



Authentic Apostolic Leadership

Structure for the Church

Dr. Andrew Corbett



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This book is the culmination of doctoral studies, personal investigation, some observations, discussions, and curiosity about the ministry of the apostle and its possible place in the modern church. This book is for church leaders who are open to change, and perhaps refining what they are currently doing.

It is hoped that this might help those frustrated with a sense of God's call on their lives yet not able to fit into the existing positions generally made available within a local church. It is also hoped to be of assistance to those of us who realise that although we have developed a team within our own churches we long to be a part of a larger team where we can have a coach cheer us on.

I have attempted to identify the function of apostles into four broad categories which I feel aptly defines the role of an apostle. Thankyou for taking the time to read what has taken me eight years to prepare and has been through some severe critical peer review.

Dr. Andrew Corbett
PO Box 1143 Legana,
Tasmania, Australia, 7277

<h1>Commendations</h1>	

Ps. Trevor Chandler, Chairman of Christian Life Churches International, says-

This manuscript is excellent, very readable, and very informative. Dr. Andrew Corbett has covered many different aspects in a clear and precise way. I found the information given to be very helpful and the material will be very valuable...clearly a lot of time has been put in and issues handled in a very practical way...It's a fine publication, well presented, and a credit to the hard work put in...this work is exceptionally good...This has been a big job and I send my warm commendation.



Ps. Phillip Hills, Senior Pastor of Richmond Assembly of God, and former Assistant Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Australia, says-



Andrew Corbett's book 'Authentic Apostolic Leadership' documents for us excellent research, well reasoned leadership principles and possibly one of the broadest studies done in this field that I know of. Andrew has taken Old Testament leaders and the principles of leadership they lived by, looked also at the overall New Testament pattern of leadership, checked and documented the nature of change through history and developed an argument for the Church to go back to it's, roots and bring back authentic leadership in the five-fold ministry gifts of Christ and the authoritative role of the Apostle.

The Church at large has dramatically drifted from its God designed course and needs to take a good hard look at itself and reflect on where it needs to go. I trust this book the product of six years of hard work will serve to inspire Church leadership at large to re-examine the Word of God, I believe this deserves wide readership across the Church spectrum.

Ps. Seppo and Riikka Kuronen, pastors of Winnaleah Christian Church, say-

Loved the book!

Ps. Charles Schwab, teacher-missionary, pastor, says-

This is a “must read” publication for church leaders who are not afraid to be confronted with Biblical truth that may disturb their thinking about what the New Testament really says about how churches should be lead.

This scholarly presentation is spiced with real-life touching accounts of some of the leaders with apostolic gifting whom God has used down through the centuries. It would seem impossible for any sincere church leader to read these passages and not be seized with humility and a passion to yield all to the service of Christ. So, although intentionally and convincingly scholarly, the book has a dynamic and motivating heart.

The book portrays a deep passion by Dr. Corbett to see the church rise towards the fulfilment of its potential through its discovery and implementation of God’s revealed leadership structure for his church. As a consequence of what must have been countless hours of theological and historical research, combined with the passion of the author’s heart, this literary presentation “speaks” as a living communication from the heart to engage the hearts of serious readers.

Authentic Apostolic Leadership Structure for the Church will challenge as well as encourage and inspire. Those who are serious about discovering God’s plan for the leadership and development of his church will not complete their examination of this book without being permanently affected by its contents. The book will most certainly inform and encourage, but it may also wound, but only in the cause of identifying inadequate or wrong approaches to church leadership with the end in mind of establishing a more complete understanding of God’s design, indeed of his provision, for the leading of his church.

Within the range of my experience and study, I know of no other publication that presents the extent of research that this book does in regard to the New Testament revelation of apostles and prophets and their leadership/governmental roles in the church.

For those church leaders who read it, and meditate upon its assertions, this book can be – next to the Bible – one of their most precious resources.

Ron Wilson, Tasmanian Assemblies of God State President says-

Congratulations Andrew on a fine achievement. I found the book enjoyable and thought-provoking. It makes a significant and balanced contribution to the current discussion on apostles. The thorough treatment of spiritual leadership through the ages is both inspiring and challenging and provides a good resource for future reference. I would recommend it to all pastors and leaders.

David Cartledge, former President of Southern Cross College Australia, says-

Andrew Corbett has addressed an issue that is desperately needed in much of the modern church - the restoration of apostolic leadership. His values oriented approach to this subject calls for a valid or authentic expression of this powerful ministry gift. While the church often struggles in futility without true biblical leadership there is also much confusion through the aberrant factor of false apostles. The First Century church also had to deal with this issue and Dr Corbett in the same way has correctly emphasised both the priority of character and genuine gifting as the answer to the church's need.



He is uncompromising in the assertion that true New Testament church leadership demands the full function of apostles and prophets in the five ministries given by Jesus. This book will provide food for thought for those unaware of this vital apostolic ministry and a worthwhile resource for those churches that dare to reach their full potential.

*“Better by far are imperfect structures
in the hands of devoted servants of Christ
than the most Biblical form of church
government practices in pride or in a
loveless and vindictive spirit.”*

Dr. Edmund P. Cloney, “The Church”

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Church	The universal Church on earth, made up of all local churches
church	A local congregation of the Church
DPCM	Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentaries
EDT	Evangelical Dictionary of Theology
IBD	The Illustrated Bible Dictionary
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words

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<h1>Preface</h1>	

As a 16-year-old boy, recently saved and baptised in the Holy Spirit, I felt the Lord calling me to serve Him in full-time service. As this call has grown and the corresponding gift of teaching rose to the fore, I felt a directive from God in 1995 to allow Him to “tuck me away.” Since that time I have gratefully served Him and the people of Legana Christian Church as their pastor, in this small town in Tasmania. Having spent most of my time previously ministering in Melbourne, Victoria (Australia’s second largest city) this was quite a cultural adjustment for us. But God’s ways are higher than ours.

Shortly after arriving here the Holy Spirit directed me to commence doctoral studies into the ministry of the apostle. I have endeavoured to do this faithfully. This research was conducted immediately over six years (1996-2002). My research involved reading the growing number of speculative books on the topic of apostles.

Being somewhat naturally analytical is a mixed blessing. I rarely just accept something simply because it’s written by an “authority.” Consequently, much of the popular material on the ministry of the apostle has lacked the level of depth, cohesion or research to support its often ridiculous claims. While I don’t pretend to have compiled *the* definitive work on the ministry of the apostle, I do humbly submit this as a contribution to such an effort.

The early church was founded with clear leadership responsibilities. It expanded rapidly despite the lack of complex denominational structures. Even though local churches had their own leadership they were also connected to external leadership. This gave them autonomy as well as accountability. Those who provided this external connection were generally trans-local in the sense that they regularly visited these relational churches. This was predominantly undertaken by apostles and prophets (only one evangelist is named in the New Testament, and he was not a trans-local ministry).

While some view the ministry of the apostle and prophet as obsolete to the “post-apostolic” era, it was upon the basis of these ministries that the early church was led, and that the Scriptures declare the church *is being* founded -

*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus
himself as the chief cornerstone.*

Ephesians 2:20

If the early church *was* founded and led by apostles and prophets, should, or can, it still be so? Is their function needed today? Are they ministries that can be emulated today?

The modern church is the result of nearly two millennia of development and growth. It is now made up of tens of thousands of denominations and independent churches, and looks quite different to the earliest church. The early Church enjoyed autonomous leadership, supplemented with external apostolic ministry. This external leadership ensured soundness in doctrine, ministerial conduct (discipline), matters of church order (direction), and the growth of the Church (development). But how do we ensure these things today?

The original apostolic leadership were God-ordained and human-recognised ministries that were for the most part, voluntarily received by local churches as having the right to influence the affairs of their local church without necessarily exerting direct control. They oversaw, and were largely responsible for, the rapid expansion of the church during the first century.

It might be argued that the modern Church has failed to recognise similar such external ministries and has in its place substituted them with hierarchical, ecclesiastical parliaments. It may also be equally argued that independent churches have failed to recognise the value of such external authority for fear of losing their autonomy.

Some argue that the church has been in a constant state of ‘evolution’ and was never expected to maintain any system prescribed or described in the New Testament. Yet if it can be shown that there are *principles* for a Biblical model for Church leadership, which encompasses the role of God-ordained external leadership, and local leaders demonstrated from: *Scripture, Church History, topical works, current church practices, and, modern leadership science* then we are obliged to evaluate our current practices in light of this knowledge.

Perhaps the key issues facing the Church at the moment include how we will adapt to a rapidly changing society, which is even now bringing stresses and pressures upon the professional clergy and denominational office bearers. In the midst of such changes, some are distorting doctrines, moral standards, the gospel, and even the mission of the church. These deviations from sound doctrine and godliness are partly the result of the absence of accountability to, and relationship with, God-appointed external leadership.



Andrew Corbett

February 2004

Chapter	
The Biblical Basis for Human Leadership	
	1

*"Human history gives lengthy endorsement to the fact that no generation can rise above the level of its leadership."*¹

Frank Damazio

Throughout the course of history it can be observed that societies have been shaped by the kind of leadership they either enjoyed or endured.² That God has appointed leaders throughout history, there can also be no doubt. We find the Biblical perspective of world history declaring that God was the One who -

...judges: He brings one down, he exalts another.

Psalm 75:7

¹ Damazio, 1988:III

² Barna, 1996:17. In his book, "Turning Vision Into Action", Barna makes the point that leaders directly affect the course of nations and history by stating that leaders affect *future* direction of nations.

The Assyrian world Emperor, Cyrus, who gave the decree to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple after the Jews were exiled to Babylon (“*In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfil the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah..."*” Ezra 1:1-2) was prophetically described by Isaiah as being “*raised up by God*”, and holding the hand of God as His servant -

“This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armour, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut.”

Isaiah 45:1

“I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the LORD Almighty.”

Isaiah 45:13

But the Biblical account of history is not just limited to describing God as the director of world events. He is the One who raises up and authorises leaders in every facet of organisation says Paul the apostle to the Romans -

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

Romans 13:1-2

(i) THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP

Knowing that God *ordains* leadership, it should not surprise anyone in the Church that God has ordained leadership for the Church. Yet, there is some debate about what *model* of leadership God has appointed for the Church. This debate is particularly important for the Christian because leadership equates to influence,³ and the Christian wants to know that he is both influencing and being influenced in a godly, but perhaps most importantly, a God ordained fashion. Some espouse a model of leadership for the Church that is congregational (where decisions are made democratically), others espouse a leadership that is autocratic, and still others have models between these two apparent poles.

³ Maxwell, 1993:1

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the basis for God using individual human leadership, and establishing that God wants His church led by *gifted* leaders. We will build toward the idea that the early Church had a *functional* leadership structure that is not only applicable today, but is actually God's design for the Church. It will be argued that the early Church did have a leadership structure, but not however what we might equate with in our modern era.

*"Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people" (Isa. 54:4). God's plan is that His flock should be led by a Shepherd, not run by a Board. Committees are to advise, never to dictate. The Holy Spirit appoints men. To Bishops and Elders is given the care of the churches, never to Committees. They are to be the Overseers, the Shepherds. Each one has his own flock. Because men have failed to recognise this, there has been trouble. When God's plan is followed, all is well.*⁴

Oswald J. Smith

(ii) LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

Corporately, the church has always had leadership. Leadership is rarely ever questioned as being necessary. The mode of leadership however, is constantly being questioned and challenged. Sometimes this has amazingly led to factions⁵ being developed within the Church commonly referred to as "denominations".⁶ It will be seen that the formation of denominations was (and is) primarily the result of differing concepts of how the Church should be led and organised rather than on doctrinal grounds (this is expanded in chapter seven). Various models of leadership are currently espoused by denominations and all are given a degree of Scriptural support by their proponents.

Because leadership within the church is universally held to be the most important influence upon a church, an examination of what the Bible reveals about leadership should be carefully done so as to explore ways to maximise this influence for God's glory. It is also extremely important due to Biblical descriptions of what happened when men did "*what was right in their own eyes.*" God prescribed how he wanted Israel to worship and honour Him. When Israel violated God's prescription, they felt His displeasure. When David first attempted to return the Ark of the Covenant, he failed to do it in the way that God had prescribed. It resulted in the death of Uzzah (2Samuel 6:7). When Christ came, He was careful, very careful; to do exactly what the Father had prescribed (Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 10:7). It can be shown that the New Testament does prescribe a leadership structure that was evidenced in the early Church and can be and indeed should be applied to the modern Church.

⁴ Oswald J. Smith, "Building a Better World", *Marshall, Morgan Scott*, London England, page 50.

⁵ "Faction" in this sense is not necessarily unscrupulous. It simply means "grouping". The WORLD BOOK DICTIONARY states: "*faction*, n. 1. a group of people...acting together or having a common end in view"

⁶ Conner, 1988:9. In his book, "The Church in the New Testament", Kevin Conner argues for one model or "pattern" of Church and states, "*Denominations are the evidence of our carnality and divisions.*"

C. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

While God chose to use human leadership throughout the narrative of Scripture and church history, it is clear that there has never been a perfect leader, other than Jesus Christ. Yet God has still chosen to work through people to lead His people. Kevin Conner says –

*“God’s government is theocratic in character. That is to say, God chooses, calls and equips certain persons to be leaders and rulers over His people, investing and delegating them with degrees of authority according to His will”*³⁴

Christ gave an entirely new paradigm for leadership. His leadership model was based on serving others and their needs rather than His own. His commitment to His leadership role was unwavering. His determination to train successors was unstoppable. His leadership influence was, and still is, the most far reaching of any leader in all of history.

What makes Christ’s leadership style all that more impressive is that it was built entirely upon love: *His love for people and their love for Him*. There was no military, political, or societal coercion for people to follow Him. People were not drawn to Christ because of His preaching ability, although He could undoubtedly preach like none other. Neither were they drawn to Christ because of His theological knowledge, although He had no equal in theology. They were not drawn to Him because of His position within the synagogue, for He had none. It could be argued that some people were drawn to Christ because of His miracles. But even these miracles were motivated by a compassion for people.

(i) CHRIST AS THE PREMIER LEADER

Compared to Christ there has been no leader. He is the ultimate example of leadership. Anyone who would describe themselves as leaders in the cause of Christ need to pay careful attention to the One they are called to emulate. His leadership was based on shepherding people through degrees of relationships. He loved, served and associated with His people.

We should not view Christ’s leadership style from a romanticised position. He was a strong, visionary, driven, leader. He offended His listeners at times. He challenged the status quo. He dramatically consumed His immediate disciples’ lives, and demanded their total surrender and loyalty.

³⁴ Conner, 1988:92

(ii) HOW CHRIST LED

Christ led by example. The record of His life as narrated in the Gospels, still sets an example for all modern leaders. We too must lead by example. Christ led by taking initiative. But His initiative was tempered by His commitment to seek and serve His Heavenly Father, and by His patient love for people. Christ had time to pray. Christ had time for people. His relationship with His Father and with people was something that He emphasized. His statement about the essence of the Law was proved to be His guiding principle for leadership -

Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:37-40

Christ's leadership was highly focussed. He didn't try to achieve more than He was called by His Father to do. He wrote no books. He established no schools or hospitals. He did not found a charitable trust, nor a monastery. While all these things may be noble, they were not what Christ was called to lead.

Christ's leadership emphasized training. He didn't teach His disciples as much as He *trained* them. He sought out men who could not only learn, but who could respond. The response that He looked for was obedience and imitation of Himself. He did this kind of training by teaching, demonstrating, supervising, and then releasing His followers to do the same work. By doing this in a master-pupil arrangement, where they lived with Him and watched His every move, they were able to learn and be trained by Christ's example. Christ's example to them often led to them asking questions that would enable them to imitate Him more closely. For example in Luke 11:1 -

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

Luke 11:1

Christ allowed His disciples to attempt preaching, healing, and deliverance. They were not always successful. Yet this is what made the difference between Him *teaching* and Him *training* them. Training requires action. Christ was able to lead by training twelve men to lead.

Christ's leadership was marked by humility. He did not wear the most expensive clothing or jewellery. He was not ashamed to associate with the outcasts of society: tax collectors, harlots, and Samaritans. He did shy away from manual labour and menial tasks. He freely gave of His time to little children.

Christ led by being prepared. He would prepare Himself in prayer. He was obviously well read in the Mosaic Law. We assume that He prepared Himself by memorising the Law throughout the years preceding His public ministry. He prepared His followers well.

D. THE TEACHING OF CHRIST ABOUT LEADERSHIP

Christ expected His leaders to be followers. To be a follower of Christ meant more than being a “believer”. Christ sent believers away when they weren’t prepared to be followers (disciples). Therefore the first requirement of Christ for leadership is that they be His followers. This involves obeying His teaching as recorded within the Gospels.

Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.”

John 14:23-24

(i) ATTITUDE, FAITHFULNESS, MOTIVES, AND, SERVANT-HOOD

Christ taught that attitude was important for leadership. Leaders must have a servant’s heart. They must be prepared to lay down their lives for those they lead. This demands an attitude of humility.

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

Mark 9:35

This stands in contrast to the general example of leadership seen throughout the world today. The Christian leader doesn’t need austerity, titles, or an entourage to reinforce his or her leadership position.

Christ demonstrated and taught that the leader’s motive for leadership needs to be love. Even when rejected by those He was called to, He still expressed love.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”

Luke 13:34

Christ made love the highest motivation for Christian service. He condemned service based on a motivation for material gain. No one should seek to serve Christ with a motive of how much they could earn from their followers. This would display a love for money rather than a love for God.

“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”

Matthew 6:24

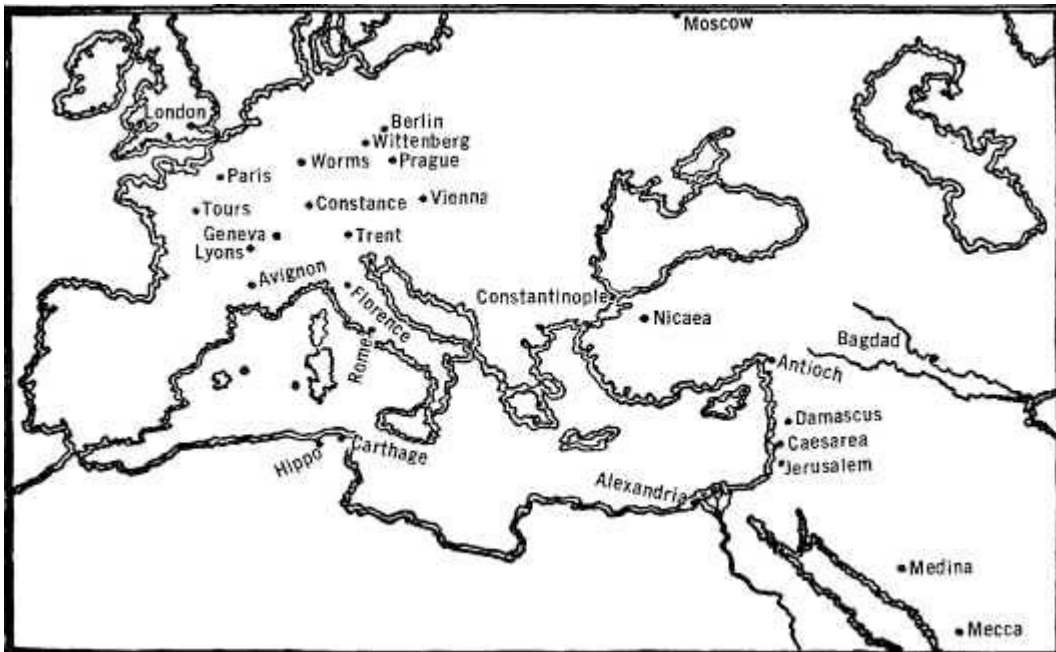
Chapter	
The Leadership Model of the Early Church	
	2

Having established in the previous chapter that it would be futile to attempt to restructure the modern Church to exactly that of the earliest Church, we shall now examine its structure and the influences that shaped it. This examination of the structure of the earliest church in the light of its influences will add further strength to the reasoning that any attempt to replicate its structure would be to ignore these factors. It will also lay a foundation for the concept that the Church was never meant to devise its own structure divorced from that prescribed Biblically and tried historically. The early Church's leadership structure was based upon certain principles which are trans-chronological and trans-cultural.

Chapter	
Modern Church Leadership	
	8

In the previous chapter we saw how denominations began largely over differences about how the Church should be organised and structured (governance). Thus the issue of examining and discovering the early Church's New Testament leadership structure is critical for those who understand that Christ desires a united, strong and harmonious Church. If we can learn the true intention of Christ for how He wants the Church structured and led we may go a long to achieving a greater sense of unity within the Church. Already there is much "infra-structure" that is removing the necessity for denominations, such as Non-Denominational Colleges and Training Schools, Non-Denominational Conferences, and a plethora of Christian resources produced Non-Denominationally for the use of any church despite its denominational allegiance.

With the breakdown of sectarian attitudes (the belief that a particular denomination is superior, or more enlightened, or more Scriptural) lately within denominations, there is a greater realisation that diversity can be healthy. We will examine in greater depth the development of denominations into what has eventuated as denominational diversity.



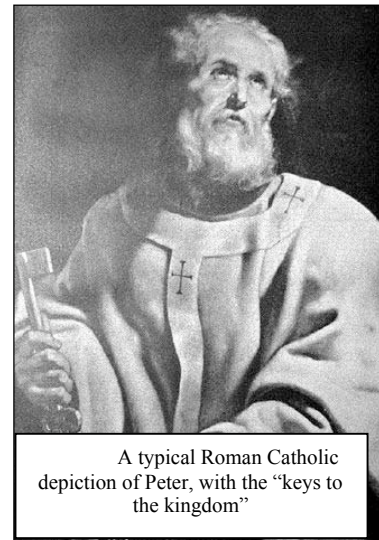
Strongholds of the Christian Church prior to the rise of Islam during the Middle Ages.

A. DENOMINATIONAL DIVERSITY

Denominations were birthed in the latter Reformation period (late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries), which is generally referred to as the *Disruption Period* of Church. They were commenced primarily in response to what was a revelation about the nature of the Church as revealed in the Scriptures. People increasingly came to know that the Roman Papal Church's claim that they were the only true Church had no Biblical support. The Papal basis for the Roman Church's *sola ecclesia* (Catholic) doctrine was Matthew 16:18-19.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 16:18 - 19



A typical Roman Catholic depiction of Peter, with the "keys to the kingdom"

Papal interpretation of this passage regards it as the basis for Papal succession and therefore the only legitimate holders of the "keys to the kingdom". Even as recent June 16th 2000, Pope John Paul II declared that the Roman Catholic Church was the only true Church.

Protestants have expressed dismay at a new declaration by the Vatican that says that redemption is only possible through the Roman Catholic Church. The 36-page declaration released yesterday argued that Christian communities such as Anglicans or other Protestants, “are not churches in the proper sense”...There exists a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the successor of [St.] Peter and by the bishops in communion with him.²⁷²

Protestants are justly dismayed at statements like this if they believe that the Church is more than the sum of the Roman Catholic Church. This is because the Matthew 16 passage when exegeted is not referring to a man and his successors having the power to admit people into or reject people from the Kingdom of heaven, but the revelation that entrance into the Kingdom of God is only possible via the Spirit’s revelation to a person about who Christ is. The “Keys of the Kingdom” in this instance refer to the message of the Gospel, which facilitates the Spirit’s revelation. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for withholding the keys of the kingdom (which he referred to as the “key of knowledge”) from others by refusing to teach the truth.

“Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.”

Luke 11:52

Prior to the Reformation, there was really only one form of Church government (polity), which was evidenced in the Roman Catholic (Papal) Church. This was a hierarchal leadership structure of priests, and bishops. Even in the East with Orthodox Church, their leadership structure was basically identical to that of the Western Papal system.

(i) DIFFERENCES ABOUT THE PRIESTHOOD

The belief that Christ invested the keys *into* heaven with a man and his successors is known as *sacerdotalism*. This is the foundation of the Roman Church: *that there exists a sacerdotal New Testament priesthood*. This has direct bearing on how the Roman Church structures its leadership. What became a cornerstone of Protestant doctrine was the belief that the existence of a priestly class was fulfilled in Christ and that His priestly work has made a way for all believers to have access to the Father. This doctrine, referred to as *the priesthood of all believers*, also has a direct bearing on how the Church’s leadership is structured.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

Hebrews 4:14

²⁷² *The (Hobart) Mercury*, Tuesday, September 7, 2000, page 14, AFP report based on a Vatican Press Release

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

Hebrews 9:12

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Hebrews 10:19 – 22

The New Testament teaches that all believers have equal access to God and that we can enter His presence boldly (Hebrews 4:6). Believers do not need a human mediator to give them access to Christ since the New Testament says that there is but one Mediator between God and mankind: *Christ Jesus*.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus

1Timothy 2:5

This being the case meant that Protestants had an argument against the claims of the Roman Church's priestly sacerdotalism. Thus, as Protestantism grew, so did denominational diversity. Since Protestants claimed that Matthew 16:18 did not endorse the Roman Catholic doctrine of the only legitimate Church being led by successors of "Saint Peter", they felt free to divide and rally around particular differences. The tragedy of this been unnecessary division within the Church.

But understanding that the Bible does not teach that a New Testament Priestly class exists within the church, significantly affects how each local church is structured. Rather than limiting certain ministerial functions, such as presiding over Holy Communion, performing funerals or weddings, to those who are sanctioned into a different class, the New Testament endorses a concept of every believer having a gift to contribute, and some believers having the gift of leadership expressed in various forms. Thus, rather than local churches being structured on the somewhat traditional lines of a hierarchy, each local church has the freedom to be structured on the basis of a team of gifted leaders working *with*, and supporting, the God ordained leader.

(ii) DIFFERENCES ABOUT LEADERSHIP

As denominations formed, their respective growths were proportionally due to the calibre of their leadership rather than the veracity of their peculiar dogma. Denominational leaders who have placed an emphasis on strong leadership that included workable leadership

structures within both local churches and the denomination have usually experienced growth and stability. The point is illustrated with possibly two of the greatest preachers the church has had since the Reformation.

Whitefield was a fiery evangelist, able to draw thousands to Jesus Christ by his piercing words. He was one of the first evangelists to cross the Atlantic many times, and was significant in pioneering revivals in America and Europe.

However, when speaking of his ministry and that of John Wesley's, Whitefield said, "My brother Wesley acted wisely. The souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in societies, and thus preserved the fruit of his labour. This I neglected, and my people are a rope of sand."²⁷³

George Whitefield (depicted above) and John Wesley were contemporaries. They both preached to crowds of tens of thousands. They both travelled extensively for the ministry of the Gospel. They disagreed publicly and sharply on certain doctrines. Yet toward the end of Whitefield's life he realised that while he was more *scholarly*, Wesley was a better *leader*. The result was that Wesley had recruited and trained hundreds, and a denomination was formed in his wake, while Whitefield simply died a famous preacher. Over two centuries later, the Wesleyan Methodist denomination still stands, and until recently one of its Sydney churches was the largest single congregation in Australia.

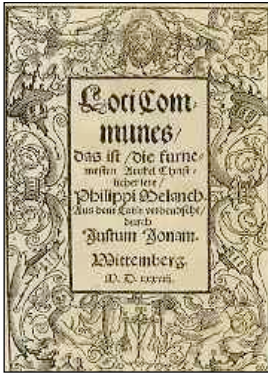
Historically, denominations built around charismatic leaders have been subject to numerical plateauing and eventually decline. Research now shows that where denominations have replaced a leader-driven structure, with a more pluralistic democratic committee or executive driven structures they have experienced decline.

...the traditional denominations in the United States were in the midst of a crisis period. Almost as if in response to some unseen cue, Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and other "old-line" denominations (except for most Baptists) began losing members. The Episcopal Church, for example, dropped from 3.4 million in 1968 to 2.5 million in 1994. During that same time period, United Methodists decreased from 11.0 million to 8.6 million; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) from 4.2 million to 3.7 million; and United Church of Christ from 2.0 million to 1.5 million, just to name a few.

A Gallup survey showed that in 1974, old-line denominations included 51 percent of American adults, but that this number had dropped to 35 percent by 1994. At the same time, the "other Protestants" increased from 9 percent in 1974 to 24 percent in 1994.

²⁷³ Roberts Liardon in "The New Apostolic Churches" (C.Peter Wagner, Editor) citing, Basil Walker, "John Wesley", Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, 1943

(iii) DIFFERENCES IN DOCTRINE



²⁷⁴But the traditional downside of strong leadership within denominations has been the strong, perhaps extreme, stance on doctrinal issues that have kept the Church fragmented under a veil of mistrust, suspicion and superiority complexes. This stands in contrast to the original New Testament Church leadership that met to discuss doctrinal discrepancies so that there could be common agreement, rather than division on doctrinal issues. Thus in the earliest Church, each congregation had some connection to each other through their submission to the apostolic leadership that met in council to discuss doctrinal issues. In this sense, being an “independent church” is an oxymoron because the New Testament

Church expressed within various congregations was united and interdependent. To be an independent church is equivalent to a human body having an independent internal organ or independent cardio-vascular system.

The major denominational doctrinal difference since the Reformation has been categorised as Calvinism, a theological system that emphasizes the sovereignty of God and His plan, against Arminianism, a theological system that emphasizes the freedom of man to choose and chart his own destiny. Generally Reformed, Presbyterian, and Baptist theology is Calvinistic, whereas Brethren, Methodists, and Pentecostals have been Arminian. This doctrinal difference was the cause of sharp division which arose between John Wesley and George Whitefield.

In the modern era it is less of an issue between denominations. Charles Finney (pictured left) was among the pioneers of a modern system of “Arminian Calvinism”.²⁷⁵ For many denominational and church leaders, this formerly highly divisive issue has brought great strength to an otherwise imbalanced understanding of the relationship between God’s sovereignty against man’s freedom.

Throughout the twentieth century *eschatology* raged as a major doctrinal division between many denominations. A system devised around 1830 called *Dispensationalism* has caused division even among the proponents of its various forms. Most of the Reformers seemed to have had a post-millennial outlook believing that the Church was to win the world to Christ and perhaps administer the kingdom of Christ on earth physically through the spiritual expansion of conversions and social reform. But denominations that emphasized the pending judgment of God and the need to escape this godless world have generally adopted a pre-

²⁷⁴ Pictured above, “Loci Communes”, written by Philip Melancthon, was the first Lutheran Systematic Theology to be written

²⁷⁵ Woodbridge, 1988:319 (refer to “Lectures in Systematic Theology” published 1846)

millennial position, where the world will plunge deeper and deeper into Christless lifestyles and government and eventually be judged by God with a period of tribulation on earth, followed by the victorious return of Christ to establish His earthly kingdom for a thousand years. Most denominations had their eschatological positions written into their constitutions or articles of faith, which then made agreement with them an issue of whether a person could be a member or not.

Among radical Protestants several important groups or new churches emerged, and several of them were apocalyptic, owing their origin to expectations of the Second Coming of Christ. In Britain appeared the Plymouth Brethren, founded in 1827 by John Nelson Darby (1800-82), who separated themselves from the world in preparation for the imminent coming of the Lord. The Catholic Apostolic Church, formed in 1832 largely by the Scotsman Edward Irving, likewise prepared for an imminent coming. Apocalyptic groups and sects were successfully established in the United States, probably because of the absence in new areas of any settled or habitual church polity. The Seventh-day Adventists were founded by William Miller (1782-1849) of New York, again with an expectation of an immediate end of the world.²⁷⁶

But modern Church leaders are recognising the absurdity of holding such dogmatic positions over eschatological doctrines. At the 1999 Assemblies of God in Australia National Conference, the dogmatic position of a pre-millennial eschatology was abandoned by the movement in favour of a simple acknowledgement that *Christ will return*. Whereas just a few years ago entire denominations could be characterised by their eschatology, this is no longer the case. The benefit of this wise direction among denominational leaders is that it can only help to breakdown manmade divisions and possibly even bring denominations together under a much larger network banner (such as the *Australian Christian Churches* network has done in Australia).



Modern denominational leaders are far less concerned with minor doctrinal differences (where there is agreement on the foundational doctrines about the triune nature of God, Christology, Soteriology and the inerrancy of the Scriptures). This will see the eventual breaking down of further denominational barriers being replaced by the formation of *ministry networks*. Perhaps, despite the assumption of many, these networks may not necessarily be based along geographic lines. With the advent of so much instant communication paraphernalia, network relationships are now extremely possible between people previously separated even by oceans.

²⁷⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, "Revivalism in the 19th Century"

(iv) BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY

Diversity based purely upon denominational distinctives are often counter productive. In modern times many churches and networks are discovering that God has called them to have an emphasis or ministry that when pooled with the broader Church is a blessing to the whole Church. There are churches that reach out to homeless youth in large cities that are distinct from churches that reach out to people in rural communities. There are churches that strongly emphasize social concern while there are churches that strongly emphasize spiritual experience. Sometimes these distinctives become denominationally discernable.

Can the Church express a healthy level of diversity without being sectarian in the form of denominationalism? The benefits of being able to do so are being experienced increasingly in many places around the world.

While it is possible to theorise that God has allowed the formation of denominations, it is very difficult to argue that they have been His *perfect* will. The argument of diversity represented by denominations is a weak one when we consider that even within denominations there is often great diversity. It is therefore not the denomination that necessarily brings diversity, but the call of God upon a congregation. Another problem with accepting the notion that denominations in themselves bring diversity to the Church is that we can end up accepting and even justifying unbiblical governmental structures within the Church. The Church needs to be careful not to legitimatise unhealthy leadership structures by accepting them as denominational baggage. Modern Church leadership should not be constrained by traditional denominational methodology wherever this contravenes Biblical patterns and principles.

B. TRANS-DENOMINATIONAL CONVENTIONS

One of the growing trends within the modern Church currently, is the rise of trans-denominational conferences and conventions. These are where a leader who (or a network which) has established relational links beyond the bounds of traditional denominations and organises corporate leadership training. One of the largest of these types of conferences is the annual *Hillsong Conference*. It attracts up to 10,000 people for a week of training in Sydney, Australia. The influence of this conference alone is phenomenal. *Hillsong Music* is an offshoot of the Hillsong Conference. According to the host, Brian Houston (pictured right), *Hillsong Music*, is the most widely sung worship music in Australian churches.²⁷⁷



²⁷⁷ Brian Houston, "You Can Change Your Future", *Maximised Leadership*, Sydney, 2000:132

(i) THE DEMISE OF DENOMINATIONALISM

With the demise of denominationalism, there is a growing emergence of a new type of leadership conference. Because many of these new networks are attempting to build churches that resemble the early Church's New Testament leadership structure (with apostolic and prophetic leadership ministries), they are strongly relational rather than bureaucratic. This is reflected in these types of conferences, which also strengthens their resolution to dare to build according to this revolutionary, yet Biblical, model.

It is not uncommon at the three-day annual conventions of churches belonging to an apostolic network to spend a large amount of time in worship, in coffee breaks, in meals together, in a few upbeat, motivational messages, in playing golf and in a semi-casual 30- to 45- minute business meeting. The best way to spend time, most new apostolic leaders will agree, is in building relationships.²⁷⁸

The importance of these new generations of conferences is being increasingly felt. There is arising an entire new breed of ministry within local churches that is realising the value of receiving apostolic input from these types of leadership conferences. A new apostolic network formed in 1998 under the leadership and apostolic guidance of Greg Dickow, *Life Changers Association*, saw as one of its primary means to bring apostolic influence and structure into local churches was through-

...a world-class training centre that hosts leadership seminars, conferences, worship seminars, conventions, evangelism workshops, and financial seminars.

(“Fulfilling Our God-Given Destiny”, promotional brochure for Life Changers Association 1998)

These conferences stand in stark contrast to denominational conferences where there is much politicking, debating, voting, and reporting. Highly controversial teacher, Peter Wagner (pictured right, notes for example, that the Minutes of the 1993 General Council of the American Assemblies of God contain 55,500 words!²⁷⁹ Those seeking an adaptation of the Early Church's New Testament leadership structure where relationships and God ordained authority are valued over bureaucracy will welcome the demise of denominationalism and its highly bureaucratic conferences.



²⁷⁸ Wagner, 1999:73

²⁷⁹ Wagner, 1999:75

(ii) CONFERENCES AS AN APOSTOLIC VEHICLE

Denominations have man-made procedures, methods, accountability, and even sometimes government. The further removed they are from the Early Church's New Testament leadership structure, the more man-made they have to be. They may tinker around the edges of recognising and releasing those with apostolic leadership gifts, and, those with prophetic insight and encouragement gifts, even paying lip service to their theoretical acknowledgement, but unless they actualise this through their relationships and structure they will struggle to have genuine apostolic/prophetic foundations (Ephesians 2:20).



Those who minister apostolically within a relational network are finding that conferences are one of their major vehicles for exercising direction and development. For example, John Wimber (pictured left) initially led a small but growing number of churches under the "Vineyard" banner. Wimber accredited the regular Vineyard conferences as "*his primary training format.*"²⁸⁰

If leadership is influence, I intend to continue to lead our movement by influencing it in the directions I feel it should go. This does not require structural authority in my opinion. I have the voluntary acceptance of all the leaders that are at this time leading our movement worldwide.

John Wimber

(iii) THE SCOPE OF APOSTOLIC CONFERENCES

(a) DOCTRINE

If apostolic ministry concerns itself with direction, doctrine, discipline, and development, then should such conferences deal with each of these areas? In Acts 15 we see that the early Church had an apostolic "conference" (more appropriately referred to as a "council"). This conference was clearly concerned with *doctrine* and not the other areas of apostolic scope. In many respects the issue of right doctrine was settled by the close of the Canon and the Councils of the early Church, up until the Councils of Nicaea (313 AD) and Chalcedon (451 AD).

The Reformation was, as we have seen, an attempt to realign the Church back to right doctrine. Many of the statements that originated from the Reformation are only echoes of Scripture and the early councils of the Ante-Nicene fathers. Put simply, modern apostolic conferences should not *have to* deal with rampant heresy in the Church, because our spiritual forefathers have already laid the groundwork for the acceptance of right doctrine. Thus it is critical that apostles familiarise themselves as best they can with the Scriptures, the history of the Church and its teachings, the creeds of the Church, and modern theological works. This should then be routinely disseminated through their own teaching to the Church.

²⁸⁰ Wagner, 1999:223

Implementing An Apostolic Model

Accepting that the Bible clearly prescribes a leadership structure that not only defines its internal structure, but one that defines its external relationships with apostolic and prophetic leaders, the question arises as to how such a model can be implemented in the light of years of traditions and possibly comfortable existing structures. The need to do so is urgent. The rise of individualism and independence is now harming both believers and churches, and is clearly contrary to the Biblical description of the New Testament Church. The lack of accountability and morality among a minority of church leaders is alarming and increasingly becoming the topic of media attention. By adopting an authentic apostolic model, churches will reap the rewards of greater focus and intentionality, greater accountability and the long term benefits arising from ministry integrity, and a far greater sense of cooperation and therefore multiplication arising from the pooling of resources rather than the constant efforts to reinvent wheels.

The single greatest obstacle to this is pride. Pride can stop a congregational member from heartily submitting to their leader. Pride can stop a pastor from realising that he does not have all the gifts with which God wants to bless his church. Pride can stop a church leader from stepping up to the plate and accepting his God-ordained responsibility to look beyond his own immediate sphere and accept that God is calling him to a greater one. None of this is about power or hierarchical structures. It is everything about what God has ordained and charged us to be responsible with!

I would like to propose a three phase plan for implementing an apostolic model for local churches:

PHASE ONE ~ THE LOCAL CHURCH

1. Local churches need to reflect apostolic values of *doctrine* - by ensuring the affirmation of the orthodox creeds (I would recommend Dr. R.C. Sproul's material in this regard: *RENEWING YOUR MIND*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1998. www.gospelcom.net/ligonier); and church *discipline* - which is undergirded by the forgiven (all Christians) truly knowing how to forgive and matters of conflict resolution being motivated by the desire to restore. John Bevere Ministries has an excellent curriculum called *THE BAIT OF SATAN* available which has revolutionised local churches in this regard.
2. Local churches need to understand the Biblical authority of leaders (and how this overrides democracy) as the ordained form of decision-making within a local church. Consequently, leaders need to understand that they are called by God to minister on His behalf rather than be an employee of a church. This will change the way pastors are called to or from churches. I would strongly recommend every local church to undertake John Bevere's *UNDER COVER* curriculum (www.johnbevere.org). This material teaches the Biblical principle of submission and authority and the benefit to believers and churches when these things are in order.
3. Local church congregations should know that their presbuteros/poimeen (pastor) is supported by a supervising apostle with whom they meet or have regular contact. I would recommend that this book be read by every local church leader and considered prayerfully as to the benefits of such a relationship both for the pastor/leader and the church.

PHASE TWO ~

AUTHENTIC APOSTOLIC LEADERS

1. Many apostles are aware of the call of God on their lives yet struggling to know how to outwork their role. This book (*AUTHENTIC APOSTOLIC LEADERSHIP*, www.andrewcorbett.net) concisely contains both the principles and parameters for apostolic ministry and should be read by everyone who senses an apostolic call on their lives. Understanding the responsibility to guard doctrine, give direction, govern with disciple and grow with development will help apostles to begin to understand their important place in the Body.
2. Apostles need to take the initiative to show concern for pastors and their churches in a regular, almost systematic, way. Most pastors would deeply appreciate regular contact from a sincerely concerned brother in Christ even if it wasn't an apostle. "Building relationships" has become a corny cliché, but the essence of what it stands for is actually vital and healthy.
3. Apostles need to recognize their distinctive authority and begin to exercise this authority in prayer (who they pray for in particular – understand the principle of 1Timothy 2:1-2, that apostles as statesmen of the Church have a responsibility to pray for Civil statesmen), public statements, and the establishment of peer connections and joint initiatives.
4. Apostles need to exercise apostolic initiatives which are inspired by the Holy Spirit. These will generally involve cooperative efforts between several churches.

PHASE THREE ~ DENOMINATIONAL TRANSITION

1. Denominations need to commit to being a Church with congregations rather than merely an organisational collective of local churches. The immediate implication for this is how denominational leaders are appointed. A leader should be given the privilege of selecting his team and bringing them to the movement for affirmation.
2. Denominations need to establish doctrinal councils/commissions rather than avoid doctrinal matters by refusing to deal with them. This was a characteristic of the Church for the first 600 years. This may involve some scrutiny of what is preached by associated denominational ministers. We should welcome this, not fear it.

Unity of doctrine is possible, not just on major issues, but on, what has been pergoratively called, "minor" issues. Perhaps the most contentious doctrinal area is eschatology. "Left Behind" should be left behind as a theological basis for eschatology! While some claim this doctrinal field is too complicated, the implications of whatever conclusions are made are dire - since right now people are being killed (and a hermeneutical system seeks to justify it) because of a misplaced doctrine of Zionism. We need to realise that there is only one Gospel which saves both Jew and Gentile and that in Christ all are equal (Galatians 3:29) and that promises of God have already long been fulfilled (Josh. 21:45).

3. Denominations should stress "apostolic" rather than "apostles". The word "apostle" is like the word "father". It implies that there must be a ministry relationship with pastors or churches for someone to be rightly called an apostle.

In doing this, denominations should look to the natural apostolic networks already existing within their movements. Some denominations have gone about this in reverse by seeking to unilaterally allocate pastors and churches into networks with whom there are no natural relationships. Anecdotally this is not well received by local church pastors.

The reality of church life is that there will be some pastors who will refuse to be linked apostolically. Denominational leaders should pray for these pastors to be divinely connected to an apostolic network.

Andrew Corbett

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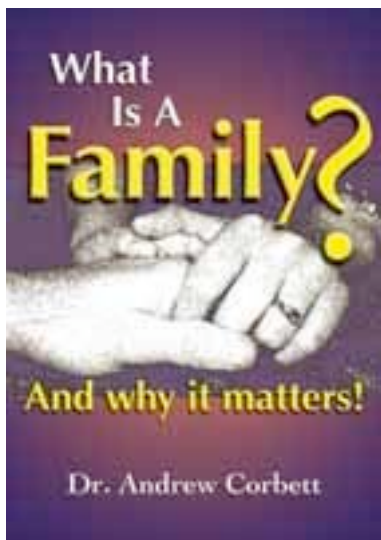
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