

Church History 03



1. Kingdom/Church in Prophecy

2. The World of the Church

3. The Coming Apostasy

I. APOSTASY COMING

Acts 20:29-30 “From among your own selves shall men arise *speaking perverse things*..

Gal 1:6 “Amazed that you are so quickly *deserting*..

2 Thess 2:3 “The *apostasy* comes first..

1 Tim 4:1 “Some will *fall away* for the faith..

2 Pet 2:1 “There will be *false teachers* among you..

1 John 4:1 “Many *false prophets* have gone out..

Rev 2:2 “Call themselves *apostles and are not*...

II. Winds of Apostasy Already Blowing

- A. *Jewish* False Teachers** (Col 2:16; Titus 1:10, 14)
- B. Lure of *Idolatry & Immorality*** (Rev 2:20)
- C. Resistance to *Apostolic Authority*** (3 John 9 -10)
- D. *Gnostic* Poison:** (1 John 2:18f) ***Many* Antichrists**
(2 John 7) “Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus ***Christ as coming in the flesh.*** This is the ***deceiver and the Antichrist.***
(Col 2:8) “See to it that no one takes you according to the tradition of men... rather than according to Christ. v9 For in Him all the ***fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.***”

III. NT Church Always had *Multiple Elders*

Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4 Jerusalem *elders*

Acts 20:17, 28 *Elders* from the church at Ephesus

Phil 1:1 *Elders* at Philippi with deacons & saints

1 Thes 5:12 [Thessalonica] *have charge over* you.

Acts 14:23 They appointed *elders* in every church

Titus 1:5 Appoint *elders in every* city

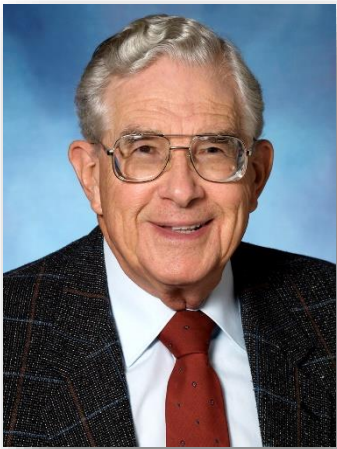
James 5:14 Call for the *Elders* of the church

1 Pet 5:1-2 *Elders* shepherd flock... among you

Heb 13:7, 17 Obey *those* who *Watch over* you.

ELDERS

IV. The *Drift* from NT Multiple Elders



Everett Ferguson
ACU Masters
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“The *apostolic writings* indicate that.. the general organization was for local churches to be presided over by a *plurality of elders*” also called *bishops*, assisted by deacons. *Early Christians Speak*, p.13

“The writings of Ignatius of Antioch to the churches of *Asia Minor* in *Early 2nd century* describe a three-fold ministry of *one bishop*, a *plurality of elders* and deacons in the churches.” *IBID.*

V. Change in **Biblical Church Organization**



Ignatius of Antioch began to speak of a Bishop & Elder as **separate** offices AD 105.

“Let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as **Jesus Christ**... and the presbyters as the Sanhedrin of God, & assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no Church.” *(Epistle to Trallians 3 & 13)*

“All of you follow the bishop as Jesus Christ does **the Father** & the presbytery [elders] as apostles. It is not lawful without the bishop ... to baptize.”
(Epistle to Smyrnaens 8)

But the Bible uses these terms Interchangeably !
Elders (Acts 20:17) = **Bishops**/Overseers (Acts 20:28)

V. Change in **Biblical Church Organization**



Ignatius of Antioch in Syria **c AD 35- 108**

“There is one bishop, along with the presbyters & deacons.” Ignatius ANF 1.81

Why did Ignatius promote bishops?
To deal with rising heresy & heretics.

“The followers of false teaching were holding their own schismatic assemblies. Ignatius’ program to deal with the false teachers and their divisive influence was to center all the congregational activities under one head, the bishop.” *Early Christians Speak, p.94*

Ignatius said “Stand aloof from such heretics.. they abstain from the Eucharist & from prayer.”

(Epistle to the Smyrnaens, ch 7)

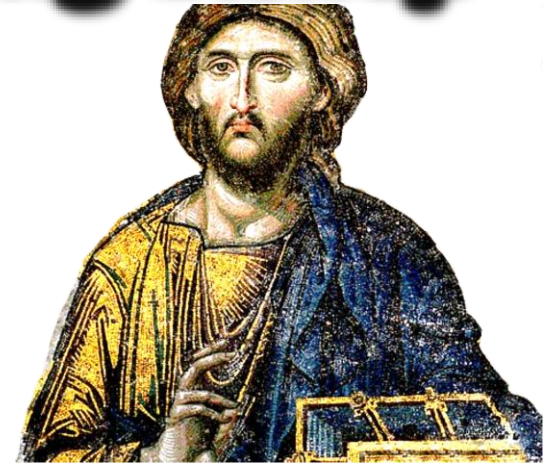
VI. The Spread of the **Ruling Bishop**

A. Clement of Alexandria.

Theologian, and taught at
school of Alexandria, Egypt.

Born c. 150 Athens, Greece

Died c. 215 Jerusalem, Israel



“Innumerable such commands have been written in the holy books.. Some to **presbyters**, some to **bishops** and **deacons**..” (*Instructor*, 3.12; 97.2)

“The grades here in the church, of **bishops**, **presbyters**, **deacons**..” (*Miscellanies*, 6.13; 106.1-2; 107.2)

“The Ignatian pattern of 1 bishop & a plurality of elders.. spread over the churches & became normal church order **by the latter 2nd Century**.” *Ferguson*, p171.

VI. The Spread of the **Ruling Bishop**

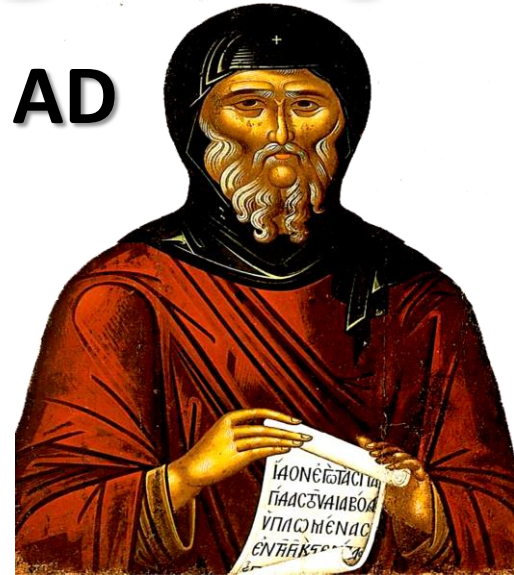
B. Cyprian of Carthage, born c. 200 AD

*He was a prominent trial lawyer
& teacher of rhetoric in North Africa.*

*He was **converted** about 246 AD*

*And became **bishop** about 248 AD*

amidst controversy !! Justus.Anglican.org



**“You should know that the bishop is in the church,
and **the church is in the bishop**. **If anyone in not
with the bishop, he is not in the church.**”**

Ante-Nicean Fathers 5.374-375

He meant it for unity. But look at the Result !

VI. The Spread of the *Ruling Bishop*

C. “By the time of Origen in the 3rd century, [185-254 AD] the 3-fold ministry of *bishop, presbyters,* and *deacons* was *everywhere accepted.*” Ferguson p. 172.



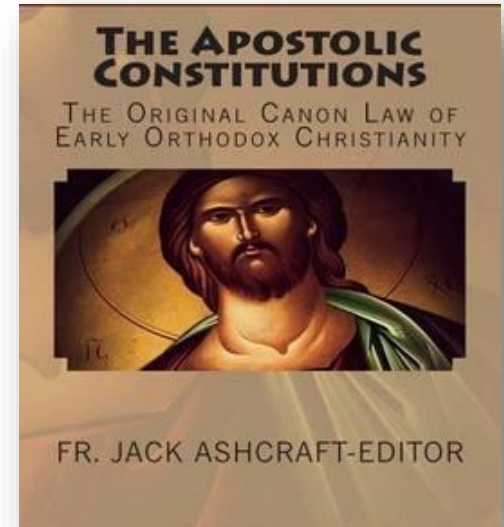
“All aspects of leadership which belonged to the college of elders soon were exercised by the bishop. Second-century bishops presided at worship (especially the Lord’s Supper), administered church funds.. and represented the church in correspondence.” Ferguson p.173

2 Tim 2:17 And their talk will spread like gangrene.

VII. Gradual Surrender *of Biblical Doctrine*

The Apostolic Constitutions

Contains eight treatises on Early Christian discipline, worship, & doctrine, intended to serve as a manual of guidance for the clergy.
(Author unknown, written c 390 AD)



“We do not permit the rest of the clergy to baptize
neither readers, singers, porters, nor ministers.
Rather, we permit only the **bishops & presbyters**.
We do not permit presbyters to ordain deacons,
deaconesses, readers, ministers, singers.. Rather
we permit only the **bishops**.” *Apostolic Constitutions ANF 7.429*

So Philip shouldn't baptize Samaritans? (Acts 8:12)

VIII. **Clergy – Laity** Distinction Permanent

The **Bible** describes the Priesthood of all believers.

(1 Pet 2:5) “**You** also... are being built up for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.



1 Pet 2:9 You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood.

Clergy-People distinction is unknown in 2nd century.

It's mentioned in the 3rd century. Tertullian: *Monogamy*, 11f

By 390 AD It's solid “So every person among the laity who does anything without the priest labors in vain.” *Clement of Alexandria* ANF 7.420

390 AD “Paul accepts the man who is husband of one wife.. be he presbyter, deacon or layman..”

Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 3.12; 90.1

IX. The Restoration *Principle*

Isa 8:20 *“To the law and to the testimony!*
If they do not speak according to this word,
it is because there is no light in them.” NKJV

Jer 6:16 “Stand in the ways and see , *and ask for
the old paths, where the good way is,* and walk
in it. Then you will find rest for your souls.
But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’ NKJV

1 Peter 4:11 “If anyone speaks, let him
speak as the oracles of God.” NKJV

Speak Where the Bible Speaks