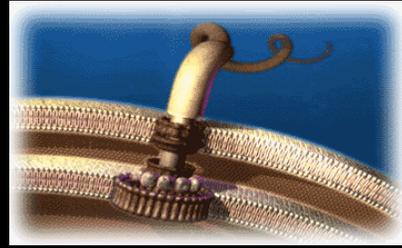


Church Government:

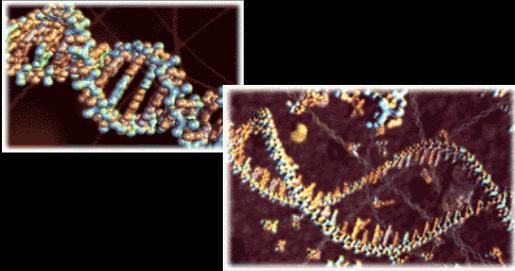
Monarchy,
Anarchy,
or
Democracy?



The Bacteria Flagellum



Every Human Cell



Structure Matters

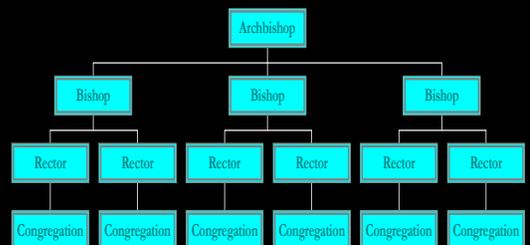
“Some of the worst havoc wrought to the Christian faith has been a direct result of unscriptural forms of church structure. Only a few centuries after the apostles’ death, for example, Christ’s churches began to assimilate both Roman and Jewish concepts of status, power, and priesthood.... Under Christ’s name an elaborately structured institution emerged that corrupted the simple, family structure of the apostolic churches, robbed God’s people of their lofty position and ministry in Christ, and exchanged Christ’s supremacy over His people for the supremacy of the institutional church.”

Alexander Strauch

The Historical Forms of Church Government



Episcopalian



Episcopalian: The Denominations

- Orthodox
- Anglican
- Roman Catholic
- Methodist

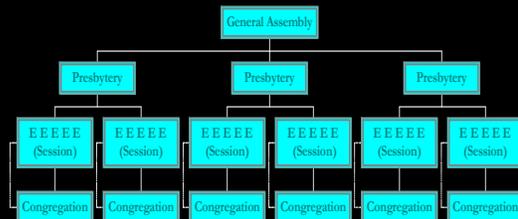
Episcopalian: The Defense

- Church history
- The position and authority of James in Acts 15
- Titus and Timothy's role with several churches
- It is not forbidden in the New Testament

The Arguments Against Episcopalianism

- In the New Testament, bishop is not a distinct office but a synonym for elder.
- There is no New Testament evidence that bishops were designed to replace the apostles.

Presbyterian



Presbyterian: The Denominations

- Presbyterians
- Miscellaneous Reformed Churches

Presbyterian: The Defense

- The opportunity for gifted men to serve beyond their local church
- A demonstration of the unity of the Body of Christ
- The distinctions between ruling and teaching in 1 Timothy 5:17
- The example of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)
- The command of Titus 1:5

The Arguments Against Presbyterianism

- Scripture nowhere calls for elders to have authority beyond their local flock.
- Acts 15 cannot be used to defend Presbyterianism:
 - The apostles were present and in leadership
 - The church at Antioch voluntarily requested the help of the Jerusalem church
 - The entire Jerusalem church sent the letter (15:22)
 - “If this narrative gives support to regional government by elders, it therefore also gives support to regional government by whole congregations!” (Grudem)

Congregational

- Ultimate authority for each local church resides within that church; each church is completely autonomous.
- The Denominations
 - o Congregational
 - o Baptist
 - o Mennonite
 - o Evangelical Free
 - o Independents

The Many Faces of Congregationalism

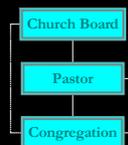
Congregational

Single-Elder (Single-Pastor)



Congregational

Corporate Board Model



Congregational

Pure Democracy



Congregational

No Government but the Holy Spirit



Congregational

Plural Local Elder

EEEEEE*EE

Congregation

*Pastor

The Evidence for a Plurality

- The OT Pattern—the Jewish Mindset



The Hebrew Words

זקן זקנים *zaqen (zaw-kane')*

- "old"; mature age; usually plural
- 178x in OT
- about 100x as a technical term for those in authority

שֵׁנִים *seb (seeb)*

- Aramaic; plural
- "gray-headed"
- 5x in OT, all in Ezra (after the exile)



The Evidence for a Plurality

- The OT Pattern—the Jewish Mindset



Elders within a House or Family

- Gen. 50:7 - Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household.
- Ps. 105:22 - To imprison his princes at will, That he might teach his [Pharaoh's] elders wisdom.
- 2 Sam. 12:17 - The elders of his [David's] household stood beside him in order to raise him up from the ground, but he was unwilling and would not eat food with them.

Elders within a City

- Deut. 19:12
- Deut. 21:1ff, 19
- Deut. 22:15
- Jud. 8:14 - And [Gideon] captured a youth from Succoth and questioned him. Then *the youth* wrote down for him the princes of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.
- Ruth 4:9, 11 - Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon.... **11** All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem."

Elders within the Nation "The Elders of Israel"

- a) Other nations had elders
 - Gen. 50:7 - Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household and all the elders of the land of Egypt.
 - Num. 22:7 - So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the *fees for divination* in their hand; and they came to Balaam and repeated Balak's words to him.
- b) In Israel, it existed by time of Moses
 - Ex. 3:16
 - Ex. 4:29
 - Ex. 12:21
 - Ex. 17:5
 - Ex. 18:12
 - Ex. 24:1, 9, 11, 14

Elders within the Nation "The Elders of Israel"

- c) It continued in the monarchy as an advisory body.
 - 1 Sam. 8:4 - Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah;
 - 2 Sam. 3:17 - Now Abner had consultation with the elders of Israel, saying, "In times past you were seeking for David to be king over you."
 - 2 Sam. 5:3 - So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the LORD at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel.
 - 2 Sam. 17:4, 15 - So the plan pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.... **15** Then Hushai said to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, "This is what Ahithophel counseled Absalom and the elders of Israel, and this is what I have counseled."
 - 2 Sam. 19:11 - Then King David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, saying, "Speak to the elders of Judah, saying, 'Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house, since the word of all Israel has come to the king, even to his house?'"
 - 1 Kings 20:7 (even in the northern 10 tribes) - Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land and said, "Please observe and see how this man is looking for trouble; for he sent to me for my wives and my children and my silver and my gold, and I did not refuse him."
 - 1 Kings 21:8 - So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in his city.

Elders within the Nation "The Elders of Israel"

- d) The group was influential during the Exile.
 - Jer. 29:1 - Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.
 - Ezek. 7:1; 8:1; 14:1; 20:1

Elders within the Nation "The Elders of Israel"

- e) The group continued to be influential after the return from Babylon.
 - Ezra 5:9ff - "Then we asked those elders and said to them thus, 'Who issued you a decree to rebuild this temple and to finish this structure?'"
 - Ezra 6:7 - "Leave this work on the house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site."
 - Ezra 10:3, 14 - "...that whoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the leaders and the elders, all his possessions should be forfeited and he himself excluded from the assembly of the exiles...." **14** "Let our leaders represent the whole assembly and let all those in our cities who have married foreign wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of each city, until the fierce anger of our God on account of this matter is turned away from us."

Elders within the Nation "The Elders of Israel"

- f) When synagogues became the focus of every community's worship, each synagogue had its own elders.
 - They were the mainstays of the synagogue.
 - From them the head of the synagogue was selected.
 - Cf. Luke 7:3 - When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.
 - John 12:42 - Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue.

Elders within the Nation "The Elders of Israel"

- g) In the Maccabean period and the Gospels & Acts, the expression "elders of Israel" describes the Jewish Sanhedrin.
 - The highest ruling body of Judaism.
 - They believed Moses established when he appointed the 70 (Num. 11:16ff).

The Evidence for a Plurality

- The OT Pattern—the Jewish Mindset
 - House or family
 - City
 - Nation
- The NT Passages—the Apostolic Example



The New Testament Passages

- Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 21:18
- James 5:14
- Acts 14:23
- Acts 20:17
- Acts 20:28
- Philippians 1:1
- Titus 1:5
- 1 Peter 5:1



Why a Plurality of Elders?

- 1) It practically creates enough leadership based on the size of the church.
- 2) It serves as protection against the sinfulness of the human heart.
 - It provides accountability.
 - 1 Tim. 5:18ff
- 3) It reflects the concept of the various parts of the body contributing to make the whole function.
- 4) It ensures wise counsel and effective decisions.
 - Pr. 11:14 - Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory.
 - Pr. 15:22 - Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed.
 - Pr. 24:6 - For by wise guidance you will wage war, And in abundance of counselors there is victory.