

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE IN A THEOCRATIC KINGDOM

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Andrew K. Fox
Northwest University
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Abstract

I believe we may have a cultural problem within our church group Assembly of God (AG) in the United States. As a country we are a politically democratic culture, as a country, that is both the envy and scorn of other nations. We have attempted to introduce democracy as the politically supreme way of social justice and order to other countries. The basis of our democratic culture is often quoted from the thrilling speech President Abraham Lincoln gave "...that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."¹ I completely subscribe to this liberty and freedom with its responsibilities in the United States and to the democratic political system. The problem, as I see it, may be that this is also a lifestyle within the theocratic local church, its Districts and National Office, in how we govern.

In this study I research this cultural collision of democracy and theocracy within the AG in the United States historically, theologically and conceptually. I will show how a political platform of democracy is generally how we form our church governance, and that the political climate in our country often alters our attitude within the theocratic local church, its Districts and National Office. I will also show how this possibly hinders our growth in established AG churches and reduces the ability to plant out of those congregations to establish new churches. My intent is not simply to criticize, but to offer insights that are critical to the AG development and influence within the culture(s) of the United States.

¹ President Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, Pennsylvania, November 19, 1863.

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Introduction

On the last day of July 1999 I boarded a British Airways flight with my family with a one-way ticket to the United States. Leaving London and familiar surroundings I embarked on a new adventure as the Lead Pastor of a local AG church in Washington. At the age of thirty-one I assumed that my Biblical understanding of church governance (contextualized in a British culture) was enough to develop a group of one-hundred people on ten acres of land into a congregation of about five-hundred in a new facility over a number of years. My naivety preceded me. I was immediately troubled after the first six (6) months to find that the local church was functioning much like the Federal Government with voting and non-voting members. For instance, I found a congregation of members to be a constituency with voting power and a Lead Pastor to be a candidate that had to appease his voters, or lose their support and financial contributions (not suggesting that the opposite in a dictator, benevolent or not, is the alternative). Also, fellow AG Lead Pastors appeared to be more concerned about their career than divine calling, evidenced often by a focus on keeping their job rather than doing it during tough seasons. These were just a few observations, albeit my own perspective, transferring from a British culture within the AG to its counterpart in the United States. To put it another way, theocracy collided with democracy in the culture and community I was now living in. I will qualify and define theocracy and democracy at a later point in this thesis.

For now, it is enough to say that the British culture(s) has always known a literal monarch, with the exception of Oliver Cromwell and the Republican Commonwealth (1653-1658) who removed the monarchy. There is a literal palace for Queen Elizabeth II (current reigning monarch) with the royal crest appearing in many places that include

buildings, consumer products, passports, and the national currency of Pound Sterling. Citizens of Britain are also subjects to the throne. This subjection has changed in practice over centuries (thank God) from the abusive tyranny of King George (1760-1820) and the following militant British Empire. Today, the throne of Britain functions very differently in society, but the unchanged principle of monarch by succession, subjects of that throne with no electoral power over it, and a parliament that represents the people (with electoral powers) still exists. It is not perfect but it does create context for democracy and theocracy. Therefore, when the Scriptures are taught, in particular the theocratic Kingdom of God (that Jesus is King, we are his subjects, family, and citizens of heaven) it is easier to comprehend loving subjection without feeling deprived of personal identity.

In a growing age of pluralism I believe that the process to find God's choice of person to be the Lead Pastor in a local church, and how a church functions, has to have policy and procedure to it. It cannot possibly function as a healthy witness of Jesus without this. Democracy is good. There must be a system in place to recognize and realize God's call and direction, or in other words, a system of governance. Richard Niebuhr's work on *Christ and Culture*² helped me to work this through in five areas by examining how God works with people: Christ against culture; Christ of culture; Christ above culture; Christ and culture in paradox; and finally, Christ the transformer of culture. The culture of God's Kingdom (theocracy) has to work within our world's 196 countries³ and their varying cultures, or to be more specific for this thesis, within the AG movement in the United States (democracy). If a church is looking to bring in a pastor from outside the life of a local congregation, resumes and references are essential details to the process of

² H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, (Harper & Row), 1951.

³ Accessed Online, October 28, 2010, <http://worldmeters.info/population>.

selection. A pulpit committee (or search committee) are vital to that process where a variety of hearts and minds can find agreement on God's choice. Presenting that person to the members of a church to recognize God's choice by way of ballot can be quite healthy in the sense that it endorses the committee's hard work and prayerful search. It can also create an atmosphere of 'togetherness' at an installation service where hands are laid on the newly elected / appointed pastor.

But the process from 'we need a pastor' to 'this particular person is our pastor' can be fragile because the human spirit is dealing with God's Spirit. Or to put it another way, people that are used to a democratic process (personal choice) by culture, are interacting with theocracy (God's choice). God is not fragile but the human spirit is. This fragile interaction is seen in who is on the pulpit committee; how they are appointed or elected; who does the appointing, or electing; and how they conduct their search. In terms of theocracy, God is the ultimate authority above all other authorities in heaven, on earth and under the earth. In terms of democracy, the will of the people has the power to decide.

It appeared to me that theocracy was employed to bring a foreign national like me with no reputation or credibility to the local AG church in Washington. In other words, it did not fit what the Book of Acts tells us, "they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles"⁴ (This appears to be democracy). But it did fit something else in the Book of Acts, "While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'"⁵ (This appears to be theocracy). My thesis will examine this process of

⁴ New International Version, Acts 1:26.

⁵ Ibid., Acts 13:2.

democracy by ‘casting lots’ and theocracy of ‘while they were worshipping’ as key decisions in choosing God’s choice of a leader.

From Genesis to Revelation we find governance particularly in terms of ‘Kingdom’. In brief, this simply means ‘authority.’ A good example of this is the centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant. He was a man in authority but also under authority and this was impressive to Jesus! “I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.”⁶ I am convinced that this response was not to the request of healing the servant but the centurion’s understanding of authority. “I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him.”⁷ Therefore, a Lead Pastor should be in authority but also under authority. I will examine how this works in our AG churches in the United States.

I believe that AG governance in the United States has evolved into a democracy that resembles the Federal Government, rather than theocracy of the church found in the Scriptures. I am basing this on the bleed between US culture(s) and how Scripture is interpreted within our culture, or as Niebuhr puts it ‘Christ and culture in paradox.’⁸ We live in a democratic culture where our political representatives are elected by the people to function in a role ‘for the people.’ It is very possible that God’s choice of a Lead Pastor is rarely our choice therefore ‘who’ is elected is probably what the people want but not necessarily what the people need in church leadership. Although the answer is not simple, it can be found in any culture following the Biblical premise “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said.”⁹ This points to another issue of

⁶ New International Version, Luke 7:9b.

⁷ Ibid, Luke 7:8-9a.

⁸ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, (Harper & Row), 1951.

⁹ New International Version, Acts 13:2.

spiritual maturity, discipleship and knowledge of the Scriptures, where our hearts are changed in submission to the throne of Jesus.

My story is not isolated or polarized. I am personally aware that there are many within our AG movement who have returned to their secular careers instead of serving out their divine calling. Good men and women are simply worn down and burned out by their constituent congregations. I am not their spokesman, and can only speak for myself. It is also obvious that Lead Pastors can create their own problems by not listening to wise counsel. My work will show why I make this claim, that change is needed in understanding and practice of bringing a culturally democratic people in the United States within the AG, to a theocratic reality of church leadership. I shall examine Biblical models of church governance (there is more than one) and track the history of the AG movement in the United States. How did we go from a prayer meeting in Topeka Kansas on January 1st 1901 on the basis of ‘while they were worshipping’ (the General Council Assembly of God officially began 1914) to our current ‘we the people’ in how the local church is governed? At the outset of this thesis I will review research on this subject using books, articles, scholarly commentaries, personal interviews and the Bible itself.

For common reference, in this project I define specifically what I mean when I use the terms ‘theocracy’ and ‘democracy’. By the first, I mean “a form of government in which God or a Deity is recognized as the supreme civil ruler, the god's or deity's laws being interpreted by the ecclesiastical authorities.”¹⁰ By the second, I mean “a government by the people; a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system.”¹¹

¹⁰ Accessed online, November 18, 2010, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/theocracy>.

¹¹ Ibid. democracy.

For my purposes, this must not be confused with autocracy meaning “a government in which one person has uncontrolled or unlimited authority over others; the government or power of an absolute monarchy”¹²

Literature Review

How did we get here – from theocracy (Book of Acts) to democracy (organizational democracy) within the AG movement in the United States? The history of the church from the Jewish Day of Pentecost (Acts chapter two) to the present day is not something I will expand on. It is enough for this thesis to generally recognize the building blocks of time in the Apostolic period 35-120; the Apologist period 120-220; the Third Century 220-305; the Imperial Church 305-476; the Early Middle Ages 476-1000; the High Middle Ages 1000-1300; the Late Middle Ages 1300-1500; the Reformation 1500-1600; the Puritans 1600-1700; the Second Great Awakening 1700-1800; and the Modern Period 1800-2000.

Specifically, in this review, I will focus on a number of authors who write on the topic of governance from a wide range of perspectives. In doing so, I will build a contextual foundation, helpful in situating my research question and subsequent project. I begin with George Wood.

Historically, I will offer dates and significant developments of the AG to our present day, on how church governance has moved from a Biblical text to a reflection of our democratic culture – theocracy to democracy – on how pastors, elders and deacons come into their positions and how the church is governed. How did the divine call of God to serve people through leadership become a career that resembles a political candidate?

Theologically, I shall use the letters written by Paul to Timothy (first letter only) and

¹² Accessed online, November 18, 2010, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/autocracy>.

Titus on the position of an elder (pastor) and a deacon drawing upon a balanced interpretation of Scripture, from authors past and present. In addition I shall draw upon Paul's letters to young churches and how they struggled to govern.

Conceptually, I will examine the main church models of governance and how they evolved into current practice today asking the question, 'what model of governance do we practice in AG churches today?' I shall begin by examining ten (10) authors on the subject of church governance from a wide range of perspectives.

George O. Wood, D. Th.p.

In the Fall of 2003 the *Enrichment Journal* published an article written by the current General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in the United States. At the time of writing Wood was the General Secretary. He examined three (3) very different scenarios of church governance: Congregational, self-perpetuating Eldership and Dictatorship. Each scenario ended in tragedy as real cases he had to deal with as an AG official. His conclusion, "Each shows the weakness in the governance structure of the local church."¹³

His Congregational example described a young pastor who received just under two-thirds of the vote needed to keep his position. Although the church had grown, the new people were not voting members leaving the fate of his ministry to what Wood calls 'old-timers.' The Eldership example described a pastor hand picking elders who became a closed circle of power running the church into the ground with only 5% of the original congregation left. His third example described a pastor bent on control who created a dictatorship. As a result, this third pastor reduced the voting membership to just over twenty (20) members and removed the church from their affiliation with the AG. In a short time he convinced the small voting membership to sell the property for \$1 million

¹³ George O. Wood, *Weighing the Tough Issues Relative to Local Church Governance*, (Enrichment Journal), Fall 2003.

and deposit the funds into his non-profit account legally, but not ethically, stealing the church.

Wood then examined Biblical forms of church governance. His own bias comes from the AG preferred position, “The Assemblies of God has always believed and practiced that Congregational Government is both a preferred Biblical and practical model.”¹⁴ He cites the church in Jerusalem who elected Matthias to replace Judas (Acts 1:15-23) and the selection of deacons (Acts 6:1-7) to relieve the leaders of doing everything. Wood summarizes that there are three (3) benefits to this form of governance. First, there is a sense of ownership by the members of the church. Second, leaders must be in touch with members of the church to sustain their leadership, as their authority comes from the people’s respect. Third, strong leaders flourish in a Congregational model of governance where there is not the fettering of denominational bureaucracy.

He offers another Biblical model as an alternative based on Eldership. Looking at the churches Paul planted he cites the appointments made by the Apostle (Acts 14:23) or his representatives (Titus 1:5) of elders to care for the congregations. They were to be appointed by Paul’s circle not elected by the congregation. He calls the elders ‘shepherds’ and refers to people with an agenda for breaking up the congregation as ‘wolves’ (Acts 20:28-29). He summarizes this model by making it clear that Paul was not a dictator, “Never does Paul counsel a church in trouble to raise its flag of, ‘don’t touch me; we are a sovereign local church’ when devourers are on the loose.”¹⁵ He brings out the example of Demas the metalworker (2Timothy 4:10 / 14) and Diotrephes (3John 9) as wolves. He concludes the example of these two Scriptural models of governance by

¹⁴ George O. Wood, *Weighing the Tough Issues Relative to Local Church Governance*, (Enrichment Journal) Fall 2003.

¹⁵ Ibid.

saying, “Clearly, there are problems in any form of local church government if leadership is unwise or self-seeking, or if the local church itself has a history of unwholesome spiritual pathology.”¹⁶

Going back to where he began, Wood revisits the three (3) real cases of church governance. To the first, he suggests that new pastor’s process new people who want to be members. To self-perpetuating Eldership, outside oversight is needed, but rarely requested because those asking for it (the congregation) have no power. To the model of dictatorship he states that the AG have to live with such risks but also states, “. . . or we must change our system to permit outside intervention.”¹⁷ He does suggest that a chaotic church like Corinth needs a strong model of governance like Eldership but also suggests a spiritually mature church like Jerusalem needs a Congregational model. He rejects the idea that apostles and prophets function as the governance model stating one of several examples in Ephesus where the leadership were elders not prophets or apostles. The two extremes are an authoritarian dictator who is an ego-centered leader hiding behind a mask of ‘strong leader,’ and an entrenched congregation that votes out a pastor when things don’t go their way. He suggests that if a church is young in years then an Eldership model would serve the congregation best until mature believers are grown to become a Congregational model. If the church is divided then congregational voting will mean some win and the others leave, so an Eldership model may serve the congregation better for a season where the people have no power to vote on anything until stability and maturity is achieved. To assist this, Wood offers a solution by engaging the officers of the District to serve as an outside oversight.

¹⁶ George O. Wood, *Weighing the Tough Issues Relative to Local Church Governance*, (Enrichment Journal) Fall 2003.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Ross Douthat

'First Things' is a monthly ecumenical journal founded by the late Richard John Neuhaus who became a Lutheran minister and later converted to Catholicism. Douthat argues in an essay for First Things why the American culture 'thinks' democracy and is paranoid about it. Newsweek called Douthat's debate "the most important vehicle for exploring the tangled web of religion and society in the English-speaking world."¹⁸ In his essay, Douthat arrives at this conclusion from four (4) pop sociological New York Best-Seller books written by Kevin Philips, James Rudin, W.W. Norton and Randall Balmer on how religion and American politics fuse together creating a crisis in how we think. He states, "...twenty-first century America is slouching toward theocracy. This is an old paranoia..."¹⁹ Douthat qualifies his statement by quoting Robert Heinlein (1952) who envisioned religious tyranny, and Margaret Atwood (1985) who imagined America as a Christian-fascist republic with public executions at the Harvard Yard. He even identifies the Bush election of 2004 being led by 'moral values' as an echo of Heinlein and Atwood. Douthat sees that all four (4) authors agree on one thing, "Something has gone terribly wrong with the separation of Church and State in this country."²⁰

His sympathy for a theocratic system comes from how the American culture tries to define 'theocracy' as Catholic Bishops wielding authority that no other denomination can claim, and the Protestant churches having a lack of centralized ecclesiastical government. The exception to this would be the Southern Baptist Convention quoting Kevin Philips who tallies the, "number of Baptists who have insinuated themselves into the highest

¹⁸ George Weigel, *Newsweek*, Jan. 10, 2009.

¹⁹ Ross Douthat, *First Things: Theocracy Theocracy Theocracy!*, (Religion and Public Life), Issue 165 September 2006, p 23.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p 24.

levels of American government.”²¹ Douthat quotes Rabbi James Rudin that if theocrats get into government then all employees – Federal, State and local would have weekly Bible studies and begin the day with prayer in the workplace. He adds that all employees of the government would have their religious belief located on their ID card, and this would give them advantage in education, home ownership, student loans and further employment. If you happened to be homosexual, it better be private or it would affect all the advantages of a card-carrying-Christian. Douthat believes this is why our culture is paranoid about ‘theocracy’ and our congregations are filled with people who think this way. If government moves towards deriving its moral authority from God (and this is scary) then local congregations are just as scary with democracy. Quoting Michelle Goldberg, Douthat states, “You can even be a totalitarian-theocrat-authoritarian without realizing it.”²² He enlarges on this by looking at the Rapture and qualifies what he means by this term (not actually mentioned in the Bible). Theocratic belief is that there will be an imminent collapse of current institutions both foreign and domestic. He asks the questions that if the hastening of Jesus’ coming will do this, why attempt to build a kingdom on earth now? Quoting Bill Moyer Douthat asks, “Why care about the earth when the droughts, floods, famine, and pestilence brought by the ecological collapse are signs of the apocalypse foretold in the Bible?”²³ He goes on to say that theocratic thinking people would have a government that prohibits abortion, research that destroys human embryos, refuse homosexuals on every level, restrict pornography, have open prayer in schools, replace sex education with abstinence education, and have policy that

²¹ Ross Douthat, *First Things: Theocracy Theocracy Theocracy!*, (Religion and Public Life), Issue 165 September 2006, p 24.

²² Ibid. p 25.

²³ Ibid. p 26.

promotes marital stability. In other words, go back to an era of the 1950's. "That may be a very bad idea, but the America of the 1950's was not a theocracy."²⁴ A further dilemma that Douthat presents is from Andrew Sullivan who voiced his opposition to theocracy in government, "to any politicization of the gospels by any party, Democratic or Republican, by partisan black churches or partisan white ones, 'My Kingdom is not of this world,' Jesus insisted. What part of that do we not understand?"²⁵ Referring to Michelle Goldberg, Douthat continues his argument that to insert the name of God in public life during national crisis further adds to the erosion of Church and State. Those erosions include 'In God we trust' added to the currency in 1863, removing the Sunday postal service in 1912, and inserting 'under God' to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954. Douthat concludes that theocracy obviously plays a huge role in democratic thinkers, referring again to Goldberg, that we can be a totalitarian-theocrat-authoritarian without realizing it. This is the crisis Douthat presents. Another phrase that has fused democratic thinking people with theocracy is 'faith based' introduced by former President George W. Bush. But almost anything with this expression was vetoed!

Douthat demonstrates this fusing of democracy and theocracy when Cardinal Roger Mahony (ordained 1962) became an advocate for civil disobedience calling for all Catholics to protest the immigration bill in 2006. Once again, democratic thinkers were voicing their objection in a theocratic manner calling upon God as their moral authority. Douthat humorously states this is a flip of the coin, 'heads' you are democratic and 'tails' you are theocratic in both ecclesiastical and political worlds. He quotes Randall Balmer who celebrates the Victorian evangelicals for taking on "the task of reforming society

²⁴ Ross Douthat, *First Things: Theocracy Theocracy Theocracy!*, (Religion and Public Life), Issue 165 September 2006, p 26.

²⁵ Ibid.

according to the standards of godliness generally to make the world a better place.”²⁶ But he adds to this by saying Christians make arguments for their position on non-theological grounds proving that politics and religion do not make sense when fused together.

Bringing his essay to a conclusion, Douthat recalls the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s saying it was religious but also multi-denominational, which has not been seen since Martin Luther King. The Movement’s core value was non-violence that attracted Gandhi and included Democrats and Republicans, Catholics and Protestants, atheists and agnostics, Muslims and Jews. But this theocratic movement that united people was never intended to be a vehicle for a candidate to win an election. Theocracy that underlined the Civil Movement (1955-1968) has now become a democratic voice for Rev. Al Sharpton (Baptist, civil rights and social justice activist) and Rev. Jesse Jackson (Baptist, civil rights activist). Douthat quotes Tom DeLay (former Majority Leader 2003-2005) as “cloaking himself in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ to brush off charges of corruption – it’s not the Church and State that’s in danger but DeLay’s own Christian faith.”²⁷ He states that if sermons on a Sunday are coming from the columns of the New York Times (democracy) why would a congregation gather to listen to the same editorial again? His final statement and summary is that the United States needs a forum of debate through the beauty of democracy but “are increasingly drowned out by cries of ‘theocracy, theocracy, theocracy’”²⁸ from faith based American culturalism, which is not real Christianity. Douthat is a supporter of the democratic culture and equally a supporter of theological convictions, but when fused together government becomes theocratic and the

²⁶ Ross Douthat, *First Things: Theocracy Theocracy Theocracy!*, (Religion and Public Life), Issue 165 September 2006, p 28.

²⁷ Ibid. p 29.

²⁸ Ibid.

church becomes democratic.

Dan Hotchkiss

Hotchkiss offers a unique insight into church governance as a Congregational Consultant for the Alban Institute. Writing the Discerner's Guide to Congregational Governance he explains how the model of Congregational Governance from the 1950s is changing. Quoting Rick Warren he explains how, "The pastor and ministries the pastor leads, and not much about the role of other players: boards, committees, bishops, and congregation itself gather for business."²⁹ The new polity is strong pastor-led churches with smaller boards, fewer committees but a multitude of ministries that operate with minimum organizational overhead. The unifying force is the vision cast by the pastor clearly and frequently, not through the bylaws and bureaucracy of voting. He calls this an essential shift in church governance by, "Fewer meetings and more ministry."³⁰

He refers back to the 19th century, where most American congregations derive their form of church governance. Its weakness is obvious, and now glaring, with six (6) common traits over a wide variety of denominations. First, that governing boards spend too much time listening to reports, rubberstamping, and arbitrating conflicts rather than envisioning the future. Second, long standing committees that make policy end up doing the work themselves with a bias towards rejecting new ideas. Third, the idea of a 'map theory' where every programmatic idea belongs to the standing committee with a bias against any form of change. Therefore, creative thinkers are totally rejected. Fourth, power committees control finance, personnel and property. They also have power to veto anything in those specific areas. According to Hotchkiss the problem here is that no one

²⁹ Dan Hotchkiss, *Congregations*, (Alban Institute), Spring 2007.

³⁰ Ibid.

has the power of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ but deferred to several levels of committee for approval, rejection or tabling the issue. Fifth, a miserly approach to delegation. Once something has been delegated it is usually followed by criticism and reconsideration because, again, no one has the authority. Quite often the projected result is delayed. Finally, paid staff members are usually hard wired to one committee or another resulting in disconnected fiefdoms and no accountability. His conclusion is none of these six (6) common traits have Biblical precedent. He summarizes by saying, “Religious institutions borrow organizational forms from around them. For instance, the early church was organized like a Hellenistic mystery cult, the medieval church resembled monarchy, and Puritans modeled English towns in the thirteen (13) colonies.”³¹ Hotchkiss explores the thought that most current evangelical churches have adopted their form of governance from the 19th century where the nonprofit corporation emerged as an all-purpose container for God’s work. “Too many congregations still live in the Victorian world of Robert’s Rules.”³² As an alternative he refers to Rick Warren’s book *The Purpose Driven Church*³³ as a reason why people are becoming impatient and the newly retired baby-boomers asking the question, ‘How does this meet my needs?’ He admits that religion cannot count on general good will to bring in new members. “All nice people knew that all nice people attended and supported the church of their choice.”³⁴ But today, people are quick to join a church and just as quick to leave it ready to join another.

Another motive Hotchkiss gives to bring about change in church governance is that congregational size is changing. There are more, larger congregations today than ever

³¹ Dan Hotchkiss, *Congregations*, (Alban Institute), Spring 2007.

³² Ibid.

³³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, (Zondervan), 1995.

³⁴ Dan Hotchkiss, *Congregations*, (Alban Institute), Spring 2007.

before. When a congregation is small there is an unspoken, unwritten informal pecking order based on seniority, longevity, relationship and trust. It really does not matter who the pastor is and what role the board plays in governance. But when the congregation is consistently over 400 in attendance on a Sunday morning, governance really matters. The congregation's behavior should be explained in formal documents like bylaws, position descriptions and budgets. Hotchkiss notes, to emphasize how influenced we are by our immediate culture, that the thickness of a church's policy book can tell you how far they are located from the nearest state or national capitol. In a large church, relationships, longevity, and money confer informal authority because nothing can be left to chance. Leaders have to operate within a form of governance to communicate, as running into each other over the coffee machine to talk often fails for multiple reasons. The form of governance a congregation adopts must not be conferred to them from the past according to Hotchkiss. If a small church has grown into a large church (not to mention all the stages of that growth journey) the previous model of governance cannot remain to sustain a healthy congregation. He does note that when a congregation has grown beyond 400 attendees the church often makes their own rules despite universal policy of their denomination. "As the congregations grow, they need to rely less on tacit understandings and more on written policies, consistent leadership training, clear delegation of authority and regular evaluation of results."³⁵ Hotchkiss explains how governance keeps people from isolation making it clear where the buck stops and how each player can collaborate while being held accountable.

Referring to three (3) Lead Pastors (Rick Warren, William Easum, and Tom Brandy) Hotchkiss is forceful in having the lead clergyperson articulate the vision of that church

³⁵ Dan Hotchkiss, *Congregations*, (Alban Institute), Spring 2007.

clearly, often and loudly without being encumbered with board and committee meetings. The downside is that ‘one-person’ leadership can become brittle and unstable. The accountability is to develop a congregational co-creator of vision and the strengthening of a board to partner with the pastor as an essential component for a strong leader. In this way the whole church builds its muscle in vision. From his own experience, Hotchkiss has discovered that governing boards that govern properly cannot bring the depth of vision a church needs. He suggests that a board number between seven (7) to twelve (12) members for large and small churches. In the secular world of non-profits there has been a large movement forward in sophistication. By this, Hotchkiss refers to the resources available for strategic planning and policy making while overseeing the legal operations and compliance with State and Federal laws. He suggests John Carver (Policy Governance) and Richard Chait (Harvard Professor) as reliable resources. The challenge is “to remember that a congregation is a congregation first and a nonprofit corporation second. That a minister is not exactly like an executive director, and a congregation is not the passive membership of a museum or the alumni of a university.”³⁶

Congregations need more than an annual business meeting to work out their differences, disagreements and support of leadership. He suggested ‘group discernment.’ An older form of this would be the Ignatian decision-making and consensus form of church governance, still practiced by the Mennonites and Quakers. Other forms of nonprofit governance in the secular forum come from Future Search (Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff) and Open Space Technology (Harrison Owen) or the Family System (Edwin Friedman and Ronald Heifetz) on building an organizations adaptive capacity.

³⁶Dan Hotchkiss, *Congregations*, (Alban Institute), Spring 2007.

Hotchkiss is quick to say a congregation is not any of these past or secular models.

Hotchkiss asks, “Who owns the congregation?”³⁷ The church is referred to in the Scriptures as metaphors like a house, human body, a bride, group of sheep and lambs with a shepherd to lead them, a vineyard, a tent or extended family, but none of these are literal. In the same way a pastor is not the CEO and the congregation members are not stockholders. Nonprofits are not just nonprofits. A nonprofit that is first a church has these unique analogies that secular nonprofits do not have. Therefore the church is unique according to Hotchkiss. A board may say that a church needs to run like a business but the church is not exactly like a business. It runs differently. To that end, Hotchkiss asked a single question to various boards in varying denominations, ‘describe your role to me.’ He was given three (3) common answers. The first was typical, “We’re here to represent the members of the congregation.”³⁸ The problem with this answer is politically framed like the US Senate representing the will of the people to have things done their way. Therefore the governing board is elected by the people to represent the people – Congregational Government. The second answer was not so typical, “We are ministers alongside the pastor.”³⁹ This idea comes from reformed theology moving away from the 19th century model. It proposes a model of a ruling elder / pastor ordained to lead and teach the congregation alongside other elders / pastors. In this way the board of elders operates according to their conscience not just as a spokesperson of a congregation. The third answer was rare but revealing, “The board is a fiduciary.”⁴⁰ This simply means that the individual has a duty to act in faithfulness in the interest of another at their own cost,

³⁷ Dan Hotchkiss, *Who Owns The Congregation?*, (Alban Institute), April 2008.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

much like a loving parent towards their children.

In summary, Hotchkiss states that a board exists to represent the owner, but who is the owner? Is the owner the congregation? If so, what is the owner's interest? Is it satisfactory worship, preaching, teaching fellowship and education? The congregation does not exist to serve as its own 'owner' as this does not fit the Scriptural metaphors. Is the owner God or Jesus? Hotchkiss concludes that the owner is the actual 'mission' of the church and the bottom line is not the bank balance but how well the mission is being fulfilled. What is the mission? Hotchkiss turns to Peter Drucker (1909-2005) who states that "The core mission of all socio-sector organizations is to change lives."⁴¹ The congregation should ask itself whose lives they want to change and in what way? Hotchkiss states that a congregation who limits its mission to itself is utterly dysfunctional. Even the success of growth, new buildings and expanding budget can be a distraction from this question of mission. Therefore, the job of a board is never to give the congregation what it wants so it cannot be 'we are here to represent the people.' Another compelling reason Hotchkiss states for the pastor to not give the congregation what it wants is that he must teach them what they don't want to hear. For instance, voluntary service to God, sacrificing personal ambition for the sake of the church's mission and giving financially are not naturally delightful. Hotchkiss asked a closing question to various congregations, 'What would you have done if someone had warned you how joining a congregation would transform your life?' The common response was, "I would have run the other way!"⁴² Pleasing current members, boards and future members is not the mission according to Hotchkiss. Changing lives is the mission. Who

⁴¹ Dan Hotchkiss, *Who Owns The Congregation?*, (Alban Institute), April 2008.

⁴² Ibid.

is the owner of the congregation? The mission of the church and governance serving it.

Mark Driscoll

Driscoll has written several books and taught on church governance as part of the Emerging Church in the United States. He explains the model of governance at Mars Hill by translating the Scriptures and applying them to the culture(s) of today. He is quick to say ‘Pastor Jesus’ is head of the Church, the apostle that planted it, the leader who builds it, the leader who rules it and the one who closes down unfaithful churches. “Therefore it is absolutely vital that a church loves Jesus, obeys Jesus, imitates Jesus, and follows Jesus at all times and in all ways, according to the teaching of his Word.”⁴³ He goes on to say that human church leadership is little more than qualified Christians who follow Jesus encouraging others to follow them as they follow Jesus. In other words, when we omit the organizational charts altogether, we have the centrality of Jesus. It is this precedent that Driscoll makes to explore, “...the roles of elder, deacon and church member.”⁴⁴ Beginning with elder (also called bishop, overseer and pastor) he states that “an elder has the highest position in church governance.”⁴⁵ As a bishop he rules and protects, as a pastor he cares for the people and evangelizes, and as an overseer he leads and manages the church. Driscoll makes the point of saying an elder has to be a good Christian first as there are too many good pastors who are not good Christians. Therefore he must be tested listing seventeen (17) qualifications in relationship to family, self and others. Using the texts of Timothy and Titus Driscoll draws attention to the metaphors of an elder being like an athlete, ox, warrior and tireless farmer. “Elders are not ultimately nominated by

⁴³ Mark Driscoll, *On Church Leadership*, (Crossway Books), 2008, p 12.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p 12.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p 15.

committees or congregational votes, but rather called by God himself.”⁴⁶ Quoting (Acts 20:28) he claims that the Holy Spirit makes someone an elder but must then be moved to examining their own life and family nominating himself to the other elders from the desire that the Holy Spirit as placed within him (1Timothy 3:1). The self-nominated candidate should then have his calling tested by the other elders, which includes testing his marriage, family, finances, giving record, job performance, spiritual gifts, relationship to those in the church and community, attitude towards authority, work ethic and humility. Once he has been unanimously confirmed by the other elders he is presented to the church members for any questions before he is installed by the elders through the laying on of hands (1Timothy 4:14 / 5:22). “The elders function as an accountable team...they are therefore unlike secular notions of a business or nonprofit organizational board.”⁴⁷ Driscoll sees that Luke and Paul’s letters provide the seventeen (17) qualifications of an elder. He concludes that an elder is not a deacon who helps the church but one who leads and trains other leaders to lead. ‘First among equals’ is a phrase that Driscoll often uses to describe a Lead Elder (pastor) quoting Alexander Strauch “all are not equal in their giftedness, Biblical knowledge, leadership ability, experience or dedication.”⁴⁸ Driscoll explains this in the pattern of equality and hierarchy throughout New Testament Scripture. Using models of Jesus and his Father; Peter, James and John separated from the other disciples; Peter particularly in the early season of the new-founded church; and Timothy with Titus he concludes, “men like Peter, John, Paul, Timothy and Titus are obviously prominent leaders... who exercise authority over other

⁴⁶ Mark Driscoll, *On Church Leadership*, (Crossway Books), 2008, p 16.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p 18.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p 20.

leaders without being overbearing.”⁴⁹ The danger of not having a ‘first among equals’ is that people will become representatives of various agendas, departments, factions and programs of the church, not to mention fighting over limited resource.

To help prevent this division he explains the difference between principles and methods. For instance, the New Testament is clear on the function of an elder but not on the form of an elder. Therefore, the form of an elder must be according to the culture. For instance, how many elders, how often they meet, how should they be structured, and how should they conduct their business (unanimity, consensus or majority)? Scripture allows a body of elders to organize themselves, therefore, their form will always be changing and the bylaws constantly reviewed and amended accordingly. Driscoll believes Scripture is clear on function (the principle) and unclear on the form (method of an elder functioning within a culture). He outlines the spiritual authority of an elder and the correction and / or rebuke of an elder stating that the position is of utmost importance and accountability. Using (1 Timothy 5:19-21) and (Deuteronomy 19:15-19) Driscoll explains the difference between sin that needs to be rebuked and sin that requires an elder to be removed, as all elders sin like all Christians sin (1 John 1:8).

Concerning a deacon, Driscoll notes that (Acts 6:1-7) shows us that elders can be overburdened and need assistance to stay on track leading the church. “Because this section of Scripture is descriptive and not prescriptive... and does not specifically mention deacons, we must be careful not to read too much into the text.”⁵⁰ The underlying principle of the text is that elders needed to be unburdened by qualified people. Driscoll states that this shows elders are appointed first, then deacons are

⁴⁹ Mark Driscoll, *On Church Leadership*, (Crossway Books), 2008, p 23.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p 50.

appointed by the elders not the members of the church. Deacons are mentioned specifically in two places in the New Testament, each time alongside the position of an elder, proving that they assist the elders. Therefore, “elders specializing in leading by their words and deacons specializing by their works.”⁵¹ Driscoll is quick to point out that the qualifications of a deacon are the same as an elder with the exception of teaching and preaching abilities as the second highest position in church governance. In the list of qualifications found in (1 Timothy 3:8-13) he highlights the rewards of a deacon as being respected in the community of faith, and community at large, with growing faith and confidence in Jesus. Although the duties of an elder are clear the same cannot be said for a deacon. Again, Driscoll points to our culture for an answer. Therefore, “duties of an elder... constant in every church in every place in every age, the duties of a deacon vary according to the needs of the local church and their elders.”⁵² He concludes that the Scriptures brilliantly established theological grounding for morally qualified elders to have the freedom of appointing deacons to fit the mission of the local church. For instance, they will be handling money, managing property, management systems, mercy needs and intimate details of people’s lives; hence, the Scriptural qualification of a deacon is similar to that of an elder.

Regarding church members, Driscoll is very clear on how he interprets Scripture. “They must be capable of seeing beyond their own navels.”⁵³ He looks through the Book of Acts, first Corinthians, first Timothy, Matthew, Galatians, Hebrews and Romans for the components of the early church. Among the many components he found was a notion

⁵¹ Mark Driscoll, *On Church Leadership*, (Crossway Books), 2008, p 51.

⁵² Ibid. p 53.

⁵³ Ibid. p 57.

of numerical record, record of widows, discipline, election, accountability and who other church members were. He explains that a church member, in one sense, is a leader by using the gifts God has given them in accordance with the two greatest Commandments of loving God and your neighbor. In order of spiritual authority, Driscoll places elders first, then deacons followed by the priesthood of believers. Being a member is the first stage of becoming a deacon and then an elder if the Holy Spirit gives you that desire. Within the Mars Hill church, Driscoll has a process for becoming a member that includes baptism, being educated by the Doctrine Series⁵⁴ they teach, serving the church, giving financially, praying for the church, personal devotions that include reading the Scriptures and prayer, attending the church and sharing their faith with others who do not have faith in Jesus. This culminates by signing a covenant agreement. One of the privileges a Mars Hill church member has is access to an online network called The City. This is where they can share goods, ask for prayer, build community and ask questions with an open-book policy from the elders and deacons. Another privilege is that “only members are allowed to oversee certain areas of ministry”⁵⁵ But at no point do the members of Mars Hill have the privilege to vote on church issues and appointments. Rather, they are included in a question and answer time at the appointment of elders (by other elders) and deacons (by the elders).

Benjamin L. Merkle

As a professor of the New Testament at the Baptist Theological Seminary, Merkle offers a three-part study⁵⁶ in the form of forty (40) questions and answers on elders and

⁵⁴ Mark Driscoll, Gerry Breshears, *Doctrine*, (Crossway Books), 2010.

⁵⁵ Mark Driscoll, *On Church Leadership*, (Crossway Books), 2008, p 71.

⁵⁶ Benjamin Merkle, *40 Questions About Elders And Deacons*, (Kregel Publications), 2008.

deacons. Beginning with church governance he asks ‘what are the various forms of church governance? Merkle offers four (4) types. Episcopal is by far, the most hierarchical-autocratic, and not usually practiced by the AG. It is worth noting that the denominations who have this form of governance agree that authority resides in the office (not the person) of the bishop. “Thus, the bishop is responsible for ordaining and appointing leaders (known as priests or rectors) to the local congregation.”⁵⁷ All acknowledge that Jesus is the head of the Church but has entrusted leadership to the office of bishop as a successor to the apostles. The second form of church governance he offers is Presbyterian as hierarchical- representative. This offers various levels of authority above the local church such as a general assembly, synod, court of appeal, and session / consistory. The local church congregation under the direction of the elders (Presbyterian in Greek comes from the word elder) choose their leaders. A single elder cannot lead but is one of a group known as session or consistory. “Thus the elders, who are elected or appointed, have the authority in the church as representatives of the congregation.”⁵⁸ Again, this form is not usually practiced in the AG. The third form of church governance is Congregational as local-democratic. “As the name indicates, the final authority does not rest with the bishops or elders but rather with the local assembly of believers.”⁵⁹ The basis for this practice is the priesthood of believers recognized in the Scriptures. This means that the church is led by the pastor and supported by deacons. “Ultimate authority lies with the individual members of the congregation.”⁶⁰ This means that the local church has a self-law autonomy independent of other congregations. It does

⁵⁷ Mark Driscoll, *On Church Leadership*, (Crossway Books), 2008, p 56.

⁵⁸ Benjamin Merkel, *40 Questions About Elders And Deacons*, (Kregel Publications), 2008, p 27.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p 28.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

not recognize ecclesiastical authority outside the local church. Congregational Governance will single out a person to be their Senior Leader who has authority to choose deacons to help him. This may vary as the nature of Congregational Governance is independent. Therefore, the self-law may have bylaws where congregation's select the deacons. Congregational Governance is usually held by the AG. The fourth form of church governance is Non-governmental usually held by Quakers and the Brethren Church. Structure is minimized with a large emphasis placed in the leading of the Holy Spirit guiding the believers directly but not in organizational terms. Structure, organization and formalism are seen as a 'quenching of the Spirit' among believers. Therefore the preaching and teaching comes from all the believers. "Freedom is given to allow the Holy Spirit to prompt others to share God's Word."⁶¹

Merkle asks the question, 'which one of these forms is correct?' His answer directs the reader back to Scripture. "We are told more about what a church leader should be than what a church leader should do."⁶² Therefore, we have to make interpretive decisions as to what is normal for our culture, according to Merkle. He gives the example of Acts chapter six (6) where they cast lots (or a ballot – name out of the hat) to choose another apostle. The text is therefore descriptive, telling us what happened in the past tense. So we are left to interpret how we choose our leaders. Merkle asks the question of any church denomination, 'is this still practiced today?' concluding that it is not. Looking at all four (4) forms of church governance; he states that they are permissible as the Scriptures do not advocate anything specific. But he does refer to Peter's first epistle as a guide that in matters of all our lives "His divine power has given everything we need for

⁶¹ Benjamin Merkel, *40 Questions About Elders And Deacons*, (Kregel Publications), 2008, p 28.

⁶² Ibid. p 29.

life and godliness”⁶³ that should include church governance, so we are not left in the dark. Merkle concludes this section by saying all forms must recognize and practice that Jesus is the Head of his Church and all other leaders, no matter what we call them, are under-shepherds. “The authority of any church leader is always a derived authority.”⁶⁴

Merkle asks, ‘does the Jerusalem Council support Episcopalianism or Presbyterianism’ as both have a form of hierarchy distinct from a Congregational model, and, ‘does Acts chapter fifteen (15) offer a clear form of church hierarchy?’ If the Scriptures are authoritative (and they are) is this church tradition of hierarchy as authoritative as the Biblical witness? Acts chapter fifteen (15) presents a crisis where ‘authoritative’ decisions were called for in the Gentile / Jew cultural battles in the newly formed Christianity. Other evidence in this New Testament chapter points to James making a decree and mailing it out as a letter of instruction to all the churches and appointing Paul and Barnabas. “Many argue that each church is not an independent body but is part of, and accountable to, a larger ecclesiastical structure.”⁶⁵ Therefore, the churches were bound to accept the decree sent out by the Jerusalem Council. Merkle argues three (3) aspects of this thought.

First, that the Council was not Representative. The only delegates that were sent to Jerusalem came from Antioch. Second, the Council involved unique circumstances. The apparent crisis was circumcision but the deeper cause involved Gentiles being included in the ‘people of God.’ Also, it was no ordinary council as the first apostles were members; therefore, there was an element to the group that made the circumstances ‘unrepeatable’

⁶³ New International Version, 1 Peter 1:3.

⁶⁴ Benjamin Merkle, *40 Questions About Elders And Deacons*, (Kregel Publications), 2008, p 30.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p 32.

after their own death. Also, this was not an annual meeting of a denomination practiced by the Episcopalian and Presbyterian models. “It was an emergency session needed to answer the important question of whether Gentiles needed to obey the Law of Moses.”⁶⁶

Merkle concludes that Acts chapter fifteen (15) may be the basis for Episcopalian and Presbyterian forms of church governance but it does not provide a compelling foundation for the modern congregations of today.

Merkle then moves to ask if Congregationalism is found in the New Testament.

“Should a church be able to call its own pastor, determine its own budget, and purchase its own property independently of outside authority?”⁶⁷ He quotes the casting of lots for the replacement of Judas in Acts chapter one (1) but also adds that Peter himself did not decide who this was, as a Pope would today. Therefore, all authority was not entrusted to Peter which is the claim of Catholicism that he was the first in the line of Popes. He quotes another example in Acts chapter six (6) in the choosing of seven (7) men to serve in a diaconal role supporting and helping the apostles. He adds that the twelve (12) did not decide as a closed community. “So the twelve gathered all the disciples together.”⁶⁸ Even so, Merkle quotes the same Scripture passage that the apostles had authority to appoint them after the disciples had chosen them. “They [disciples] presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid hands on them.”⁶⁹ Merkle suggests that this became a pattern with Paul and Barnabas appointing elders in the four (4) regions of Galatia after the local congregations had chosen them in Acts chapter fourteen (14). This thought is also supported by Millard Erikson (Professor of Theology Portland) and John Polhill

⁶⁶ Benjamin Merkle, *40 Questions About Elders And Deacons*, (Kregel Publications), 2008, p 34.

⁶⁷ Benjamin Merkle, *40 Questions About Elders And Deacons*, (Kregel Publications), 2008, p 32.

⁶⁸ New International Version, Acts 6:2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Acts 2:6.

(University of Pennsylvania) as recognized Scriptural commentators. Merkle also suggests this congregational pattern is seen in Acts chapter thirteen (13) by sending Paul and Barnabas out as missionaries. He continues that reports from missionary journeys, and sending them out again, did not center on a few people holding office but the whole church congregation. Added to this is Merkle's reference to Acts chapter fifteen (15) that the whole church was involved with James, the apostles and elders. "The New Testament seems to favor a self-governing model for the church."⁷⁰ He states that the selection of leaders (Acts 1:23/6:2-3), sending missionaries (Acts 13:3/14:26-27), affirming theological positions (Acts 15:22), carrying out church discipline (Matthew 18:17), and even excommunication (1 Corinthians 5:2) were all the responsibilities of the local congregation with their respective leaders. Merkle is quick to suggest that this does not rule out the cooperation of inter-church activity.

Daniel Akin, Robert Reymond, James White, Paul Zahl

The research of these four (4) men, edited by Chad Brand and Stanton Norman, offer a historical overview of church governance. "Christians do not all agree on just how churches are to be governed or structured. That is nothing new, as these differences date back to the earliest days of the church."⁷¹ The term 'presbyter' 'elder' 'bishop' and 'overseer' appear to be used to point out the same role. But throughout the history of the church these roles appear to have been singled out as distinct from each other. The result is Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Congregational and Non-Government as four (4) main models that also produce many smaller interpretations. Therefore, a church can be

⁷⁰ Benjamin Merkle, *40 Questions About Elders And Deacons*, (Kregel Publications), 2008, p 44.

⁷¹ Daniel Akin, Robert Reymond, James White, Paul Zahl, *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity*, (B&H Publishing, 2004), p 10.

Episcopalian with resemblances of Congregational as a hybrid. They collectively conclude that if the New Testament was not clear on church structure, where did the Episcopalian view come from, if not a distortion of Scripture?

The writings of the Early Church Father's are cited as a significant historical point where the church became diverse in structure. For instance, Clement of Rome (?-101AD) makes no distinction between 'elder' and 'bishop' whereas Ignatius of Antioch (35-108AD) makes a distinction saying, "The bishops preside after the likeness of God and the presbyters after the likeness of the Apostles, with the deacons."⁷² Between AD80 and AD150 the Didache⁷³ equates elders and overseers but Ignatius offers a three-tiered leadership with bishops at the top followed by elders / overseers and finally deacons. This became a normal practice as time moved on. Irenaeus (?-202AD) agreed that God had appointed bishops as a succession to the Apostles with the same authority to give instruction to further generations. Pentecostal and Holiness churches have always steered away from any form of apostolic succession – or succession of any kind. The problem they present is that the bishops did not just serve but became authoritative teachers, with presbyters and deacons endorsing and enforcing that authority. By 200AD the church had taken on a hierarchy structure with people at the top and unfortunates at the bottom. Even so, the monarchical (theocratic) structure had not been fully developed yet. "One might argue that the bishops at that time were more like the conveners of Presbyterian synods than as judges of the final appeal."⁷⁴ There was an elaborate system of church

⁷² Daniel Akin, Robert Reymond, James White, Paul Zahl, *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity*, (B&H Publishing, 2004), p 12.

⁷³ Traditionally held as the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles.

⁷⁴ Daniel Akin, Robert Reymond, James White, Paul Zahl, *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity*, (B&H Publishing, 2004), p 12.

governance forming outside the local places of worship. This would include different levels of ministry where the individual could advance themselves. Origen (185-254AD) took this further by teaching that the sacraments of the church involved our salvation to, “sanctify those who partake of it”⁷⁵ dictating who serves it and who can receive it. Again, this created a hierarchal monarchical system of governance. Cyprian (?-258AD) went further by quoting Jesus’ words to Peter (endorsing apostolic succession) that the keys he was given could open the door of heaven for those who believed and were faithful to the church. In the same breath, the bishops could slam the door on those they considered to be unworthy. Therefore, the individual’s relationship to the church directly affected their salvation. Jerome (347-420AD) argues that the rise of heresy endorsed the authoritative roles of the bishop, presbyter and deacon. Augustine of Hippo (354-430AD) agreed with Jerome that the church directly dictated salvation therefore the role and authority of those who held the office also held the keys to heaven.

By the Middle Ages church polity had become a dominant force with more attention, wealth and power being placed on bishops, presbyters and deacons. Such power was seen in the excommunication of King Henry 4th. “Henry pilgrimed to the Pope’s palace in Canossa and knelt penitently outside in the snow for three [3] days before Gregory came to the gate to offer him absolution.”⁷⁶ This was the height of the Papacy. The Protestant Reformation, in part, was a rebellion against the ascending role of bishops, presbyters and deacons. Martin Luther (1483-1586) did not want to abolish the offices in the church but, “In Luther’s theology, each church was to call and confirm its own pastor.”⁷⁷ Luther was

⁷⁵ Daniel Akin, Robert Reymond, James White, Paul Zahl, *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity*, (B&H Publishing, 2004), p 13.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p 15.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p 16.

clear that a bishop could not impose himself or supersede the authority of congregational life. This made the Lutheran teaching more Congregational. Luther also included the State and their role in the local church, which lasted in Germany until 1919. “The bishops and pastors, then, governed the church, but the state governed the bishops.”⁷⁸ Zwingli (1483-1532) agreed with Luther on emphasizing the priesthood of every believer rejecting the idea of a bishop. “In Zurich, perhaps more than in any of the other reformed cities, church and civic community were one indivisible body, governed by the spiritual and secular authority as the basis for their joint governance.”⁷⁹

In Geneva, Calvin (1509-1535) organized the offices of the church into pastor, elder, teacher (doctor) and deacon, though in practice the pastor was also the teacher. Calvin also opposed Episcopalian governance saying there was only one level of ordained ministry in an elder / pastor with two roles as a teacher and ruler. Knox (1505-1545) would take this line of thinking to Scotland with a wide-spread affect on Presbyterianism. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603) Protestant reforms struggled against Episcopalians and Erastianism. Even today, the Church of England still remains the same. The Anabaptists, Separatists and Puritans were among many movements that attempted a different form of church governance. According to the authors, when Europeans began colonizing in the Americas, doors of change opened that no one could possibly have anticipated - the rise of denominations. People could have any variety of practiced Christianity they preferred as long as the colony they chose believed it. The authors believe that this is where the notion of a church that was separate from the State

⁷⁸ Daniel Akin, Robert Reymond, James White, Paul Zahl, *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity*, (B&H Publishing, 2004), p 17.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p 18.

began, albeit in infant stages. The Wesleyan Movement (1843) adopted Episcopalian church governance, but the power of a bishop was lesser. Holiness groups also adopted the same form of church governance. “These churches were challenged by the rise of Pentecostalism, some of them split again, giving rise to Pentecostal Episcopal churches.”⁸⁰ The 20th century saw an explosion of new church structures specifically in the United States, “many of them affirming a Congregational methodology. Perhaps due to the fact that this seemed more in keeping with the democratic spirit of America.”⁸¹ Many ‘Bible’ churches sprang up which included the AG. “Some Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God, adopted hybrid polities, with some elements of the Congregational and some of either the Presbyterian or the Episcopalian.”⁸² They conclude by quoting a scene from ‘The Fiddler on the Roof’ (1971) where two opposing opinions are offered and both are correct. Within this narrative a bystander is confused and offers yet another opinion and he is also correct. These authors conclude that Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Congregational are correct.

George Knight

Knight looks at the Pastoral Epistles to Timothy and Titus through the Greek text. Regarding these two young men, he states they were not presented as monarchical bishops but emissaries with a temporary mandate. He views the ministry of Timothy and Titus as apostolic delegates portrayed throughout the Pauline Epistles. He acknowledges that the perceived problem is that Paul was not concerned about recognizing church leaders, and that spiritual gifts, not leadership, was the norm. Knight objects to this idea

⁸⁰ Daniel Akin, Robert Reymond, James White, Paul Zahl, *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity*, (B7H Publishing, 2004), p 20.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

saying Timothy and Titus were examples of an opposite view of Paul. “Various writers characterize the New Testament age in this way and also indicate that recognized leaders only came into existence later in the church when the vibrancy of the charismatic gifts were waning.”⁸³ Knight continues to say that pastors / elders, teachers, helps and administration are the charisma of governing being in the first rank of the charismata Jesus gives to the church found in (Ephesians 4:11) and (1Corinthians 12:28). Paul is therefore the first to speak about leadership, after Jesus, and not just spiritual gifts. “Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you.”⁸⁴ Knight strongly suggests that Paul was greatly concerned with how the local churches were governed with specific authority that must not be ‘muzzled’ but ‘obeyed’ ‘respected’ and ‘loved.’ Knight also proves that this was an introductory point in all his epistles with the exception of Colossians, and in every example he also shows that Paul spoke to plural leadership.

Knight breaks this into various categories of leadership. “Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.”⁸⁵ He suggests this refers to leaders who have charge over giving instruction to the church. “You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord’s people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it.”⁸⁶ Knight implies that Paul is pointing to those that

⁸³ George William Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on the Greek Text*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), p 29.

⁸⁴ New International Version, 1 Thessalonians 5:12

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 1 Corinthians 16:15-16.

the church should be in subjection to. “And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.”⁸⁷ Knight points out that key terms are used to identify who these leaders are, for instance, ‘pastors’ and ‘teachers,’ “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.”⁸⁸

Again, Knight suggests that specific titles are given to leaders. He concludes that bishops and deacons are used virtually synonymous and give meaning to Paul’s emphasis on leadership. Knight quotes the Book of Acts on Paul’s first missionary journey with an emphasis on ‘appointing’ (not electing) elders in every church. He also suggests that the qualifications given to leaders in the epistles to Timothy and Titus were nothing new.

“But the qualifications are an enlargement and specification of the general characteristics already required in the early days of the church.”⁸⁹ He refers to Acts chapter six (6) in choosing men of ‘good reputation and full of the Holy Spirit.’ Between the first appointing of leaders through his epistles to Timothy and Titus, Knight suggests that appointing leaders with a good reputation and full of the Holy Spirit was a common practice for Paul. “Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.”⁹⁰

Knight points out that the church was growing in the ancient world and something needed to be ‘in writing’ for ongoing appointments of elders since his instruction was to do this ‘in every town.’ In other words, this was the first written polity of the church. Added to this is the method of appointing by ‘laying on of hands’ carried over from an earlier

⁸⁷ New International Version, 1 Corinthians 12:28.

⁸⁸ Ibid. Ephesians 4:11.

⁸⁹ George William Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on the Greek Text*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), p 30.

⁹⁰ New International Version, Acts 14:23.

initiation. “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”⁹¹ Knight summarizes his thoughts on the Pastoral Epistles as it relates to appointing leaders, “From these considerations there seems to be no real substance to the charge that the officers in the Pastoral Epistles are different from what one finds in the earlier letters.”⁹²

Geerhardus Vos

It was at the beginning of the twentieth century that Vos authored his book on the Kingdom of God and the Church. He was considered a father of reformed theology and a distinguished representative of Princeton Theology. He compares the Kingdom and the Church. He clearly states that the Kingdom of God is prevalent in all of Jesus’ teachings but that the church was only mentioned twice in the Book of Matthew. Vos understands that the first mention of the church by Jesus is far more important because of its context. “We must ask ourselves what there was in the situation of that particular juncture of our Lord’s ministry that will account for this solitary and significant declaration about the church.”⁹³ He states that it was this occasion where Jesus announced to his first confessor of Messiahship that he would build his church, his ecclesia. The point Vos makes is that the juncture was just as significant as the declaration because people deserted him at that specific time. “Peter’s confession, therefore, was distinctly a confession which stood in contrast with the rejection of Jesus by others.”⁹⁴ The center of this confession and

⁹¹ New International Version, Acts 13:2-4.

⁹² George William Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on the Greek Text*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), p 31.

⁹³ *Ibid.* p 141.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p142.

rejection being, “I will build my church”⁹⁵ as opposed to the Jewish Church. Ecclesia in Greek is rendered from the Hebrew words Qahal and Edah that referred to the congregation of Israel as a kingdom. Vos is saying that if Jesus’ Messiahship is recognized, like Peter did, then it was a new kingdom different than the commonwealth of Israel. He goes on to say that just because Peter confessed his Messianic kingship, it did not make Peter the builder or founder of the church as Catholicism states, as Jesus himself made it personal, ‘I will build my church.’ In this way, Vos ties in the consistent teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom of God with the church, “thereby appropriates for himself the objective task of calling this church into existence by his Messianic acts.”⁹⁶ He goes on to stress that the Kingdom of God is entirely God’s therefore the church is also God’s and at no point in the ownership of human hands, but “out of the fullness of his authority”⁹⁷ he gives the symbolic keys to Peter, but again, the supreme authority is God. Vos continues to emphasize this point of building the church and exercise of authority in the church looking to the future. ‘I will build’ and ‘I will give’ are not subjective statements but objective in the person of Jesus. “Its origin and government depend entirely upon the Messiahship of Jesus.”⁹⁸ But he is quick to clarify that the church had not begun yet. Peter confirms this in another confession, “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”⁹⁹ The point Vos makes here is that Jesus had to go into Jerusalem (as Messiah King of a new Kingdom) and suffer at the hands of men before the church could be

⁹⁵ New International Version, Matthew 16:18.

⁹⁶ Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church*, (Harvard University, 1903), p 144.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p 144.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p 145.

⁹⁹ New International version, Acts 2:36.

birthed. Again, he connects kingdom and church as inseparable truths in Jesus. “We now observe, that the church, here for the first time formally introduced, is most closely related to the kingdom...”¹⁰⁰ He is referring to the words of Jesus that the keys to the church are also the keys to the kingdom. “I will build my church... I will give you the keys of the kingdom...”¹⁰¹ It is here, again, where Vos calls into question the issue of authority. Were the keys authority given to the church to open or close access into heaven as a gatekeeper? He denies this possibility as it would separate the kingdom and church as two individual authorities. He suggests that the keys open and close, not eternal life granted by the church, but to blessing and revelation in heaven and on earth. Vos believes that the authority invested into the church is one of instruction and discipline (or discipleship) in the Scriptures that open this blessing and revelation.

He offers another explanation to authority in the church as keys of a steward having access to all that is in the house, “therefore symbolize the administration of the affairs of the house in general.”¹⁰² In either case, authority to instruct and discipline, or to administrate the affairs of the church, the kingdom is certainly present on earth represented by the church. Both church and kingdom carry the metaphor of a house that is built, with a foundation, and keys to instruct or administer it. This is the theocratic point of Vos that Jesus is supreme in both. “It must be possible, this much we may confidently affirm, to call the church the kingdom.”¹⁰³ But he goes on to say that the kingdom may not be identified with the church under all circumstances.

The kingdom, as Jesus introduced and taught, is a house with community found in the

¹⁰⁰ Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church*, (Harvard University, 1903), p 147.

¹⁰¹ New International Version, Matthew 16:18-19.

¹⁰² Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church*, (Harvard University, 1903), p 149.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* p 150.

Greek name *ecclesia* designated as an assembly of free commonwealth. He refers to the parables of wheat and tares along with the net that hauled in good and bad fish as the work of the church, therefore, kingdom is community that will find its final analysis before the supreme authority in Jesus. If this is true, the disciples had to organize themselves. “The body of disciples previously existing must now take the place of the Old Testament and therefore receive some form of external organization.”¹⁰⁴ This is something that the kingdom did not visibly possess on earth. It had been internal and invisible and lacked embodiment. Through the suffering of Jesus, Vos states that the external embodiment of the kingdom in the church would be empowered by his resurrection and coming of the Holy Spirit, hence, the gates of hell will not overcome, because the church will have overcoming power. Vos goes further by insisting the strength of the church will not come through the strong, but refers back to the Rock (Jesus) that the church is built on. Again, he connects the kingdom of God with the church in Jesus.

Vos also points to the coming of Jesus with power, in the clouds, with his kingdom as a future event; therefore, kingdom is now and yet to come. But in both cases it is through the church. “She is more than the imminent kingdom as it existed before Jesus’ exaltation.”¹⁰⁵ He suggests that the consummation of king and kingdom (the church) began at his resurrection, ascension, and coming of the Holy Spirit finding its finality when Jesus returns for his church. Regarding those who hold an office within the church, Vos brings out a strong view, “The Christ is King in his church and all authority exercised within any church-body derives from him an important principle of church

¹⁰⁴ Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church*, (Harvard University, 1903), p 152.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p 156.

government, which those who endeavor to distinguish between the Kingdom of God and the visible church do not always sufficiently keep in mind.”¹⁰⁶

Added to this is his thought that the church is not the only evidence of the kingdom, but all humanity as it exists on earth is in itself evidence of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, it is very possible to be in the Kingdom of God, not as a citizen but as part of creation, and not be in the church. He refers to the Old Testament church (Jewish people) as theocratic where everything was governed, including the State, by God. Jesus introduced a separation of Church and State, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s”¹⁰⁷ and, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”¹⁰⁸ The point Vos is making here is that the same applies for the exclusive church (ecclesia / assembly of citizens in the kingdom) and the Kingdom of God in terms of all humanity as creation. He distinguishes between the exclusive church and inclusive kingdom where the former is the only place where theocracy really exists, in the members, or citizens, of the church. Everything in the former is governed by the overriding principle that Jesus is king but this cannot be said for all humanity. He is quick to say that this does not mean attending a church or joining one but the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit by which we are born again.

Vos compares the Old Testament church to the New Testament with an identical principle, “The primary purpose of Israel’s theocratic constitution was not to teach the world the principles of civil government... but to reflect the eternal laws of religious

¹⁰⁶ Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church*, (Harvard University, 1903), p 162.

¹⁰⁷ New International Version, Matthew 22:21.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* John 18:36.

intercourse between God and man...”¹⁰⁹ He also briefly compares both Testament’s to the form of democracy that existed in the Old and New. The king was to be benevolent; therefore policy was needed to administrate provision for the poor. Israel understood this, the church is supposed to understand this, but the world is not expected to understand it without the influence of the church. Again, this is where Vos sees kingdom and church as inseparable.

Frederick Fyvie Bruce

Bruce is a professor at the University of Manchester, England. His Scriptural commentary indicates that there was approximately ten (10) years between Paul planting a church in Philippi and his epistle of encouragement and direction for them. Like any church plant, it began with a vision. “During the night Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”¹¹⁰ On arrival Paul did not find a ‘man’ but a group of “women assembled on the Sabbath day to recite the appointed prayers.”¹¹¹ Because Philippi was “of a Roman colony modeled on that of the mother city”¹¹² there was probably a lack of Jewish men willing to constitute a synagogue, because “the quorum was ten men.”¹¹³ The first convert in this church plant was a woman, again, not a man. “One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond

¹⁰⁹ Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church*, (Harvard University, 1903), p 85.

¹¹⁰ New International Version, Acts 16:9-10.

¹¹¹ F.F. Bruce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Philippians*, (Hendrickson), 1989, p 4.

¹¹² *Ibid.* p 5.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* p 1.

to Paul's message."¹¹⁴ Lydia became the starting point to what would become an influential New Testament church. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord,' she said, 'come and stay at my house.'"¹¹⁵ When Paul and Silas came out of prison, "they went to Lydia's house"¹¹⁶ where, "she and the members of her household were baptized."¹¹⁷ Bruce firmly concludes that the church core was not men but women stating, "Lydia and some of her companions formed the nucleus of the church of Philippi."¹¹⁸

Ten (10) years later Paul writes his epistle to the church in Philippi. "To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons."¹¹⁹ What started with a group of women by the river was now a thriving church with structure, overseers and deacons, consistently growing. Bruce states that Paul encouraged the development of leadership qualities but can find no prescription for it. He does refer to the first chapter that "he who began a good work in you will carry it on until completion"¹²⁰ as an implied practice. Having opened with a salutation far more inclusive than Lydia and her companions, Paul also concludes "Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus."¹²¹

Bruce points out that it was almost fifty (50) years later that Polycarp (65-155AD) wrote to the church in Philippi "still administered by the plurality of leaders, to whom he refers to as 'elders.'"¹²² The results are shown but not the process. One of the key results

¹¹⁴ New International version, Acts 16:14.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. Acts 15:16.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Acts 16:40.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. Acts 16:15.

¹¹⁸ F.F. Bruce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Philippians*, (Hendrickson), 1989, p 5.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Philippians 1:1.

¹²⁰ Ibid. Philippians 1:6.

¹²¹ Ibid. Philippians 4:21.

¹²² F.F. Bruce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Philippians*, (Hendrickson), 1989, p 28.

was good sense with managing money, “when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.”¹²³ And, “Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.”¹²⁴ He also referenced them to Corinth, “And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed.”¹²⁵ And, “Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity...they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.”¹²⁶

Margaret Poloma

Poloma offers a survey among Pentecostal AG pastors and how they came into ministry. She states the AG are a model of supernaturalism and pragmatism (with an emphasis on the former) now seen as faith and prayer wed to state-of-the-art technology and systems of governance. The data Poloma used was a series of interviews with 246 pastors of which all of them prayed in tongues with 69% doing so daily. All of them had received answers to prayer with 54% being led to do specific acts by God. 84% had experienced miraculous healing through their ministry with a list of other spiritual experiences. Poloma concludes her survey that, “Personal spiritual experiences –

¹²³ New International Version, Philippians 4:16

¹²⁴ Ibid. Philippians 4:15-16.

¹²⁵ Ibid. 2 Corinthians 11:9.

¹²⁶ Ibid. 2 Corinthians 8:1-4.

sometimes quite dramatic ones – are the spiritual lifeblood of many pastors.”¹²⁷ This is not a democratic experience. She then divides the survey into two parts asking about the ‘call’ to ministry and then the ‘particular assignment’ in ministry.

In the first part of her survey, Poloma provides anecdotal material finding a result in two (2) out of five (5) pastors had received their ‘call’ into ministry through supernatural intervention (prophecy, a vision or divine word of knowledge). One pastor who had served his congregation for over fifteen (15) years was spiritually sensitive but also astute in business. He recalled two (2) separate and dramatic events that have stayed fresh in his total of thirty (30) years of ministry. The first was a vision on college campus and the second ‘divine’ providence to pay for tuition. Another thirty-year-old (30) pastor stated that his ‘call’ to ministry came at the same time as he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. He recalled that it was difficult for him to sleep and that God was preparing his heart for ministry. He went to his own pastor who ‘confirmed’ that call to ministry creating opportunity and eventually pulpit time to teach from Scripture. In this way he could obtain his ordination without being institutionalized in a Bible College (completing required education by distance learning). This young man was asked to join the pastoral staff in his home church and is still serving there today. “The launching of this pastor’s ministry would have been a very different story in a more organized and bureaucratized denomination where degrees and credentials are equivalent to union cards.”¹²⁸ The former is what Poloma calls the ‘leading of the Spirit’ as a process to enter ministry that involves the mentoring from a seasoned pastor, proving of ministry before the church,

¹²⁷ Margaret Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas*, (University of Tennessee Press, 1989), p 67.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* p 69.

and finally the laying on of hands to publically endorse the ministry.

Another pastor that took part in Poloma's survey submitted his name to a nominating board that was looking for leadership after conversations with his District Superintendent. Although his name was submitted, he did not submit a resume, but nevertheless was invited to interview. He was one in twenty-seven (27) that submitted their name and one in eight (8) that were interviewed. The candidate pastor is quoted saying to his wife after realizing the problems in that church, "No way are we coming here; we don't want and we don't need this."¹²⁹ He told the nominating board to withdraw his name and left the building to drive away. But as he went, Poloma states that this pastor heard from God that he was to lead that congregation. "I couldn't afford not to obey what I believed I heard Him say."¹³⁰ Poloma's point is the supernaturalism of these AG pastors.

Another pastor was a former military career man who made God a promise while in the heat of battle that he would 'get saved' and 'build a church' if he got out alive. He survived and 'got saved' at a large revival meeting and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But his promise to build a church was a faded memory in the heart of a man with a tenth grade education. It was fifteen (15) years later that he was invited to speak at a small AG church, nearing his retirement from the military, which both needed a pastor and a building. This man accepted the position and built the church. Again, Poloma provides information that pastors within the AG predominantly have a 'divine call' to the ministry. Although the material Poloma produced is over two decades old, the postscript states that bureaucratic structures may eradicate this 'divine' process of calling a person

¹²⁹ Margaret Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas*, (University of Tennessee Press, 1989), p 72.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

from one form of serving God to serving as a pastor.

Peter Toon, Steven Cowan, Paige Patterson, Samuel Waldron

‘Who Runs the Church?’¹³¹ offers four (4) views of church governance that differ from traditional models in two aspects, namely, Single Elder Congregationalism and Plural Elder Congregationalism. Patterson opens with examples from Polycarp (155AD) to Criswell (2002) explaining that these churches had lost their pastors (through death, resignation or being asked to leave). The emphasis in these examples was placed in ‘the pastor’ not the system of governance. “From Apostolic times the hand of God has rested upon certain men, most often associated with the local parish or congregation.”¹³²

Patterson continues that all forms of church governance are doomed from the beginning unless they begin with Jesus the Head of the Church. She claims that pastors and deacons are the only two recognized offices in the New Testament Church where the name ‘pastor’ is also interchangeable with ‘bishop’ and ‘elder.’ She summarizes these roles by saying the pastor provides spiritual leadership and the deacons, practical help. Although Patterson agrees that plural Eldership can be found in the New Testament, a single elder from among that group needs to be the recognized leading elder. According to Patterson the method of appointing this man varies through Scripture, the principle being that the local church believers decide on some level. “The churches were essentially autonomous and Congregational in polity.”¹³³ Patterson sees that the New Testament church congregations were recognized as a priesthood of believers filled with the Holy Spirit but the pastor was expected to interpret the leading of the Holy Spirit accountable first to

¹³¹ Peter Toon, Steven Cowan, Paige Patterson, Samuel Waldron, *Who Runs the Church: Four Views on Church Government*, (Zondervan, 2004).

¹³² Ibid. p 133.

¹³³ Ibid. p 134

God and then to the believers. The inter-church activity is seen to be more of a loose confederation unified by the Headship of Jesus and the doctrine of the first apostles. That doctrine was eventually written down and became an authority to the local congregations. Going back to church history, Patterson focuses again on the importance and influence of a single elder / pastor as someone who is ‘called’ by God to serve in that capacity.

Although church history does not record how these men came into ministry, it does zero in on the vitality of this office. With Knox in Edinburgh (1505-1546), Hus in Prague (1369-1415), Zwingli in Europe (1484-1531), Edwards in Northampton (1703-1758), Hubmaier in Nikolsburg (1420-1538), Truett in Dallas (1867-1944) and Boice in Philadelphia (1938-2000), Patterson concludes, “these stellar figures of church history have been by virtue of calling, gifts and dedication, and what my father termed, ‘moral ascendancy’ the knowledged under-shepherds of their flocks even while exercising monumental influence beyond those geographical and congregational restraints.”¹³⁴ Her emphasis, again, is the vital importance of the Single Elder / pastor who leads.

Waldron offers another model with Plural Elder Congregationalism. He defines what is meant by the term, essentially Congregationalism. But he adds that Congregationalism has two distinct interpretations in the history of the church; first, the autonomy of a local congregation as independency, and second to democracy. It can also mean both giving a third definition to Congregationalism. “As independency, Congregationalism has to do with the regulation of the local churches to one another. In one sense it teaches the independence of each local church.”¹³⁵ This would indicate that there is no hierarchy of

¹³⁴ Peter Toon, Steven Cowan, Paige Patterson, Samuel Waldron, *Who Runs the Church: Four Views on Church Government*, (Zondervan, 2004), p 133.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* p 188.

ecclesiastical government that has authority over the local church. Waldron adds that this definition also include a casual association with other churches with independence closely guarded in all inter-church activity and impulses. Waldren writes passionately about renewal in a plurality of elders that lead, contradicting the traditional democratic rule of a Congregationalism. “This renewed interest in elders has created a reaction against the radical, democratic form of governance practiced by many evangelical churches.”¹³⁶ Waldren cites churches that were once termed democratic Congregationalism but now practice independent Congregationalism with a group of elders to lead them. This is sharp turn from the culture of church democracy in the United States and brings a further separation of Church and State in terms of ‘mirror image.’ For example, the democratic Federal Government being a model for the Church. “The rule of elders in the reformed tradition makes the decisions of Eldership authoritative regardless of the consent of the church as a whole.”¹³⁷ Waldren opens the door to reformed thinking emphasizing the Biblical text not the traditional history of the church. He observes that church planters tend to adopt the Plural Elder model for church governance.

Summary

In light of this review I am still left with questions that drive this thesis. There appears to be four (4) main models of church governance developed over the history of the Church: Presbyterianism, Episcopalianism, Congregationalism and Non-Government. Within these models are varying interpretations of what they mean influenced by the changing culture. Specific to the United States, history shows that denominations were

¹³⁶ Peter Toon, Steven Cowan, Paige Patterson, Samuel Waldron, *Who Runs the Church: Four Views on Church Government*, (Zondervan, 2004), p 189.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

the mainstream churches at the time of the thirteen (13) colonies as a collective view. For instance, Lutheranism, Catholicism, Anglicanism were seen as Episcopal; Reformed churches were seen as Presbyterian; with Anabaptists, Separatists, Puritans, Baptists and Mennonites as Congregational. The only addition to the thirteen (13) colonies was Non-Government with the Quakers, Brethren, Amish and Moravian churches. History also shows the cultural variance in these churches with the influence of English, Dutch, French, Spanish, German, Swiss and Swedish expatriates. In one sense, history implies that these settlers formed their own religious practice developing through the American time-line to what we have today. It also appears that the thirteen (13) colonies strongly debated between denomination versus sect and inclusive versus exclusive, leaving the purpose of freedom highly interpretable. Have we moved away from the Scriptural text to a cultural influence in the United States that began with the thirteen (13) colonies?

Wood seems to have a viable solution, albeit not airtight, to involve the specific AG District as an option between Congregational and Plural Eldership pending on the maturity and pathology of the church. Douthat offers insight into political vehicles evolving from moral convictions with strong warnings that we are confused as a nation in our interpretation and subjective response to democracy and theocracy. Hotchkiss offers a strong pastor-led church minimizing committees and boards (governance) with an emphasis on more ministry and less meetings. He warns that the church is a 'church' first and not a non-profit first, dictating to how a church is organized. His opinion is that the mission of the church dictates to how governance is formed and carried out. Driscoll offers Biblical interpretation on elders, deacons and members of a local church and how they function together. Within his church group, the membership does not vote on any

appointment but they are included in the final process of appointing by way of questions and answers. This recognizes the priesthood of believers. Merkle searches for the beginnings of church governance in the Book of Acts and the Epistles suggesting that the disciples were included in decisions of the apostles. Chad and Brand edit a brief history of evolution and development in church governance closely tied to how national government is formed, suggesting this is still in process. Knight examines the Pastoral Epistles refuting the idea that Paul was all ‘spiritual gifts’ and not interested in specifics of leadership. Knight adds that Paul was the first promoter on Scriptural leadership after Jesus, as a priority. Vos offers insightful thoughts on the Kingdom of God actually being the church, and that the two are inseparable. His emphasis was not on election or appointing but the principles of the theocratic Kingdom in the Old and New Testaments. Poloma offers an insight into how a person decides to be a pastor before the process of election or appointing. She directs attention towards the emphasis of supernaturalism in the AG pastoral ministry. Patterson and Waldron contrast each other in Single Eldership and Plural Eldership Congregationalism. The latter being something that is developing among church planters today.

Interpretation of the Scriptural text is varied with ‘bishop’, ‘elder’, ‘deacon’, ‘overseer’ and ‘pastor’ understood in what the title means but not necessarily the function of that office. Many see the title ‘deacon’ in the strictly Greek translation of ‘servant’ but the practice is also seen as a Managing Board of Directors who hire and fire while creating church polity in the AG. Is this a cultural influence of carnal power? At the same time, although ‘pastor’ and ‘elder’ are commonly interpreted as ‘shepherd’ or ‘overseer’ (specifically to the body of believers in Scriptural teaching and instruction) the two

extremes are seen as ‘little Hitler’s’ or a ‘puppet Pastor’ controlled or at war with a Managing Board of Directors. Is there a clear understanding of ‘calling’ as a practice of Peter’s words? (1 Peter 5:2) “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve...” Is this person elected or appointed, and in either case, who elects and who appoints, and who elects or appoints them? Does this point to Congregationalism as our only true Scriptural form of governance? If this is the case, how many of our AG local churches are influenced by the culture of democracy (our countries form of governance) or by theocracy in the Kingdom of God? Can the Kingdom of God be truly defined as the local church? According to Vos it certainly can be.

There appears to be a development of how the church is organized and practiced in the Scriptural text itself. For instance, Paul visits Philippi and begins the church with a woman called Lydia and her employees, but ten years later writes “To all God’s holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons...”¹³⁸ The difficulty is that there is no specific Scriptural text to say how a handful of volunteers who ‘heard Paul’s message and believed’ became an organized body of believers with a reputation of giving more to the work of God than any other church in the New Testament. I come back to my question of culture influencing our form of local AG church governance in the United States.

Research Question

My primary question is ‘does AG policy lead churches toward more of a democratic

¹³⁸ New International Version, Philippians 1:1

or theocratic vision of church leadership?’ In addition, how has such policy developed within the AG and what are the Scriptural roots that help clarify church leadership? ’ Our nation’s system of government allows us the privilege to vote for those we want to represent us on a Federal, State and local level. To a degree, we also vote on the polity of those representatives while they hold an elected office. These research questions consider whether this system has overtaken the Scriptural system of local church governance. I am not sure if there a clear and singular model of church governance in the Scriptural text. Are our congregations, under the ultimate authority of King Jesus, becoming a constituency of voters deciding who God has called to serve as a pastor? Furthermore, once in the office of a pastor, do those constituents continue to vote on deacons, elders, paid staff members, and direction of the local church?

I want to explore the Scriptural text on ‘appointing’ and ‘electing’ by examining the various forms of local church governance adopted and developed throughout church history. In particular, I want to examine the history of the AG in the United States to see if there is a trend of cultural influence over the way business is done in the local church. I shall look at the official position of the AG in the United States on the office of a deacon, elder and pastor. Are they appointed or elected? Whatever the results show to this question, I want to further ask, who does the appointing or electing? Does the Kingdom of God operate within any culture of any country at any point in history since the birth of the Church? To that end I want to examine the AG position on the Kingdom of God and the local church.

Methodology

In this project I collected the historical data on the AG in the United States citing the

growth statistics as far back as the records will go to the present day. I also state the AG official position on aspects of democracy and theocracy. I will refer to the statement of the AG that, “The priority of the church is to preach Christ exclusively (1Corinthians 2:2) and the mission of the church to proclaim the Gospel (Matthew 28:19).”¹³⁹ This shows that mission determines local church governance and not the other way around. This is why I am researching democracy and theocracy in the local AG church within the United States. Is the statement true to practice?

Methodology and Rational

This project employs a mixed-method approach, using both qualitative and historical methodologies. Qualitative work allows for nuance and context, seeking to understand the cultures in which decisions are made or practices are developed. The qualitative aspect of this project will entail personal interviews with key people in the AG movement. Historical research allows one to understand how policies or practices have come to be by looking at changes over time. This aspect of the project will require diligent searches through documented records going back to when the AG first incorporated. This involves printed material published by the AG, online through the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, and a personal interview with the head of that particular department. This mixed-method approach is key to answering my primary research question, ‘does the practice of democracy in local AG churches help or hinder our growth in the United States?’ It will also assist in answering additional questions about democracy and the Kingdom of God.

Sample

The data from this project will come from two main sources. The first involves

¹³⁹ Accessed Online, November 23, 2010, <http://ag.org/governments-and-political-parties>.

historical records. The second section of data that I will collect will come in the form of interviews. I will interview the following people regarding their perspective.¹⁴⁰ I shall not be asking any interviewee to represent the AG specifically but allow them to share their own views that may differ from each other. My reasoning for this is that the subject of governance, theocratic and / or democratic, is largely a ‘positional view’ not an issue of doctrine.

Dr. George Wood (GW)

“Dr. George O. Wood was elected chief executive officer of the Assemblies of God at the 52nd General Council in August 2007. As general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, USA, part of the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world, he is a member of the denomination’s Executive Leadership Team and Executive Presbytery. The church has over 12,300 congregations in the United States with nearly 2.9 million members and adherents. The U.S. Assemblies of God is part of a larger World Assemblies of God fellowship with a membership of over 62 million. Dr. Wood also serves as chairman of the World Assemblies of God fellowship as he was elected to that position at its meeting in Lisbon, Portugal in May, 2008. Prior to his present position, Wood served the church as its general secretary for 14 years. He was assistant superintendent of the Southern California District from 1988-93. Wood pastored Newport-Mesa Christian Center in Costa Mesa, California, for 17 years. The son of missionary parents to China and Tibet,

¹⁴⁰ George Wood interviewed in his AG office at Springfield Mo. Wednesday 3, November 2010, 1:00pm – 2:15pm. Johan Msotert interviewed at Starbucks in Springfield Mo. Tuesday 2, November 2010, 3:00pm-4:00pm. Gary Allen interviewed in his AG office at Springfield Mo. Wednesday 3, November 2010, 2:20pm-3:20pm. Jesse Miranda interviewed at AG cafeteria Springfield Mo. Wednesday 3, November 2010, 11:30am -12:45pm. David Morrison interviewed in the AG Higher Education conference room Tuesday 2, November 2010, 1pm-2:00pm. Warren Bullock interviewed at Double Tree Hotel Springfield Mo. Monday 8, November 2010, 8:00pm-9:45pm. Mark Carlson interviewed by through internet Friday 19, November 2010.

Wood holds a doctoral degree in pastoral theology from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and a juris doctorate from Western State University College of Law in Fullerton, California. He did his undergraduate work at Evangel University (College) in Springfield, Missouri, and served the college in several capacities, including being director of spiritual life and student life from 1965-71. He was ordained by the Southern Missouri District in 1967. Dr. Wood is the author of a number of books including his most recent 'Living in the Spirit' along with 'A Psalm In Your Heart', 'Living Fully', 'The Successful Life', and a college text on the 'Book of Acts.'"¹⁴¹

Dr. Johan Mostert (JM)

“Professor of Community Psychology. Teaching psychology and training counselors at AGTS is not just an academic exercise for Johan Mostert. After several years in his early career as a pastor of the Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa, he left the comfort of prosperous parish ministry to become a pastoral counselor among abused and abandoned children at the Villa Lubet Children’s village. For the next twenty years he served the needs of South Africa’s poorest and most vulnerable citizens, directing the National Welfare Department of his denomination for more than a decade. The severity of the AIDS crisis and compassion for the rural poor eventually led him to begin Chrisnet, a faith-based organization dedicated to channeling government grants to local churches and Christian sustainable development projects. He is widely recognized as a leading authority on local-church response to the global AIDS pandemic and travels frequently as a speaker and project consultant for faith-based development agencies. His passion as a teacher is to train counselors who will respond to human suffering wherever

¹⁴¹ Accessed Online November 8, 2010, <http://ag.org/top/About/Leadership/index.cfm>.

it is found with biblical and psychological skill and Spirit-led compassion.”¹⁴²

Dr. Gary Allen (GA)

“Dr. Gary R. Allen is Director of Pastor Care. Dr. Allen directs the counseling services and a helpline for 34,000 Assemblies of God ministers and their families. For nine years (2001-2009) he served as Executive Editor of the Enrichment Journal, a quarterly leadership publication for ministerial encouragement and resource. Prior to serving in this role, Dr. Allen was Director of the Leadership Training Network for the Illinois District Council from January 1994 to October 2000. He served as pastor of First Assembly of God in Elgin, Illinois from 1974 to 1994, and Calvary Assembly of God in Carthage, Illinois from 1971 to 1974. From 1966 to 1971 he served as Associate Pastor in churches in Springfield, Missouri and Kansas City, Missouri. He served as a Navy Chaplain in the United States Naval Reserve for 30 years, retiring with the rank of Navy Captain (06). He also served as Police Chaplain for the Elgin, Illinois Police Department for 16 years. Dr. Allen graduated from Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri (1967), he earned a Master of Divinity degree from Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri (1971), and a Doctor of Ministry degree at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.” (2001).¹⁴³

Dr. Jesse Miranda Jr (JMJ)

“For decades, Dr. Jesse Miranda Jr. has been a mover and shaker not only in Assemblies of God circles but also among U.S. Hispanic Protestants. Saluted as ‘the granddaddy of U.S. Latino Protestantism’ by Christianity Today, Dr. Miranda is the founding president of the multid denominational Alianza de Ministerios Evangélicos

¹⁴² Accessed Online November 8, 2010, <http://agts.edu/faculty/mostert>.

¹⁴³ Gary Allen, personal email in response to request for bio, November 8, 2010.

Nacionales (AMEN), chief executive officer of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, an AG executive presbyter, founder of the Latino American Theological Seminary, distinguished professor and director of the Jesse Miranda Center for Hispanic Leadership at Vanguard University, and past chairman of the AG Commission on Ethnicity. He received his bachelor's degree from Vanguard, master's degrees from Biola and Fullerton universities, and a doctorate from Fuller Theological Seminary. Dr. Miranda, 73, grew up in Albuquerque, N.M., the son of a Mexican lumber mill worker and Spanish-descent mother with a third-grade education. With his irenic spirit, Miranda is widely regarded as the driving force behind uniting disparate U.S. Hispanic evangelicals on issues such as theological education, social ethics and racial reconciliation.”¹⁴⁴

Daniel Ishmael Morrison (DM)

“Daniel Morrison serves as the Editor / Media Specialist for the Alliance for the Assemblies of God Higher Education. He is also the Administrative / Editorial Assistant compiling statistical data for the Alliance. As a graduate of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and undergraduate of the University of Alabama, Daniel brings a technical perspective to his position. As a single 27-year-old man his views on church governance represent his generation and educational status. As an ordained minister in the Assemblies of God and member of the Evangelical Theological Society, Society for Pentecostal Studies and Society for Biblical Literature, Daniel has three publications and four awards to his name.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Accessed Online November 8, 2010, http://ag.org/pentecostal-evangel/Conversations2008/4934_Miranda.cfm.

¹⁴⁵ Daniel Morrison, personal email in response to request for bio, November 12, 2010.

Dr. Warren Bullock (WB)

“Dr. Warren D. Bullock has served as the Northwest area executive presbyter since 2001. Since 2006, he’s held the position of senior pastor at Northwest Family Church in Auburn, Washington. During his ministry, Dr. Bullock has pastored at several churches in Washington and Oregon. He also served as superintendent of the Northwest District for eight years. Dr. Bullock has a long history with Northwest University in Kirkland, Washington. In addition to earning his undergraduate degrees there, he has held the positions of public relations director and dean of the school of ministry. Dr. Bullock currently serves on the university’s board of directors. Dr. Bullock earned a Master of Arts from Seattle Pacific University and a Doctor of Ministry from California Graduate School of Theology and is the author of the book, ‘When the Spirit Speaks.’”¹⁴⁶

Mark Carlson

“Mark has excelled in Creative Arts and Music on the Pastoral Staff 1986-2006 from Seattle, Auburn, Des Moines and Sacramento. Mark has worked under considerable pressure producing the finest musical presentations at seasonal times of the year up to crowds of 25,000 people. He understands from a rich personal heritage ‘how things work’ and is able to articulate them well. In 2006 Mark planted Design Christian Church in maple Valley Washington having produced one of the most thorough strategies for communicating to a neighborhood. Incorporating the talent of his own family he developed a strong leadership for DCC with remarkable accountability. Mark is currently the Director on Ministries at Snoqualmie Ridge Washington.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Accessed Online, November 8, 2010, http://ag.org/top/About/Leadership/nonresident_exec_presbytery.cfm.

¹⁴⁷ Mark Carlson, personal email in response to request for bio, December 10, 2010.

Instrumentation

Through searching AG historical records I will get a sense of the tension between theocracy and democracy as it relates to church governance. This will help me see how this has played out since 1914. To gain a sense of how this is practiced I have personally interviewed key people in the AG.

In regards to the historical portion of my data, I will simply collect documents, and read them thoroughly with a critical eye. For the qualitative interviews, I will ask the following questions. They are presented in three categories beginning with a reaction to key words, commentary on our national form of democratic government and the AG traditional form of governance. I shall use a digital voice recorder for accuracy and transcribe their answers.

First Category – Personal interpretation of key governance words.

1. *Briefly describe your understanding of the following words contextualized within your own ministry: Authority; Election; Appointment; Deacon; Pastor; Elder; Church; Governance.*

Second Category – Our national form of government

1. *The only form of government the thirteen (13) colonies had known was either dictatorship or a monarch. Why was it so important to distance themselves from a monarchy system of government to an elected form of government?*
2. *Why was it so important to have an Amendment in the Constitution of the United States to separate the Church and State?*
3. *Explain, in your opinion, how authority is given and used in our system of democracy?*

4. *Do you vote (locally, State and National office) and why? (I will not ask who you vote for or what political party).*
5. *In your opinion, do we have the best system of government compared to other countries?*

Third Category - Our heritage of church AG governance in the United States:

1. *Have you been elected into office, and what was it?*
2. *Have you been appointed into office, and what was it?*
3. *The people in Moses' day were in desperate need of a leader. Why was he not elected by the people to lead them?'*
4. *Why is it so important that a common two-thirds majority vote is needed to elect a pastor in a local church?*
5. *In your opinion, how does a church go from 'We need a pastor to lead us' to 'this particular person is our pastor?'*
6. *In your opinion, how does a church go from 'This is God's chosen leader for us' to 'we don't want him anymore?'*
7. *Our countries government is based in governance of the people, by the people, for the people. In your opinion, has this become the form of governance in the church?*
8. *In your opinion who should be elected and who should be appointed in the church? And who should do the electing and who should do the appointing?*
9. *How would you compare the following two Scriptures within the context of church governance? (Acts 1:26) "Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles." (Acts 13:2) "While they were worshipping the*

Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'

10. How important is church governance to the local church and its mission, and why is this?

11. Explain your view of a deacon described by Paul in his letters to Timothy and Titus?

Analysis and Validity

I shall be comparing the data to make sense of the historical AG records and personal interviews. I shall do this by looking for patterns influenced by our culture; for instance, the culture of the United States when the AG first incorporated to our present culture. Through the historical records I will look for emphasis on theocratic and democratic thought and practice. I shall also define key words that describe Scriptural positions and their context like elder, deacon, pastor, authority, election, appointment, church and governance. I shall do this by looking at the original Greek language of the New Testament and subjective definitions of each interviewee. Furthermore, I shall critique current AG policy and positional papers with historical records of the same type.

Data

I will present my data in three distinct ways. First, I will attempt to define key words to church governance by going back to the original Greek language used in the New Testament. Second, I will examine the historical records of the AG. Third, I will show the answers to my questions from each interviewee.

Defining Words

The language of the New Testament is known as 'Attic Greek' meaning 'classic.' It

was a 'lingua franca' meaning a language spoken between people that was not their native tongue. The ancient civilized world used this language in written and spoken form to cooperate and communicate known as 'Koine Greek' meaning 'common.' For instance, Josephus (37-100AD), Philo (20-50AD), Philip the Evangelist (Acts) and all four gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) used this Greek form, whereas Latin was the language of law and administration for the upper class. Therefore, Koine Greek came from Attic Greek as a language the common man could understand with idioms of other native languages. With this brief background, what do the following words mean in Koine Greek: deacon, elder, presbyter, bishop, pastor, overseer, ordained, appointed and elected? Furthermore, what is the concise historical background of deacon, elder, presbyter, bishop, pastor and overseer?

Deacon is 'diakonos'¹⁴⁸ (pronounced dee-ak'-on-os original word δίακονος) meaning, "one who executes the commands of another, a master, a servant, attendant, minister."¹⁴⁹

This could be a waiter who serves food and beverage, one who serves a monarch or an office assigned by the church to care for the poor distributing the resources collected.

They act on behalf of the one who has given them derived authority (the origin of authority is not the person serving), not endowed (personal authority), or to be confused with "endued with power from on high"¹⁵⁰ (to put on authority like a garment).

Diakonos (deacon) is found in all four (4) references within the first epistle to Timothy

¹⁴⁸ Deacon, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, W. R. F. Browning. Oxford University Press Inc. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Northwest University. Accessed Online December 26, 2010.

¹⁴⁹ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Hendrickson, 1996), p 138.

¹⁵⁰ New International Version, Luke 24:49.

from Paul.¹⁵¹ In Greek mythology Hermes¹⁵² is called a deacon (diakonos) as a young man who attended Zeus. In the same way Paul was perceived to be Hermes in Lystra as an ambassador of Barnabas. “Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker.”¹⁵³ It is generally accepted that the seven (7) men in Acts chapter six (6) were the first deacons to assist the twelve (12) apostles. There were disputes between the Grecian and Hebraic Jews on the distribution of food to widows, but who decided on the seven (7)? “So the twelve gathered all the disciples together and said.... ‘choose seven men from among you.’”¹⁵⁴ This shows that there was due process, but what were their qualifications? They were “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.”¹⁵⁵ Who gave them the authority (derived) to be deacons? “We [the apostles] will turn this responsibility over to them.”¹⁵⁶ Was there a vote by the disciples? “This proposal pleased the whole group.”¹⁵⁷ There was no democratic process or theocratic command but they were involved in the relational process. How was the authority of the deacons derived? “They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.”¹⁵⁸ Among these seven (7) men were Stephen and Philip who served in a greater capacity, the first being a martyr and the second an evangelist. They appear to have moved on to be elders, something more than a deacon. Although it is generally accepted that these seven (7) men were the first deacons, they appear to be an antecedent

¹⁵¹ New International Version, 1 Timothy 3:8 / 3:10 / 3:12 / 3:13.

¹⁵² Hermes, Greek mythological young man serving Zeus.

¹⁵³ New International Version, Acts 14:12.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. Acts 6:2-3.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. Acts 6:3.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. Acts 6:5.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. Acts 6:6.

of a presbytery (the twelve [12] apostles) and not a church diaconate. Also, the Greek masculine noun diakonos is not in Acts chapter six (6). Rather the feminine noun diakonia¹⁵⁹ (pronounced dee-ak-on-ee'-ah original word διακονία) meaning 'ministration.' There is no evidence that these men served for a set term, but indefinitely, even so, Philip and Stephen appear to have been promoted.

Elder is a difficult word to determine in Koine Greek as a distinct office in the church. The Old Testament elders were a collective group of older men who had influence. An example would be, "Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites."¹⁶⁰ They were never elected or appointed but were the senior male representation of a tribe, clan or family. A son may succeed his father but not through a democratic process as the position was held through respect and honor. In the New Testament, elders were associated with the chief priests "all the chief priests and the elders of the people."¹⁶¹ Again, they were not elected or appointed but represented the community as senior men. The early epistles of Paul do not mention elders but address the church as 'fellow workers' 'brothers' and 'servants.' It is not until Paul writes to Timothy and Titus that elder is used, not as an Old Testament group of senior men, or those representing the community with the chief priests, but as an office of the church with qualifications. It is here where the difficulty begins with the word 'elder' in Koine Greek. The masculine noun episkopos¹⁶² (pronounced ep-is'-kop-os original word ἐπίσκοπος) means, "a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any

¹⁵⁹ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Hendrickson, 1996), p 137.

¹⁶⁰ New International Version, Exodus 4:29.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. Matthew 27:1.

¹⁶² Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Hendrickson, 1996), p 243.

curator, guardian or superintendent who oversees.”¹⁶³ When an elder (episkopos) joined other elders in Jerusalem they would be the collective presbytery, or in Attic Greek ‘presboteros’¹⁶⁴ (pronounced pres-boo'-ter-os original word πρεσβύτερος) meaning, “body of elders, senate and council.”¹⁶⁵ Each group of Christians in the city would have an elder (episkopos) who represented them when all the elders came together (presboteros). From this group of elders across the city there would be one, like James in Jerusalem, as a first among equals. “The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders (episkopos and presbuteros) were present.”¹⁶⁶ Each elder represented the local church and James represented the Church in the city. There is no absolute methodology in Scripture, democratic process of election or congregational appointment, where the elder (episkopos) comes into this office within the local church. Scripture does show that Paul instructs Timothy and Titus to appoint, with derived authority, elders in the community where the local church met “appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.”¹⁶⁷ There is also evidence that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in each town they visited, “Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.”¹⁶⁸ The word episkopos (elder) is used in Paul’s epistles to Timothy and Titus. Therefore an elder was called episkopos on his own but presboteros with other elders.

¹⁶³ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Hendrickson, 1996), p 243.

¹⁶⁴ Elders, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, W. R. F. Browning. Oxford University Press Inc. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Northwest University. Accessed Online December 26, 2010.

¹⁶⁵ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Hendrickson, 1996), p 535-536.

¹⁶⁶ New International Version, Acts 21:18.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Titus 1:5.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. Acts 14:23.

Presbyter is ‘presbyterion’¹⁶⁹ in Koine Greek (pronounced pres-boo-ter'-ee-on original word πρεσβυτέριον) as a neuter noun. This is the collective body, council or senate of elders (episkopos) referred to above. This was probably modeled on the council of elders in a synagogue that the gospel writers refer to. Paul asks Timothy to remember how he was released into ministry, “Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders (presbyterion) laid their hands on you.”¹⁷⁰ Again, this was not through election but appointing by the presbytery or body of elders by physically laying their hands on him.

Bishop and Overseer are both episkopē¹⁷¹ (pronounced ep-is-kop-ay original word ἐπισκοπή) meaning a single elder (episkopos) from a body of elders (presbyterion) as the first among equals. It is the feminine noun of the masculine noun ‘elder.’ James could have been a bishop (episkopē) referred to above. There is nothing in Scripture to support that a bishop is elected from among the presbytery but recognized. History shows that by the second century a bishop received endowed authority from God not derived from others. The bishop not only influenced the Church but also the State. This is because by the time of the Early Church Fathers the position of bishop assured community cohesion. Paul uses this term in his first epistle to Timothy commending the desire to be a bishop (episkopē) as noble.¹⁷² “The letters of Clement of Rome (95AD) and Ignatius of Antioch (115AD) demonstrate the development of a hierarchical office that eventually became dominant. The office of bishop is thus an indicator of the evolution of Christianity from a

¹⁶⁹ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Hendrickson, 1996), p 535.

¹⁷⁰ New International Version, 1 Timothy 4:14.

¹⁷¹ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Hendrickson, 1996), p242-243.

¹⁷² New International Version, 1 Timothy 3:1.

popular Palestinian movement to a sophisticated institution with offices, authorities, and hierarchy.”¹⁷³

Pastor is *poimēn*¹⁷⁴ (pronounced poy-mane original word ποιμήν) as the masculine noun used as a metaphor of a shepherd “to watch for enemies trying to attack the sheep - to defend the sheep from attackers - to heal the wounded and sick sheep - to find and save lost or trapped sheep - to love them, sharing their lives and so earning their trust.”¹⁷⁵ Paul does not use this term in writing to Timothy or Titus. However, he does use the term *poimēn* (pastor) in Ephesians carrying the metaphor of a shepherd, “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.”¹⁷⁶ The qualifications Paul applies to an elder is generally accepted as the same qualification for a pastor as their function is the same. The term pastor (*poimēn*) is only used by Lutheran and various Protestant denominations as a title for the person in charge of a local congregation including the AG.

Ordain and Appoint are both *diatassō*¹⁷⁷ (pronounced dee-at-as'-so original word διατάσσω) meaning, “to arrange, appoint, ordain, prescribe and give order.”¹⁷⁸ Paul uses this verb in his letter to Titus. “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint (ordain) elders in every town, as I directed

¹⁷³ J. Andrew Overman, Bishop, *The Oxford Guide to People and Places of the Bible*. Ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan. Oxford University Press, 2001. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Northwest University. January 3, 2011.

¹⁷⁴ Pastor, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Ed. E. A. Livingstone. Oxford University Press, 2006. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Northwest University. Accessed online January 3, 2011.

¹⁷⁵ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Hendrickson, 1996), p 527.

¹⁷⁶ New International Version, Ephesians 4:11.

¹⁷⁷ Ordain / Appoint, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Ed. E. A. Livingstone. Oxford University Press, 2006. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Northwest University. Accessed online January 3, 2011.

¹⁷⁸ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Hendrickson, 1996), p 142.

you.”¹⁷⁹ Again, this appears to be derived authority from Paul to Titus. Over time, to be ordained (diatassō) or appointed took on the form of an elaborate ceremony that included a miter, crosier, chrism and kissing of the bishop’s ring. Catholics believe that Jesus ordained (diatassō) Peter, “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church”¹⁸⁰ succeeded by St. Linus (?-76AD), then St. Anacletus (?-92AD (Cletus), St. Clement I (?-101AD) and so on. In other words, the ordained or appointed were touched by the hands that were touched by the hands all the way back to Jesus laying hands on Peter (although there is no evidence that Jesus actually laid his hands on Peter). The Protestant Reformation changed this emphasis to calling ministers ordained or appointed as new lines of authority separate from Peter.¹⁸¹ Although ceremony is still involved in the AG, it is clear than an individual cannot ordain another person, only God can do this.

Elected is another difficult word in the context of governance as it is not used in the Scriptures. However, it is used in a theocratic context to describe the doctrine of predestination. In this case elected is ‘syneklektos’¹⁸² (pronounced soon-ek-lek-tos original word συνεκλεκτός) but does not apply in any office or officer of the Church in Scripture. It is important to note that there are over 80,000 political elections every year in the United States, the most important being the President every four (4) years. Following the ratification of the Constitution in 1788 the first presidential election was 1789 nominating eleven (11) candidates of which George Washington won the election. There is a total absence of electing for governance in Scripture.

¹⁷⁹ New International Version, Titus 1:5.

¹⁸⁰ New International version, Matthew 16:18.

¹⁸¹ Orders and Ordination, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Ed. E. A. Livingstone. Oxford University Press, 2006. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Northwest University. Accessed online January 3, 2011.

¹⁸² Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Hendrickson, 1996), p 603.

Policy and Historical Shifts

It is helpful for my research to examine the AG position on our national form of democratic government. The Commission on Doctrinal Purity and Executive Presbytery of the AG in the United States¹⁸³ has stated that they do not endorse systems of governance or political parties. The statement does not refer to church governance. They also acknowledge that Romans chapter thirteen (13) includes Christians therefore the believer is encouraged to vote and seek political office in the will of God. They further acknowledge that the American culture has a participatory form of government therefore it is the Christian's duty to participate in that system. But they clearly recognize that the function of the church is absolutely different than the government of the United States. Therefore the church should avoid becoming embroiled in party politics and a particular form of government for many reasons. Although those reasons are not qualified in the statement, the priority of the church is to preach Jesus exclusively and the mission is to proclaim the Gospel. "Historically, when the church has become involved in partisan politics, the outcome has been disastrous for both the Kingdom of God and the system of government it promoted or attacked."¹⁸⁴ The Commission and Presbytery continue to acknowledge that because the United States has different political parties, and believers are encouraged to participate, by its very nature, this can create division in the church. The AG has been clear on this that, "There is no room for such division in the church."¹⁸⁵ Therefore the AG asks its affiliated and sovereign churches to be apolitical keeping to the priority and mission of the church.

¹⁸³ Accessed Online November 11, 2010, http://ag.org/top/beliefs/contempissues_09_government.cfm.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

Second, what is the position of the AG on the form of local church governance? The official position¹⁸⁶ is that a pastor is elected by the local congregation known as ‘Congregational Governance.’ A local board of deacons is also elected to assist the pastor in operations and business of the local church. The statement does not say how a deacon is elected, so I assume that it is by the congregation in the same context as the pastor. It further states that there are two types of AG churches: the General Council Affiliated Church and the District Affiliated Church. The first is autonomous and self-governing while the second is not recognized as mature enough to self-govern, therefore the District is engaged with the local church until full autonomy to self-govern is established. This would be known as ‘Eldership Governance’ and not traditionally the preferred way of the AG. Self-governing autonomy keeps the AG from being a denomination characterized by hierarchy clearly stated as an official position, “The Assemblies of God is considered a cooperative fellowship instead of a denomination.”¹⁸⁷ This makes sense to me in AG governance but leaves me with further questions on how this is practiced.

Third, what is the AG position on the Kingdom of God (theocracy)? In August 2010 the General Presbytery adopted a position on the Kingdom of God in nine (9) sections. I shall abridge the main points. The linguistic term ‘kingdom’ has first and secondary meanings in the Hebrew and Greek language. The primary meaning is one of rule, authority and reign of a king. The secondary meaning is the territory, subjects and operations of that kingdom. The AG recognizes that when an individual is regenerated by the Holy Spirit they become part of the Kingdom of God. While participation (secondary Meaning) is not compulsory, the Kingdom is present (primary meaning) whether or not

¹⁸⁶ Accessed Online November 11, 2010, http://ag.org/top/beliefs/contempissues_09_government.cfm.

¹⁸⁷ Accessed Online November 11, 2010, <http://ag.org/top/about/structure.cfm>.

the individual recognizes this. The AG also recognizes that there are many expressions used for the Kingdom of God in the Bible but they all refer to the one Kingdom. “The Kingdom of God is both a present reality and a promise of future fulfillment.”¹⁸⁸ Therefore the Kingdom is present in the Church but not limited to it. The Kingdom existed before the Church began and will continue to exist after the church has experienced the rapture but “the fullness of the Kingdom awaits a final apocalyptic arrival.”¹⁸⁹ Therefore the Kingdom is already present but also yet to come. Saying that, the AG has been clear on the local church and the Kingdom that, “The Kingdom of God is not the Church.”¹⁹⁰ The AG also recognizes that there is an inseparable relationship between the Church and the Kingdom. The Church is therefore part of the Kingdom, but not all of it. They continue to address our form of democracy in Federal Government in that, “The Kingdom of God may operate within, but is not identified with, any present political system.”¹⁹¹ Endorsing earlier statements the AG has made about the relationship a Christian has to the State (referencing Romans chapter thirteen [13]) they are clear that, “The Kingdom of God is not a blueprint for a radical cultural change based on some carnal theocratic or revolutionary agenda.”¹⁹³ The point of the Kingdom is to radically change lives through the work God has done for us in Jesus and to include us in His family as adopted sons and daughters, not the advancement of a ‘kingdom now’ militant church. According to the AG in the United States we are not theocratic Israel. The AG

¹⁸⁸ Accessed Online November 11, 2010, <http://ag.org/top/about/structure.cfm>.

¹⁸⁹ Accessed Online November 11, 2010, http://ag.org/top/beliefs/position_papers.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

concludes with a quote from John's revelation of Jesus, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus"¹⁹⁴ as a Scriptural context for the Kingdom present and yet to come.

Fourth, what is the position of the AG on deacons, trustees and boards within the local church? The General Presbytery adopted a position August 17th 1976¹⁹⁵ and has remained unchanged. The introduction to this position clearly states that God selects a pastor to lead and then gives him deacons to support and serve the congregation understanding that God always gives a leader vision, and that the cooperation of leaders is a beautiful experience. "The deacons are chosen from among the congregation to 'serve the church' in the practical, spiritual, and temporal matters of that body of believers."¹⁹⁶ In addition, trustees are also chosen to serve as signatories and custodians of church property. Where the church is young in their faith, small or in decline, the AG make provision for a 'board of advisors' where the Scriptural qualification for deacon is not applied. The qualification for a board of advisors centers on subscription to the AG Tenants of Faith, attending the church regularly, giving to the church financially and approved by the District. The official board is the combination of a pastor with deacons and appears not to include trustees. There are sixteen (16) Scriptural qualifications listed for a deacon stating, "A person's life and character must pass certain criteria before qualifying one to serve. The Scriptures dictate the qualifications."¹⁹⁷ The qualifications of a trustee appear to be a 'matter of conscience' stating, "Trustee boards in churches are frequently granted capacities similar to that of a board of deacons. If the board of trustees is granted such capacities, it is recommended that the qualifications shall be the same as a board of

¹⁹⁴ New International Version, Revelation 22:20

¹⁹⁵ Accessed Online December 17, 2010, http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position_Papers/index.cfm.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

deacons.”¹⁹⁸ Added to this is another matter of conscience for the local church. “If the official board is other than a board of deacons or board of trustees, the qualifications shall be determined by the constitution and bylaws of the local congregation as long as the Scriptural standards of leadership are maintained.”¹⁹⁹ The paper also states that the pastor is the chairman of the official board and president of the corporation and each member shall be the help, prayer partner, advisor, supporter and assistant in fulfilling the goals God has given to the pastor. Board members are a team that should intentionally develop a relationship with each other through prayer, worship and cooperation. The health of the congregation should be the official board’s concern and activity. The life and lifestyle of each board member should also be a witness of the Christian life; therefore they act as public relations of the church. The responsibilities of the deacons “shall act in an advisory capacity with the pastor in all matters pertaining to the assembly in its spiritual life and in the administration of the ordinances. They shall act in the examination of applicants for membership and also in the administration of church discipline.”²⁰⁰ The responsibilities of a trustee differ from a deacon because they are responsible as servants in legal matters of business. The paper concludes with a suggested process for eligibility, “When a nominating committee is provided for in the local constitution and bylaws, the following procedure is recommended: Spiritual qualifications shall be considered as stated under ‘qualifications.’ The nominee shall be one who faithfully supports the local church in attendance and finances. The nominee should understand the Assemblies of God church government. Before a nominee is presented, the pastor should discuss

¹⁹⁸ Accessed Online December 17, 2010, http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position_Papers/index.cfm.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

philosophy and vision and determine the nominee's willingness to serve. The selection of board members shall be by a vote of the local congregational membership after nominees have been approved."²⁰¹ The position paper concludes with a definitive statement, "The pastor is God's gift to the church; board members are the church's gift to the pastor."²⁰²

Fifth, what is the position of the AG on elders? Although the minutes from the first General Council in 1914 recognizes an elder, and the ordination of elders, the current position is 'non-position.' "After research, we conclude, because of the use of the word in the original Greek (Acts 20:17/28; 1 Timothy 5:17; James 5:14, etc.), that the words 'elder' or 'eldership' refer to the office of pastor, bishop, or overseer. It is beyond the scope of our assignment to speak to this office."²⁰³

Sixth, how do the growth statistics line up for AG churches and ministers? According to the 2008 General Council's archive statistics,²⁰⁴ in 1960 there were 8,233 AG churches in the United States with 508,602 members. By 1975 further detailed records were added for the archives that included 1,239,197 adherents and 23,223 AG ministers. By 2008 the number of churches had risen to 12,377 with 1,662,632 members, 2,899,702 adherents served by 34,178 ministers. Is this growth over forty-eight (48) years limited or liberated by the form of church governance the AG has traditionally held - Congregationalism? Is there any connection? Has that form of governance made any difference to preaching Jesus exclusively and proclaiming the Gospel? Is the result a hierarchy within the AG that resembles an unconscious corporate organization?

The data shows the statistics of the AG in the United States show the difference

²⁰¹ Accessed Online December 17, 2010, http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position_Papers/index.cfm.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Accessed Online November 12t, 2010, http://agchurches.org/Sitefiles/Default/RSS/Statistics_2008_public.pdf

between number of churches opened and closed between 1965 and 2008 was a positive 3936. The worst two years were 1965 and 2001 with more churches closing than opening. 1982 and 1983 were the most successful years between opening and closing AG churches with a positive 243 and 213 successively. Between 2000 and 2008 the ratio of opened and closed churches did not exceed positive double figures.

So, do the themes at each General Council make any difference to how we govern?

Again, let's look at the record from 1957 through 2009. 1957 By His Spirit; 1959 Forward with Christ; 1961 Fervent in Spirit; 1963 Upon All Flesh; 1965 Looking Unto Jesus; 1967 Come, Lord Jesus; 1969 Go and Tell; 1971 Take the Word; 1973 Calling Our World to Christ; 1975 God is Moving . . . By His Spirit; 1977 (37th: Oklahoma City, OK, Aug. 18-23)--He is Worthy; 1979 Together. . .In Mission; 1981 God Omnipotent Reigns; 1983 Preach the Word; 1985 Stand Firm in the Faith; 1987 I Surrender All 1989 Review--Rejoice—Renew; 1991 I Want to Know Christ 1993 Live the Word; 1995 Pentecost Now; 1997 Lord Send a Revival; 1999 Serving Our Generation; 2001 Empowered by the Spirit; 2003 Turn America, Pray the Way; 2005; People of the Spirit; 2007 Impact! 2009 Nothing's Too Hard for God!²⁰⁵

What about the number of ministers in the AG? In 1973 the AG had 21,638 ordained, licensed, certified and specialized licensed ministers, thirty-five (35) years later in 2008, the AG had 34,178 ministers. The profile of an average AG church in the United States²⁰⁶ had 143 people attending a Sunday morning service of which 132 were voting members. The majority of these were female. The average age of a pastor was fifty-two (52), and increasing since 2008, who would stay in their position within a specific local church for

²⁰⁵ Accessed Online November 12t, 2010, http://agchurches.org/Sitefiles/Default/RSS/Statistics_2008_public.pdf

²⁰⁶ Accessed Online December 20, 2010, http://ag.org/top/about/statistics/Statistical_Report_Summary.pdf.

an average of nine (9) years, with decreasing tenure since 2008.

After asking these questions and looking at the statistics, I will examine how the AG first incorporated which may shed light on how we practice church governance today. I will research the historical minutes, correspondence and position papers of key elements to my thesis. What I will be looking for are developmental changes that speak to church governance. To that end, I interviewed an official church historian in the AG in the United States. The following is an abridged conversation. It is not a ‘word for word’ quote from Darrin Rodgers²⁰⁷ but transcribed in segments keeping the context of AG history centered on church governance. The citations of AG records are mine.

“The AG held its founding General Council April 2nd-12th 1914 at Hot Springs, Arkansas. Those in attendance came from diverse religious, geographic, and social backgrounds. The founding fathers and mothers of the Assemblies of God came together, in part, because they realized the need for accountability and structure. There was a certain danger that Pentecostalism might implode, as a lack of accountability on doctrine, morals, and finances brought disrepute on certain segments of the young movement. Many Pentecostal missions had open pulpits. People did not know who was going to preach the following week, or what they would preach. There was also the issue of collecting money that had little accountability in how it was used. For instance, there was a periodical, titled “In School with the Holy Ghost: God's Newspaper,” published in the 1910s that claimed to contain new letters and prophecies from Jesus. Variations are still being promoted today by Steve Chalke (Baptist social activist) and Brian McLaren

²⁰⁷ Interviewed Tuesday December 14, 2010 in his office. Darrin has served as director since September 2005. A fourth-generation Pentecostal. Darrin earned his B.A. (Hillsdale College), M.A. in Theological Studies (Assemblies of God Theological Seminary), and J.D. (University of North Dakota School of Law). He came to the FPHC from Fuller Theological Seminary, where he served at the David du Plessis Archive and the McAlister Library.

(Evangelical pastor / author) who question the doctrine of creation, the fall of man, and redemption as it has been understood and taught by Protestant churches). Because of poor morals and lack of accountability this new awakening was becoming an embarrassment with people beginning to reject the Pentecostal experience. Therefore “all kinds of chaotic conditions have been manifested ...individualism has been the human order of the day, every man being a law unto himself...men’s hearts were calling on God for help to adjust these matters...”²⁰⁸ In 1913 the current Pentecostal Evangel was first published in an attempt to bring a common voice among Pentecostals. But it was not until two years later in 1916 that the full Statement of Fundamental Truths was adopted to bring clarity to Pentecostal doctrine. “The Completed Statement, as revised and edited by the Council Committee on Resolutions and approved by the Executive Presbytery, was adopted...”²⁰⁹

Ultimately, there were five (5) reasons for organizing: unity, conservation, foreign missions, legal foundations, and publications with Bible training schools.²¹⁰ In addition to this, there was an adoption of two officials, E.N. Bell (Chairman) and J. Roswell Flower (Secretary) who were elected into their positions by the Council of voting believers. Both were educated men. The first was a Baptist minister and the second practiced law, both became Pentecostal. A later motion was made to appoint twelve (12) Executive Presbyters (from the governance term used by Presbyterians) of which nine (9) were appointed. There was also another motion allowing the nine (9) to appoint the other three (3) without the Council being involved.²¹¹ The purpose of this Executive Presbytery was

²⁰⁸ Minutes of the First General Council April 2nd – 12th 1914 Hot Springs Arkansas, Introduction, p 2.

²⁰⁹ Minutes of the Third General Council October 1st – 7th 1916 St. Louis Mo. p 9.

²¹⁰ Minutes of the First General Council April 2nd – 12th 1914 Hot Springs Arkansas, Introduction, p 4.

²¹¹ Ibid.

to oversee in all necessary matters within the United States and the foreign mission field. It was at this time in 1914 that the 'Assemblies of God' was incorporated and that the Annual General Council should be the proper place of business.²¹² Church offices were also unanimously agreed upon. Therefore "we also endorse and commend all in whose lives God has already revealed His power in any of these ministries, and as a matter of convenience in their recognition, adopt the Scriptural terms of Elder, Evangelist, Minister, Exhorter and Deacon."²¹³ The issue of 'ordination' was also resolved that, "...those ministers in unity with us who by experience and qualifications justify the General Council in recognizing their ordination as Elders, and likewise prepare a list of those ministers and aspirants to the ministry whose experience and qualifications do not warrant their ordination as elders."²¹⁴

Business took on the form of 'motions' 'whereas' 'adoptions' and 'be it resolved' but there was nothing that specifically stated a form of parliamentary order like Roberts Rules of Order (1876). 'On motion it was adopted that the Council should be governed by parliamentary usage, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.'²¹⁵ The first General Council was a fellowship of ministers, but by 1917 the AG changed its polity to allow churches to join the General Council as well. This change came because of the American Conscription Act passed in June 1917 under President Woodrow Wilson. You could not be a conscientious objector unless part of a 'well-recognized denomination' whose bylaws opposed war or killing in war. Sociologically the AG is a denomination but generally called a fellowship in spite of the current position paper.

²¹² Minutes of the First General Council April 2nd – 12th 1914 Hot Springs Arkansas, Introduction, p 4-5.

²¹³ Ibid. p 6.

²¹⁴ Ibid. p 11.

²¹⁵ Ibid. p 2.

By 1927 the AG adopted a revised Constitution and Bylaws by changing some of the terminology creating a more sophisticated document. For instance, Chairman became Superintendent and Secretary became General Secretary.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, this did not change anything significant in terms of AG governance. By 1961 the Statement of Fundamental Truths was revised²¹⁷ but the revision did not necessarily dictate to church governance. Throughout the history of the General Council there have been further amendments, revisions and resolutions, but they do not substantiate a significant change or development in church governance. It appears that a Congregational model governing the local church, Districts and General Council has remained consistent since 1914 to the present day as a priesthood of believers. (I include Congregational to also mean the collective Council in voting on officers and offices). At no point is there evidence of an officer in the AG being recognized as a bishop with endowed power. There is, however, ample evidence that power is derived in an appointed or elected office with the approval of church members, presbyters, executive presbyters and the General Council of ordained ministers.” (End of abridged conversation)

Having asked questions about the AG and interviewing Rodgers, I still need to ask several questions about the emphasis of church governance. I shall return to the Heritage database and research letters from the desks of various AG offices and officers. The database is somewhat limited and does not give an accurate picture because not all official letters to AG ministers have been recorded. General Secretary J.R Flower (January 1944) refers to the democratic process in his correspondence regarding the

²¹⁶ Constitution and Bylaws of the General Council of the Assemblies of God Including Essential Resolutions Revised and Adopted, September 16th – 22nd 1927.

²¹⁷ Minutes of the Twenty-Ninth General Council of the Assemblies of God, August 23rd – 29th 1961.

National Association of Evangelicals, “We are entitled to forty-two (42) voting delegates, if I understand the basis of representation correctly... there will be many of our people in attendance in spite of the fact they will not be given recognition as voting members.”²¹⁸

There is only one other recorded letter to AG ministers in the 1940’s that makes reference to a democratic process, again from Flower (1949) referring to the recognized voting ministers as a constituency. “The voting constituents exceeded that of any former General Council.”²¹⁹ A previous letter from Flower (1942) makes reference to constituency but does not refer to voting or delegates. “The result of their labors was an amendment to the General Council Bylaws which will be published for the consideration of all our constituency.”²²⁰ Overall, there appears to be a minor emphasis on the democratic process in official letters to AG ministers through 1969. For instance, there are seventeen (17) references to voting²²¹ on issues from 1948-1968; forty-three (43) references to groups of AG ministers as constituents²²² from 1942-1969; and fifty (50) references to ministers as delegates²²³ from 1941-1967. There also appears to be a greater emphasis on spiritual life referencing prayer²²⁴ that include decision making seventy-two (72) times from 1940-1969; guidance of the Holy Spirit²²⁵ that include decision making sixty-six (66) times from 1940-1969; and the Word of God²²⁶ that include direction and decision seventy-two

²¹⁸ Accessed Online, December 21, 2010, <http://ifphc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publicationssearch.FullText>, Ministers Letter, January 24, 1944, p.2.

²¹⁹ Ibid. Ministers Letter, October 1, 1949, p.1.

²²⁰ Ibid. Ministers Letter, September 21, 1942, p.2.

²²¹ Accessed Online, December 21, 2010, <http://ifphc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publicationssearch.FullTextResults>.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

(72) times. Again, this is limited to what has been permanently recorded and does not give an accurate picture. I still need to look at other AG literature. Does the historic AG publication called the Pentecostal Evangel show emphasis in the subject of church governance? In 1917 the publication ran an article by E.N Bell answering questions about the newly incorporated AG. One of those questions was in regard to church governance. “Have we any Scripture for nominating and voting for a leader in the church?”²²⁷ Bell answers that we must select the one God has chosen and be guided by the Holy Spirit. He quotes (Acts 1:23) that the two (2) men were asked to ‘stand up’ therefore nominating them to be voted on by the apostles, not all the believers. “Then they prayed God to show which of the two was His choice, show it, of course, by the lot or vote. So we ought to pray on all such occasions when about to vote, unless God has already shown us His choice.”²²⁸ He goes on to say, “The fact that they gave ‘their lots,’ plural, shows that each had a lot to cast. Each to cast a lot is the same as each to cast a vote. However ‘lot’ is the Scriptural term for the act, while ‘vote’ is the political term. The thing that makes the vote the lot or allotting of the Lord is that each voter will be so guided by the Lord to vote the will of God.”²²⁹ Bell warns that the voting delegate be yielded to God or the leader chosen may not be the choice of God. In 1969 there was an article by the National Association of Evangelicals offering a Christian Declaration for the believer that includes voting from personal conviction. This was to be presented to President Nixon as a concern for the moral condition of the United States²³⁰ and not as a position on church

²²⁷ Accessed Online, December 21, 2010. <http://ifphc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publicationssearch.FullTextResults>. The Weekly Evangel, E. N. Bell, May 19, 1917. p.9

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid. Pentecostal Evangel, November 9, 1969.

governance. Between 1917-1969 (the limited years of recorded reference) the majority of 146 references in the Pentecostal Evangel to voting are in the context of church governance. The same can be said for delegates²³¹ referenced 1058 times between 1916-1969 and constituents²³² forty-seven (47) times between 1923-1969. These were all in the context of church governance. Prayer²³³ is referenced in a broad context of articles in the Pentecostal Evangel (that include voting, delegates and constituents) 2712 times from 1914-1969. The Holy Spirit²³⁴ is referenced in the same broad context 2701 times within the same years. The Word of God²³⁵ is referenced 2714 times, within the same context and years, as a greater emphasis than governance.

Understanding that governance does not grow a church, but that it can hinder it, is there any relationship to the fastest growing AG churches and church governance? The 2007-2008 AG statistics report²³⁶ show churches from thirty-nine (39) states, ranked 1-154, as the fastest growing congregations in the United States. California, Florida, Illinois and Texas had ten (10) or more churches represented in the report. The fastest growing churches in each of the four (4) states mentioned are The People's Church California, Iglesia El Calvario Florida, Crossroads Community Church Illinois, and Trinity Church Texas. In every case the governance model is currently a Congregational Single Elder model. None of the four (4) churches began that way, but they did find that church

²³¹ Accessed Online, December 21, 2010. <http://ifphc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publicationssearch.FullTextResults>.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Accessed Online, December 21, 2010. http://agchurches.org/Sitefiles/Default/RSS/Statistics_2008_public.pdf. Section VI Part f pages 2-6.

governance had to change so it did not hinder growth.²³⁷

The Interviews

First Category²³⁸ – Personal interpretation of key governance words.

1. *Authority* – **(GW)** Distributed. **(JM)** Anointing. **(GA)** Influence. **(JMJ)** Control and power. **(DM)** Exercise of power within your position. **(WB)** Right to exercise power. **(MC)** The Pastor leads with authority under the authority of God.
2. *Election* – **(GW)** Good. **(JM)** Anointing. **(GA)** A model of selection. **(JMJ)** Unclear. **(DM)** Selected by the people. **(WB)** God’s perspective on who will be saved. **(MC)** Those selected to serve in a leadership capacity as voted upon by a committee, group, or leadership.
3. *Appointment* – **(GW)** Good in certain circumstances. **(JM)** Anointing. **(GA)** Another model of selection. **(JMJ)** Fraternalism. **(DM)** Selection of a person by fewer people. **(WB)** Relates to authority. **(MC)** Either a man made appointment to lead, serve, or oversee as well as an appointment to a position or place by God.
4. *Deacon* – **(GW)** Excellent. **(JM)** Serves those in the community with social needs. **(GA)** Servant. **(JMJ)** Authority. **(DM)** Leader that serves people. **(WB)** Servant. **(MC)** one selected per the biblical requisites to assist in leading and overseeing the affairs of the local congregation.
5. *Pastor* – **(GW)** Wonderful. **(JM)** Shepherds as part of a team. **(GA)** Shepherd overseer. **(JMJ)** Servant. **(DM)** Shepherd teacher serving the people through

²³⁷ Personally contacted by phone. (1) People’s Church December 21, 2010. Lead Pastor Dale Oquist. (2) Iglesia El Calvario. December 22, 2010. PA to Exec Pastor Elizabeth. (3) Crossroads Community. December 22, 2010. Exec Pastor Dan Goodson. (4) Trinity Church. December 22, 2010. Pastor-on-call.

²³⁸ In Category One (1) I want to get an idea of their personal interpretation of these eight (8) key governance words.

pastoral care. **(WB)** Shepherd. **(MC)** the senior leader/shepherd of the local body of believers, selected by a vote of the membership.

6. *Elder* – **(GW)** Excellent. **(JM)** Shepherds as part of a team. **(GA)** Fuzzy term that fits the senior leader. **(JMJ)** Traditional and historical. **(DM)** Aids the pastor in teaching the people. **(WB)** One who leads. **(MC)** one given to lead and selected/appointed by the senior leader for the sake of giving guidance and pastoral oversight.
7. *Church* – **(GW)** Beautiful. **(JM)** Grouping of persons. **(GA)** Local community of faith. **(JMJ)** Little ‘c’ the people big ‘C’ the world. **(DM)** Regular gathering of accountable people. **(WB)** Body of believers both locally and globally. **(MC)** The Bride of Christ.
8. *Governance* – **(GW)** Necessary and I like it. **(JM)** Problematic for me as governing implies differentials that include control. **(GA)** A system of process. **(JMJ)** Control. **(DM)** Authority set by the people on how they will conduct their business. **(WB)** A system of operation relating to process not authority. **(MC)** polity which establishes the protocols necessary for the church to function as a church per biblical guidelines as well as operating in accordance with state and national laws.

Second Category²³⁹ – Our national form of government.

1. *The only form of government the thirteen (13) colonies had known was either dictatorship or a monarch. Why was it so important to distance themselves from a monarchy system of government to an elected form of government?* **(GW)** They

²³⁹ In Category two (2) I am asking five (5) questions about our national government in the United States as cultural background.

resented taxation without representation and did not want to be dictated to by someone so far away who did not understand their affairs. **(JM)** In Keeping with God's plan for mankind they wanted to practice what Martin Luther preached on the priesthood of believers. This would remove the hierarchy out of the church. They rejected the divine right of a king believing he was not superior to them as a collective priesthood of believers. In a sense, they completed Luther's work by removing the papacy and king out of the church. **(GA)** They were on a new adventure and a new beginning frustrated by the environment of a monarchy being over-taxed and over-regulated as a people. Their own principles and values were not considered under a king. This is very personal to me as my own grandfather came from Liverpool England to start a new life and adventure. He was a tailor. **(JMJ)** They wanted more land, and furthermore, they wanted to organize themselves on that land. They were nothing like the tribal mentality of the Native-American people; their collective culture had a European tradition. What they wanted was a majority model, or social contract, where the Mayflower Compact followed their own self regulated rules determined by themselves, not the king. **(DM)** They did not like the alleged divine right of the king, or anyone saying they had a 'divine right.' They also believed the king was not acting in accordance with the Bible. **(WB)** They believed the king was unjust so the people rebelled against him. They were against his imposing authority. There was no one in the colonies that would rise to the rank of king so they looked for another form of governance. The geography of England and the colonies would not work either. **(MC)** The people resented taxation without representation preferring

elected leaders by the people, for the people. These representatives would run the affairs as dictated by the people. They believed this would produce a better outcome for all versus the distrusted governance of one over all.

2. *Why was it so important to have an Amendment in the Constitution of the United States to separate the Church and State?* **(GW)** There wasn't an amendment, instead, the State couldn't establish or interfere with religion as a reaction to what they had come from in Europe. They didn't divorce it from State – that's a modern trend. The Supreme Court has picked up on Thomas Jefferson's phrase about there being a wall between Church and State (and that was Jefferson's opinion) but it wasn't a controlling opinion at that time. **(JM)** This is not too important to me as I was born, raised and educated in South Africa. I have only lived in the United States six (6) years. The South African counterpart also has the separation of Church and State but it includes cooperation with the State. Therefore, the Church can be subsidized by the State to meet the social needs of community. **(GA)** The leadership of the Church and Government were too close. Therefore the policy of the Church and Government were tightly linked together. It was not so much to take away the influence of the Church over Government but the other way around. The Church should not control the political system. **(JMJ)** They wanted a clear distinction between the two. England had a hierarchy system and they did not want it. Civilization in Europe was very Catholic at the time which meant 'top down' rule. This also tied into ownership of land and property. We must not forget that half the colonists were Separatists seeking freedom from Christianity altogether. **(DM)** It was to avoid the government forcing one form of

religion upon the people. **(WB)** I am not sure it was a wise amendment. The Church and State should be intimate because the Church could advise the State on its moral course. Without this, those who we elect are left with no moral influence other than their own. The Church can guide in morality but not in politics. They say there are two things we cannot discuss, politics and religion, but I disagree. To separate is to leave it without boundaries. **(MC)** The freedom to worship without fear of reprisal or laws and taxation levied upon the church by a few or even one if they had the power to be swayed.

3. *Explain, in your opinion, how authority is given and used in our secular system of governance?* **(GW)** By the people, and because we have a culture in which there is such polarizing political opinion, authority is often used because people are manipulated into the position that whoever is in power might put them in power. All groups have influence but in our last analysis through voting, people do have a say and it's the last say. They can speak back when they don't like how politics are going. **(JM)** It is given by the people and used for the people. But the reality is that it can be all about money and corporations. People on the street may have a say on paper but not in practice. **(GA)** Wisdom is in the people. Take the whole community and try to level it and you will find none of us has everything but collectively there is value. It gets distorted when it is delegated to full-time leaders in the cities and country. Do all decisions that political leaders make get validated by the people? What does it do to the ego and mindset of those in position? The term 'political' can be positive when it includes a sense of ownership by the people. They want to do everything but they cannot manage

everything. There are people selected by the elected to manage things where those in office have no expertise. Their skill is to lead an office of managers for the community. **(JMJ)** The people give it. The definitions are written into the Constitution but the interpretations differ through each successive generation. For instance, the 60's population interpreted 'we the people' differently than today. I think the Civil Rights Movement showed us this. **(DM)** It is given by the decision of the populous to act on behalf of the people. The model of 'servant leader' has been deformed in secular government. It is a dance between the person with authority and the people he receives it from. **(WB)** Through the election process by the people but also by appointment of those elected. Who the elected appoint to help them is an acceptable exercise of power taken under advisement.

Authority is used through the enactment of laws. In addition, when a President is being asked questions by the media he is exercising his authority through influence. **(MC)** Officials are elected and serve as representatives for their constituents. Their leadership is assumed to be free from partiality or preference.

4. *Do you vote, if so, why do you vote?* **(GW)** Yes I do because it's my country and a Romans chapter thirteen (13) obligation in being obedient to the state within a democratic context. **(JM)** I am not a US citizen so I cannot vote. But I did vote in South Africa. I felt it was my duty. **(GA)** Yes because there is a sense of participation and ownership. There are things that people see in the community that elected leadership can have distance from. For instance, the TV show 'Undercover Boss' showed the man at the top going underground and working on the factory floor within his own company. He was fired because he could not

drive a fork lift and damaged assets in the process – the person firing him did not know he was the boss. No one had a voice to say anything through the system of that company until the boss tried it himself. Voting is an opportunity (system) to say something and have a voice positive or negatively. **(JMJ)** Yes. As a citizen I exercise the right of ‘we the people.’ **(DM)** Yes. I see it as my right and duty.

(WB) Yes. I vote as part of being a good citizen. But one must research as much as possible on who you are voting for. **(MC)** Yes. It is a privilege and right.

Regardless of the known outcome, I still cast my vote.

5. *In your opinion, do we have the best system of secular government compared to other countries?* **(GW)** Yes, because we have checks and balances all through local, State and Federal Government. It is a unique system that has prevented the greatest outburst of freedom and progress. I wouldn’t want to substitute anything for our government. On all levels you have a good equilibrium and people have chance to express themselves. **(JM)** I would quote Churchill, ‘Democracy is the worst system but it is better than second best.’ In my opinion, special interests have taken over. **(GA)** The United States is fraught with shortcomings and failures but some countries want to emulate our democracy rather than lead an exodus from it. Ours is best under the circumstances of humanity. We had some form of theocratic influence, but those who make their living in the United States need to have issues on the table to ‘come let us reason together.’ This is the wisdom in the people that has value with God. **(JMJ)** Yes, on paper. But the interpretation of it varies from generation to generation. **(DM)** Yes, because it prevents dictatorship. No, because the system is broken as all other systems are

broken. **(WB)** We had the best form of government when they were guided by a moral compass. It was balanced and honest disagreement. It is now a broken system. The result of this is that the church is being influenced by the culture not the other way around. **(MC)** In its original form, yes.

Third Category²⁴⁰ – Our heritage of AG governance in the United States.

1. *Have you been elected into office, and what was it?* **(GW)** Every office I have held I have also been selected for – part time position on boards, Evangel University by board, Pastor by the congregation (and subject to election every three years by my own choice), General Secretary and General Superintendent. All my life from age 29 the positions I held have been by election. **(JM)** I have not been elected into any position in the AG in South Africa or the United States. In South Africa a pastor comes into his position by the Regional Board not the congregation. That board was constituted by six (6) members from surrounding black, colored and white churches. **(GA)** I have been elected to a number of positions either by a congregation or a board. **(JMJ)** Pastor, Sectional Presbyter and District Presbyter all by election. I have also been elected to Commissioner of Ethnicity and the White House Council of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. **(DM)** I have been elected President of the student body. **(WB)** I have been elected Pastor, Presbyter, Assistant Superintendent, District Superintendent and Executive Presbyter. **(MC)** No.
2. *Have you ever been appointed to office, and what was it?* **(GW)** A lot of committees, boards and task forces but not since I was 29. In ecclesiastical terms

²⁴⁰ In Category three (3) I am asking eleven (11) questions about our heritage of AG governance in the United States.

‘appointment’ is when someone is chosen by someone who has power to choose but not necessarily been a consensus built by a wider group of people. **(JM)** I was appointed the position of a Professor. **(GA)** I have been appointed to various positions confirmed and ratified by others. **(JMJ)** I have been appointed President of a college. **(DM)** I have been appointed to my current position and a member of the board of administration for the seminary. **(WB)** It is a much smaller list that includes board member of AGTS. **(MC)** Yes, if I can include being on a pastoral staff.

3. *The people in Moses’ day were in desperate need of a leader. Why was he not elected by the people to lead them?* **(GW)** They were under Old Testament law, not the New Testament law. I can accept someone appointed by God if they’ve had a burning bush experience but we’d have a bunch of little Hitler’s running around. I look at everything I’ve been elected to and see God was in it. I don’t know how I could feel confident to lead without support of people through voting. **(JM)** Leadership is a gift from God given to some but not to others. We must recognize this. **(GA)** The Old Testament model was pretty much theocratic selecting a specific person at a specific time for a specific purpose. We must remember that Moses was reluctant. People were so frustrated that when Moses said ‘let’s go’ they went. But when they got out there in the desert, their human nature set in. Moses had not got them to the Promised Land and they were frustrated. He may not have been seen as effective by the people. **(JMJ)** There is a difference between a nation and a tribe. A tribe does not have a constitution and bylaws but goes by personality and proven leadership within community where

everyone knows everyone. Having Moses lead them was an elementary step for Israel. The Hispanic community (church) functions in relationship so it can be interpreted as tribal. The Western European background is stronger than colonized people (Hispanic) still underdeveloped, so we need to bring them to a mature level of governance. We are acting like tribes but on paper we are a nation and country. On paper Israel were a nation but functioned like a tribe. **(DM)** Moses was to be a servant of God not of the people. **(WB)** The people were slaves so if they had attempted to overthrow the government of that day they would have failed badly. They did not have it in them to develop a process by which a leader could be elected. **(MC)** God has always intended to lead his people and he knows best.

4. *Why is it so important that a common two-thirds majority vote is needed to elect a pastor in a local church?* **(GW)** For good reasons, because it is used for the selection of pastors and board members. For instance, one pastor got eight (8) votes more than 2/3 but there were 250 people voted against him – should he pastor? He wisely said he wouldn't take it. In a smaller church the congregation had gone from 1000 to 100 in 20 years and was dysfunctional, but they had twenty (20) plus members. They chose a person who has no leadership ability, and he was elected with one vote to spare. He accepted it for the job and pay. Ownership governance doesn't work either. There was a church in California with 4000 people but the board ran the church. That board was the same seven (7) people who were self perpetuated. The pastor wanted to make some small changes but this board fired him. The result was over 2000 people leaving that

church. The board members eventually left the church and it grew. Therefore, people vote with their money and presence. **(JM)** It helps with consensus speaking out of one voice. One person cannot stop an election in this case. This is born not out of Scripture but American culture of ‘individualism.’ Does the pastor come from those people having grown with them, recognized by them, anointed to serve them? ‘I will come and shepherd you’ tends to be superficial. Organic is the way of Scripture. The board should not ask ‘what is your vision for us’ but ‘what is Gods vision for us with the gifts represented in you and us.’ **(GA)** A leader without the majority will find it hard to form a coalition. It will be very tough for him. **(JMJ)** With an elected pastor there is no division. It gives voice to the people to vote and not feel like they are puppets. This is where the word ‘democratic’ comes from (‘demo’ meaning people). **(DM)** I have just been through the process of electing a pastor as a member of my church. It gave me assurance that the people were with him. **(WB)** There has to be a sense in you that God has called you to that church first. The Bible tells us to take heed over the flock to which God has called you. Roberts Rules has played into our system of governance and how this is realized. If not Roberts Rules then there must be another effective system. We are so deep into Roberts Rules it would take something substantial to replace it, and I am open to that. **(MC)** To determine the leading of God upon the majority of the voters.

5. *In your opinion, how does a church go from ‘We need a pastor to lead us’ to ‘this particular person is our pastor?’* **(GW)** It’s democracy with good governance in place. I had a ‘Standing Pulpit Committee’ in my church so that if something

happened to me they were ready to step in and find pastor. One of the problems is that a lot of pastors don't pay attention to their governing documents. The first thing I did as pastor was take the bylaws and say they were a reflection of the past problems in church. Therefore, we must design a governance system that we can teach a membership class so it becomes more than a piece of paper stuck in a closet. It must be a training mechanism for members to understand how a church functions. If I'm giving my tithe to a church I'd want to know how it is organized. This is Ephesians 4:11/12 equipping saints for work. I have known good men

6. who resigned because of bad DNA in a board or old-timers who got recycled and felt they were losing grip on power. **(JM)** Two forms of process: firstly, relationship over time and secondly, development of a team who do not advocate responsibility to one man. **(GA)** We have to understand the difference between the 'call' of a pastor and the 'function' of a pastor. The process of selecting a pastor is both conscious and subconscious as it relates to his personality. Wisdom is in the people but not 'all' wisdom is in the people. **(JMJ)** Communication and education. Communicate 'who is the pastor'. Educate by 'combining the person to the people' is it a good match? Choose who has more in common not who has little in common. If the education is not high it is not an AG Sovereign church but an AG District church that needs District help. Israel were not in a position to be developed hence Moses was appointed. Israel was used to monarchy in Egypt. God wanted 'community' by saying 'my people' which is unity on what we have in common. First a tribe then a developed nation. **(DM)** We have a democratic system but need a democratic theocracy moving from election to appointment.

When there was a call in the Bible on a person's life the community confirmed what God was doing. Paul received God's call but needed to be taught by God before the people could recognize his calling. He was being prepared. **(WB)**

Either a search committee or a board conducts a search. In some cases the committee will call the District and ask about candidates in an endeavor to match the church with the right man. This is mostly democratic. **(MC)** Lack of or misguided vision. *In your opinion, how does a church go from 'This is God's chosen leader for us' to 'we don't want him anymore?'* **(GW)** I think it's a question of the capability of leadership. I can take you to a train wreck of churches where an insecure leader has bulldozed his way in and wouldn't listen. I think that where I see the problem from my personal perspective is that in when a Congregational system becomes dysfunctional there is no way to reach in from the outside and do surgery on the DNA, and do a DNA transplant. That's why I was so supportive of change in 2009 because it gave us a different model for churches that are functional to turn over and take ownership of dysfunctional churches. There is a church in San Diego where the District turned over four churches of fifty (50) people or less and now running 700 after two years. Churches were so dysfunctional they needed outside help. Everything has strengths and weaknesses – if a preacher is a great orator it's a strength and weakness – because he may rely on oratory skills not study. Here is where our distributed system of governance makes it very difficult from a national point of view because the national office serves as a resource. Leadership for the Springfield office is trying to push a wet noodle in a straight line forward. If you

lead by example, lead by resource – we are putting in place a coaching model which has been successful since we launched. We ramped up our credentialing requirements and one of the innovative things done in the last years is District Schools of ministry for people in career changes, they can do the education through District Leadership. This is good for pastors who are bi-vocational. This helps prevents churches closing remembering that districts have two functions – build relationships, and resource churches. For instance, we want to rename ‘Headquarters’ in Springfield to ‘National Resource.’ We are not the head of anything and we don’t quarter anything. **(JM)** Deficits in the pastor, his team or the congregation. The bottom line is a loss of relationship. People must not sit back and let the pastor do it all. **(GA)** It becomes subjective. I have known examples where people have said, ‘he can teach but he cannot preach.’ The people wanted someone who could preach with passion. This is a fickle and subjective reason. **(JMJ)** It comes down to an ‘either or’ paradigm but we must choose ‘both and.’ Scripture is ‘both and’ so ask the question ‘is he our man? The Bible tells us that it pleased ‘us’ and the ‘holy spirit.’ Not a one sided abstract subjective spiritual decision. Nor a carnal materialistic business mandate. God used people to show his decision. If people are not mature – is it really a church? **(DM)** It would be God that tells the people that he is not the pastor anymore. **(WB)** It is usually over control ‘what kind of church are we going to be’ and ‘who makes that decision?’ A search committee will ask the candidate-leader for change but when he starts to bring change it creates realism. This is a collision of process. People recognize they need a pastor but also want to control the pastor. If

you want to follow but also want to lead you have a collision. Board members can be leaders but not very good followers. They can cross with a pastor when he leads and enlist others to their way of thinking. **(MC)** Mistrust. Lack of leadership. Lack of vision. Lack of good decision making. Lack of positive board and body relationship with the pastor.

7. *Our countries government is based in governance of the people, by the people, for the people. In your opinion, has this become the form of governance in the church?* **(GW)** It is and isn't depending on the age, size and DNA of a church. A lot of church plants are not wired for Congregational Governance. Where Paul writes to Timothy about appointing elders in every church, those churches weren't wired for that because they were baby churches. That's to be expected in newer churches but there will come a time as they mature and the pastor leaves where congregation needs to be involved. There are people in various stages of discipleship. I get letters every week pulling me down. I had a letter from a 12 year old approved by pastor. What's happening in our culture, because of anger, is seeping into the church. If you watch Fox News long enough you would be mad too, but what happens is people get single focused on a single issue and if you don't line up with that then you're a heretic. For instance, we came up with a paper approved by the General Leadership on our position leaves open the question as to whether God created in age-days or 24 hour days. The Home School movement took paper and distorted it, posting it on the internet saying if you are wrong about this issue then you are wrong about everything. The same thing applies on immigration which we signed onto – secure borders but

recognize there are thousands of believers caught in this web so let's establish a valid path towards citizenship. But the bloggers got on to it and wrote me a stack two-feet high of letters and emails telling me I'm wrong on this and wrong on that therefore wrong on everything. Our beliefs and position papers weren't decided by one man but by democracy - representational democracy. It is fine to disagree but this doesn't mean we will change our position. We still advocate for democracy. You can't disagree with the fundamental truths and stay credentialed but you can disagree with a position paper and hold credentials. **(JM)** Absolutely. The moment you get into a power play it is no longer relational. This can be so infantile. **(GA)** Absolutely. Remember the Old Testament model was a specific person for specific job. The New Testament changed this dynamic by tearing the veil in temple. The presence of God was not exclusive anymore but inclusive. It reappeared on the Day of Pentecost and indwelt in the believer. I do not know where that presence of God went between the veil and Pentecost. The first 70 years of church had no value on temple building but as Jesus said, 'he will be with you and in you.' Joel said it would be inclusive on all people who ask. This validates the person, the ordinary person. Where the church gets in trouble is not theocracy-democracy dilemma but not allowing the presence of God to be the factor among all of us to keep us focused on the mission. It must not focus on governance. **(JMJ)** In some way yes. Church is not completely 'democracy' but also 'theocracy' in a 'both and' thinking. This is where 'under God comes' we are all under Him. **(DM)** Yes. **(WB)** I blame the culture but more so a spiritual climate. We may use the tactics of the culture but it can be a spiritual issue we are

dealing with. Can we disagree with each other and still be brothers? How do we submit, follow and lead? To use the tactics of the world (petitions etc) is not a cultural issue but a deeper spiritual issue. **(MC)** Somewhat. People have a tendency to believe they know what should happen with the church and so they select a pastor for and by that purpose.

8. *In your opinion, who should be elected and who should be appointed in the church, and who should do the electing / appointing? I am going to give you three positions.*

- a. *Pastor* - **(GW)** Elected by the people unless they are too young in the Lord or immature to do so. **(JM)** Appointed by God recognized by the people. **(GA)** Elected in the governance models we have right now. **(JMJ)** Whatever is in the church bylaws must be honored but it is up to the church. Any change to the bylaws must come from the pastor. **(DM)** Appointed by deacons ratified by the people. **(WB)** Elected by the people. **(MC)** Elected by the voting membership.
- b. *Elder* – **(GW)** Elected by the people. **(JM)** Appointed by the pastor as they live together ‘us and the Holy Spirit.’ **(GA)** Appointed by the pastor. **(JMJ)** Same as a pastor. **(DM)** Appointed by pastor. **(WB)** Appointed by the pastor. **(MC)** Appointed by the Senior Pastor.
- c. *Deacon* – **(GW)** Elected by the people. **(JM)** Appointed by the pastor. **(GA)** Elected by the people. **(JMJ)** Same as a pastor and elder. **(DM)** Elected by the people. **(WB)** Appointed by the pastor. **(MC)** Appointed by the Senior Pastor.

9. *How would you compare the following two Scriptures within the context of church governance:* (Acts 1:26) “Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.” (Acts 13:2) “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” **(GW)** In the Book of Acts you have to distinguish the unique from the normative – Day of Pentecost is unique but speaking in tongues became normative. Paul and Barnabas’ call in Acts 13 appears to be unique. God calls people in different ways. What is interesting about Barnabas and Paul is that they were already called and they would not have got to that point if their ministry hadn’t been validated by people coming to Christ. The leaders in Antioch had got together and said, ‘we’re the operational government of this church and we can see god has called them’ at some point. Arabia brought transformation to Paul’s life and everyone going into ministry needs some preparation time where they are with God, the Word and calling. Our credentialing is a little too easy in AG so I’m all for spending some time getting ready for the assignment. I’ve studied how people in the Scripture got their call and everyone who had a supernatural revelation to ministry subsequently suffered immensely – Ezekiel, Moses, Isaiah, Paul, Jeremiah – the call was ballast for what they went through. Timothy didn’t have that experience – he was an intern – he didn’t suffer as much. The supernatural revelation and call goes with suffering. **(JM)** The difference is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost that changed an Old Testament model to a New Testament model. **(GA)** In Acts chapter one the disciples were operating under Old Testament mindset modeled

after casting lots, drawing out the Urim and Thumin of the High Priest. In Acts 13 transition happened as the presence of God came upon people therefore God values the people themselves. Both Old and New Testament models can have a place today. **(JMJ)** Acts chapter one is not an election but a 'lottery' of guess work. Election is a definite cast of a vote. Jesus appoints the apostles but Matthias was a lottery not election or appointment. Were there other names? Not sure how the Holy Spirit 'said' literally but he did. God's supernatural will trumps all the rights and will of the people. Unless he speaks he leaves it to the people and he only knows why. In Moses day Israel was primitive and underdeveloped. The Sabbath is a good practice for God to speak to us all in these matters and more. Moving from Judaism to Gentilism was the paradigm for the new church hence the decision making process. They were like Israel underdeveloped and needing the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we do today. **(DM)** They both have their place in the church. They can coexist without coming into conflict. **(WB)** The Holy Spirit allows us to adapt process to the situation. Some say Peter jumped the gun in replacing Judas (I do not believe Matthias replace him). They had an Old Testament pattern to work with. If I have a traditional church that had an elective process then that is what I work with. To effect change I had to have multiple small meetings with individuals to discuss a better process. I believe the Holy Spirit works with us in this. In Acts chapter one that was the only process they knew. Prayer and fasting is vital for major decisions. But it depends how we pray. We often pray to get God on our side. If people will participate we should pray corporately. I have found that the church does not really pray for their pastor as he

goes to General Council to vote on key issues. This is from our culture when people say 'it does not matter if I vote or not.' But some of the most effective business meetings I have been in have followed some of the most powerful prayer meetings led by the General Superintendent. His leadership is a prophetic catalyst. Paul also invites Timothy to come with him and Luke. There was no process of governance but a mentoring role. The New Testament does not speak specifically to governance so we can operate in our own culture. This is an education to process. Sometimes we can be more concerned about our right to vote (secular) than our contribution to the local church. **(MC)** There are times to draw names out of the hat and there are times the Spirit of God needs to move upon the hearts of leaders until they hear from God who that person is to be.¹⁰

10. *How important is governance to the local church and its mission?* **(GW)** No matter what form of governance style it's got to work with mission. There are successful churches operating on different levels of governance so it's not governance that makes it work. **(JM)** It is critically vital but the way a church can degenerate turns this into a mechanical power play. Mission and governance are vital because of their Holy Spirit function. You cannot reduce this to a formula. **(GA)** Very important. I was once asked if leaders are born or made. I answered neither because they emerge as we do ministry - missional focused. Leaders are the least likely to emerge and the most likely to not perform well. This is the uniqueness of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament model. The dilemma is to select the right pastor in a political culture. We must rely on spiritually mature people who can see through this who rely on the Holy Spirit. The consensus of the

people is to hear 'set apart for me' and then actually do it. Where we get into trouble is when there is no worship and fasting to engage the Holy Spirit with us and in us. Some of my better deacons and leaders came out of a horrible background that the Old Testament would not recognize but the New Testament does. The whosoever may come but also the whosoever may emerge. **(JM)** Very important. Mission is the core value. Not specifics. I live in Hispanic hierarchal culture but also systems and models. What works in the Anglo church will not work in Hispanic. This works in the AG. We can both think a different way and decide differently. AG is moving forward unconsciously and not proactive more by movement than intention. Look at these two distinct areas: Arabia for Paul was Sinai for Moses going from one type of governance to another. Arabia is a 'Sabbath' to re-transform yourself before you transform anything. Get contemplative and reflective. We have not examined the words we use and what we mean by them. A contemplating Sabbath will help us change this. Our vocabulary is tired and worn out in church. Missional is a new language that explains mission. **(DM)** It is vital based on Acts chapter six. Leaders can be so encumbered with work they have no time to study and pray which is vital to mission. **(WB)** It is important because there has to be a system of functioning. But that system should change as the church grows. Churches of 150 perpetuate because the system does not change. The pastor has to change himself as he can be a cap to growth. Then he must bring the change. He does not change his mission but the system. The New Testament shows strong eldership and deacons. But we have abused the office of a deacon making them a board of directors. We

need the legal requirements in our culture but this was not the intent of the Bible.

(MC) Without it, any sort of bedlam can occur from leadership doing crazy stuff to boards and people acting like idiots.

11. *Explain your view of a deacon described by Paul to Timothy and Titus?* **(GW)** He was concerned about character not job description. It is not about the local church having the fivefold ministry but about having a pastor and deacons doing the work. In the United States the board of deacons is off from the Biblical model. I switched my church to a board of elders and the deacons had no governance responsibilities. They serve. The elders were elected by the congregation. The issue of divorce is a problematic text here because you don't build doctrine on shaky text. Pentecostals come to the understanding of text through experience – a man becomes a widow, remarries and wants to still be a deacon. So I would hold that a person can be a deacon if a spouse committed adultery and they have remarried or they were divorced before conversion. My position hasn't changed on this for 40 years but what has changed is a gradual realization that former belief was faulty and not full interpretation of Scripture. God calls people to ministry without our permission and our responsibility is one of validation. **(JM)** The emphasis is character. In South Africa polygamy was practiced so Paul's emphasis of husband of one wife was interpreted as monogamy. I do not know if Paul is not referring to divorce but I do know that Paul told Timothy and Titus to appoint elders not elect them. **(GA)** Paul was trying to give the guidelines of transformation. Titus and Timothy appointed them but did not elect them from among the people. I was in an international gathering where questions were asked

to pastors and they would not answer without the consent of the Superintendent. This was cultural not Biblical. How they get there is not as critical as how they function when they get there. Regarding marriage 'husband of one wife' was referring to an attitude of a 'one woman man.' I have been in the presence of men who are not a one woman man. This weighs heavier than divorce. Elders are selected from within the base of deacons therefore this is probably why there is more text about a deacon. A person who has been married and divorced can be a deacon in my thinking. Each example must be case by case. We do it for pastors so why not deacons? There needs to be change / improvement in local church governance in how leaders are selected because every form of governance is flawed in church. You may have a better church model but still running the same 30 people or a bad governance model and be running 3000. Is this a governance issue or an effective missional focus? A church will function not because of this but in spite of this. **(JM)** Peter and John delegated in Acts chapter six so they could continue in ministry. The same applies for the appointing of deacons. They deal with the mundane type running of the church. It cannot be non relevant and non spiritual. Their role is vital. Paul tells them to appoint elders and deacons because it was a mission field and the people were not developed spiritually. The same principle as Moses and Israel. Remember they were a tribe not a nation. The people Timothy and Titus appointed elders and deacons over were tribal. Leadership today is coming from within the church not outside. So they are not strangers to each other. A pastor must develop leaders in his church. The AG bylaws allow for this. **(DM)** Emphasis on training. We neglect in the United

States the reputation of a deacon outside the church. **(WB)** Paul released some of his authority to them to appoint elders and deacons. We see a superintendent as a minder of the store or irrelevant. This is wrong as he has a similar anointing to release ministry. This must not be seen as transmitting power but a spiritual authority and covering. I think we have taken the role of a deacon (servant) and changed it to a board of directors much like stockholders. This is wrong. **(MC)** One who has proved he can well lead his life, his home, and his external affairs in such a way that warrants their involvement in leading the local church.

Analysis

Looking back at the data I'm asking the question, 'what does this mean to my primary research question?' I shall begin with the original Greek definitions, then the historical shifts of the AG, and finally the answers given by key AG individuals.

Defined Words

It seems to me that Thayer's Greek-English lexicon defines the position of a deacon as someone very different than is seen in today's AG churches. Without a doubt, the form of deacons must be according to the culture they are present in, but their function must be entirely Scriptural. It is to this end that Thayer's work translates from Koine Greek the crisis in function. Deacons are servants not Company Directors, Stockholders or representatives of church members. I do not see deacons predominantly serving under derived authority representing, supporting and helping the lead pastor / elder. Perhaps this is because the derived authority comes from voting members, like a constituency, as elected people rather than appointed by the lead pastor / elder and approved by the members. This would not neglect "it seemed good to us and the Holy Spirit."

The same can be said for an elder who is “charged with the duty of seeing things get done” according to Thayer’s translation. Once more, the form and function are dictated to by culture and Scripture. I see that the AG may not recognize an elder for two reasons. First, the Greek translation may be too authoritative in ‘seeing things get done.’ Second, the official position on elder is ‘no position’ voiding out a clear position of governance in the church. What may be lacking here is not only a clear definition, but also a progressive model from being a deacon (as the Holy Spirit calls the individual first) to a greater place of responsibility as an elder (again, in time, as the Holy Spirit calls the individual). A further crisis for the AG may be because elders appear to be appointed by other elders in Scripture.

A similar point arises for a presbyter who is obviously a proven elder within the church, and not an opportunist. Thayer’s translation is tightly linked to his understanding of an elder. The function is to oversee, but in a greater capacity than the confines of the local church. AG presbyters and executive presbyters are elected from among the voting body of a District (not a church). It seems to me that this comes close to overseeing something greater than the local church (but not excluding it) in theory, but it comes back to a question of authority again. Where did it come from and how is it used? It comes from the voting body and exercised over, for, and on behalf of, that same body. Here is the crisis within theocracy and democracy. This works in a democratic culture but falls short in theocracy within the church.

Added to this is Thayer’s translation of bishop and overseer as a ‘first among equals.’ This could be the position of District Superintendent or General Superintendent within the AG. I am not too concerned about the choice of titles as this could quite possibly fall

into the 'form' of our culture. But I am concerned that a District Superintendent (specifically) has a position of authority without an actual authority as a bishop or overseer. There appears to be a crisis in AG structure by creating District Affiliated churches and District Churches. The first is not set up to be 'overseen' by a Superintendent (bishop / overseer) whereas the second is, when it comes to church governance. It seems to me that a pastor / elder can have authority without literally coming under authority in a District Affiliated AG Church. By this, I am referring to the role of a Superintendent (bishop / overseer). I would question agreeing on fundamental truths as actually 'coming under' authority.

I personally enjoy Thayer's translation of pastor in Koine Greek as one who 'sees people as sheep.' There is no discrimination in the translation of 'born again sheep' 'churched sheep' 'unchurched sheep' 'backslidden sheep' or any other cultural classification. His concern is people and 'winning the trust' of those people. This is personal not polity and focused entirely on character and calling.

The practice of AG Districts in an ordination service comes close to how Scripture translates. God ordains people not man, (as the AG also recognizes) but there is a certain place, again, for theocratic authority. It is not enough that 'hands' are laid on those being ordained, it must be the Superintendents hands (as a bishop with authority, not from a constituency, but from God). He is not just a manager but a recognized 'first among equals' and more so. This may appear to look like Catholicism (the hands that were touched by the hands, and so on, back to Jesus), but there is truth in the 'hand of God' upon a man's life that lays his hands on the ordained. At some point, authority is not derived but granted by God, not permanently, but as a vessel in that position.

Policy and Historical Shifts

It seems to me that the AG has maintained a consistent stance on Church and State. The position paper on not using the church, its pulpit, and the positions within the church for a specific political party have been, and is, very clear. The AG are clear that our countries form of government is democratic and encourage individuals to be part of this excellent system, while at the same time, recognizing Romans chapter thirteen (13) as our motive. This would be in keeping with ‘preaching Jesus exclusively and proclaiming the Gospel.’ This would further the church’s distinct reputation for being theocratic (with Jesus as our ultimate authority) worshipping with those who have different political views.

The difficulty comes with the official position of Congregational Governance that appears to defuse the function of those who hold office beyond the local church. At what point does a ‘cooperative fellowship’ look like a room full of Mr. Rogers’? The journey of a man’s life who has been called by God, recognized by others, proven in his character and competence, but disregarded in filling the position of a lead pastor / elder does not make sense to me. In addition, when a lead pastor / elder needs personal or ministerial help, surely the presbytery has a collective wisdom above and beyond the local church member? I am not suggesting the latter be ignored, but the derived authority of the former be recognized, and engaged in the local church. It seems to me that the AG beginnings had a stronger sense of recognizing the ‘Holy Spirit’ through the lives of men than it does now. This may be dictated to by our current celebrity-mad culture and a reaction to play down theocracy. Several significant changes have been made throughout the years that include a polity on denomination (1917), a more sophisticated document of governance

(1927), and a revision of the Statements of Truth (1961). Even so, Congregational Governance has been maintained.

In 1974 a statement was made (and has remained unchanged since) that God calls a pastor / elder, but also calls deacons to help him and serve the congregation. Again, this may sound good but in practice it seems to me that God calls a pastor and the congregation (constituents) elects deacons to represent them. This may be why the AG had 8,233 churches in 1960 and 12,377 by 2008 - a growth of only 4,144 churches in forty-eight (48) years. This is where it seems that democracy began to dominate theocracy in the simple belief that God is able to work through us by the Holy Spirit; and although it may 'seem good to us and the Holy Spirit', the 'seemed good' is decided by the subjective popular vote and not by conviction of the heart. After all, who would put Barnabas and Saul together to 'preach Jesus exclusively and proclaim the Gospel?' This was not Congregational Governance practiced today.

Comparing the themes at General Council's between 2000 - 2008 with the growth statistics shows that one did not really speak to the other with more churches opening than closing. This may be because of a cultural shift after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in terms of resource and economy. If this is the case, then it does not fit Scripture that at the worst times in community and culture, the church grew. (2001) 'Empowered by the Spirit' (2003) 'Turn America, Pray the Way' (2005) 'People of the Spirit' (2007) 'Impact!' (2009) and 'Nothing's Too Hard for God' were excellent themes by looking at what was happening in the culture, but were they theocratic in practice within the local churches? After all, the same Spirit that works on a national level also works at the local level. I am not questioning the Holy Spirit or the people that hold key

positions within the AG, I am questioning the ability for a lead pastor / elder, who returns to his local congregation from a General Council, and is road-blocked by governance. For instance, 'Nothing's too hard for God' could look like a new initiative for the local church, but it has to get past so many democratic obstacles often resulting in frustration.

Looking at the AG publications and official letters sent out from the General Superintendent, an emphasis has been maintained on the Holy Spirit, prayer and the Word of God compared to matters of church governance. My concern is that the beginnings of the AG movement were characterized by strong men and women who were shaped in a certain way that I do not see today in terms of resolve and conviction. Again, local bureaucratic democracy may be driving away characters like this. Looking at the top fastest growing churches in the United States, each one has a model of Single Elder Congregational Governance. It is beyond the primary question of this thesis to further investigate these four (4) churches, but I would almost assume that significant growth came through a strong leader of conviction and resolve who appointed those who God had called.

The Interviews

In this analysis section I will contrast and compare the answers given. First, there is a distinct four-tiered reaction to my first category of questions ranging from Organizational (GW and GA), Spiritual (JM and MC), Idealism (DM) and Specifically Cultural (JMJ and WB). These themes seem to carry through all categories and questions. Looking at the background and experience of these men I am not surprised by their answers. For instance, George Wood and Gary Alan come from organizational environments in Law and the US Navy respectively. Johan Mostert and Mark Carlson have different

backgrounds but have similar experiences. For instance, South Africa is a spiritually rich culture (JM) and a church planter (MC) needs to be spiritually dependent on God with little resource available to them. Daniel Morrison is a highly educated young man who remains in the environment of student life in his current employment with idealistic views, fitting with a student, hence idealism. Jesse Miranda Jr. lives up to his nick-name as the granddaddy of US Latino Protestantism viewing all my questions through the lens of a 'go-between' in Anglo and Latino cultures. Warren Bullock fits into the same tier as Miranda, in that; he tends to bring his experience into a relative and objective forum as a 'go-between' for generations.

Second, each person identifies strongly with US history, in particular the thirteen (13) colonies and our form of national democracy. Each interviewee was by no means vague about this. The exception to this would be Johan Mostert as a South African expatriate. The common theme that came out to my first question in this category was one of 'representation' to voice an opinion, consent, agreement or disagreement. For instance, the key words in their answers were that the thirteen (13) colonies 'resented' (GW and MC) authority 'over-regulated' (GA and JM) as people so they 'rebelled' (WB) against someone who claimed 'divine right' (DM & JM). These were key phrases to my questions contextualized in the four-tiers.

The historical interpretation regarding separation of Church and State had a theme of 'who influences who' from all interviewees. It came down to a question of 'control' (GW, GA, DM and MC) and a need for the Church to influence the State in 'morality' (WB, JM and JM) but not the other way around. I found this to be a refreshing view compared to the network news and talk radio that drive popular thought.

Regarding secular authority and how it is used, the unanimous theme was ‘by the people, for the people’ (GW, GA, JM, JMJ, WB, DM and MC) stated as wisdom coming from the collective populous, not a single person. The same unanimous theme came in response to voting on a national and local level. All felt it was their ‘duty’ and ‘right’ to cast their opinion through a ballot. This was both refreshing and clear in the sense that resolve and conviction were represented. The following question had the same kind of response, with strong convictions, that the United States has the best form of government, (and I agree) but all agreed that this was ‘interpreted’ differently with each successive generation. The strongest view came from George Wood who ‘wouldn’t substitute’ our form of democratic government for anything else. Once more, a strong American culture was the driving force.

Third, concerning our AG church governance most had been personally elected into an office with the exception of two (MC and JM) but all had been appointed to a position at some time. The question of Moses being appointed by God and not elected from the people created varied answers, again, based in background and experience and the tiers that contextualized each person. This type of response (no matter what the substance was) showed that each person was, in fact, highly influenced by the culture or previous generational cultures. I am not suggesting they are wrong to be influenced this way, but the principle carried to my research question. Distinction was made between Old and New Testament laws (GW) adding that Israel were, in fact, theocratic and Moses was not a candidate who wanted the job and probably a failed leader in the eyes of the people (GA). Also, Israel was in no position to have a process in place to decide who would lead (WB) as they were slaves to a monarch in Pharaoh. My concern here is that I personally

wonder if we have not weakened our own national democratic culture in recent years making us a little more like Israel, not in captivity by any means, but weakened nevertheless. If this is true, we may be moving towards a tribal culture and away from a democratic one, albeit unconsciously. And if this is true, it will influence AG churches. This possible tribal culture would not allow for something like our current church bylaws or policy, but the strength of personality like the current Latino culture (JMJ). This is the point I was attempting to make while interviewing, that on a national level, democracy actually looks like a form of monarchy (sarcastically commented on by the national news networks as a Caesar his Czars – two conflicting cultural titles might I add) forcing a culture to look for a ‘Moses.’ Again, if this is the case, it will influence AG churches in how they govern. Others defer to God knowing what is best for us (MC) and ultimately, God decides (JM).

All agreed that a pastor needs more than two-thirds majority from voting members to form a strong ‘coalition’ so there is no ‘division’ among the people (easily said than done as democracy naturally divides people on choice). ‘Consensus’ was preferred as a voice from the people. But again, if theocracy is defined as divine authority, the ‘consensus’ must fall into Scripture that “it seemed good to us and the Holy Spirit” and not “we’ll have to agree to disagree.” There is one addition to this thought (WB) that a pastor must first feel God has called him to that church, it cannot be just two-thirds alone looking for a paycheck, but the witness of the candidate in his own heart. (WB) leaned towards a theocratic call prior to any democratic appointment or election. I am convinced that all the other interviewees would have the same resolve and conviction, but it was not voiced.

Democracy rated high in their collective opinion on how a church decides on a new

pastoral candidate. An emphasis was placed on consistently developing a system of church governance (GW, GA, JMJ, JM and WB). This was a progressive thought that surprised me. Here's the surprise, if the AG are influenced by the culture in terms of church governance, and the changing tribal culture looked for a 'Moses', what would the governing documents look like? Added to this was the thought of moving to a democratic theocracy and away from election to appointment (DM). Taking all the age groups and generational influence of the interviewees mentioned above, it seems to me that authentic and progressive thoughts on church governance are generally coming from a younger idealistic people.

Concerning a congregation not wanting their pastor anymore, most said it was a matter of capability in leadership and relationship (GW, JM and MC) with some taking it further to be subjective and immature for it to get to this place (WB and GA). These themes created a paradox that (GW) there was no real system of reaching into a church that needs help, but new AG initiatives were developing. My point is that spiritual authority, with credibility through respect, would actually be a way of dealing with this type of problem. The idealism of (DM) comes out again saying that God tells the congregation the pastor is not the pastor anymore. My concern is what forum this would take? If it looks anything like our culture (and we are influenced by our culture) it would look pretty ugly.

On the issue of our democratic culture influencing our AG church governance all agreed that one does affect the other. Further additions to this theme were added from (GW and WB) on using the tactics of the world to address governance instead of dealing with deeper issues of submission to each other and to God. This is a theocratic answer

where ‘deeper issues’ are generally the case. For instance, behind Ananias and Sapphira’s cheating on their tithe was a profound issue of submission, not money. The same can be said for the quarrel of Paul and Peter over Jewish rituals. This is where the wisdom may not be found in the people but in the presbytery or District Superintendent (bishop / overseer) who can quickly settle a dispute, if those disputing have a sense of respect.

Most reminded me that AG position papers and fundamental truths came from representational democracy and not by one man. Therefore, a person can disagree on the former and hold credentials, but not the latter, implying that we can disagree on a number of issues but not on Scriptural interpretation on certain criteria that point to an ordination.

Whether a pastor, elder and deacon should be elected or appointed, the results show a surprising theme. For instance, a pastor should be elected according to (GW, GA, WB and MC) and appointed according to (DM). The only exception would be (JMJ) who would honor whatever the bylaws stated elected or appointed. An elder should be elected according to (GW) but others disagree saying he should be appointed by the pastor. Again, (JMJ) would honor whatever the bylaws state. A deacon should be elected according to (GW, GA and DM) but appointed by the pastor according to the rest. This is an interesting point of concern as Paul places a greater importance on an elder than a deacon. The opinions show the opposite of Paul, that democracy (voted in by election) is more important for a deacon than an elder. I believe this varying opinion on whether a pastor, deacon and elder should be appointed or elected was largely down to personal Scriptural interpretation, whereas, the history of the United States and its way of democracy was unanimous and singular in voice. Again, I believe the conviction may be clearer in our democratic culture than theocratic governance within the church.

Comparing Acts chapter one (1) and chapter thirteen, (13) the views of each person differ again, so a common theme is not seen. For instance, (GW) separates the unique from the normative; that there are times in New Testament Scripture we cannot take as normative because they were unique in themselves. Others say that these chapters show the difference between an Old Testament model and a New Testament model (JM and GA) with the birth of the church between testaments. Others are convinced that both models can coexist (DM, MC and JMJ) allowing for the Holy Spirit to adapt to any situation (WB). This thought seems to be far more acceptable to exist at any time, in any country, within any culture since the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts chapter two (2).

Everyone agreed that governance must fit the mission of the church as ‘critical’ and ‘vital’ to how it is fulfilled. Governance does not grow a church but it can hinder it. In the same way, all agree that Paul was describing character to Timothy and Titus, concerning an elder and deacon, not the form or job responsibility of those roles.

Recommendations

A democratic people in a theocratic kingdom are the point of collision for me. The lens through which we ‘see’ church is absolutely through our cultural eyes - and that culture is afraid, unsure, and even paranoid about authority. Added to this is the historical background of how the United States began breaking away from monarchy to democracy, and how this history is interpreted by those in authority, and those who elect them. Furthermore, I do not believe that a clear distinction is actually understood between democratic authority derived from people and spiritual authority given by God (and cannot be exercised without people). I do not see British and American culture(s) operating in the same structure of national and local government but I do see spiritual

authority transcending both culture(s). By this, I mean the qualification and proof of character in the local pastor (single elder) who does not use his congregation for a wider platform of ministry (touting himself as a candidate for something else). Even so, this wider platform can be recognized by other pastors (elders) within the same city as further service to oversee the larger community. I believe the AG has this in place in the position of a presbyter, but the spiritual authority is lacking, probably due to our paranoid culture. Our District Superintendents tend to be passive as managers facilitating policy and new initiatives to their own constituency of AG churches lacking the spirit of a 'father' whose wisdom and counsel is felt among those who love him, not those who necessarily elected him. Added to this is the lack of recognizing the developmental growth of a church like Philippi within the collective roles of the AG. I believe this is seen in the confusion of a deacon's role and the trustee's role. The AG has made provision for a young church to combine a trustee and deacon into one person out of necessity. But unlike the church in Philippi, as the church grows a trustee 'is' a deacon by tradition creating issues of control. I have two agendas in my recommendations. First, I will recommend seven (7) moves, readjustments and changes to current AG practice. Second, I will ask further questions that allow for further research.

I would recommend the following specifically to the AG movement in the United States: First, do away with Congregational Governance completely. The research shows that the community of faith is progressively getting shallow in Christian maturity. The ramifications to this are multi-layered. It implies that the Scriptures may not be taught with resolve and conviction from the pulpit and / or the lifestyle of Christianity has become so busy there is no time to learn. It may also imply that AG churches are more

influenced by the culture than by the Scriptures. Another implication is the possible weakening of our own national form of democracy voiced by talk radio and network news. In other words, we quickly build up, and then just as quickly, tear down. This is seen in how quick a person joins a church, and is just as quick to leave and join another. Consumerism does not fit Congregational Governance. Furthermore, the ‘chicken and egg’ effect may be producing ‘job opportunities’ within the church instead of a missional focus. All of this, and more, leads me to recommend that Congregational Governance be rejected as a redundant model for planting new churches and growing existing congregations through a multi-campus model.

Second, I would recommend that a single elder Congregational model be adopted. Not just adopted but taught as a relevant form (not function) of Scriptural positions such as pastor, elder, deacon, presbyter and bishop (superintendent). How they function together, not as hierarchy but men and women divinely called to serve together in cooperation. The fear-factor in the local church of a ‘first among equals’ appointed by other elders within the church (or from the District if elders are lacking) has its risks for the same reasons given for removing Congregational Governance. But in this way, if there is a change in the lead pastor / elder a model is in place to further the ministry of the local church and recognize who God is calling to lead. This would remove the search committees that are mostly unqualified in the Scriptural sense.

Third, that Scriptural qualification for a pastor, elder and deacon be the AG consistent in spite of current trends. The emphasis is not to restrict but to revisit and rethink the importance of a shallowing culture and the ramifications to one or two generations in the future. I would strongly recommend that this is, in part, a vehicle for spiritual authority

for a District Superintendent and his involvement above letters of recommendation and education concerning the candidate of pastor specifically.

Four, the principle of a 'first among equals' would not only work within the local church but in current Districts. To a degree, this is already in place with pastors (elders) of a District coming together as the presbytery electing their 'first among equals' as superintendent (bishop). Although this is currently called a 'counsel', and the official presbytery of the District is derived from that counsel, it appears to be in place. What is lacking, as mentioned above is the spiritual authority. To that end, I would strongly recommend that the District Superintendent (bishop) have a demonstrated record of State oversight. By this, I mean connection, network and relationship with municipal and State individuals outside of the local church. I am not implying political advantage, but a strategic 'kingdom' oversight that leads. He should think big and have the characteristics of vision. For instance, State and city officials would be calling on him to participate in formal events, and for personal counsel.

Fifth, that all business discussed at District and National Council's proceed with prayer in accordance to Scripture that 'while they were worshipping the Holy Spirit said.' By this, I am not implying that prayer is currently absent but that a greater emphasis be made recognizing, again, the burden of responsibility church leaders have in their communities representing the Kingdom of God. Without playing down the importance of church business, time in God's presence prepares the heart. If this is not being done with quality time, it is not being done in the local church. Once more, I am pointing to spiritual authority.

Six, programs that encourage coaching and mentoring be revisited with an emphasis on ‘fathering’ younger men and women as a primary means for recognizing the ‘stuff’ that develops a leader above and beyond education and pedigree. The implications of this would require a deepening of substance in current leaders and a broadening of hearts to accommodate relational, cultural, and generational challenges. I am not convinced this can actually be ‘programmed’ and may fuel the sense of ‘I am qualified to coach / mentor’ purely on educational achievement. Thus, making the culture a little shallower.

Seven, that old, traditional and corporate terminologies change. I recommend that ‘board of’ be referred to as a ‘management team of’ with a specific focus. For instance, ‘management team of finance’ and ‘management team of operations’ would take away the cultural and traditional ambiguity out of serving in an official capacity. I would also suggest that these deacon roles of ‘managing’ include competence qualifications as excellent stewardship and generosity are key issues to our current culture. This would mean serving for a minimum of one year alongside someone already fulfilling that role. This would help remove the two criteria of longevity and seniority as ambiguous assumptions to serve as a deacon.

Having recommended the above seven (7) items I want to ask the following questions: If cultural history influences the way we have practiced church governance how can we prepare for future changes in our culture that will influence the same? Can we get beyond playing ‘catch-up’ with the culture and anticipate the future without moving away from Scripture? This may involve cooperation with cultural architects and such leaders within the United States as Microsoft, Google, Facebook and Amazon currently practice.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of this project, I must go back to the beginning of this thesis and state the obvious, that the culture(s) of Great Britain is not the culture(s) of the United States of America. Therefore, as a British expatriate living and working in the United States, I cannot, and must not, impose a British culture. I have not sought to compare them as it relates to the AG church governance but remained focused within the boundaries of the United States. Without a doubt, the democratic culture of the United States has a large influence on church governance from the ‘way we think.’ The historical founding of the United States is hard wired to our way of life (and this is excellent), and furthermore, our Christian way of life. Douthat was probably correct in assuming the American culture is confused on theocracy and democracy – which one is politics and which one is religion? Even so, I am still convinced that our efforts and energies, as it relates to church governance, are more concerned with an inferior position of ‘deacon’ than a greater responsibility of an ‘elder’ (also meaning to a degree pastor / overseer / bishop / presbyter). I think this comes from a confused Scriptural understanding of a deacon. Although the AG position paper on a deacon is excellent and Scripturally sound, the practice of it creates a ‘stockholder’ profile like a managing director. Does the average American prefer a posture of ‘servant’ with dutiful responsibility, or one of ‘position’ that comes with corporate authority and power? I think the latter is probably the preferred interpretation of deacon in practice. Also, the absence of an official position on ‘elder,’ in spite of a clear position in the early days of the AG movement, adds to a confused role of a deacon. I think Margaret Poloma was correct by interpreting the AG movement distinct for its ‘supernatural’ calling of people into serving God through the

local church. It concerns me that the Old and New Testament ‘callings’ of God are largely separated into theocratic Israel and the democratic church. There is obvious precedent for a theocratic people in the Old Testament and an unclear model of church governance in the New Testament. Is it Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Congregational or Non-Governance? Historical interpretations of various positions held in the church have proven to be centered on power and control within these four (4) mainstream models. The preferred model for the AG is Congregationalism, but in practice we may be a hybrid of all four (4), taking into consideration an AG central office, Districts and presbyters.

Church planters, and individuals gifted to turn a church around and bring it into current community relevance, may be offering us a new insight (from ancient Biblical days) of Single Elder to Plural Elder forms of governance where congregational members have no power to vote. George Knight believes James was this kind of elder that Mark Driscoll calls ‘first among equals.’ There is an obvious concern of a pastor having too much authority in the local church. Although the cases cited from George Wood prove this point, I am concerned that it may be too easy to obtain ordained credentials with the AG (also a concern of George Wood) not taking to heart the qualifications of a pastor detailed by Paul in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. Most of the AG Districts are funded by the tithes of AG ministers, and the average age of an ordained minister is increasing. I think we need to return back to a ‘character development’ program with a ‘character proven’ qualification as an emphasis that also examines the ‘divine call’ of each potential leader. What are they giving up for the ministry?

If leadership is a key issue to church governance (and it is) then we must examine our culture in a far more intimate way than we have been. It is one thing to ‘come through the

ranks' of the church (as Timothy did) but it is quite another to have no heritage in Christianity or the local church and receive a divine call. The first can be a career with salary and benefits, whereas, the second is a personal resolution that has nothing to lose. If Warren Bullock is correct (and I do believe he is) we may have sold out to our culture in the endeavor to be relevant instead of striving to develop leaders who will 'father' young men as their 'spiritual sons' as a principle that precedes church governance. Here is the rub, our culture (Anglo) is practically absent in developing strong 'sons' in the local church because of an equally absent strong 'father' leading the church. This relational way of thinking has powerful overtones of submission, honor, respect and service (all themes of a theocracy) that struggle to develop through democracy within the church. Social networks, and literal networks, are the cultural trend but the passage of time together, with each other, creates a heritage of strong 'sons' who honor their 'fathers,' who did not necessarily vote on them. I believe Dan Hotchkiss is right in perceiving that the Boomers are frustrated with church governance as an owner of the church, instead of the mission. It is these Boomers that should be 'fathering' the sons of AG churches instead of having their names come up for a nomination each year.

In my opinion, our culture is something that local AG churches should be influencing, with a reputation of missional commitment to the local community, not petty politics. This reputation should extend to developing young men serving as deacons that local employees take notice of, not older men who recycle through the electoral system of church governance like bastions of yesterday. Surely, these men would have served as a deacon at some point but developed into elders, who have gone out and planted a church from the local congregation, or at least helping a church plant? This is truly missional

keeping governance fluid and changeable where the priority of the church is to preach Christ exclusively and the mission of the church to proclaim the Gospel.

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