

Abolishing the Laity: an Anabaptist perspective

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In 428 Pope Celestine I was not amused. Honoratus, an influential monk, had just become bishop of Aries. Now news was arriving in Rome that Honoratus, to the Pope's 'astonishment', had as bishop been wearing clothing that differentiated him from laypeople. This, Celestine declared, was contrary to tradition. Not only was it a 'novelty'; it was also a 'superfluous superstition'. It was right that the clergy be distinguished from 'the common folk', as well as from non-Christian people. But let this be 'by our learning, not by our garments; by our mode of life, not by what we wear; by purity of thought, not by peculiarities of dress.'¹

It is not hard to sympathize with Honoratus. By the late fourth century the Roman clergy, according to their pagan critics, were 'enriched with gifts from matrons, go about seated in carriages, (and) are clothed in style.'² Yet earnest clerics like Honoratus, in their impulse towards an ecclesiastical anticipation of the school uniform, were attempting by their example to win the higher clergy over to a simple lifestyle. Perhaps this, in part, was why Celestine's letter, the first reported mention in church history of clerical costume for secular clergy, had such meagre results. Not for the first time, a papal intervention failed to stop, or even delay, an unwanted innovation. By the end of the fifth century innumerable priests were dressing in a distinctive, archaic manner that was no longer reserved for monks.³ But there must have been other reasons for this spread of ecclesiastical attire, reasons to which Celestine was sensitive. Although he assumed that there would be distinctions between clerics and layfolk, he was concerned that these not be unnecessary – or too visible. In this way, by resisting something which, to us, seems an obvious component of a clerical lifestyle, Pope Celestine was being conservative. He was holding to some of the earliest traditions of the church at a time when those traditions were withering.

Others in Rome were aware of these early traditions. Amidst a general rush towards aristocratic clericalism, there were those who remembered that many parts of the church had once been characterized by a 'universal ministry'.⁴ The pseudonymous Pauline scholar Ambrosiaster, writing a generation before Celestine, recalled: 'At first, all taught and baptized on whatever days and seasons occasion required ... That the people might grow and multiply, it was at the beginning permitted to all to preach the gospel, and to baptize, and to explain the scriptures in church.' But subsequently things had changed 'when the church embraced all places, houses of assembly were constituted, and rulers and the other offices in the church were instituted.' To Ambrosiaster's tidy mind this came as a great relief, for 'when all do everything, that is irrational, vulgar and abhorrent.'⁵

In Rome, thus, there were traditions and memories which pointed back to an earlier church, a pre-Christendom church. These memories were, to be sure, overschematized. As I shall point out, the early Christian congregations were not uniform – it was rarely if

ever the case that ‘all did everything’. But these memories pointed back to church as that had been animated by different values from those in ascendancy by the late fourth century. Throughout church history these memories have remained controversial. Are these memories consistent with a faithful reading of the biblical texts? Do the early documents of the post-apostolic church indicate that something radical was afoot? And, in any event, what relevance do origins have to Christians living many centuries later, in very different circumstances?

My own conviction, reading the Bible and church history from an Anabaptist perspective, is that there is life in the roots. In a post-Christendom world, we are most likely to get genuinely relevant insight from sisters and brothers living in an era before the church grew through inducement and compulsion, not least because inducement and compulsion are, I believe, antithetical to true Christianity. For this reason, in thinking about ordination, we are likely to benefit by pondering the insights of one of the earliest documents of the church in Rome. ‘You’, 1 Pet 2.9 informed communities of believers in Asia Minor, ‘are a royal priesthood ... God’s own people (*laos*).’

Where might Peter (or a close associate writing in his name) have got this cojoining of universal priesthood and universal peoplehood? It is not improbable that Peter heard something similar from the man whom he had left his nets to follow and who was the fount of the movement to which Peter had given his life. Jesus of Nazareth’s brief public career was marked by the confidence that ordinary people, who knew God as Abba and were animated by God’s Spirit, could do great things. Possibly for this reason, his career was also characterized by conflict with professional religionists. Peter must certainly have remembered the tense occasion upon which Jesus, in the remarkable scene recorded in Mt 23, pronounced his multiple ‘Woes’ upon the teachers and renewal leaders of his day. They, said Jesus, were behaving oppressively and ostentatiously; they were enjoying honorific titles and wearing distinctive garb. But, turning to his followers, Jesus said, in effect, ‘Don’t be like them!’ ‘You are not to be called rabbi ... Call no one your father on earth ... Nor are you to be called instructors’ (Mt 23.8-11). Instead, Jesus gave to his followers their true identity – they are God’s children; they are brothers and sisters; they are his disciples. And, because of all of this, they are servants.

Servanthood. That was Jesus’ understanding of his own mission (Mk 10.45). That also, according to Jesus, was the destiny of his disciples. And it was a lesson which they had the greatest difficulty in learning. Repeatedly, using instructional aids (such as a child) and speaking with great asperity, Jesus warned his followers against exercising the forms of power characteristic of Gentile leaders. Instead, he called them to be, and to think of themselves as being, servants (e.g., Mk 9.35; 10.43; Lk 22.25-26). On the last night of his life, Jesus re-emphasized this vocation by interrupting the Passover seder to enact a mnemonic ceremony which he then gave to his disciples – reciprocal footwashing. ‘If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet’ (In 13.14). Jesus’ followers – all of them were to be servants. The earliest Christian writers reflected upon and applied these themes which they had heard – and heard reported – from Jesus. They also appropriated and universalized themes which they had gleaned from the Old Testament (e.g. Ex 19.6). These themes emphasized the common

properties of all Christians. The members of the Christian communities were all, as children of one Father, brothers and sisters. They were all disciples – apprentices – of Jesus. As they learned from him, they were all distinctive, all saints. As recipients of the Holy Spirit, they all had gifts and ministries. By God’s grace they were all the people (*laos*) of God; but at the same time they were also all a priesthood. They all were members of Christ’s body. In keeping with Jesus’ passionate desire, all of them – without exception – were servants.

They had entered into this common ministry by baptism, through which they had moved from death to life, from old social solidarities to a new order of relationships and commitments rooted in the Kingdom of God. Through the laying-on of hands, they had been commissioned to a life of ministry, entered into a new order, and experienced ‘ontological change’. And they had been empowered for this new life of service by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God. For them baptism was thus ordination.⁶

In three seminal passages (Rom 12.4-13; 1 Cor 12.7-11; 12.27-30), Paul gave sample lists of the diverse gifts that, through the Holy Spirit’s work, were apportioned among all the disciples of Jesus for ministry. These gifts ranged widely across the life of God’s people: from prophecy to hospitality, from uttering wisdom to interpreting tongues. Paul was explicit that these were various forms of service; and, as manifestations of the Spirit, they were given to everyone (‘to each’) or the good of all. The ministry, in a Pauline community, was universal, for every member.

In his lists of gifts and ministries, Paul included gifts of leadership. In two passages, Rom 12 and 1 Cor 12.7-11, Paul scattered these in the midst of a sampling of many gifts. In two other passages, however, these gifts seem to have had functional priority: in 1 Cor 12.28 Paul noted that ‘God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers’, after which Paul noted other gifts that had been apportioned to members of the body of Christ; and in Eph 4.11 Paul mentioned apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers without noting other gifts. The latter two passages indicate the importance that Paul ascribed to these ministries for the establishment and maintenance of Christian communities; but the former two remind us that these gifts of designated leadership were no more spiritually exalted than other gifts (e.g. exhorting, giving, healing, assisting). Paul was adamant about this: the parts of the body that seemed weaker were indispensable and worthy of ‘greater honour’ so that all the members ‘may have the same care for one another’ (1 Cor 12.22-25). There was thus, in these early Christian communities, an ‘egalitarian ecclesiology (which) in no way excluded leadership and authority’.⁷

This delicate interdependence of gifts – leadership gifts along with other ministries – is well stated in Eph 4. Paul was concerned to remind his readers that, by virtue of one baptism, grace was given ‘to each of us’ (4.5, 7). To some members of the community, who probably constituted a kind of leadership team, Christ had given gifts of apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, pastoring and teaching. The purpose of these gifts, however, was to equip the other gifted community members to do their ‘work of ministry’ and thereby to build up the multigifted corporateness which is the body of Christ.⁸ ‘The full stature of

Christ' (4.13) was thus not realized by individual members; it was realized when the entire body functioned in what Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder has called a 'divinely coordinated multiple ministry'.⁹ In this fullness, the role of the designated leaders was to serve the community by enabling every member to find his or her distinctive service.

It is not clear how this worked in practice. It is likely that teaching and preaching and even baptizing could be done by many members. As Anglican liturgical scholar Paul Bradshaw has pointed out:

*It was the privilege and responsibility of every baptized Christian to be a minister of Christ in accordance with the mutual discernment of gifts, and so liturgical participation in the ministry of word and prayer would be open to all whose gifts were recognized by the community.*¹⁰

The same was probably true of presiding at communion; there is no evidence to suggest that only designated leaders could preside over the table eucharists.¹¹ And yet there were needs – of planting and linking churches, of uttering messages from God, of exercising spiritual responsibility and authority which existed in all emerging communities. At first these seem to have been functions rather than offices; 1 Thess 5.12, in which Paul speaks of those who 'labour among you, and care for you (*proistamenous*) in the Lord and admonish you', contains no job titles.¹² Indeed, one of the most commonly used designations of early Christian leaders – *synergoi* (co-workers) – reveals much about the functioning of the early Christian leaders (e.g. Rom 16.3, 9; Phil 4.3). By working together, by synergizing, they achieved more than they could have done by solo performing.

Within a few years, in many churches, titles emerged to describe the leadership functions that were necessary to enable communities of ministers to flourish. Apostles, prophets, evangelists soon were mentioned by job title; so also were persons who exercised enabling and oversight (pastors, elders, bishops); and so, eventually, were people who in various ways helped the other leaders – these were given the title *diakonoi* (servants), which, however, in essence was the calling of every member of a community of servants. Almost invariably in the New Testament these terms are listed in the plural; in early Christianity there is no thought of monopastoring. Sometimes these servants were paid by their communities; at other times they earned their own keep. Often women seem to have been involved with men, in many types of ministry (including that of apostleship, prophecy, leading of house-churches and 'co-working' (synergism)).¹³ There is little information about how these gifts were discerned and these ministries accredited. Several passages refer to an 'appointing' which was done, in new communities by apostles acting autonomously, and in more mature communities by corporate decision-making (Acts 14.23; 6.5; 2 Cor 8.19). This appointing was accompanied by prayer and laying-on-of-hands, a channel of blessing which the early Christians used in baptism and on many other occasions.¹⁴

In the milieu of the ancient Mediterranean world, a religious community shaped like this must have seemed countercultural. Christianity's main rivals were served by paid professionals, whether rabbinic teachers or priests of Asclepius or Cybele; these all had their distinctive titles and characteristic vestments. But the Christians, who in their attempt to be faithful to Jesus did many curious things, were accustomed to viewing themselves as strangers in their societies. A common self-designation of Christians was 'resident aliens (*paroikoi*). This reminded them that whereas they could be relatively at home anywhere, they could be absolutely at home only in heaven.¹⁵

As the centuries went by, however, the early Christians, losing the vision of Rom 12.2, gradually became conformed to their environment. This accommodation was as prevalent in the area of ministry as it was in other areas of their life. It was not that the ministry of all believers disappeared; indeed, the spread of Christianity was the product of the witness and common life of countless anonymous believers.¹⁶ In late second century Gaul, Irenaeus of Lyons asserted that all Christians have the 'sacerdotal order'.¹⁷ And some years later in Caesarea, Origen urged his hearers to realize that 'the priesthood has been given to you also, that is to the whole church of God and the nation of believers.'¹⁸

Nevertheless, changes were soon evident that indicate that the Christian movement was losing sight of the 'universal ministry'. At differing paces from place to place, the churches were developing a distinctive corps of leaders, who alone would have titles and accreditation and who increasingly would dominate the church's ministries. A significant early indication of this is the appearance, in Clement of Rome's letter of AD 96 to the 'resident aliens' in Corinth, of the word *laikoi*, which in contrast to leaders now meant 'laity' – a term which was to have a great future.¹⁹ The designated leadership of the Christian communities gradually became standardized. As the apostles died out and prophets lost vision and voice, Christian communities were led by bipartite (bishops and deacons) or tripartite (bishops, presbyters and deacons) teams. By AD 215, these positions were implicitly ranked in a career structure; a deacon, by 'serving blamelessly and purely ... may attain the rank of a higher order.'²⁰ Meanwhile, certain functions, such as teaching and presiding at the eucharists, were limited to members of specific 'orders' of what were now known as *kleros* ('clergy'). The orders of clergy, in similar fashion to orders in Roman political and social life, had special rights and duties by virtue of their office and status. By the end of the second century, men entering clerical orders were commissioned by a service which was now called by the Latin word *ordinatio* (ordination).²¹

It was in the fourth century, in the years following the conversion of the emperor Constantine I, that the Church took its decisive steps away from universal ministry and towards aristocratic clericalism. As Christians came to accept inducement and compulsion as recruiting devices, this became unavoidable. Through its growing alliance with the imperial power, Christianity became a religion to which it was advantageous to adhere. Church growth ensued, with huge congregations replacing the house churches of the earlier centuries. Basilicas were now crammed with people (*laikoi*). The *paroikoi*, no longer the resident aliens of I Peter, had become parishioners, not resident aliens but settled residents, inhabitants of the 'parishes' which, by force and fiat, had become

uniformly Christian.²² A Spirit-gifted universal ministry could hardly be expected of masses, many of whom had been press-ganged into the churches. Indeed, as a late fourth-century church order observes, it was difficult simply to ensure that during services ‘nobody may whisper, slumber, laugh or nod’.²³

Supervising these people, and ministering to them by awesome rite and rhetorical sermon, was now the calling of orders of religious professionals. As the church grew, new orders, such as ‘diggers’, ‘doorkeepers’ and ‘readers’, were added to what was now clearly an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Modelled upon the imperial civil service, the church’s hierarchy became a career structure, in which men (women had now almost completely vanished from leadership)²⁴ ‘advanced’ from grade to grade as well as often from one congregation to another. The conversion of the bishops from the chief pastor of a Christian community to the ecclesiastical administrator of a ‘diocese’ containing many churches was an integral part of the emergence of hierarchy.²⁵ By the end of the fourth century ordination had become a sacrament, conferring indelible ontological change upon the ordinand and using ‘language which might, a century earlier, have been used to describe the consequences of baptism’.²⁶ This change was fundamental and far-reaching. As Gregory of Nyssa put it, the ordinand’s ‘invisible soul is transformed by some unseen power and grace to the higher state.’ ‘Yesterday and before he was one of the people, one of the crowd, (but) suddenly he is revealed as a guide, a president, a teacher of righteousness.’²⁷ In contrast to pre-Constantinian Christianity, the fundamental division was no longer between ‘Church’ and ‘world’; it was now between ‘ministers’ and ‘laity’.²⁸ It was this differentiation of priests from laypeople that made the introduction of a distinctive clerical attire, despite Pope Celestine’s protests, so unstoppable.

With these developments, the post-Constantinian church’s perspective on ministry had altered fundamentally from that of its earliest antecedents. This shift was best stated in the late fourth century by Ambrosiaster. Leaders, he stated, inverting Eph 4.12, ‘do the work of the church in the service of the believers’²⁹; they evidently no longer saw it as their calling to elicit the distinctive service of all believers. Within the fully developed structures of Orthodox and Catholic Christianity much committed and pastorally sensitive ministry continued to take place. But this ministry took place according to different assumptions from that of early Christianity. The church’s leaders were by definition servants; but their actions were often characterized by exercises of the Gentile power against which Jesus had warned his disciples (Lk 22.25-26). Preoccupied with warding off the power of lust, church leaders often forgot Jesus’ warnings about the lust for power. Small wonder, in this world in which the reciprocity of ministry had withered, that the mnemonic device of footwashing either vanished altogether or survived as a patronizing gesture, in which an ecclesiastical superior ceremonially washed the feet of selected inferiors.

I have neither the space nor the competence to trace a history of the ministry – ‘lay’ and ordained. A few comments may, however, be in order. The Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century protested against the clericalism of the Medieval Church. An early watchword of the Reformation was the ‘priesthood of believers’. Although early in the Reformation this occasionally led to a renewed involvement by the laity in spiritual

ministry, in general the Reformers interpreted priesthood theologically rather than ecclesiologically. They were more convinced; that is, that all believers have direct access to God than that all believers have a priestly ministry to each other and the world.³⁰ Indeed, it seems that in large measure the Protestant Reformers were content to perpetuate the structures and assumptions of the post-Constantinian church. Protestants, to be sure, now specialized in sermons and the Catholics in rites and sacraments; but both emphasized ministry as something which religious professionals do on behalf of their flocks. For a querying of these structures we must turn to renewal movements – Lollards, Anabaptists, Quakers – and to unusual individuals who believed that God was summoning them into uncharted terrain. Symbolic of these (a large number of these spiritually sensitive individuals were women) is the Anabaptist Lijksen Segers of Antwerp, to whom in 1551 her inquisitor blurted out with exasperation, ‘Why do you trouble yourself with the scriptures? Attend to your sewing.’³¹ Also symbolic is the better known spiritual pioneer Susannah Wesley of Epworth, whose Sunday evening prayer services excited such insecurity in her clerical spouse.³²

Even in the so-called ‘free churches’ clericalist assumptions remained largely unchallenged. As Winthrop Hudson has noted:

*The (Baptist) improvised church order ... developed somewhat unwittingly and unconsciously, being dictated more by considerations of expediency and necessity rather than by considerations stemming from a re-examination of the nature of the church and its vocation in the world.*³³

In other traditions, such as Methodism, there have at times been more imaginative experiments; but even these have succumbed eventually to a preponderant clericalism. The mono-pastoral model – in which it is the ‘ordained minister’ whose ministrations really counts as ministry, who really can preside at communion, by whom one has really been visited – has proven to be wonderfully indestructible.

This has continued to be true even in the latter half of the twentieth century. As Western Christianity has entered a period of crisis and as previous legal and social constraints have withered, church attendance throughout Europe has plummeted. Some theologians have seen an empowering of the laity as an appropriate antidote to this. Over forty years ago Dutch theologian Hendrik Kraemer wrote *A Theology of the Laity*, in which he argued that a ‘priestly-hierarchical’ tradition was almost as operative in the Protestant traditions as in the Roman Catholic church. He also observed:

*The laity or body of lay-membership of the church has never in church history enjoyed the distinction of being treated with care and thoroughness as a matter of specific theological importance or significance.*³⁴

Partly as a result of his initiative, the World Council of Churches began its Department of the Laity. Simultaneously, Dominican scholar Yves Congar was calling Roman Catholics to recover a vision of lay ministry, intriguingly for missiological reasons. ‘History shows that the apostolate of the laity is only taken seriously when a “real world” exists to

confront the Church, and the Church is aware of it.³⁵ Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner came to similar conclusions. In 1974 he observed that a transition was under way between the traditional state church and 'a church as that community of believers who critically disassociate themselves, in virtue of free personal decision in every case, from the current opinions and feelings of their social environment.' An essential component of this new church will be 'declericalization', in which the primary impetus for life will come 'from below'.³⁶ Meanwhile, in North America, Methodist ecclesialogist Howard Snyder has for many years, in numerous books and articles, been calling the church to become 'a community of ministers.'³⁷

But change has been slower than many have desired. After years of work to help churches in 'the rediscovery of the laity', Hans-Ruedi Weber of the World Council of Churches has commented ruefully, 'Church structures proved to be much more difficult to renew than we had expected.'³⁸ As he must recognize, the 'Lima Document' on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry devotes ten times as much space to 'The Church and the Ordained Ministry' as it does to 'The Calling of the Whole People of God.'³⁹ I doubt that this is because, as one ecumenical apologist has argued, the churches, agreeing on the importance of the ministry of the laity, chose to devote space to topics about which they disagreed.⁴⁰ It is rather, I suspect, because it would require re-education and repentance, on the part of many people, to repudiate the structures and assumptions of clericalism. In the apt words of Weber, it would require 'a Copernican change'.⁴¹

This, I believe, is what must happen. To be responsive to the vision of the New Testament and the needs of our time, Christians must stop seeing the ecclesiastical universe in clerico-centric terms. No longer will it do to think in terms of ministers as distinct from laity, of higher-ups and lower-downs. Instead, when thinking of ministry, Christians must think of the services offered by every gifted believer. No longer content with feeble and often patronizing attempts to emancipate lay people, Christians must commit themselves to dismantling a two-tier church. Christians are used to talking about the priesthood of all believers; people assent and nothing changes. Perhaps it would help jolt our thought and action out of accustomed ruts if we altered the slogan. Our calling is nothing less than the abolition of the laity.

Such a change will not be easy. For the traditional structures continue precisely because they are traditional, and because Christians are 'codependent' in keeping them that way. Ordained clergy, on the one hand, are accustomed to viewing themselves as professionals. They have their training institutes, their forms of certification, their career structures. They even have their guilds, which they often call 'Fraternals'. Archbishop Runcie gave expression to this guild mentality when talking about the role of other bishops in his enthronement service: 'I will be seen to be one of a band of brothers.'⁴² In the church of Christ, is it really only the clergy who are brothers? And if so, do the best insights of the sisters really motivate them to join a system as elitist as this? From their position of brotherly eminence, the clergy are accustomed to providing professional 'services' and often, in significant measure, to exercising control over the life of their churches. The nonordained laity, on the other hand, whether as faithful traditionalists or

as religious consumers in a consumer society, are complicit through viewing it as their due to be served by the holy people whom they pay.

Despite this inbuilt conservatism, change is taking place. The monopastoral model is breaking down; new forms of ministry are emerging; and the clerico-centric view of the universe is less and less convincing to people who are observing what is going on in the world and the church – and who are reading their Bibles. A major force or structural change, throughout the West and in many parts of the Third World, has been stark necessity: the number of ordinands, in many traditions, has fallen dramatically. A wide variety of ‘lay ministries’ have sprung up as Base Ecclesial Communities have flourished. The trans-denominational charismatic movement has provided dramatic evidence that charism is not primarily channelled by linear, ‘apostolic’ descent. One commentator, Dutch theologian Edward Schillebeeckx, has rejoiced in these ‘alternative practices’. The church’s response to these, he believes, should be the recognition of ‘a fourth ministry’ which, working with the recognized orders of bishops, priests and deacons, would help ‘as many members as possible (to) be involved in building up the church’.⁴³ More radical than Schillebeeckx, Reformed exegete Markus Barth has called for a ‘church without laymen and priests’.⁴⁴ But how to move in this direction remains unclear. Jesuit Karl Rahner has viewed this as a time for experiment and pioneering. The German title of his influential book *The Shape of the Church to Come* expresses his hopeful outlook: *The Changing Structure of the Church as Task and Opportunity*.⁴⁵ And Rahner has offered one significant hint, ‘All that we can say about the future of the Church is that whatever form its development may take, it will be consistent with its origins.’⁴⁶

In what follows, I shall offer fourteen goals, ways forward which I believe are consistent with the church’s origins and which may be useful as we reflect on ministry in the 1990s and beyond. I offer these with varying degrees of confidence. I have experienced realizations of these goals in churches with which I have been associated; but some of these goals I have not seen adequately realized anywhere. The goals that I suggest, although in keeping with much Mennonite thinking, by no means represent a cross-section of Mennonite practice in any country. I am aware of my need of instruction and reproof by the understandings and experiences of sisters and brothers in many traditions; and I recognize that there is holiness and faithful discipleship among Christians whose ecclesiological traditions differ from my own. To some of these, I recognize, many of my suggested goals may seem grossly impossible, even intrinsically objectionable. But I hope that every reader will find here at least one or two ideas worth pondering, and maybe even some goals to work toward. I sense that, as the church responds to the challenge of ministry in a post-Christendom world, more and more Christians – in many traditions – will be willing to experiment.

New patterns of ministry and new terminology are emerging. We should, I believe, greet change; but we should not welcome it uncritically. Each new development in ministry, and each suggestion that I shall make, must be tested. Does it aid the Church in its kingdom work and mission? Is it consistent with the Church’s origins (is it apostolic)? And pre-eminently we must use Paul’s criteria (Eph 4.11-13): does it equip all the saints

to be servants? Does it build up the body of Christ? Does it enable the believers together to grow into a maturity that is Christ-filled and Christ-like?

Goal 1. We will increasingly view baptism as functional ordination. This idea is not new; it was stated with intense conviction in Martin Luther's earliest Reformation writings. But to me it is foundational. In baptism we testify to our repentance, dying to sin and being born to 'newness of life' (Rom 6.2-4). No longer encumbered by guilt or by old inevitabilities, we by God's gracious action are 'clothed' with Christ Jesus, in whom there is liberation from oppression and in whom 'all of you are one' (Gal 3.23-28). Through baptism we thus experience a shift in 'order' – from a solidarity with a rebellious humanity to a new solidarity with those who are one in a socially-encompassing body of nonconformists (1 Cor 12.13). It is members of this body who 'rink of one Spirit'. In Paul's thought, baptism in the Holy Spirit is conjoined with water baptism. It equips all the members of Jesus' *ordo* of disciples, gifting them for ministry (1 Cor 12.47).

*Goal 2. The church will become a community of ministers.*⁴⁷ Through the working of the Holy Spirit, every member of Christ's body is gifted. This gifting enables them, in their various ways, to be servants; it is 'for the work of ministry' (Eph 4.12). In the church, there are thus no non-ministers. As Howard Snyder has provocatively commented, 'In a church of one hundred members, (God) wants one hundred ministers, not one, five or ten.'⁴⁸ This understanding does not do away with a specialized ministry; on the contrary, through the diversity of the Spirit's gifting, the ministries of many members will be highly specialized. Nor does this understanding assume that every Christian's ministry will be equally responsible; in any congregation, there will be differing degrees of personal and spiritual maturity. What this understanding does away with is what Yoder has called the 'undifferentiated laity'.⁴⁹ It is worth noting that, since this understanding presupposes that the members of the church are Christian believers, it is likely to be most at home in churches that practise believers' baptism.

Goal 3. A church that is a community of ministers will find appropriate means to discern spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit sovereignly apportions gifts, all of which are essential to the body's health, among all Christians (1 Cor 12.11). These gifts, which are breathed upon Christians, are not identical. A gifted body is egalitarian but it is not anarchic, in which any member may do anything.⁵⁰ The Spirit can change or withdraw the gifts. The work of the Spirit will best be sensed as members minister, as they serve each other and the world. It is through responding to each other's ministries truthfully that we discern the gifts that God has given to each. The church will need to become a community of truth-telling to overcome the inclination of many members to self-deception, flattery and dissimulation. This is hard; in our 'affirmative' age niceness is a beguiling temptation. But it is not impossible. As Paul commented to the Ephesians, it is by 'speaking the truth in love' that the church grows into a body in which every 'ligament' collaborates properly (4.15-16). Increasingly, congregations will discover that this truthful discernment takes place best when assisted by a thoughtfully constructed gift discernment process.⁵¹

Goal 4. Designated gifts of leadership will be among the spiritual gifts that will be given to any community of ministers. Paul was clear on this point: he expected that by God's grace in the church at Rome, and by implication in other churches, gifts of leading and teaching would mingle with those of faith and compassion (Rom 12.4-8). There was, for Paul, no ontological distinction between these gifts. Paul knew that there were contributions that a visitor from outside could bring to the congregation (Rom 1.11). He assumed, however, that the essential gifts for leading the congregation's life were those which God will 'raise up' within the congregation; they would not need to be 'called' from another congregation or from theological college. Today as well, the gifts of the designated leaders will be attested by the experience of the members of the congregation. Their service may well be especially appropriate to local needs, for they will intimately know the ethos of the congregation which has called them.

Goal 5. The primary calling of the designated leaders will be to enable every member to be a minister. At times congregations may wish to use biblical titles – elders, pastors, bishops, deacons. At other times, in the knowledge that these biblical terms were often adapted from first-century secular parlance, congregations may prefer to speak of members of a 'leadership team'. The titles of the designated leaders will vary; however, the plural nature of the leadership of a congregation (leadership titles in the New Testament are always plural) should not vary. What is vital is that the designated leaders carry out, on behalf of the other servant members in the congregation, four essential tasks. First of all, they must, on behalf of the congregation, take overall responsibility for its common life, and for the life of its members. Second, they must lead the congregation by articulating its common vision, and by helping all members to express this in action. Third, they must enable a 'pastoral centre' to emerge, which ensures that the congregation is a safe place, a place with a hearth.⁵² But above all, they must take the lead in encouraging the ministry of others, nurturing the immature to maturity and the sick to health, thereby enabling the congregation to become a ministering priesthood.

Goal 6. The gifted ministers who are not designated leaders will nevertheless function in many ways. There is no reason that the designated leaders should do most of the teaching or worship leading. These tasks, including presiding at eucharists, are matters, not of status (who is pastor?), but of spiritual gift (through whose leadership do the people most freely learn or worship God?). The same is true of counselling, chairing congregational business meetings, hospitality, leading music in worship, administering church finances, and many other tasks. As a result, the contributions of the designated leaders, while absolutely essential to the health of a congregation, may not always be immediately visible to a casual visitor.

Goal 7. Theological and practical training will be vital in the life of a congregation of ministers. Much training can take place in the course of the normal life of the congregation, as members work and suffer, learn to pray and to understand the Bible, and carry out their various ministries. Designated leaders as well as other ministers can be well trained locally, often through being apprenticed to more experienced Christians. Theological education by extension (including correspondence courses), leadership training programmes such as Workshop, congregation-based theological education such

as that of the Northern Baptist College or the Northern Ordination Course (Anglican), or other part-time non-residential courses at theological colleges may help leaders learn while remaining in their congregations. At times it will be appropriate for people who have a special vocation to Bible study and theology and a special gift in teaching to undertake courses of study that are available at theological colleges or universities. Such residential education can put much needed resources at the disposal of congregations. But it, while appropriate, should not become the norm. More normal should be the retooling, by existing theological colleges, of their programmes to facilitate the training of leaders in the places where they are already ministering. Whatever the mode of training, the aim of training must be to produce new kinds of interactive, listening leaders who, having 'come down from the throne of knowledge and ideas and travel along the roads', are able to prepare maps that correspond 'with the features of the land on which the people walk and suffer.'⁵³

Goal 8. Women and men will minister together, at every level of the church's life. This collaboration, which seems to have characterized the Christian movement in its earliest years, should be seen as normal. It need not be invariable. Since the invariable norm of a universal ministry is that all should minister according to the gifts that God has given them, there may be times when only women or only men are ministering. It is, however, the experience of a growing number of congregations that things go best when the gifts and wisdom of both men and women operate together.

Goal 9. In a community of ministers commissioning will take place frequently. It will be appropriate to pray for and lay hands on those who are being commissioned as designated leaders. But other ministers, who are exercising other charisms for the health of the body and the witness of the church, should be commissioned in a similar way. This is not a means of establishing an 'upper class' of church members; ideally, and ultimately, all Christians, as their gifts emerge, should experience their congregation's affirmation of their ministries. What is essential is that existing ministries be recognized, blessed, and prayed for, and that they be made accountable to the congregation that they are serving. As churches discover that their priestly ministry is also exercised for the sake of the world, they may on occasion lay hands on members for demanding missions in secular employment.

Goal 10. The 'ordination' of all ministering members will be 'relative', not 'absolute'. There is no necessary reason to assume that a person who has been an effective 'overseer' or 'counsellor' or 'community involvement instigator' will continue to be equally effective in these roles forever, or if he or she should move to a different congregation. The Holy Spirit, who gives gifts, can revoke gifts. Congregations, and especially designated leaders, should be sensitive to this – alert to members who are ministering in ways that appear self-aggrandizing. Furthermore, congregations differ. It is therefore not helpful to view 'ministers' as transferable functional components. When they move to a new congregation, they should be subject to processes of gift discernment along with other members. If their gifts are affirmed, they may be recommissioned in their new congregation.

Goal 11. 'Ministers' will avoid titles, especially titles that refer to status rather than function. All Christians, by virtue of their baptismal 'ordination', share a common status – disciples of Jesus. Since all of them are ministers, and since their services are many, titles could get tedious. If a designation of ministry is needed, 'John, Bible Study Leader' or 'Susan, Pastor' will do – provided that people remember that the 'pastor' is a member of a team of designated leaders, not the focal point of the life (and criticism) of the congregation. Titles such as 'Reverend', which presuppose distinctions of ontology and training between members of the church, should be avoided on dominical grounds (Mt 23.8-9).

Goal 12. Clerical clothing will not be worn by members of ministering communities. The same reasoning applies here as with titles of status. In a world in which pagan priests had their distinctive garb, the Early Church grew despite its lack of a visible clerical presence in society. Certainly it gives pause for thought that the Christian Church took almost four centuries after Pentecost to invent clerical attire. It is understandable that Christians who minister in hospitals or prisons should find it convenient to use clothing to indicate that they have special contributions to make; but these advantages are outweighed by the offence caused, within a church which conceives itself as a community of ministers, by giving special attire to some of them. If special attire is to be worn, let it be worn, on days of high celebration, by everyone! Wouldn't it be festive if, on Pentecost, we all wore red? Or on Sundays, as in some African churches, if we all wore white?

Goal 13. Congregations will provide financial support for ministering members in a flexible way that will vary according to need. Some designated leaders may have full-time jobs and support themselves and others by their labours; other designated leaders may devote all their working hours to the church. Some members with other ministries may require full- or part-time support from the church; others may make their contributions voluntarily. There is no reason why the persons who are paid by the church should be the designated leaders; and there is good reason why a congregation should not view its leader as a 'paid professional'.

Goal 14. All congregations, and teams of designated leaders, will need to be accountable, internally and externally. Internally there will be accountability of all members, including the designated leaders, to the congregation gathered for discernment and business. As congregations grow in the ministry of every member, they will simultaneously discover the importance of a regular, powerful (and therefore well-attended) business meeting.⁵⁴ It is to the other believers, as well as to God, that the designated leaders are accountable.

The other believers, each with their ministries, will be accountable to the designated leaders, who are responsible to God for the spiritual welfare of both believers and body; and recognizing this responsibility, they will accord to the designated leaders freedom to lead and to envision. Significantly, in the first major adjustment of church polity recorded in church history, decision-making was interactive, involving both designated leaders and 'the whole community' (Acts 6.1-6).

Externally as well, congregations and teams of designated leaders will need accountability. Local problems, without illumination from different experience and a wider perspective, can seem intractable. And at times a person from outside, in whom a congregation has recognized wisdom and the capacity to elicit the gifts of all believers, can bring words of healing authority into sick situations. This has been a strength in the episcopacy of the 'great traditions'. In the coming years of crisis for Western Christianity, however, I sense that all traditions – episcopal and non-episcopal – may benefit by re-examining their structures and assumptions. As they do this, thinkers in the episcopal traditions may recognize that something went awry when the church took over the administrative structures of its imperial environment; when bishops began to wear the purple which hitherto had indicated the status of the pagan magistrates; when bishops, instead of being lead pastors within a congregation or senior overseers over a small number of churches became ecclesiastical administrators over vast areas containing countless churches. These episcopal structures may have been suited to maintenance in a world in which everyone had to be Christian; but are they equally suited, in a world in which belief will be voluntary and countercultural, to mission?

Perhaps 'free church' congregations, lacking the weight of 'historic episcopacy', can help explore ways forward to more appropriate forms of external accountability. To do this they will at times need to repent of rampant self-will masquerading as 'independence'. Forms of extra-congregational accountability, which are often rather emaciated, have long existed in 'free church' traditions, with 'travelling evangelists', 'area ministers' and 'superintendents'. More recently, charismatic congregations have often sought affiliation – at times loose, at times binding – to 'apostles'. North American Mennonites over the centuries have had 'bishops', always written in the lower case, senior pastors who, while rooted in the life of their own congregations, have helped guide the affairs of younger communities of faith. In Mennonite experience these 'bishops' have not always functioned in a life-giving way. Gentile power, alas, may be found in all traditions! Despite the abuses, congregations, for the sake of the emergence of their own integrity and universal ministry, will need to be accountable. Perhaps, as Baptist theologian Nigel Wright has argued, this should be to 'pastors who, while remaining in one church, become resource persons for other churches and leaders.'⁵⁵ In any event, this accountability must be interactive, in which the external leaders are shaped by their encounters with the congregations and their gifted, ministering members.

These fourteen goals may seem a mixed lot, some already the experience of many churches, and others elusive and possibly unachievable. But in all of them I am motivated by a common concern – to find structures and relationships which will enable all believers, according to the vision of Jesus and Paul, to be ministers. I am not discouraged by the fact that, from the outset, Christian churches struggled in their attempts to give life to this vision. A true vision will challenge the commitment and imagination of people in any era. And yet I am fascinated by evidences of a true memory, in which the earliest traditions of the Christian movement indicate that they were closer to realizing this vision than most of us are. I also am intrigued by the evidence of renewal movements across the

centuries, and of renewal movements throughout the world today, who are giving new expression to the goal of universal ministry.

I do not think that the chief impediment to what I am proposing is tradition. There are many traditions, and the struggle for faithfulness in any era depends on how we discriminate among alternative traditions that church history – and the history of each of our denominations – offers us. To orientate ourselves truly in tradition we must ponder what God was doing as he revealed himself in his Son Jesus and began a new social movement among his followers. And as we do this we may discover a tradition that is not a manifesto for conservation but an impulse for experiment and change. As Leonardo Boff has provocatively put it, ‘To preserve tradition means to do as the first Christians did.’⁵⁶

No, the impediment to universal ministry is not so much tradition; I think it has more to do with realities of power and economic survival. The professionalised vision of ministry is so indestructible in part because its practitioners depend on it to survive. But perhaps an even more formidable blockage to universal ministry has to do with what we have come to think of as the size of a ‘normal’ congregation. Constantine and his successors, in first legalizing and then promoting Christianity, not only brought in new ‘Christians’ by means of inducement and compulsion; they also made the church big. Congregations moved from expanded sitting rooms to basilicas. And this changed everything. It put a premium on the ‘ministry’ of those with public, rhetorical, dramatic gift; and it relegated others, who had many forms of ministry to offer, to the status of ‘passengers’ in the ship of the church run by ecclesiastical ‘mariners’.⁵⁷ When one person was expected to lead five hundred people in worship, professionalism was bound to arise.

Our mindsets today are conservative. Constantinianism is crumbling all around us, but we – even in ‘free church’ traditions – remain the captives of its values, its scale. It may be because our late-Victorian buildings determine our ecclesiology. Or it may be because, in keeping with much ‘church growth’ strategizing, we desire not merely that new believers be born by water and the Spirit; we, captives of an age in which statistics are the primary indicators of success, also desire big churches. With big budgets. And big people up front. How different things might be if we could conceive of ‘church growth’ in terms of a proliferation of member-led small congregations.

It is hard to leave behind the dominant Christendom tradition of leadership that Dutch spiritual writer Henri Nouwen bemoans:

*One of the greatest ironies of the history of Christianity is that its leaders constantly gave into the temptation of power – political power, military power, economic power, or moral and spiritual power – even though they continued to speak in the name of Jesus, who did not cling to his divine power but emptied himself and became as we are. The temptation to consider power an apt instrument for the proclamation of the Gospel is the greatest of all.*⁵⁸

We need big people. But we must measure their bigness by countercultural standards: are they willing to renounce 'Gentile power' (Lk 22.25)? Are they true servants (Mt 23.11)? As a result of the words and work of Jesus, servanthood will henceforth be measured by the self-effacing way in which servants equip others with vision and enable them to enter into the universal ministry of those who are apprenticed to him. Ultimately it is Jesus, the giver of 'gifts to his people' (Eph 4.8), who is the measure of ministry.

I close this paper by restating a vision. It is a vision of a liberated people, each serving one another and the world through exercising the gifts that God's Spirit has given them. This is good news, and its liberating quality can be demonstrated in Christians around the world whose energies or service it has unlocked. But there is another dimension to the vision to which I have not yet alluded. It is a vision of an alternative future for a large but shrinking group of people commonly called 'ministers'. How often they are crushed by the diversity of demands made upon them by congregations who expect them to be omniscient. How difficult, in the midst of administration, visitation and praying at parish fetes, it is for them to discern and exercise their own life-calling and Spirit-gifting.

The early Christian vision of ministry was never that of the 'superminister'. It was of groups of ordinary people, to whom God has promised all the varied gifts necessary for them corporately to grow 'to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ' (Eph 4.13). The destiny of these people was liberation, liberation to be themselves in community. This destiny is still ours to claim. To all of us it is an invitation to discover what it means to be uniquely gifted members of the servant-body of Christ.⁵⁹

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¹ Celestine I, *Epistola IV*, 2 (PL 50,430-431). For comment on this document, see Leon Cristiani, 'Essai sur les origines du costume ecclésiastique', *Miscellanea Guillaume de Jerphanion*, (Rome, 1947), 69-79.

² Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*, 23.3.14.

³ Cristiani, 'Essai,' 76; Janet Mayo, *A History of Ecclesiastical Dress* (Batsford, London, 1984), 19.

⁴ I owe this term, and much more, to John Howard Yoder. *The Fullness of Christ: Paul's Revolutionary Vision of Universal Ministry* (Brethren Press, Elgin, Illinois, 1987).

⁵ Ambrosiaster, *Comm. in Eph.* 4.11. 12 (CSEL, Ambrosiaster, III. 91, 99).

⁶ Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, 2 (Doubleday, Garden City, NY, 1974), 481. Barth points out that the passages in I Timothy's ordination to ministry, 'may well refer to the confession and laying-on-of-hands connected with baptism rather than to an antecedent of a bishop's consecration.'

⁷ Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face* (SCM, London, 1985), 39.

⁸ Along with most modern commentators and translators, I assume that, for grammatical as well as theological reasons, there should be a comma after 'to equip the saints'. For a discussion of this point, see Hans-Ruedi Weber, *Living in the Image of Christ* (Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA, 1986), 70-71.

⁹ Yoder, *Fullness of Christ*, 16.

¹⁰ Paul Bradshaw, 'Patterns of Ministry', *Studia Liturgica*, 15 (1982-1983), 51.

¹¹ Schillebeeckx, *Church with a Human Face*, 72.

¹² I have translated this 'care for', rather than 'have charge of' (NRSV), because I find that it better renders the nurturing, rather than dominating, function of early Christian leadership. See Bo Reicke, in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament VI* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1968), 701-702.

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- ¹³ Rom 16.1-5,7; I Cor 11.5; CoI4.15; I Cor 1.11; Phil 4.4. See Schillebeeckx, *Church with a Human Face*, 57; Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (CUP, Cambridge, 1988), 182, 209.
- ¹⁴ Everett Ferguson, 'Laying on of Hands', in E. Ferguson, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (Garland Publishing, New York/London, 1990), 530.
- ¹⁵ I Pet 2.11; numerous early Christian writings cited by Pierre de Labriolle, 'Paroecia', *Bulletin du Cange* (Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi), 3 (1927), 196-205.
- ¹⁶ Norbert Brox, 'Zur Christ lichen Mission in der Spatantike', in Karl Kertelge, ed., *Mission im Neuen Testament* (Herder, Freiburgim-Breisgau, 1982), 226.
- ¹⁷ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 4, 8, 3.
- ¹⁸ Origen, *Hom. in Lev.*, 10, I.
- ¹⁹ I Clement, 40, 5.
- ²⁰ Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*, 8.
- ²¹ Tertullian, *De Idol.*, 7.
- ²² Labriolle, 'Paroecia', 200-203.
- ²³ *Apostolic Constitutions*, 2, 85.
- ²⁴ There are some exceptional cases. The mid-fourth century church order from Asia Minor called the *Testamentum Domini* (ed. J. Cooper and A.J. MacLean, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1902), reports that widows called 'presbyteresses' (*presbytidas*) stood at the front during eucharists with other ordained clergy (1.23, 35,41-42) and engaged in ministries to women; this, however, was the apex of their ecclesiastical careers. Fifth-and sixth-century documents indicate that it is likely that women in some areas actually functioned as priests (Giorgio Otranto, 'Notes on the Female Priesthood in Antiquity', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 7 (1991), 78-93).
- ²⁵ Everett Ferguson, 'Bishop', in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 153.
- ²⁶ Bradshaw, 'Patterns of Ministry', 55.
- ²⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Baptism of Christ*.
- ²⁸ Bradshaw, 'Patterns of Ministry', 51.
- ²⁹ Ambrosiaster, *Comm. in Eph.*, 4.12, 1-4 (CSEL, Ambrosiaster, 3, 81, (0).
- ³⁰ H. Urner, 'Laiendienst', in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd ed., IV, 207; Howard A. Snyder, *Liberating the Church* (IVP, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1983), 171.
- ³¹ Thieleman Jansz Van Braught, *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs' Mirror of the Defenseless Christians who Baptized Only upon Confession of Faith* (Herald Press, Scottdale, PA, 1951), 515.
- ³² Adam Clarke, *Memoirs of the Wesley Family* (Lane and Tippet, New York, 1848), 387-393.
- ³³ Winthrop S. Hudson, 'Stumbling into Disorder', *Foundations*, I, i (April 1958), 45, cited in Paul M. Harrison, ed., *Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1959), 18.
- ³⁴ Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Lutterworth Press, London 1958), 9, 83.
- ³⁵ Yves Conger, *Priest and Layman* (Darton Longman and Todd, London 1967), 246.
- ³⁶ Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come* (SPCK, London 1974), 23, 56.
- ³⁷ This particular phrase comes from Howard A. Snyder, 'Irving Park Free Methodist Church', in David B. Eller, ed., *Servants of the Word* (Brethren Press, Elgin, Illinois 1990), 104.
- ³⁸ Weber, *Living in the Image of Christ*, 7.
- ³⁹ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (WCC, Geneva 1982), 20-32.
- ⁴⁰ Jeffrey Gros, 'Toward Unity in Faith and Universal Ministry', in Eller, *Servants of the Word*, 187.
- ⁴¹ Weber, *Living in the Image of Christ*, 71.
- ⁴² *Guardian*, 29 February 1980.
- ⁴³ Schillebeeckx, *Church with a Human Face*, 266.
- ⁴⁴ Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, 2, 477.
- ⁴⁵ Karl Rahner, *Strukturwandel der Kirche als Aufgabe und Chance* (Herder, Freiburg-im-Breisgau 1972).
- ⁴⁶ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, cited from memory by Gerard Hughes, *Walk to Jerusalem* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1991), 37.
- ⁴⁷ Howard A. Snyder, 'Irving Park Free Methodist Church', in Eller, *Servants of the World*, 104.
- ⁴⁸ Snyder, *Liberating the Church*, 180.
- ⁴⁹ Yoder, *Fullness of Christ*, 46.

⁵⁰ A congregation in which all members do everything because they are members is the inverse counterpart of the traditional congregation in which the ‘pastor’ does everything because he is pastor. Both are equally distorted, for neither takes seriously the variegated gifting of the Holy Spirit.

⁵¹ The way one parish (Holy Trinity, Wolverhampton) discerns gifts is described in *Views from Post Green*, August 1991, 2.

⁵² I owe this insight to the theological vision and practical experience of Robert and Julia Banks (*The Home Church* (Lion, Tring, Herts. 1986), 107).

⁵³ Carlos J. Mesters, *Defenseless Flower* (Orbis, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1989), 47.

⁵⁴ The monthly business-meeting of the Wood Green Mennonite Church make decisions in ways that may be helpful to other congregations. See ‘All Agreed, Then?’, *Adminisheet* 6 (Administry, 69 Sandridge Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 4AG).

⁵⁵ Nigel G. Wright, *Challenge to Change* (Kingsway, Eastbourne 1991), 188.

⁵⁶ Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis* (Collins, London 1986), 60.

⁵⁷ *Apostolic Constitutions*, 2, 58.

⁵⁸ Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus* (Crossroad, New York 1989), 58.

⁵⁹ This paper has benefited from the detailed criticisms of Nelson Kraybill, Stuart Murray, Dave Nussbaum, Peter Price, Christopher Rowland, and John Howard Yoder, none of whom is in agreement with me on all points. To these, and to my most committed critics Eleanor Kreider and Andrew Kreider, I want to record my gratitude.