

# Church History

## Bishops

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- The later books of the New Testament and some of the Apostolic Fathers provide impressive evidence of a wide geographical spread for a particular church order. In each church, that order involved a plurality of elders or bishops (the terms were used interchangeably) assisted by deacons:
- Ferguson, E. (2005). (Vol. 1, p. 107). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

# Bishops

- 1. Jerusalem and Judea—Acts 11:30; 15:6; James 5:14
- 2. Syria—*Didache 15:1*
- 3. Galatia—Acts 14:23
- 4. Asia Minor—1 Peter 5:1–4
- 5. Ephesus—Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 3:1–13
- 6. Philippi—Philippians 1:1; Polycarp, *Philippians 6*
- 7. Corinth—*1 Clement 42:4; 44:3–6*
- 8. Crete—Titus 1:5–7
- 9. Rome—*1 Clement 42; 44; Hermas, Vision 3.5.1*
- Ferguson, E. (2005). (Vol. 1, p. 107). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

## Paul to Ephesian elders:

- <sup>28</sup> Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.
- <sup>29</sup> I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.
- <sup>30</sup> Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:28-30 NIV)

# Why move from plurality to singular?

- The emergence of one bishop at the head of the presbytery (monepiscopacy – church government under one bishop) is attested first at Antioch of Syria and in Asia Minor by the letters of Ignatius. The bishop, as portrayed in the letters of Ignatius, was still a local bishop in a city (not a territorial bishop), and nothing is said of apostolic succession or a priestly function
  - Ferguson, E. (2005). (Vol. 1, p. 107). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Preside over the eucharist – administer church funds – correspondence and hospitality – giving authoritative teaching.

# Apostolic Succession

- An argument used by Irenaeus against the teachings of the Gnostics (Marcion) and Montanism (Montanus), both of whom claimed “apostolic succession”.
- Other factors involved:
  - Forgiveness of sins following baptism – apostasy, adultery, immorality.
    - Forgiven by God but not the church.
  - Martyrs – witnesses – prelude to “saints”.
  - Penance

# What to make of the bishops?

- They willfully and sinfully departed from a divine authorized pattern, so that the changes they made should be repudiated and reversed.
  - The assumption of movements wanting to “restore primitive Christianity.”
- They were exercising the liberty they had in the absence of any divinely authorized pattern. It served the needs of their time but is open to change for the needs of other times.
  - The position of those who see the church as a social institution in the stream of historical development. Those wanting the church to adapt to the times.
- The changes brought about were guided by the Holy Spirit and therefore permanently binding on the church.