alone disqualify nearly, if not every, romish catholic pope, cardinal, bishop or priest from service to the true assemblies of Yahweh, and disqualify many of those belonging to the protestant sects

as well. Only an ignorant, blasphemous, self-serving man could possibly blame Paul for these organized religious sects, since Paul himself refutes them at every turn!

There is no prescription in Paul's letters for popes, cardinals, or priests. All references to priests in Paul's letters are in the context of the Old Covenant, where the performance of prescribed rituals at precise times, along with other duties necessitated a professional priesthood. Romish sacramentalism and their priesthood are vestiges of Babylonian paganism readily adopted by the later romish "church" and adapted to their perverted interpretations of the New Testament in order to satisfy their desire for control over the people. None of this can be blamed on Paul, who consistently states in his epistles that the rituals, "works of the law" in the A.V., have been done away with in the New Covenant (i.e. Rom. 3:20, 27, 28; 4:2, 6; 9:11, 32; 11:6; Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10; Heb. 6:1; 9:14). Even the Melchizedek priesthood mentioned by Paul at Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20 and 7:1-21, after Psalm 110:4, is said to belong to none other than Yahshua Christ. Again, any man who blames Paul for romish churchianity and its offspring is profusely ignorant.

I must also add, that not only many of the early so-called "church fathers", but many commentators unto this very day have looked to earthly models, drawn from our own historical experience, as the basis for "church" structure. They have not realized that there is no proper model in our recorded experience which demonstrates how an assembly of the children of Yahweh should operate, except in His only guidance: the scant instructions which we have in the epistles of the New Testament, and what we see in the gospels and Acts. This model offered by the apostles remains outside of our experience, since it has never been tried to any significant extent, and since those who have tried it have been persecuted, suppressed, or even destroyed by the romish church or various governments, much of what we do know of those groups which have tried to live a true Christian life is mere propaganda! Today there are a few groups in America which have come close to a true Christian model of community living, such as the Amish or the Mennonites, yet even they rely upon the larger outside community (i.e. tourist dollars) for a good part of their sustenance. So many commentators have accepted the structure adopted by the romish church, a blending of old Rome's paganism and its model of imperial government, as if such a model were based on scripture, which it certainly IS NOT! Yet others look to the Judaeian "sanhedrin" as a proper model, which it is not since it was sectarian and oligarchical. Many other alternative models are based on greed and a desire to concentrate power, while appearing on the surface to be righteous. Mormonism is one example of these. We have seen here that the authority of assembly elders should not transcend the immediate community, each which should elect its own elders. Any more than that is not Scriptural.

There is not one legitimate religious authority with U.S. Government tax-exempt status (IRS 501c3). Such status is a reward by the government granted only if the organization holding it agrees to follow certain guidelines. True Christianity, an exclusive, racist, discriminating doctrine, cannot possibly be found operating within those guidelines! That true Christianity is racist can be found as quickly as one can

examine the language of Matt. 13:47-48 or 25:31-46, which by themselves should be enough to support the statements offered here, although many more scriptures follow suit. Yet this is only one issue – albeit a major one – where tax-exempt “churches” capitulate to government guidelines. Bob Jones’ University in South Carolina did this very thing in recent years, being one prominent and public example. Yet as Yahweh raised judges and leaders for the children of Israel as He deemed it necessary, so even now will He raise true ministers and elders for His people. As the children of Israel awaken, and get out of Babylon (which includes all of those tax-exempt phony “churches”), even though we must continue to render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, then as we render to Yahweh what is His, Babylon will crumble under its own weight: for not enough of the people of Yahweh shall be left to support it any longer.