

# CHURCH POLITY

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**Polity** 1538. [–L. *politia* – Gr. *politei,a* ] **1.** Civil order. **b.** Administration of a state; civil government 1715. **2.a** A particular form of political organization 1597. **b.** An organized society; a state 1650.

*Polity* concerns organizational set-up, but is not limited to structural matters alone. It also concerns “political” relationships within the church—those relations where issues of authority, power, or control are involved. Together, structure and leadership dynamics constitute *polity*, as the term will be used in this short paper. Transition, sometimes slow and sometimes swift, characterizes the movement of the people of God from Genesis to Revelation. This is nowhere truer than in the area of their organization and governance, or polity<sup>1</sup>, which in biblical times underwent numerous minor or even major modifications.

## I. TIME TO REEVALUATE?

Change is in the air, and so is much discussion about the way we conduct business. In terms of polity, are we set up for success? Is it possible we’re holding to an outmoded organizational model? Evaluation is part of responsible leadership. We must remain open to new ideas and constructive criticism, because the task of world evangelism is too important to relegate to mere fine-tuning of previous strategies.

The truth is, we *have* been reevaluating for quite some time, and have come a long way from our more authoritarian days (’80s to early ’90s). As a movement, all of us in the past bought into an overly authoritarian model of leadership. I recall all too many reckless words uttered by myself, decisions I made and pressured others to accept; I remember too many hurt people—hurt by me. For years I’ve been trying to change my leadership style, and I am sure the same is true for most of you reading this paper.

Yes, we have been moving towards very positive change—in the direction of group leadership, consensus decision, and so forth. With the establishment of church boards and elderships, as well as through the emphasis on the need for personal involvement of older men in lives of church leaders, the infrastructure for a new arrangement has already been laid down. Sadly, familial failure in the lives of many top leaders has made the need for a different approach all the more apparent. At any rate, everyone is trying to change—and everyone is talking. In part we are putting our heads together because the old way is not working so well anymore. Our growth rate has been slowing for quite a few years.<sup>2</sup> Leaders are overloaded, yet instead of sharing the load with others, many hold on to “control,” and end up unable to effectively serve as the “super-pastor-preacher-administrator-organizer-motivator-husband-father-discipler-local leaders” they feel they must be.<sup>3</sup>

The Oxford English Dictionary shows us that *polity* came into the English language in the 1500s. Yet fifteen centuries earlier is the period on which we must now focus—the first century—as we ask what the Bible says about church polity. It *is* time to reevaluate. This will not be easy, but it must be done all the same.

## II. IS THERE A BIBLICAL PATTERN, OR NOT?

Many groups claim to have discovered the magical model of organization. There are two extremes to be avoided, two ends of the spectrum. Certainly, the Papists are wrong, and yet there is an equally destructive error also to be avoided in “congregational autonomy,” such as that claimed in the mainline Churches of Christ (henceforth mCOC). We can be “cooked” at either end of the spectrum—by UV or by IR. Surely it is better to remain in the safer range of visible light!

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the Israelites underwent a major modification from federation to monarchy—a change initially fraught with promise but through which, in the end, individual kings were able to lead an entire nation astray. Similarly, the N.T. church moved from a single church to an association of congregations working under the direction of “apostles and elders” in Jerusalem, as well as under the influence of the Apostle Paul. In time, under the ever-increasing influence of the second-century presbyters, the relative autonomy of congregational cooperation gave way to the catholic conglomerate. The painful lessons of the O.T. church-state had been forgotten. Even in our day, sin, slowdown, and relational conflict all tend to accelerate when polity does not keep pace with growth, the balance of power is lopsided, or an outmoded model is being clung to when reform is the need of the hour.

<sup>2</sup> In my 2000 paper *Statistics and Church Growth* I suggested that a wrong emphasis on statistical success has led to many abuses movement-wide.

<sup>3</sup> As someone said of Malcolm X, “That’s too much power for one man to have!” Not just too much power—too much pressure!

It is a simple observation that the N.T. churches did not operate with *total* autonomy, since they submitted to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). The mCOC is wrong on this point, and at any rate has an implicit political structure.

In the N.T. era, apostles planted and organized churches. Quite possibly there were overlapping spheres of influence (as when Paul writes to the Romans, members of a church he did not plant). Church planters installed elderships and then moved on, so the record would seem to indicate. So is there a pattern? Yes and no.

A mistake I think I have made for many years is in seeking a *static* model of church polity. (Is this from the old “patternism” we inherited during my years in the mCOC?) After teaching many classes, drawing many charts, and seeking hard for the “pattern,” I believe I have been wrong all along. As I now read the NT, the organizational setup seems to have been *dynamic*. Situations changed, the church adapted accordingly. In our movement, this paper maintains, we have held too long to an outmoded model. When we were few in number (and nations), it was probably both effective and godly to operate in a “one-man” leadership mode. Boards and committees are hardly needed to lead a campus ministry, or a church planting of singles. Does the Bible not show us that organization depends on the situation—size of the group, stage in life, etc? The burden of proof is on those who would advocate a single, static model for all churches at all times.

If there is any “pattern” in the N.T., perhaps it could be summed up in a few simple principles. These principles can be understood to constitute the dynamic approach to polity of the early Christians.

- **Evangelists plant churches**, stay a few months or years, **then move on**, preaching the word, winning the lost, and establishing new churches. These men are effective speakers, and move confidently into new territory. We need them desperately—even if we do not need them to function as evangelist-elder-teacher-administrators!
- **Elders are stationary**, in distinction to their more mobile counterparts, the evangelists.
- **Elders are appointed after a relatively short period of time**—say, a few years. The evidence from Acts 14 and Titus does *not* indicate a long period—e.g. 8 or 10 years—before elderships were installed.
- **Elders oversee the local congregations.** 1 Timothy shows it is God’s will for the local church to be run by elders (presbyters, overseers) and deacons (ministers).<sup>4</sup> There is no biblical evidence that evangelists are the ultimate leaders of congregations—quite the opposite! Take as an example Paul’s farewell to the leaders of the great Ephesian church, whom he sent for and called to meet him in Miletus. Did he summon the Regional Leaders? The evangelists? No, it was the *elders*. Why them? Speculation could lead to many possible answers, but how about the simplest answer? These were the men who had the greatest influence on the future of the church in Ephesus.<sup>5</sup>
- **Other ministers join the elders in administering the affairs of the church.** The ministers (*diakonoi*) probably include a range of positions of service.
- **The arrangement is flexible.** There is a shift from one-man or small-team leadership at the planting stage to governance by eldership after a few years. The Bible never says how many elders there must be, nor how rigidly the character qualifications of 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1 are to be insisted upon, though we are right to steer to the conservative side of interpretation and keep the standard high.
- Dynamics among evangelists, elders, and other leaders implicitly support **a system of checks and balances.**
- In short, this model is **dynamic, not static.**

### III. HOW DID THE MODEL DEVELOP IN THE N.T. CHURCH?

Jesus appointed Peter as the head guy (Matthew 16), and he was certainly the chief spokesman on the day of Pentecost. With the keys with which he was entrusted, he opened the door into the church, the most visible expression of God’s kingdom on earth. Peter was given “the keys,” to be sure, but this did not make him *owner* of the kingdom. One man has keys to the house he *rents*, another keys to the house he *owns*. Peter was but a steward, a “renter.” No one owns the

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<sup>4</sup> See also the prologue to Philippians (1:1).

<sup>5</sup> Several common terms in the Gk N.T. indisputably refer to the eldership. *Presbyteros* (elder) refers simply to the age, respect and social function of the man advanced in both life and wisdom. The second term, *poimen* (shepherd), speaks of his duty to care for the flock who are his charge. The Latin equivalent is *pastor*, which is retained in most English translations of Ephesians 4.11 out of deference to those denominations who seek biblical warrant for their favored term. The third term is *episkopos* (overseer), referring to the elder’s oversight of his flock in a less personal way than *poimen*. In Acts 20 and 1 Pet 5 these three terms are used interchangeably. N.T. scholars agree that what would later become separate offices originally were one. It’s likely the O.T. functions of eldership spilled over nearly 100% into the N.T. role. Elders were older, more experienced men whom God held accountable for the spiritual well-being of their tribes and clans and hence for that of all Israel. They were, spiritually speaking, *shepherds and overseers*. Unfortunately, however, in O.T. history their spiritual oversight generally turned out to be just that – *oversight!* They neglected their primary responsibility (Ezek 34). The failure of eldership as a whole under the old covenant in no way reduces the critical need for elders today, however. The church will never reach the maturity God intended without strong, spiritual elderships in place (Eph 4.11-13). —from *Elders, Evangelists, Deacons* (article, 1994)

house but God. Peter was a catalyst—through his spirituality, preaching, and leadership, God “jump started” the church. In those earlier days, it was *good* that there was a clear leader at the top—a “fired up” leader was able to put some fire in the bones of the people of God, much needed.

Yet the one-leader model of Acts 2 soon morphed into a sort of two-leader plan in Acts 3-8, as Peter and John apparently led together. By the time of Galatians 2:9 (15 years into the movement) and the Jerusalem Council (slightly later), there were three leaders (“pillars”) in Jerusalem, though it’s *far* from clear that they exercised control over the entire movement.<sup>6</sup> In fact, James seems to be the president, whereas Peter holds more of a missionary role. And as we read through Acts, we get the sense that it is God, through the Holy Spirit, who is “calling the shots,” not any one individual [Peter]. When a decision must be made, the leaders confer—not to validate the decision of the lead guy, but to sense and follow the will of God’s Spirit.

Regardless of which date church historians ultimately assign to “the beginning of the movement,” we are certainly well past the “Acts 15” point, the 15-year mark. By that time the N.T. church had no one clear leader. And yet the word was being effectively spread all over the Mediterranean world. The ugly power struggles that would affect the church in the mid- to late second century were still a long way off. There was no single leader over the worldwide N.T. church.<sup>7</sup> Reviewing the record, we find:

- *Gospels*: 1 man (Jesus) leads his group
- *Acts*: 1 man (Peter) is originally chief spokesman for the apostles. Soon, Peter and John seem to be co-leading the fledgling church. Within a few years, the triumvirate consists of Peter, James, and John. The apostle Paul respects the Jerusalem church leadership, yet is in no way subordinate.
- *Letters*: Paul is a church planter and master organizer, but never once does he claim to “lead the movement.” (If ever there was a candidate for head guy, Paul would fit the bill.) The 21 epistles, as well as Revelation, never mention a “movement leader.” Surely this fact makes it easier to remember that it is Christ who is head of the church.<sup>8</sup>
- *Postapostolic times*: Not until the papacy begins to develop is there a clear “movement leader.” (Yet he was rejected by both the Church of the East and the Orthodox churches.)

#### IV. WHAT ABOUT SUCCESSION?

There was no explicit plan for replacing the “Rock” to whom the keys of the kingdom were initially given. James the brother of Jesus may well have replaced Peter, in Jerusalem at least, though this is hard to prove. Perhaps Peter did not

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<sup>6</sup> Even though the Pauline communities voluntarily supported them spiritually (and later, financially).

<sup>7</sup> Consider this passage from the newly published *Golden Rule Leadership* (W. Shaw & G. Ferguson, 2001):

Leadership by a single evangelist over a newly established church is certainly the pattern of church plantings and their explosive evangelistic growth as seen in the book of Acts and 1 and 2 Tim and Titus. However, we also find in these writings Paul’s instructions to appoint elders to oversee and manage God’s household as it matures and ages. We could make the case that evangelists in the early church were instigators and delivery experts at the birth and infancy of new churches, but groups of greater maturity and corporate strength were the norm for long-term growth and development.

Acts 6 and 15 are examples of how both church and kingdom leadership and management quickly moved to a *group* of qualified leaders meeting needs and making decisions regarding what was best for the corporate growth of a church and the churches. The Ephesian elders (Acts 20) were to use Paul’s example as a frame of reference, but they became the leadership team responsible for the continued maturing of the flock upon his departure. This pattern was to be repeated by Timothy and Titus throughout the church plantings Paul had initiated. Groups of leaders can handle more in terms of size, complexity, pressure and objectivity.

God used individuals to initiate movements, but not to single-handedly run them. The apostles clearly combined their leadership of the early Christian movement with the leadership of a group of elders (Acts 15). There seems to have been a collective wisdom hammered out by the leaders through discussions and prayer. The needs of the people, and even the voice of the people, were considered but not catered to in matters of doctrine and practice. Unity was valued over individual rights, but individual liberty was protected whenever possible. Leadership was respected and submitted to, but not feared or venerated, as had been the case with the Pharisees and Jewish religious leaders. Peter commented on Paul’s work and Paul on Peter’s with affection or correction, depending on what was needed. Paul respected Peter, James and John, but did not fear them or shrink back from calling for change when needed (Galatians 2). Peter did not resent Paul after being challenged, but affectionately speaks of him in 2 Pet 3:15-16 (though pointing out that some of his letters are hard to understand). Respect, but not fear, was again demonstrated... [L]eaders were both humble and honest with and about each other. They were a team who needed, valued and loved each other, while never assuming that any one of them could have all the answers or could always be right. Even the dispute between Paul and Barnabas, which was later reconciled, indicates that the kingdom and its leaders were humble enough to disagree honestly and still value and leave the door open to each other through time. They divided the world in terms of ministry to Jews or Gentiles, but do not seem to have had a competitive edge toward their tasks. Instead, they displayed affection and companionship. It is troubling when we compare ourselves to, compete with and condemn other leaders with our own numbers or accomplishments. This tends to lead to dread and fear of each other in those times when we most need grace, unconditional love and support to get back on our feet and into the battle. It is far more Biblical for us to understand and to assume the best about each other in times of difficulty in our respective fields of ministry. We must do to others as we would have them do to us.

<sup>8</sup> This means leaders’ authority rests squarely on the authority of the words of Christ; they are not entitled to enforce rules not mandated in scripture. Exception: rules deemed essential for the health of the body—as a matter of love, conscience, or safety.

preside at the Jerusalem Council because he was so personally involved in the issues. In fact the only “succession” suggested by the NT is that the original church-planters (evangelists or apostles) in function were “succeeded” by overseers (elders). Is this the “succession” we ought to focus our attention upon?

Yes, God’s people will always need *strong leadership*, but not necessarily *one strong leader*. We must question the “One man, One Message, One Movement” model. It is far from clear that a *coalition* of leaders from around the kingdom could not just as effectively “lead the movement” as a single, charismatic individual. Of course it is God who is our true leader.

## V. WHAT IS OUR PRESENT POLITY?

Our present system can be summarized as follows:

- Evangelists oversee the local congregation.
- Higher level evangelists oversee these evangelists (GSLs)—and even higher level evangelists oversee these evangelist (WSLs).
- Elders assist in a “shepherding” capacity, serving *under* the evangelist. The elders in turn are just beginning to be organized on a GS, WS, and movement-wide level.
- Church Boards, though legally accountable for the official actions of the church leadership, are generally expected to follow the direction of the lead evangelist—to implement his policies.

## VI. HOW DID WE GET HERE?

In the mCOC, elders—or the “men’s business meeting,” in their absence—hired, fired, and oversaw (and often overlooked) the evangelist, or “pulpit minister.” In the mCOC, elderships often embodied unspiritual attitudes, defended the lukewarm, and threw many obstacles in the path of the evangelist who wanted to see the congregation move forward—especially evangelistically. There was, predictably, a reaction against the elder-over-evangelist polity. This frustration is a significant reason for the movement’s eventual break with the mCOC. Furthermore, as the ICOC launched new congregations, too young to have elderships, they were (understandably) led by young evangelists. I believe there was an *overreaction* against the notion of eldership. Had the mCOC elders been zealous, driven, and led lives worthy of imitation, it is questionable whether the preachers would have coveted full leadership of the church.

And yet this is not to say that circumnavigation of elder authority was *always* our attitude. In the early days of Boston, the elders’ lives were indeed exemplary. Unity was forged, and the eldership functioned. Decisions affecting the Boston Church or the fledgling movement emerged from joint discussion, prayer, and collaboration between elders and evangelists. *Many* brothers expressed desire to become elders one day—including many of our present WSLs.

When, a decade after 1979, our Kingdom Missions Evangelist moved to Los Angeles, something began to change. In time, fewer and fewer brothers were saying, “I hope one day to become an elder.” The role of the elder—now often frustrated by a sense of unease about the direction of the church and the negative effects of “pushing the members” on the spiritual health of the congregation—was held less in high regard than before. Conflicts between church leaders (evangelists) and elders (the “overseers”) became more and more common. A number of elderships collapsed, for a variety of reasons. To sum up:

- There was a rejection of the elder-over-evangelist model, due to the lack of spirituality in mCOC elderships.
- Most new congregations did not work towards establishing elderships (considered more or less optional).
- The role of the elder began to fall into low esteem. (This is changing now, however.)

## VII. ELDER OVER EVANGELIST, OR VICE VERSA?

Years ago, we taught quite plainly that the evangelist was to raise up an eldership *under which*, after their appointment, he would serve. Not surprisingly, many people (me included) found it strange that the evangelist would yield his authority to the elder whom he would now serve *under*, despite the fact that the evangelist was still leading the church. In effect, and in theory, the elder was given the responsibility (the oversight) yet without the authority. This is highly paradoxical, at best. The contradiction arises because, after installation of an eldership, the evangelist does not step aside and let them lead!

Our *assumption*—and this must be tested!—has been that elders are to serve *under* evangelists, even though publicly we stated that they served *over* them. Why must this assumption be examined?

- This is not the teaching of the Bible.
- An “overseer” oversees, just as much as an evangelist evangelizes and a teacher teaches. The overseer is the “boss”—if oversight as a word has any literal significance.
- A “shepherd” leads his flock (John 10). But how can he be said to lead the flock when it is the evangelist who is leading the charge?

- While apostles exercised an international role, they were inspired by the Spirit and trained by Jesus. To some extent they were *over* the elders. (But, in the WSL position, have we recreated the role of the *apostle*?)

In churches where evangelists and elders worked side-by-side, it is not completely clear (in the Bible) that either one was “over” the other. Rather, words like *cooperation*, *collaboration*, and *camaraderie* come to mind.

## VIII. ON HIERARCHY

Are we overly “hierarchical,” as the critics claim? It is eerie to recall my original reaction when I read about Ignatius of Antioch—the famous bishop of the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century who urged the authority of the bishop over other leaders and launched the church on its long and tortuous route to the Vatican. I thought—as many of us may have thought—“We will never go that way,” or “We must never go that way.” I even taught against the very model of leadership we have come to embrace—the one-man leadership model, echelon on echelon, an ever-growing network of accountability—for concern that we could slip into the Patristic-era superstructures (and super-problems) of the proto-Catholic Church. This is not to argue against organization. The various echelons, which reflected the geopolitics of the Old World, are understandable enough. It makes sense to divide and subdivide along national, geographical, and civic lines. The real problem with the RC church is the failure to implement biblical relationships. Rather than a collegial network of friends, through whom the Spirit freely moves and guides the church, a lineal arrangement prevails. Things are accomplished by authority and position rather than by consensus and friendship.

To be honest about our international organization, we have at least partially recapitulated the organization of the Catholic Church of the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century! (Again, this is not all bad.) They had the Bishop of Rome—soon to be a full-fledged pope. In obedience to him were his bishops—the chief of whom were designated archbishops. In relationships, we really have little in common with the RC church, but in polity we are beginning to resemble them. Instead of priests, bishops, archbishops and pope, we have evangelists, GSLs, WSLs, and a Kingdom Missions Evangelist (or “Leader of WSLs”). Just as the bishop oversaw a group of churches, we have GSLs. Just as archbishops oversaw the GSLs, we have WSLs.

Yes, there must be a balance between autonomy and hierarchy, authority and friendship. Leadership is of God, yet we must ponder which leadership roles are essential.

## IX. WHAT ROLES ARE KEY AT THE CONGREGATIONAL LEVEL?

The five-item list of Eph 4:11, once the foundational positions of apostle and prophet are taken away (Eph 2:20), becomes a three-item list:

- Evangelists
- Elders
- Teachers

All three roles/functions are much needed today: evangelists (church planters), elders (those who actually oversee the churches), and teachers (who work with elders and evangelists to ground members in the faith). This is not to say that one person might not embody more than one role or function, but the larger the congregation, the greater the need for diversity and for a group of qualified individuals, as opposed to one “quarterback” or “general.” These three positions are the *teaching* positions of the church; these men preach and teach, bringing the Word to the people. In addition, quite naturally there are other biblical positions to consider:

- Administrators (1 Cor 12)
- Women’s roles, such as the order of widows (1 Tim 5)
- Various sorts of ministers (*diakonoi* or deacons)
- Those who focus on serving the poor (Acts 6)—our “HOPE coordinators”

At the risk of utter redundancy, let us revisit the job description of the first three:

- Evangelists: Plant churches; move frequently; motivate the troops. Their ultimate goal is to hand over the church to qualified overseers who will perpetuate the work and mission of the congregation while attending to its spiritual needs.
- Elders (overseers): Determine the organization and program of the local church; as shepherds, they respond to the spiritual needs of the flock. They do not work in opposition to the evangelists—assuming the evangelists are not usurping the elders’ biblical authority as overseers. All leaders work together—through relationship, more than authority—sharing their gifts, pooling their talents, and showing mutual respect as they approach issues in true teamwork. (No “rubber-stamping,” and no one single person ought to have “veto power.”)
- Teachers: *Teach* the Bible. There is a difference in emphasis: Evangelists preach to the lost (as they establish churches) or to members; elders’ teaching focuses more on domestic issues and refuting false doctrine.

## X. WHERE SHOULD WE GO FROM HERE?

(1) We ought to **reexamine nomenclature**. How biblical is it? How accurate? How helpful in linking, in people's minds, the function of the individual with his biblical responsibilities? Our own traditions, just as easily as those in the denominational world, can easily obscure God's original intent.<sup>9</sup> We might rename the leadership title of the WSL; leading a WS is too much pressure on one individual, or couple. Instead of "WSL," perhaps "WSM" (WS Minister) would be more appropriate. "WSE" (WS Evangelist) would work also, esp. if WSE became "WSO" (WS Overseer).

(2) Instead of the single-man-at-the-top model, consider the benefits of **group leadership**. This does not negate the principle of leadership—i.e. the needs for a prime motivator, a chairman, or a president—but it does entail a different mode of operation from that which we are accustomed to.

(3) We must **reexamine the role of the elder**. The question to be answered: *Does the N.T. teach that elders are to lead the local congregation? Are our elders fulfilling their biblical job description?*

(4) **Discussion**. Our discussions must not be constrained merely by the "bottom lines" of numerical growth and financial giving, but by the Scriptures. (What does the Bible say?) There are quite a few implications of such a view of church leadership. All involve a *power shift*. Will those who are currently exercising too much control, wielding too much authority, be willing to share with others? Here are some of the key areas for discussion:

- Over-functioning of the evangelist, GSL, WSL, and under-functioning of the elder, GSE, WSE.
- "Tenure" for senior church leaders.
- "Chairmanship" or rotational leadership.
- The need to decentralize, as well as to review financial obligations. We may need an inspiring "L.A.," but we do not want a "Vatican."
- What consensus leadership really means. Is it a "*marriage*" where the elder must submit to the evangelist should a disagreement arise, or is it more of a *friendship*—after the analogy of Barnabas and Saul (before the rift!), or David and Jonathan.
- The benefit of a system of "checks and balances" in church polity. Analogy: three governmental branches—executive, legislative, judicial. When any one branch becomes too powerful, government becomes ineffective.
- How and the extent to which any changes in polity should be explained to the membership at large.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Brothers, it is my conviction—and I am not alone in this—that our churches are hurting. In large measure they are hurting because those making the decisions that affect us all—those who drive us—are often not strong in a number of key areas—the areas of family, administration, shepherding, biblical knowledge, long-term planning, legal issues, etc. That's why they need elders, administrators, teachers, legal experts and older men involved in their lives, holding up their arms, watching their backs, nurturing their families, and in every way helping to ease the load they are currently bearing.

Some WSLs, who at one time themselves aspired to eldership, are now pondering whether the character/family requirements of 1 Timothy 3 really apply to evangelists after all. Yet the answer is not to lower the bar! It is to delve into the Word, with minds, hearts, and Bibles opened. We mustn't assume we are rightly directing our own steps (Jer 10:23). It is time to *radically* reconsider—to reconsider whether we are set up in accordance with biblical principles of polity. Are we hiding from the obvious truth? The slow-down in the movement is a function of some rather serious imbalances in the areas of leadership and authority. We have a choice. If we make the necessary changes to our polity, our movement will remain united, and "nothing will be impossible for us." Leaders will lead within their appropriate spheres of influence and using their God-given gifts. We can and will evangelize the world, because the troops are committed; disillusionment has not set in, despite all our shortcomings. Moreover, credibility of the top level of ICOC leadership is still high. The time is ripe.

Yet if we delay, and end up losing either fire or unity, we will have lost the opportunity of a millennium.

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<sup>9</sup> Consider the following terms from the Greek N.T., some associated with leadership positions and polity and others not, whose usual translation has lost strayed from or obscured the biblical meaning. A more accurate translation is suggested to the right.

church (ekklesia) → assembly  
deacon (diakonos) → servant/minister  
tongues (glossai) → languages

apostle (apostolos) → missionary  
evangelist (euangelistes) → preacher  
bishop (episkopos) → overseer

baptism (baptisma) → immersion  
gospel (euangelion) → good news  
Christ (Christos) → anointed one

disciple (mathetes) → student  
pastor (poimen) → shepherd  
presbyter (presbyteros) → elder