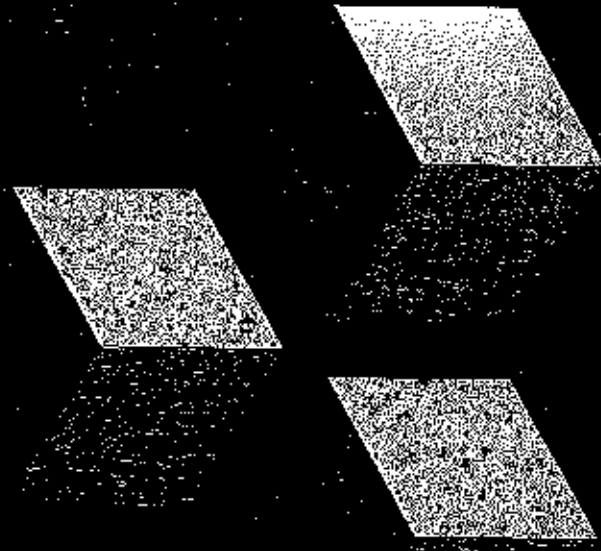


**MINISTRY IN
THREE DIMENSIONS**

**ORDINATION AND LEADERSHIP
IN THE LOCAL CHURCH**



STEVEN CROFT

Changes in society and emerging ways of being church however call for new ways of being church and therefore make new demands on the ordained ministry. A cluster of skills which, for the moment, we will call enabling or collaborative leadership skills has now become one of the primary skills of those who exercise their ordained ministry within the local church.

However, challenging and changing the way in which the clergy see themselves is not an easy task, particularly in a time of uncertainty, multiple stresses and low morale. The next chapter moves on to look at the clergy's understanding of themselves and their response to ideas of 'leadership'.

FOLLOWING A FALSE TRAIL: SECULAR MANAGEMENT MODELS FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY

Understanding Clergy Stress

The 1990s have seen a growing realisation that many who share in ordained ministry of the Church are under increasing stress and pressure. The symptoms of this stress are easy to detect in lives which are overbusy or imbalanced; where there is too much work and too little leisure; too much activity and not enough stillness; too many superficial contacts and too few deep relationships and friendships.

Stress is not a simple phenomenon. However, all the indications are that the clergy are suffering in a more widespread and intense way than was the case even five or ten years ago. The dominant mood at the Deanery Chapter meetings I attend is one of tiredness and preoccupation often combined with a sense of frustration at intransigent congregations on the one hand and central structures on the other, which are sometimes seen as unappreciative, demanding and out of touch. The common threads in conversations with those who have recently been ordained centre around how much work there is to do and how little time to spare.

A survey conducted on behalf of the Evangelical Alliance in 1990 of 3000 evangelical clergy across different denominations makes sobering reading.³

- 7 out of 10 clergy feel overworked
- 3 in 10 feel their families suffer because of their work
- Only 2 in 10 have received training in management or leading teams

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

- Out of a typical 60-hour week, an average of 22 hours is spent in administration
- In contrast to this just 38 minutes per week are spent in personal prayer

The consequences of so much stress in the lives of the clergy are not good. They are to be seen in the increase in marital breakdown among clergy; the breakdown in health or in relationships within churches; an increase in burnout and breakdown which is stress related; and, more commonly, the less spectacular running out of steam and loss of effectiveness which many of the ordained experience in mid-ministry. Identifying the cause of this rise in stress levels is not straightforward. Certainly we live in a much more needy society. A vicar in an average parish will be dealing with extremely demanding pastoral situations on an almost daily basis week in and week out, in continuous contact with people who are in emotional and spiritual need. As the tide of faith continues to recede across society, people outside the churches have fewer and fewer resources on which to draw when facing the difficulties which come in every life: particularly those of illness, conflict and bereavement. Many clergy are sharply aware of the need to exercise the kind of collaborative ministry and enabling leadership referred to in the previous chapter but lack the skills or the support to make the transition. Most clergy of every tradition acknowledge the need for local congregations to change, develop and grow but also recognise the pain and the difficulty in bringing about that change and the skills and support which will be needed by those in leadership.

In response to this trend there has been a significant growth in publications aimed at either analysing or helping clergy to combat the effects of stress. Some of these contain simple practical guidelines for good practice in the caring professions.² Others provide clergy and others with sensible patterns for the proper ordering of work, rest, worship and study that are sorely needed.³ A third group focus on particular aspects of the task of ministry and ways in which it can be made more manageable.⁴ Other studies have attempted to seek out the deeper root causes of stress and build strategies and remedies on the basis of that richer understanding.⁵

SECULAR MANAGEMENT MODELS FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY

The most persuasive and thorough analysis in this final category is Andrew Irvine's book *Between Two Worlds: Understanding and Managing Clergy Stress*, which is based upon an extensive study of the working habits and values of clergy in Scotland and in Canada and the fruit of more than twenty years of thinking and reflection around these themes.⁶ Irvine's thesis is that, although the symptoms of much clergy stress may be business, overactivity and burnout, the causes of that stress are to be found by looking deeper at the twin roots of identity and isolation. On these two, questions of identity are of prior importance, for it is the clergy's understanding of who they are and who they are called to be that lead to patterns of work and behaviour which in turn lead to isolation.

Irvine argues that the clergy's understanding of their own identity has been eroded from both outside and within the churches during the past fifty years. As the Church has declined both numerically and in its place within society, so the wider society's view of the clergy has been eroded. Two generations ago the parson or minister was a respected figure within most communities. Clergy in the 1990s have to work against a perception in society that the vicar is, at best, a figure of harmless, eccentric irrelevance and, at worst, someone whose holy exterior masks a tendency towards immorality or abuse.⁷ Almost all of the ordained are therefore seen to be marginal to the wider society and its concerns. The Church is commonly seen by the community in which we are set as having failed, and portrayed in that way by the media. By implication it is not difficult for the clergy to see themselves as having failed also, caught up within the wider trends of society's retreat from faith. In the context of that marginalisation and perceived failure, the question of how the clergy see themselves and their ordained role in relation to the wider community becomes central: what does it mean to be ordained in this generation and what am I meant to be doing?

The most obvious route for the ordained to take is to retreat within, become preoccupied with and find their role within the community of faith: the Church. Many congregations thus become captive to a 'Father knows best' theology and model in what have become stagnant backwaters of church life, unlikely ever to be renewed in mission.

However, within the broader and still moving stream, retreat is not possible. As noted above, there has been a rediscovery and re-

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

emphasis on the ministry of the whole people of God. This is an entirely right and healthy development. The Church has made significant progress from seeing itself as a hierarchy, modelled upon its picture of God the Trinity as a hierarchy, to seeing itself as a community proceeding from the Holy Trinity as an open community of love.²

Within the old model, it was at least possible to discern easily the specific identity and role of the ordained minister: he or she is acting primarily as a representative and intermediary, standing between God and the community. In this capacity, the priest preaches the word of God, administers the sacraments and extends care to the needy and vulnerable. He or she is dealing primarily with individuals already formed into a community by the other circumstances of their lives. The group which gathers in the parish church Sunday by Sunday is simply a sub-group or cross-section of the wider community of the geographical parish and the priest has a clearly defined and visible role within that perception of reality.

However, in the new ways of seeing church and being church, there is no pre-existing community within the geographical parish, whether that parish is full of tower blocks, suburban houses with large gardens where people never see their neighbours, or the village transformed by an exodus of its young people and an influx of the retired into new estates. One of the key tasks of the Church is the creation of primary communities in a desert of isolated lives. This is a task which involves the whole congregation, not simply the clergy. Others within that congregation, in the main stream of church life, are rightly encouraged to use their gifts and to undertake many of the tasks and functions once the preserve of the full-time stipendiary priest. This is the very way in which community is formed and relationships nurtured. What, then, is the role of the ordained? To allow our concept of priesthood and ordination to shrink into the only unique preserve of the ordained is a route which some have followed. The whole of ordained ministry becomes more and more focused around presiding at the Eucharist, with disastrous consequences for the mission of God to the world and for the enabling of community and ministry among the people of God. Others are drawn down the route of abandoning the distinctiveness of ordination altogether, or even the need for ordained ministers. Once again, our inherited concepts of what it means to be ordained

SECULAR MANAGEMENT MODELS FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY

cannot stretch to embrace the task and calling of the clergy in the Church of the future.

Irvine's appeal is for the development of a new understanding of the identity and role of the ordained which takes account of these changes in Church and society. He argues, persuasively, that such a new understanding needs to be grounded and tested in each of the four areas of a theological quadrilateral: Scripture, the tradition, reason and experience.³ Because we are *Christian* ministers, our understanding of the people we are called to be and the task we are called to fulfil must be securely rooted in and consonant with the Scriptures and with the understanding of the Gospel, of Jesus Christ and the Church which we find there. It is not enough simply to be pragmatic, to argue from what we find there. It is not enough simply to be pragmatic, to argue from what we think we need to be to what we should therefore become.⁴ Similarly, we stand as inheritors of almost 2000 years of Church history and tradition. The understanding of ministry which we develop at the beginning of the third millennium must draw on the evolving traditions of the Church and its ministry through the ages, and not simply on understandings of leadership drawn from society around us.

However, just as we are called to root our understanding of ministry in Scripture and in the tradition we have inherited, we must also be faithful to reason and contemporary experience. Our inherited understanding of ordained ministry in pastoral mode does not make sense and is not working. This is true from the perspective of our call to mission, from the perspective of the health of existing congregations, and from the perspective of the health and well-being of the clergy.⁵ The Christendom model of one stipendiary priest caring for a stable congregation is breaking down. A new understanding of ordained ministry is called for which makes sense of our changing situation, yet remains faithful to our roots and our rich inheritance.

TABLE 2.1

	Scripture	Tradition
Reason		Experience

The Flight into Management Models

- We have inherited a model of ministry which is no longer working.
- Clergy urgently need to develop a new self-understanding.
- There is a change demanded in the role of the clergy which we have already explored: new skills seem to be required in the areas of enabling and collaborative leadership.

It should not surprise us therefore that the place where large sections of the contemporary Church have looked for inspiration and for models for the role of the clergy have been in secular models of management and leadership, often dressed in a veneer of Christian language. Clergy and churches in the evangelical tradition have led the way in this development, although they have not been alone. Evangelicals have generally been quicker to perceive the need for enabling and collaborative leadership skills among the ordained from the perspective of mission and have been in the forefront of the development of lay ministry (and therefore of some kinds of collaborative ministry).¹² When talking to evangelical clergy and ordinands about leadership I have found that there is no need to justify the use of the word or argue that it is part and parcel of the role of the vicar. Most evangelicals understand this intuitively, as it were, without the ideas being unpacked or argued out. In fact, for many younger evangelical clergy the primary focus of what it means to be ordained is focused in the very exercise of leadership skills.

Inherited Styles of Evangelical Leadership

Generally speaking, the evangelical tradition has not drawn its concepts of leadership directly from secular management sources, as have other traditions in the Church, but it is possible to discern two main influences at work. An older generation of evangelical clergy, now mainly approaching retirement, were prepared for the exercise of leadership in the Christian Church not through their theological colleges but through their public schools, universities and national service and a related network of Christian camps and organisations.¹³ The leadership values which underpin their ministries have been those of unquestioning obedience within an organisation in

order to achieve a desired end; discipline, hard work and self-sacrifice; not revealing weakness or pain; courage, endurance and the passing on of the highest example to others. Leadership within this tradition has largely been seen as exercised by men.

Much was achieved in post-war evangelicalism by leaders cast in this mould by their early years of formation. Other Anglican leaders came from similar stock.¹⁴ However, this is not a tradition which finds the sharing of weakness, collaborative ministry or the sharing of authority easy.¹⁵ Leaders who continue to operate in this way in the closing years of the century are too easily perceived as aloof and somewhat distant, perhaps more representative of a different social class in a society which no longer defers automatically to someone of a particular accent or background. The culture now favours a much more collaborative style. Leaders who have been fashioned in this mould are also often operating intuitively and uncritically in a certain leadership style, which may have its strengths but which has not engaged with the deeper insights of Scripture and tradition.

Leadership Styles and the Church Growth Movement

The second strand of evangelical thinking influenced indirectly by secular leadership styles is still very much with us in the methods of church development popularised by the Church Growth Movement. Leading proponents of this school have emanated from Fuller Theological Seminary in California and have included Peter Wagner, John Wimber, Eddie Gibbs and, latterly, Carl George. Eddie Gibbs's substantial book *I Believe in Church Growth* was first published in Britain in 1981 and was highly influential on a generation of Anglican clergy trained at or around that time, myself included. John Wimber's work has had a massive influence on the stream of Anglican Church life which was already caught up in charismatic renewal from 1983 until the present. The influence of Vineyard concepts has been mediated through four highly influential and large Anglican churches: St Michael-le-Belfrey in York, St Thomas, Crookes in Sheffield, St Andrew's, Chorleywood, and Holy Trinity, Brompton in London. In the 1980s regular meetings for leaders at Chorleywood and Sheffield propagated Vineyard-style concepts among influential Anglican church leaders in between the annual training conferences led by Wimber himself. John Wimber died in 1997 and direct Vineyard influence on the Church of England has

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

deceased. The inspiration and lead given by Holy Trinity, Brompton has continued, largely through the development and growth of the Alpha course. The Vineyard became known in Britain largely through its emphasis on and recovery of signs and wonders and healing, particularly in evangelism. However, much of the teaching in conferences and seminars was in management and leadership concepts mediated through the Church Growth Movement, of which Wimber himself was a pioneer.

As with the earlier model discussed, the Church Growth Movement has been responsible for a great deal that is good in the life of the Church. Along with many others I have been inspired by its vision, the models of leadership it has produced and the insights of Gibbs, Wimber, George and others. However, we must also recognise that the models of church leadership and church life which the movement puts forward are not drawn directly from Scripture or the Christian tradition (although many of them are justified by appeal to the Old and New Testaments, sometimes convincingly). Instead, they are the core concepts of secular management theory applied to churches as systems and organisations. John Wimber's steps to building a healthy church begins with vision and proceeds to values, strategy and programmes.¹⁶ Wimber is applying here insights identical to those of Peter Drucker and others of 'management by objectives' to ways of being church.¹⁷ This may be a valid and effective way to proceed (and I would argue it has considerable validity) but, again, there is little direct engagement between these management/leadership insights and Christian Scripture and tradition. The local church is (perhaps rightly) seen as systemic, that is, a complex organisation in which each part affects the other.¹⁸ However, the leap is then made to seeing the minister or senior pastor of a large church as the Chief Executive Officer,¹⁹ explicitly by Eddie Gibbs in Table 2.2 illustrating the changing role of a minister as a congregation grows in numbers. As more people join the church, the minister becomes less and less of a pastor to individuals and more and more simply the supervisor and eventually the manager of a network of pastoral cares and other systems.

Having attempted to work this model myself for some time in a

SECULAR MANAGEMENT MODELS FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY

TABLE 2.2

Church Size	Industrial Skill Level
1	Unskilled Worker
2-65	Foreman
66-150	Supervisor
151-450	Middle management
451-1,000	Top management
1,000+	Chairman of the Board

growing church, I am able to testify that to do so meant something of a denial within myself of my calling to be ordained and a deep dissatisfaction with that style of ministry (in addition to a certain amount of justified frustration on the part of church members). I was left struggling for several years between seeing the need to enable and support others in ministry, if the task of pastoral care was to be undertaken adequately; and yet still being called in some sense to exercise pastoral ministry myself, in order not only to fulfil my own calling but also to give integrity to the remainder of my ministry within that place. The inherited language and patterns of ministry no longer fitted the needs of the present day ordained minister. Yet the models offered by the Church Growth Schools were not arising naturally from the Scripture or the tradition but from commercial and industrial models and, largely for that reason, did not fit either.

Leadership as the Defining Quality of Ordained Ministry

The need for enabling and collaborative leadership skills is perceived so acutely by evangelical Churches, ministers and para-church organisations at the end of the 1990s that the word 'leader' is becoming the most commonly used title for a person called to full-time Christian work within the Churches. Conferences and courses are routinely advertised for 'leaders'. Para-church mission agencies in their enabling of the clergy seek to build up, encourage and support 'leaders'. The most recently published and very helpful handbook by David Pytches divides every part of the work of the

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

ordained into one or other aspect of 'leadership'.²⁰ The word *leader* is now being used not only as a substitute for the Anglican titles *priest* or *presbyter* but also in preference to the much more common expressions of *minister* (meaning 'servant') or *pastor*.

This change of use in the way we describe the ordained should give us pause for thought. There is a danger of a gap opening up between a popular understanding of what ordination is about ('leadership') and the Church's understanding of that ministry captured in its liturgy and especially in the ordinals, which do not use the word. There is a deeper danger of the Church as a whole beginning to use a word to describe the work of the ordained which does not have deep roots in the Scriptures or the tradition. As John Finney points out, one Greek word which is never used to describe Christian ministers in the New Testament is the word *archo*, the normal secular Greek word for a leader in business or politics or industry.²¹ The early Church clearly thought very deeply about the different titles used to describe those charged with different responsibilities among the people of God, as we shall see, and was deliberately shy of leadership language and titles taken from the society of the day. Surely, there is a lesson for the contemporary Church.

Management Models and the Non-evangelical Church

If the evangelical world has embraced the insights of leadership and management by adapting them to, and attempting to root them in, the biblical tradition, at least superficially, other streams of Anglican church life have begun to use management insights, as it were, undiluted and unrooted in Scripture. The organisation *MODEM* (Managerial and Organisation Disciplines for the Enhancement of Ministry) has been set up with the aim that 'by the year 2000 the values and disciplines of those engaged in the management of secular and Christian organisations will be mutually recognised and respected'. *MODEM*'s first publication²² in 1996 contained a selection of articles on the application of management insights to local church life.²³ The organisation's second book in 1999 comes highly commended by both church leaders and others from the world of management and, again, contains an excellent series of helpful articles. Such insights seem to be gaining ground, particularly at the level of Diocesan and national church life. Stephen Pattison, in

SECULAR MANAGEMENT MODELS FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY

a fascinating and cautionary essay on the subject, chronicles the embracing of a management/leadership philosophy by many of the present House of Bishops.²⁴ Clergy training in management studies is on the increase. Some dioceses are experimenting with management practices either partially or wholesale, as with the Diocese of Ripon's working towards the Investors in People award. Human Resource Management practices are influencing the Church of England's policies on appraisal and review and in-service training and will gradually affect and shape pre-ordination training over the coming years.²⁵

Again, many of these developments are good, necessary and in many ways overdue. There is much that the Church can learn from good practice developed over many years in the commercial world or in the public sector. Many of the perceptive thinkers about societies and organisations have a background in management and organisational studies and they have perceptive and prophetic things to say to the whole of society, including the churches. We have both legal and moral obligations to work within employment law and good practice in the appointment and development of staff. Many local churches and even dioceses still have a great deal of catching up to do in this area. It would be arrogant in the extreme for the Church to say it had nothing to learn from the world of management and leadership studies.

But when the insights gained from these worlds are adopted uncritically by the Church, there are dangers. Perdition swings are not always healthy. Today's underemphasis easily becomes tomorrow's overstatement and broken dream. Uncritical adoption of management insights is not the answer to our need for a new Paradigm of Christian ministry. As we shall see in later chapters, there is a great deal in the Scriptures and the Christian tradition about the way in which power should be exercised within the Christian community and by those who would be leaders. In a substantial part of that tradition, we are explicitly told not to model ourselves on society around us in the way that power is used.²⁶ At the very least, insights flowing from the world of management need to engage with and be checked against the insights of Scripture and tradition before they are incorporated wholesale into the life of the People of God. As Pattison points out, leadership and management ideas are not neutral in terms of values. They carry with them a

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

particular view of the world and of humanity which clashes in significant ways with the a traditional Christian world-view. Their fruits are not universally acknowledged to be good and beneficial, particularly by those who are the 'managed' rather than the managers. Pattison suggests, perceptively, that the Church seems ready to embrace management values in the late 90s just as it too readily embraced secular therapies and counselling techniques in its pastoral care, paying less and less attention to the roots of pastoral practice in the Christian tradition.²⁷ The secular concepts of 'leader' and 'manager' cannot do justice to the whole of what it means to be ordained nor must we allow them uncritically to shape our understanding of Christian ministry. We need to listen to the lessons of the world around us but we need also to attend to our own inheritance if a new and healthy understanding of what it means to be ordained is to emerge.

Focusing the Problem

Over the past six years I have spoken to many groups of clergy, lay people and ordinands in my capacity as Mission Consultant to the Diocese of Wakefield and, latterly, as someone charged with the responsibility of training clergy in a theological college. It has not been difficult to help people of all traditions to recognise that inherited understandings of the identity and role of the ordained no longer fit the needs of our present situation. Everyone can, as it were, see the problem and understand that some re-thinking is needed, particularly in connection with those new skills required of the clergy, as seen in Chapter 1: enabling and collaborative leadership.

However, once we have moved on from talking about the problem to thinking about solutions and ways forward, two distinct groups have emerged when I have begun to use language and concepts such as 'leadership', 'management' and related insights.

Clergy, lay people and ordinands from an evangelical tradition, with some others from a more central stream, have responded extremely positively. There has been no need to convince them that this kind of area is part of the ministry of the ordained. Their focus has been on learning what will be helpful and applying it immediately. The danger has been that such insights will be taken

SECTULAR MANAGEMENT MODELS FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY

on board too quickly and uncritically; that they will not be digested theologically and subject to the critique of Scripture and tradition. When this happens, leadership and management insights will prove a false and sterile trail in the longer term.

However, the second group among those I have talked with have responded extremely negatively to concepts such as 'leadership' and, especially, 'management'. This group has included those from a more catholic tradition whose instinctive reaction has been: 'I am called to be a priest, not a manager'. It has also included those who have been the victims and casualties of bold management and leadership ideas either in their workplace or in churches they have been part of. Significantly, it is a group which includes many women of all traditions who find themselves alienated from what they hear as a very male language of management and leadership studies and who are searching for a different vocabulary.²⁸ Members of this group have been unable to take on insights and ideas about 'leadership' within the life of the churches because there have been so many prior issues to think through and because their own basic theology and model of ministry simply cannot stretch to accommodate the new ideas.

You will have guessed that the author has emerged from the first group and has come to identify with and to appreciate the concerns of the second. My aim in what follows is to revisit the Christian tradition and understanding of ordained ministry and to rework that tradition in the light of the present day needs of the Church in order to develop an understanding of the ordained ministry which is more adequate for the twenty-first century. We begin in the following chapter with an overview of what the Scriptures have to say about leadership and ministry, before beginning to explore what it might mean to see ministry once again in three dimensions.

BEGINNING TO SEE IN THREE DIMENSIONS: TOWARDS A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP

Throughout the centuries the Church has been refreshed, renewed, reformed and re-ordered through its engagement with the Scriptures. The mismatch we have observed and which many reading this book will experience each day of their lives between the traditional view of the ordained minister and the demands of that ministry in contemporary society needs to be taken first to the Bible rather than the secular understanding of leadership emerging from a management culture. What resources can we rediscover in Scripture which will speak to our contemporary situation?

The Right Ordering of Leadership and Ministry to the People of God

One theme which is immediately apparent is that the Bible as a whole is concerned with the healthy ordering of leadership and ministry among God's people from the beginning through to New Testament times. We see the leadership of the emerging nation of Israel change and adapt as the community changes and grows from an extended family, to a collection of tribes enduring slavery, to a redeemed community on a continuous journey, to a people settled in the promised land. Wherever the dominant pattern and style of leadership and ministry changes, the biblical authors take time to pause, to tell the story and to justify what is happening. They often emphasise the degree to which God himself is involved in the transition and the discovery of new patterns of ministry. Often attention is drawn both to the tradition they have inherited (in

previous patterns and styles of leadership) and to the needs of the new situation: there is a balancing which is equivalent to the four sections of the quadrilateral explored above.

So in the transition from the leadership of patriarchs in the extended families of Genesis to the leadership of Moses which was necessary for the liberation from slavery, the writers emphasise carefully the direct call and authority of God which, despite Moses' many excuses, cannot be resisted¹. The extension and development of Moses' ministry of judging the people following the visit of Jethro is carefully recounted on two occasions in classic texts on the necessity of sharing and delegating the care of a large community.² The historians who gathered and edited the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings take care to emphasise the transition to kingship which was made by the nation during the time of the prophet Samuel. We are reminded again and again in the later chapters of Judges of the need for a king in Israel.³ We are taken into the dialogue between the people and Samuel, Samuel and God, and then Samuel and the people again; and then see described the careful calling, choosing and then rejection of Saul, the first king, and the eventual accession of David. Similar attention is paid to the call of the prophets, the setting aside of musicians and temple servants, and the different ways of governing and teaching the people in the period after the exile. Leadership and the forms of leadership matter to God.

—Identical concerns can be traced through into the New Testament. As we shall see in a later chapter, Jesus himself places a high priority on the call, training and ministry of the twelve and of a larger group of 70.⁴ A major and recurring theme in the Acts of the Apostles is the development of the right forms of ministry within the New Testament churches.⁵ The letters of Paul continually return to the way in which ministry is to be exercised and ordered within the body of Christ.⁶ Towards the end of the New Testament period, the Pastoral Epistles and the general letters of James and 1 Peter give an increasing emphasis to the conduct and appointment of ministers in the local church.⁷ The right ordering of ministry and leadership among the people of God is a central theme of the Old and New Testaments.

A Proper Use of the Biblical Texts on Leadership

However, because there is an abundance of material on leadership and ministry in the Scriptures, there is all the more reason to use and interpret the texts with great care. There are many examples both in recent literature and in sermons and talks on leadership where lessons about how to lead are simply read off, particularly from Old Testament texts, with little attention paid either to the context or to the fact that some of the insights they give may be genuinely pre-Christian. The memoirs of Nehemiah, for example, furnish many 'lessons' in leadership style (prayer, research, clear vision, perseverance against opposition, delegation, decisive action). Many of these lessons are very much in harmony with secular trends in the understanding of leadership and management. However, books and presentations based on Nehemiah rarely emphasise that the governor of Jerusalem is not leading a church attempting to reach a post-Christian society but a small city state in danger of being overwhelmed by its enemies (surely there must be some differences between the two contexts). Similarly there is only rarely any acknowledgement that ministry, death and resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Spirit to the Church might have profound implications for the way in which leadership is exercised and direction given to the people of God.⁸ Insights from Nehemiah and other parts of the Old Testament may be valid, but they can hardly be thought to be complete.

Leadership of the People of God in the Old Testament

There are many manifestations of leadership in the Old Testament. However, as the story unfolds, the Old Testament's understanding of leadership among God's people comes to focus more and more clearly in the person and role of the king. Already in Moses and Joshua, and even more so in the Judges, a concept of national leadership is emerging which is looking in two directions. Leaders are called upon, first, to ensure that the people of God are protected from the enemy outside the nation who will regularly seek to conquer and annihilate Israel. They are called upon, secondly, to establish justice and right order in Israel and among its people. So Moses and the judges can be seen in two ways: as protectors and

saviours of the nation through their courage and military leadership; and as those who strive to fashion the life of the nation around the laws of the Lord and administer justice within the land. In return, those leaders receive benefits, trust and service from the nation.⁹

The Old Testament's understanding of leadership is linked to its understanding of God. The sovereignty, kingship or leadership of God himself over the nation is seen in similar ways to that of the rulers of the nation. The Psalms proclaim again and again that the Lord is King,¹⁰ God's kingship like the leadership of Moses and the judges faces in two directions. The Lord is a mighty warrior bringing salvation and deliverance from enemies of the nation.¹¹ The Lord is a righteous judge, ensuring that there is justice within the land, particularly for the poor of society.

This central concept of God's reign and rule naturally feeds into and nourishes the picture of the ideal king of Israel as both a mighty warrior and a righteous judge of the land.¹² The king depends on God for both help in battle and insight in giving judgement. David, the first great king of the united tribes, is portrayed throughout the books of Samuel as one who trusts in God and who is, supremely, the mighty warrior who extends the kingdom and pushes back the enemies of Israel. Solomon, his son, who succeeds him is portrayed, in a balancing way, as the ideal judge of Israel, endowed with the great gift of wisdom, teaching and the interpretation of the law. Israel's experience of David and Solomon, her developing picture of God as king and the ideas about leadership and kingship in the cultures of the ancient Near East all play a part in forming a strong collection of ideas about the king which, again, finds its expression in the psalms. The ideal king, in the prayers of Israel, loves the Lord and is both a mighty warrior and a righteous judge.¹³ The shepherd image of the Old Testament is primarily an image of right leadership rather than a therapeutic image of care for individuals in need (although right leadership certainly embraces that function of care for the weak).¹⁴

The historical books of the Old Testament tell us that Israel's kings did not live up to this developing ideal. Israel herself never regained the glory of the days of Solomon. The rulers of the northern and southern kingdoms were not, by and large, faithful to the worship of the Lord; they were often defeated in battle; they did not uphold justice and the cause of the poor. A tradition of independent, critical

commentary on leadership emerges in the preaching and writing of the prophets which continually contrasts the real with the ideal. In the period while there are still kings on the throne, there begins to emerge a longing for the ideal king who will come who will fulfil all that Israel longs for her kings to be.

The northern kingdom of Israel came to an end with the Assyrian conquest in 722 BC and the southern kingdom of Judah ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC. For the first time there was no descendant of David enthroned in Zion. Yet still the prophets kept the hope alive that a new ruler and leader would be born who would save the people from their enemies and establish justice in the kingdom and re-establish the reign of God. However, reflection during the desolate years of exile in Babylon began to change Israel's concept of herself in relation to both God and the nations. Her concept of leadership also begins to change in the crucible of intense national suffering as a new identity is formed for the people around the faithful worship of the Lord rather than around a political kingdom.¹⁵ Kings in the ancient world were anointed with oil on their accession. The ideal king would become known in the prophets and later writings as 'the anointed one', which in Hebrew is Messiah and in Greek is the Christ. The entire hope of the nation comes to rest in him.

Around this central strand of the role of the anointed king and Messiah cluster the other concepts of leadership in the Old Testament: not least because most emerge or develop as having some connection with the court and with the temple and all are subject to change and development. The priest is responsible for the right ordering of sacrifice and worship; the wise scribe emerges originally as an administrator of affairs of state; later he develops into the godly teacher and interpreter of the law and so into the Rabbi of Jesus' day; the prophet gives more inspired leadership, often critical of the establishment. All of these have their own traditions, training, sense of call and evolving function in the life of the nation and, after the exile, in the faith community which becomes Judaism clustered around the temple in Jerusalem and, increasingly, dispersed throughout the ancient world. However, each also feeds into Israel's developing understanding of the one who is to come: the Christ.

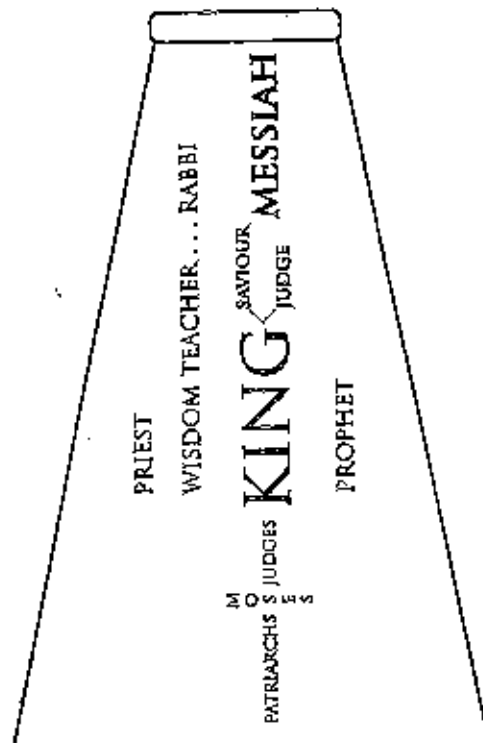


Figure 1: Old Testament patterns of leadership

Jesus the Messiah

If we are to be faithful to the whole of Scripture we must see Jesus against this wider background of the hope of a Messiah who will come both as Saviour and as Judge. Jesus sees himself as both fulfilling and transfiguring the expectations of leaders found in the Old Testament and focused in the hoped-for Messiah. His birth is predicted as that of the coming king.¹⁶ He enters the Gospel story in his maturity, proclaiming the kingdom of God both in word and action.¹⁷ His message is one of salvation: the very name 'Jesus' means 'the one who saves'.¹⁸ The salvation Jesus brings is not the deliverance of Israel from her enemies but the salvation of all people everywhere from their sins. The victory is won not in battle, where David and his heirs won salvation for their people, but through suffering and death on the cross. Jesus' message is also one of justice and judgement and the right ordering of the whole of society, beginning with the new community he calls into being, the Church.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

The gospel writers reveal to us a Messiah who intentionally gathers to himself all the strands of the leadership and kingship tradition in the Old Testament but who changes our understanding of those themes as we see them brought together in the Christ. He is designated as the anointed king but his kingdom is not of this world,¹⁹ nor is it established by force. It is a kingdom which belongs to the poor in spirit,²⁰ which can only be understood in parables and riddles,²¹ which begins as a something tiny but grows to fill the whole garden.²² He is the inheritor of the tradition of the wise teacher, the lawgiver, the Rabbi and scribe, and delivers new laws on the hillside, echoing Moses, yet he is different. He repudiates titles and honour; has harsh warnings for those who consider themselves to be teachers; and 'teaches as one having authority, not as one of the scribes'.²³ He stands in the line of the prophets: speaking messages from God; doing deeds mightier than those of Elijah; rebuking those in power without fear or favour, authenticating his message through suffering. Yet with all of the prophets, the message they bring is more important than the messenger. With Jesus, the opposite applies. He is the message he brings, the living word of God. As a priest he prays for his people yet becomes himself the sacrifice for their sins.²⁴

In much of Jesus' ministry he is challenging the use of power among the secular and religious leaders of his age; again and again he repudiates both their attitudes and their methods and some of his strictest censure is reserved for those who misuse authority in the name of religion.²⁵ As we shall see in the following chapters, Jesus turns the values of the human society upside down. The least important in society is to be the most valued in the kingdom of God: little children, lepers, tax collectors, and sinners. The meek, not the strong and powerful, are to inherit the earth.²⁶ The values of the kingdom are to apply especially among the community of faith, the church, where there is to be a completely different attitude to leadership: 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all'.²⁷

Leadership within the Early Christian Communities

The Old Testament insights about leadership cannot be read across in a simplistic way into our thinking about the Christian Church.

TOWARDS A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP

As it were, all of the rainbow rays of light from the Old Testament find their focus in Christ as the lens and prism of God's revelation in Scripture. Within that lens of the person of Jesus, the rays of light are refracted: they are broken down and emerge in different patterns for the new age that has begun. The Church itself is neither a nation nor a corporation, but a unique community of faith, hope and love, called to be a community with a distinct heartbeat rhythm of worship and mission and to instruct others in the way of faith.²⁸ In the earliest days of the Church and, Christians believe, continually since those days, God has poured out the Holy Spirit upon his people. The Spirit is given not to isolated individuals, as in the Old Testament, but on the whole community, from the 'greatest' to the 'least'. The narrative in Acts again continually emphasises the gift of the Spirit to those who are of lowly station and on the outside of faith as well as those within.

'Leadership', 'Kingship' and 'Headship' within the Christian community belong first and foremost to Christ himself, designated within the New Testament, as the head of his body, the Church.²⁹ The Holy Spirit has given different gifts to different members of the body of Christ, for the common good.³⁰ The resulting diversity of gifts is to be celebrated and treasured, but is not to be made a cause of division or of showing greater honour to some members of the community in preference to others.

The New Testament letters contain several lists of different gifts of the Spirit, which are in no sense meant to be exhaustive.³¹ On the basis of the gifts that had been given, different ministries were exercised within the Christian community for the benefit of the whole. There is no uniform pattern which emerges across the churches that we can discern. Perhaps the clearest list of the early charismatic ministries is that in Ephesians 4.11f. 'The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.' The dynamic here and in similar passages is very much one of Jesus himself anointing and appointing individuals to these ministries and those ministries then receiving recognition from the wider body of the Church. It is worth noting that there is hardly any direct emphasis in any of these lists of the gifts of the Spirit on the qualities which the world around us describes as 'leadership'.³²

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Any understanding of 'leadership' and ministry within the Church which is to be a Christian understanding cannot be derived directly and simply either from society around us or from the Old Testament images and models. Rather, a Christian understanding of what it means to exercise leadership within the Church must take account of, be mediated through and be integrated with

- our understanding of Jesus and his mission
- the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church
- our understanding of the church as the body of Christ

Ministry in Three Dimensions

Alongside these 'charismatic' ministries, given to different individuals by the gift of the Holy Spirit for the building up of the whole body, the early Christian Churches began to evolve a different and parallel structure of ministry to meet the rather different need for the proper ordering and care of local congregations. We find traces of this emerging structure for ministry within the earliest texts of the New Testament, as we shall see in more detail in the following chapters. There is no uniform pattern throughout the different churches which can become a blueprint for ministry in the Church for all ages, but clear principles can be discerned. Nor was there, as we shall see, some kind of age of purity in regard to Christian ministry when the only ministry the Church needed was that of the Spirit mediated through different members of the Church. By the time of the later New Testament documents, this emerging structure is becoming more and more important and more clearly into focus, developed as it is in response to the new context and mission of the church.

The three 'orders' of ministry of *diakonos* (deacon); *presbyter* (sometimes translated 'elder' and sometimes 'priest'); and *episcopos* (most usually translated bishop) trace their roots to New Testament ministries and offices. They are the words which emerge from the New Testament period to carry forward the Church's understanding of three different dimensions of Christian ministry within the congregation and the wider area into the second century and beyond. For almost 2000 years and across the different streams of the Christian tradition, these three orders or dimensions of ministry

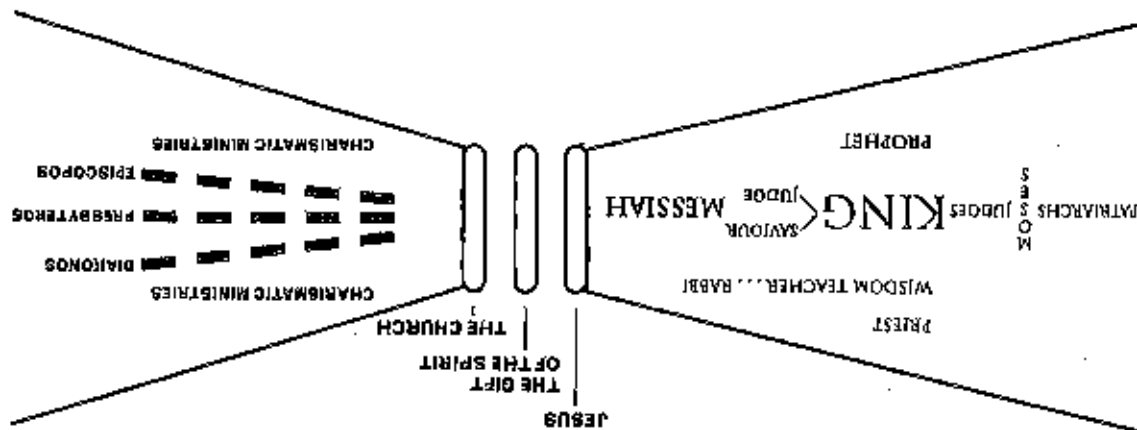


Figure 2: New Testament patterns of leadership

have remained central to the Church's concept of what it means to be ordained and to exercise leadership. Each denomination, as it has emerged, has discovered the need to develop its own expression of these three dimensions of ordained ministry and leadership: the diaconal-dimension of service-loving given within and outside the body of Christ; the presbyteral-dimension of ministry centred around the ministry of preaching and of prayer and the sacraments in the local congregation; and the episcopal-dimension of keeping watch over the life of both local churches and the wider Church and of commissioning and nurturing others in ministry.²³ The denominations as we see them today have developed many different ways of ordering these three dimensions of ministry and those established more recently have generally avoided the titles of 'Bishop', 'Priest' and 'Deacon'. Even in the new Churches however, there are discernible patterns of servant ministries, teaching ministries, and ministries which are concerned with the well-being of a network of congregations and of those who serve them.

I am not concerned to argue here or in the following pages that a particular form of the threefold ministry can be found in the New Testament which can therefore validate a particular expression of ordained ministry today or, still less, any particular manifestation, stream or tradition of the Christian Church. I would want to argue, as above, that the different contexts in which the Church has found herself down the ages have led to the development of different styles and patterns of ministry and of Church government. This diversity has been needed. The insights of the different traditions today are to be welcomed. There is a need for all of the Churches to be reflecting on and developing their understanding of the ministry of the whole people of God and how ministry within the body of Christ is to be ordered.

However, I do want to contend that we have in the three dimensions *diakonos*, *presbyteros* and *episkopos* something of a distillation of important insights about Christian ministry and leadership, rooted in Scripture and drawing from a rich tradition in Church history from which we can begin to build a new understanding of ordained ministry. In the Church in England, and especially in the Church of England, ordained ministry has been seen for many years as one-dimensional: the vicar has come to be seen simply as a presbyter or priest with a ministry focused around his or her personal preaching

of the word, prayer, administration of the sacraments and care for the needy. As we have seen in previous chapters this one-dimensional view of the ministry of the ordained is no longer adequate either for the missionary task which faces us or for the clergy's own self-understanding. There is a large mismatch between this 'ideal' and what most vicars actually do in practice and feel they need to do in theory.

The place to turn in this mismatch between our understanding and reality is not to the broken cisterns of secular management theory but to our springs of living water;²⁴ the God who speaks through Scripture and has continued to speak in new ways through Scripture throughout the history of the Church. Drawing our principal understanding of ordained ministry from the leadership traditions simply has the effect of reversing the pattern. Gaps remain between what is practised and what is needed. Instead, the following pages argue, we need to recover and reflect on our tradition of a three-dimensional ordained ministry. The vicar or minister needs to have a diaconal dimension to his or her ministry, so ministry proceeds from an attitude of service and Christian leadership can be seen to involve many basic and practical tasks; a presbyteral dimension focused around the service of the Word and the sacraments; and the dimension of episcopal ministry – the need to guard and to guide the unity of the pilgrim people of God in a particular place and to raise up, commission and nurture others in Christian service.

In the chapters which follow we will explore each of these three dimensions of ministry in turn: first examining their roots in Scripture and the tradition and going on to exploring ways in which the insights gained from each can enrich our understanding of the practice of ministry today. Our goal is an understanding of the ministry and role of the ordained which more closely matches the needs of the whole people of God in the present generation.