

Models of Accountability

by Daniel Juster

Tikkun International, Inc.

The Models of Accountability - Preface

The use of the word apostle in the text of this paper may cause some confusion. First of all, this usage for contemporary times in no way should be taken as implying that people today have authority on the same level as the original New Testament circle of Yeshua's disciples and those accepted into their circle. These Apostles had authority to write Scripture as the ultimate doctrinal foundation. It is my conviction that God is not revealing new doctrine today.

On the other hand, I believe that Scripture also uses the word *apostle* in a small "a" sense and that no other word adequately describes the Ephesians 4 function which continues in validity today. In my view, *apostle* in this sense refers to one whose calling includes several of the following ministries:

1. Caring for or shepherding pastors.
2. Planting congregations.
3. Traveling to strengthen congregations with foundational teaching and ministry.
4. Overseeing a group of related congregations.

As such an apostle with a small "a" is no greater an ascension of inordinate position than the function of pastor, evangelist, teacher, or prophet. As such, it is a functional term. No other term adequately describes what apostle designates, and I believe we do best to recover this function. The function of today's "apostles" in authority greatly varies in different fellowships. My own concept is a limited one as the paper describes.

Please note the inadequacy of other terms:

1. Bishop - in the Bible, is probably equivalent to elder. However, in Catholic traditions includes oversight of more than one congregation. Yet it developed as an absolute authority in the parish in this context. Hence as biblically defined it does not fit. Post-biblically, it is not true, as used, to our convictions.
2. Missionary - this may be closest to our usage if the person is a planter or overseer of planters as many missionaries are. Yet missionary may also refer to one who flies a missions airplane! It is not a Jewish term.

I believe that the person who is functioning apostolically serves in two of the four enumerated areas. Hence the word does not necessarily imply legal governing function in the life of congregations. However, it may depending on how one sees such a function being used today. At any rate, I would not be a stickler for the word. Men have always functioned in such ways in history,

in all kinds of contexts (Baptist...Judson; Knox, Presbyterian; Ashery-Methodist; etc.) Unfortunately, this function is found more in the early decades of a movement than in the later.

Introduction - A Biblical Theology of Accountability

The rise of our own Messianic Jewish Congregations movement, a movement that is not predominantly under any one historic denominational structure, leaves several questions to be answered. These questions are not necessarily even raised by those in historic structures which have drawn their conclusions on these issues in bygone eras. Other new movements of congregations unconnected to these structures also are raising these questions. Here are a few of them:

1. What is the most Biblical form of government in a local congregation? Is it a democratic model of member authority? Or is it an elder plurality model, or the anointed leader head as governor? Perhaps it is some combination. If so, how do we determine the proper combination?
2. How are congregations to be interrelated? Is each local congregation to be seen as fully autonomous? Or, are congregations to be interrelated? If so how? To a local congregation, a larger region, internationally? How do interrelations work? Is there accountability in these relationships?
3. What are the proper standards of justice, discipline, due process and procedure in congregational life? How do we protect members from abusive authority while providing for the place of legitimate authority and submission? What is the place of charismatic anointing in authority?
4. Is there a significant relationship of accountability to apostolic teams, apostles, leading pastors, and prophets named in Ephesians 4:11ff?

These are crucial questions. Our answers to them may determine the biblical balance and stability of our communities into the future. We propose to survey the Scriptures to see what can be gleaned concerning these issues. Our primary emphasis will be on New Testament teaching since the order of New Covenant congregations of which we are a part came into being on the basis of the New Covenant and the foundational teaching for these congregations is found in the New Covenant Scriptures. However, the Old Covenant Scriptures must not be ignored in answering these questions.

I. Government, Authority and Justice in the Old Covenant Scriptures

Drawing the proper conclusions for New Covenant government from the Old Covenant Scriptures is a difficult task. Major differences are to be noted in the nature of the people of God. Israel in the Bible was a geopolitical entity made up of a people descended from one couple, Abraham and Sarah. New Covenant congregations consist of Jews and Gentiles who affiliate in voluntary association. This is a pronounced difference. The New Covenant people of God transcend nationality (though they are rooted in Israel) and do not constitute any one geopolitical entity.

Hence, the beginning of governance in Israel was through a family model. The father of the clan was the ultimate authority. In the Egyptian sojourn, Jacob remained the head of the clan but Joseph had a higher civil authority due to his position under an autocratic pharaoh.

It is not until the time of Moses that we can begin to see the emergence of leadership models. The Torah pictures Moses as having no desire for authority in Israel. His leadership is by a call of God and is reluctantly accepted. This call for the sake of confronting pharaoh, being an instrument of the supernatural power of God, and being head judge, prophet, and priest in leading Israel from Egypt to the promised land. Moses leadership was the most noteworthy concentration of power in one individual in the entire history of the *Tanakh*. It is worth mentioning in this regard that Moses is described in the Bible as the meekest or most humble man on earth. The concentration of this authority was of a military order and can be explained as follows.

First, the task of leading 600,000 to 2,000,000 people across a desert required an unprecedented military order. Indeed, Israel's conquering of the promised land required a total war mobilization of a whole people for literal war.

Second, it became clear that Moses needed to share his authority and judging with leaders of tens, hundreds, and thousands to carry out his task. Even Moses needed to trust delegated leadership to ensure victory.

Third, the violation of this leadership position produced the most grave punishment, that Moses was precluded from entering into the promised-land.

Fourth, the manifest presence of God in the pillar of fire and cloud demonstrated God's favor on the Mosaic leadership. The violation of Dathan and Abiram in rebellion to his leadership was swiftly punished (Numbers 16) since this was a totally unjust mutiny in a military situation. In addition, we are not told of how God would have dealt with Moses if he had further violated his position. Such was the extraordinary power of God in this situation, that we cannot doubt that God himself would have severely and immediately dealt with Moses.

It should be especially taken to heart that this model of leadership passed on to Joshua alone. It is significant that the mantle did not pass to Moses' son as in the model of Eastern kingship. Joshua, as well, leads in a time of national military mobilization to conquer the land.

The Torah given to Moses divides up the function of prophet, priest and king. These offices are not fully again united until Yeshua, the prophet like Moses. The Torah model produces three flows of mutually related, separated, and accountable authority. The use of Moses' centralized authority as the model for congregational government is hence greatly and obviously suspect. However, to explore this relationship, we must continue our description of Israel's history.

After the time of Joshua, where the basic most intense job of the occupation of the land had been accomplished, the centralized authority of Moses and Joshua passes from the scene. Already by the time of Joshua, a separated priestly office was established whose offices were held by succession or physical descent. This was not, however, the case of either civil government or prophetic offices. Civil government in Israel now passed to the elders in

plurality. Indeed, we find at the end of the book of Joshua that Israel remained faithful in the days of the first elders. Priestly involvement in civil government was by special judicial appeal in Torah outlined cases. However, general government was in the hands of the plurality of elders or judges.

From this we reflect on the Near Eastern form of government reflected in the concept of the elders of the gate. These elders were the leading figures of cities who acted in plurality in judging cases. Leading figures among them achieved a judgeship or ruler status beyond the locality, Judges hence were raised up from among those who judged, those who were deemed by age, experience, and wisdom, apt to rule. The period of the book of Judges can give a false impression, if only a cursory reading is attempted. This impression is that all of Israel was ruled by a succession of autocratic Judges with absolute power. This is not the case at all. Scholarly opinion is near unanimous in holding that judges were regional leaders. Furthermore, judgeships overlapped in time. However, a regional leader with great ability could have a national affect through the wisdom of his rule and his military success against Israel's enemies.

In the government of decentralized authority there was a system of mutual accountability. The Torah made it clear that if a city went astray, and was unrepentant, it was to be punished by other cities gathering together under its judges to afflict the punishment after legally ascertaining the truth of capital accusations.

Decentralized judges as a system avoided abuses of power but was limited in bringing the people to a united faithfulness to God and his Torah with the commitment to national unity. However, as we will point out in examining the book of Samuel, this was due to the hardness of the people's hearts. Scripture hence, early on, points out that authoritarian government is the result of a people's hardness of heart and refusal to be self governing under law.

The *Tanakh* makes it clear that all who function in authority are accountable to the Torah. No man is above the law. This is a great contrast to other Near Eastern societies in which the will of the autocratic king was the law! God's law frees men from the tyranny of man if they are willing to be freed. Hence, in a study of Torah it is valid to conclude that no one in society is beyond the arm of justice. The judges of one area may bring the other judges to judgment. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that priests could not as well be judged if they violated the law. Since all were under the rule of law other judges and priests could bring judgment to bear on priestly cities and towns and even the high priest. ***There is no exception made in the law to applying it and its justice to any member of society who violated it.*** The system of plural judges provided for this application. If one city went astray, decentralization at least provided the safety that all would not go astray. The fact that this standard was not applied in various ages of Israel's history was not at all a matter of God's ideal will but was the failure of leaders and people to be faithful to the standards of God's law.

The Books of *I and II Samuel* provide us with the greatest piece of literature warning against the dangers of authoritarian leadership in the ancient world. The people's clamoring for a king is rejected by the judge Samuel as a horrendous fall from the will of God. God knowing of the people's weakness provided laws for the king in Torah. Kingship was hence part of God's permissive will not his ideal will.

Samuel provides us with a people who desire to be under an authoritarian leader. So also to-day, the relief from responsibility before God causes people to submit to authoritarian models of leadership. Samuel goes to great length to warn the people of the abuses they will suffer under centralized authoritarian leadership. The king's authority will lay heavy burdens on the people from taxation, to land appropriations, to military service for the sake of self-enrichment. Nevertheless, God instructs Samuel to proceed to anoint the king for their clamoring for a king is not a rejection of Samuel but a rejection of God himself.

Anyone who seeks to use the Scriptures to support a non-accountable headship authority after the model of the kings of Israel must seriously deal with these passages and their strong rejection of this as the ideal of God.

The history of Saul already provides us with a clear picture of the dangers of kingship. Saul seeks to overstep the bounds of his authority and perform priestly functions. In addition, we see in Samuel's rebuke of Saul, the beginning of a major prophetic role in Israel's history, that is to be a voice to check abusive kingly power.

The prophetic role in ancient Israel is absolutely unique. Whereas other nations had priestly oracles to discern signs and omens, these functionaries served under the authority of the king. In Israel, the prophets formed independent schools that performed a major function in criticizing authoritarian abuses and in bringing pressure to bear to limit these abuses. This function even extended to announcing the overthrow of a king and announcing his replacement (Jehu's rebellion prophetically supported) or to sanctioning a rebellion against abusive power (the anointing of Jeroboam in his rebellion against Rehoboam and the prophetic offer of covenantal dynasty if he would be faithful in a northern kingdom separate from the south). Yes, prophets fomented uprisings against kings at their most intensive times of opposition.

These amazing prophetic voices preached a message that condemned abuses of authority in these regards:

1. Leading the nation astray in the idolatry of accepting false gods. This sin was the greatest of all since now that power was centralized, the king's apostasy led the whole nation astray.
2. The abuse of standards of justice for the common people. This is definitely the second most important theme in the prophets. Leaders are responsible to hear the grievances of the poor: to not show favoritism and to see that justice and the basis of evidence was ensured in the courts. Ancient Israel had both lower and higher courts, with the highest court being the High Priest and/or the king depending upon the nature of the offense. Justice was defined by standards of the law which limited indentured servitude, provided for land inheritance, required just business practices and required penalties for criminal violations of the law (from murder and thievery to adultery and slander).

The failure to provide a fair system of justice for handling grievances and the idolatry of the nation form the two most prominent prophetic themes. From the king's abuse of power in seizing Naboth's vineyard in the days of Elijah to the enslavement of people against the Jubilee principle in the day of Jeremiah, the prophets continually stood with the people against the tyranny of abusive authority. As we have stated, at periods of the worst abuse, prophets were not beyond calling for the removal of the king.

Hence, our examination of kingship in ancient Israel shows us a system that was not the ideal of God, though God used anointed kings once the people had so chosen. We see a system that was limited by the important role of prophets who were at times killed for their supposed treasonous disloyalty. Strong judges, even under kingship, still maintained a degree of regional authority. The history of kingship in ancient Israel certainly gives no grounds for holding to a kingly authoritarian model for governing local congregations or association of congregations in presbyteries or national bodies in such absolute authority as vested in a leadership individual and even passed on by descent. It is of note that the use of such a model is most prominent not in biblically orthodox faiths but in clearly cultic groups.

A word should be said concerning the provision of the hereditary-priestly office in the Torah. Is this a model for congregational leadership or congregational associations? Let us call attention to these important facts.

First of all, the priestly office and its system of dynastic succession was for the Mosaic temple system and is nowhere spoken of in the New Testament as our model for leadership.

Second, the priestly office did not control what was an equally valid and powerful spiritual office, the office of the prophet.

Third, the priestly office was limited to the specifically described and limited functions of service prescribed in the Torah.

Fourth, a priest who was sinful could be brought to justice. There is no reason to believe that the king or other judges could not discipline a priest for violating the law. Aaron's oldest sons were disciplined and punished by death. Saul's vengeance upon Ahimelech was not a violation of a principle that a king could not bring a priest to justice. Saul was wrong because Ahimelech was not treasonous.

Rather than supporting absolutist authoritarian forms of government, a fair reading of the Old Testament lends credence to these conclusions:

1. Centralized power and authority is not God's ideal. If He is fully accepted as king, a kingship type of authority is neither necessary or desirable.
2. The *Tanakh* shows us a system with checks and balances in which the separate office of prophet, priest and king limited the others power. Hence, the safety of checks and balances are crucial in a valid form of government.
3. The prophetic office provides a model of charismatic non-legally enjoined authority through influence that is distinct from governmental authority and functions as a limit to it.
4. The concern of justice in the courts and the process for those with grievances is an utmost concern in the prophets and must be provided for in any New Covenant system of government considered to be true to the prophetic tradition.
5. The specific forms of government in the Old Testament are not direct models for New Covenant congregational government. Although principles can be gathered that are more uni-

versal, New Covenant government functions in an order of congregations that is essentially different from the national order of the people of God in the *Tanakh*.

II. Authority and Congregational Government in the New Testament

A. The Teaching of Yeshua

A specific form of government is not explicitly brought out in the teaching of Yeshua. However, there are principles for good government.

We need to realize that the period of the first century was vastly different than the Old Testament period. The civil and religious authority which was allowed to the Jewish people in the land (by Roman Rule) was now to be found in judges who sat in plurality, forming lower and higher courts. There were judges of areas, and elder judges in plurality over synagogues. There were appeals to lower Sanhedrin and to the ultimate Sanhedrin said to be the Supreme Sanhedrin constituted of both priests and rabbis (scribes and pharisees). Although we must have caution in regard to assuming that the idealized picture of the Talmud is truly accurate to first century conditions, most would agree that these features were part of the terrain of first century Jewish life in the land.

1. Synagogues proliferated and were ruled by a plurality of elders each of whom was recognized as a community leader known for wisdom and the respect with which he was held in the community.
2. Lower courts or bet din with pluralities of judges that applied the law to cases by majority rule.
3. Lower Sanhedrins that served as courts of appeal and made rulings by majority opinion in cases brought to them.
4. The Supreme Sanhedrin, the high court, was the last court of appeals. This high court could determine with finality the application and interpretation of law in cases brought to them. This authority is called in the Talmud, the keys of the kingdom and the binding nature of its decisions was such that whatever was bound on earth (with regard to judicial decision) was bound in heaven (supported by and had the backing of God).

Although Yeshua recognized the legitimacy of this judicial authority (the Scribes and Pharisees act on Moses seat so practice what they prescribe Matthew 23), He yet was preparing for the replacement of the religious authority of the Sanhedrin by the disciples He had chosen.

Matthew 16, 18, and 21 are watershed passages for understanding the principles that apply to congregational government. These passages are to be understood in the light of the Jewish context outlined above. Before drawing out the teaching and implications of these passages it is well to first recall the general teaching of Yeshua on leadership.

The united teaching of Yeshua associated leadership with broader servanthood. Hence, we find that Yeshua chose twelve disciples. A pronouncement is given to Peter, but the disciples basi-

cally function in plurality. Indeed, the severest rebuke is given to those disciples who seek to be in positions of greater authority. Yeshua rather teaches that the greatest (the one with the most authority) is to be the one who demonstrates the broadest servanthood. He himself demonstrates this by washing the disciple's feet and rebuking those with a concern to know who would have greater authority. Leadership characterized by washing each others feet and laying down ones life for the other was a magnificent revelation.

This is a consistent theme in the Gospels. In addition, the Messiah speaks in the strongest terms against those who would exercise overlordship and calls such styles "Gentile" leadership! This does not mean that the New Testament does not provide human leadership and authority in God, but it does mean that the leadership is different in character from the world. The cross is the path to authority. We are called to take up our cross of self denial and loving service; to follow Him. As part of this we are to eschew honorific titles such as father, rabbi, and teacher. There should not be a clergy-laity distinction among Gods people. The leaders of Gods people are humble servant leaders who are empowered by the manifest presence of the Spirit; they may have functions after their names but not titles before their names.

Any true understanding of New Testament leadership and governmental authority must recognize this broad context. It was in these regards that first century Jewish leadership was lacking. Hence their opposition to Yeshua; light and darkness were opposed. This forms the background for Yeshua's teaching that the Sanhedrin will be replaced by the disciples as the supreme court of religious authority in the kingdom of God.

Peter's confession of Yeshua as the Messiah in Matthew 16 forms the context for Yeshua's first announcement of this authority shift. Peter is addressed, but contextually this applies to the 12 disciples as a whole whom Peter represents. He is given the keys to the kingdom of heaven. The implications of this are unmistakable to one familiar with the first century context. Yeshua is giving the authority claimed by the Sanhedrin to the disciples.

Furthermore, Matthew 18, while repeating the statement about "the keys" and binding and loosing" does so in a context of affirming first century judicial process. This process is the proper one for confronting another in sin. Matthew 18:15 is the most crucial passage in Scripture in delineating due process to ensure justice in the congregations Yeshua's disciples will establish. This passage, which should now be read, establishes that individuals should first confront one another alone. This safeguards the reputation of the one in error and gives an opportunity for repentance before a general knowledge of the sin would destroy the reputation of the brother. However, if he does not listen, he is to be confronted again with two or three present. This provides a greater weight of confrontation and might lead to repentance. However, it also provides two or three witnesses to confirm the truth if there is no repentance. This is clearly the language of judicial procedure based on Torah and universal in the courts of Judaism. Yeshua was herein providing for the courts of his congregations as Paul noted in I Corinthians 5 and 6.

If he refuses to then listen, it is to be brought to the congregation. (The synagogue is probably the background model for understanding this.) If he refuses to listen to the congregation, he is to be considered as a tax collector or as a publican (e.g., not part of the community of faith, or disfellowshipped).

Some have wondered if this passage means that the congregation as a whole is to sit and render judgment as judge and jury. This is impossible both in the terms of the context of Jewish Ju-

dicial procedure and in terms of the context of the passages. The keys to the kingdom represents the power of judicial decision. This is given to the disciples not to the congregants as a whole. These passages speak of the transfer of supreme authority as a court from the Sanhedrin to the disciples. This is the high court, as seen in operation in Acts 15. Local congregations under the disciples would form lower courts (I Corinthians 5, 6). Matthew 18 rather envisions a situation where the evidence is presented in the congregation which urges repentance upon the sinner in the hope of avoiding the final decision which will be issued by a plurality of judges. The leaders bring the congregation together to hear the evidence and then finally to hear the rendered decision. A study of the New Testament will show that those sins requiring death or exile in the *Tanakh* required disfellowshipping in the New Testament. There are these additions failure to be willing to be reconciled to a brother, and apostasy from faith in Yeshua (Galatians 1).

There are several noteworthy implications among congregations for governmental structures in the body of believers. Since Yeshua addresses this to the disciples as if your brother sins against you," he includes all who are brothers in Yeshua as subject to a Matthew 18 process of correction and discipline. This is not only in accord with the passage but is according to the Jewish context in which no one was above the law, but anyone could be disciplined by the courts, even if in leadership, by the plurality of other judges. No exceptions must be allowed.

Hence, we note this enormous conclusion for all governing structures in congregations and in ministry institutions: Any structure of government that removes leadership from being subject to a Matthew 18 process of correction, evidence and discipline is in severe violation of Scripture. Furthermore, any structure of government that does not provide a fair system of justice, and for witnesses to present evidence for and against the accused so as to provide a truly fair day in court is in severe violation of Scripture. Lastly, privately dispensed disfellowshipping where the evidence is not presented to the community before the decision is rendered or which ostracizes other believers with no due process is in clear violation of this passage. When the process of justice is secretive, it is open to abuse and may very well provide no justice at all. Matthew 18 endorses the basic nature of Jewish judicial procedures.

Since Yeshua's words to His disciples set up His high court, we should expect that the establishment of congregations would establish lower courts vested in the leaders of local congregations. Hence there would be lower courts and courts of appeal. As in first century Jewry and in our own civil courts, higher courts provide a check on the possible errors of lower courts. Higher courts tie together lower courts in mutual accountability. Higher courts also have the right to hear or not to hear a case on the merits of the case itself. These established procedures in Judaism and western law are assumed in such passages as Matthew 18 and I Corinthians 6.

B. Authority and Governance in the Book of Acts

The book of Acts provides a picture that is at best a general description. It is first of all clear that the Jerusalem faith community is under the authority of the disciples of Yeshua in plurality. Leading figures in the early chapters are Peter, John and James (Jacob) the Son of Alphaeus, those three that had a special relationship with Yeshua. The nature of the governance of this community, except that it is in the hands of these disciples as elders, is left unclear. Is there one head elder? Peter seems to have this role: Is he the final decision maker, or do the disciples in plurality constitute the decision making body? It would seem the latter, since no absolute role

of authority is mentioned for anyone. Yet this is not clearly stated. We do see the appointment of deacons as sub authorities who both service and oversee the distribution of funds and goods in the community.

The latter chapters of Acts reveal more specifics. In Acts 11, the other elders call Peter to account with regard to his preaching to Cornelius. his defense is accepted by the elder plurality.

The ministry of Paul begins to bring out the picture of the relationship of Apostolic authority and elders. The Apostles are sent in teams (plurality) to establish new congregations. They are sent (in the case of Paul, Barnabas, and Silas) from the Antioch community. When they establish these new congregations they appoint elders. These elders are not elected by popular vote. However, as I Timothy 5 brings out, the response of the people to the candidate for appointment was certainly a consideration. Yet the model is that the spiritual authority appoints and transfers spiritual authority. *There is no instance of individuals running against each other in elections for office.*

Once these elders are appointed, it appears that they functioned in plurality in the governance of the communities of faith. Apostles in the planting stage certainly seem to be the authorities. Yet once elders are appointed it appears that governance has been transferred to them. The book of Acts never singles out any individuals as being appointed as heads. The consistent witness in passage after passage is that when the leaders were called, it never named individuals but *elders in plurality* (Acts 19).

In Acts 15, we find a description of the most judicial decision of binding and loosing recorded in the New Testament. The council of elders meets together to decide the issue of the relationship of Jew and Gentile in the body of the Messiah James speaks the final word which is accepted by the council. James, the brother of Yeshua, is clearly the leader-moderator of the council. However, it certainly appears that the decision of the council is an elder plurality decision that accepts James' perspective. This is more clearly established by the presence of Peter, who is at least the equal of James, and the presence of Paul who claimed in Galatians 1 and 2 an equal apostolic authority to the others.

Hence, in summary, we find these features in the Book of Acts:

1. Local governance as vested in a plurality of elders.
2. Apostles appoint elders and transfer their authority.
3. There is no clear head of the first century Messianic movement, but a plurality of Apostles and apostolic flows.
4. The one gathering of Apostles and elders to make a significant decision is made as a council in plurality. These factors should not overly surprise us since plurality government was the nature of governance in Jewish society, both in synagogues, and in the Sanhedrin.

This is further confirmed in the gathering of leaders in Acts 21, where key figures are not even named, and in Paul's calling together the plurality of Jewish leaders in Acts 28.

C. Authority and Governance in the Epistles

The Epistles confirm the basic picture of the book of Acts. First of all, Paul enjoins Timothy to appoint elders (1:5). He does not tell him to appoint congregational heads in any specific passage. The criteria for elders provides us with a high standard. They must prove themselves in

maturity of faith, stability of family life, hospitality, ability to teach and be looked at in high regard by the community.

It is significant that no epistle addresses any individual as the head of the spiritual community. It is always addressed to the church, to the plurality of leaders, or to the elders among you (I Peter 5). Derek Prince had compiled the statistics on this and found over twenty references to a plurality of community leaders. This is an extraordinary fact.

It is sometimes stated that the pastorals address a head pastor, but this is clearly not so. Titus and Timothy are addressed as apostles, as is clearly reflected in their roles under Paul in the book of Acts.

Only the book of Revelation brings the possibility of heads of churches being addressed. The letters of the seven churches are addressed to the angel, or messenger of each particular church. Is this angel the head pastor of the church, an Overseer over a city, or an angelic heavenly guard of the church? This is a highly debated point. Baptists derive the title of their pastor representative at their conventions from this passage in Revelation 2 and 5 (messengers). No information is given as to who these messengers are or how they function in plurality with others if they are human representatives.

It should be noted that the local churches were not only under the governance of a plurality of elders but were in relational accountability to apostolic figures as well. Yet this apostolic authority was by relationship and influence. This is all reflected in I Corinthians 5 and 6 in which the elder-leadership is enjoined to disfellowship and incestuous member and to establish a court within the church to decide grievances and disputes with Matthew 18 as a basis. Believers are not to go to the civil courts in their cases against one another. Authority in the local congregation acts as a court of authority. There was no legal civilly enforceable power in the apostles authority. The church was not a society related to civil laws, powers, penalties and enforcement. All authority was spiritual and relational. Hence, if a congregation rejected apostolic input, there was no recourse to civil enforcement.

Apostles themselves seemed to function in a plurality of relational accountability. Even Peter, certainly the leading apostle, if there was any, could be sternly rebuked by Paul. Peter was brought to repentance by his rebuke (Galatians 1,2).

Paul's quarrel with Barnabas is not resolved by requiring one to submit to a more absolute authority in the other: Barnabas, as a matter of fact, was the more senior figure who had previously been related to the twelve and brought Paul to be accepted by the Apostolic circle.

This basically concludes the picture reflected in the New Testament. It is a picture of natural *relational accountability* (accountability is a function of relationships) governance of local congregations.

Several questions, however, remain unclarified in these texts. For example, is the plurality of elders spoken of the elders for a city? Perhaps each elder functions as a head of a local congregation but in plurality with other elders as the elders of the believers or "*ecclesia*" of the city. Or, perhaps these communities are so small that the plurality of elders is within a specific gathering of believers. The possibilities for interpretations have produced various models

of government. For example, Baptist denominations and Assemblies of God have considered the head pastor as the only elder. Other leaders in congregations are seen as deacons. Presbyterians have seen the plurality of elders to function over each local congregation. The head elder is the pastor; yet he must function in consensus with the other elders. The pastors relate the congregations together as the church of the city through the counsel of elders known as Presbytery. By this congregations are in mutual accountability. Baptist pastors find accountability to other pastors in their district. However, the authority of a Baptist pastor is subject to the democratic acceptance of his congregation.

Ephesians 4:11 demonstrates furthermore that plurality need not imply coequality, at least not in the sense of sameness of function. Those within the local body or without are recognized in the Spirit that gives the individual a greater measure of authority to which others defer when this individual functions in his office. However, this deference is through recognizing the Spirit's work and does not contradict the plurality-consensus emphasis of the New Testament. Anointed leadership may be recognized and deferred to, but in a context of a consensus of agreement.

III. Models of Leadership

New factors in our times require that we carefully apply biblical authority to our specific situation. First of all, with the relationship of civil authority to religious authority and the necessity to define our legal order for the sake of the state, for the handling of funds in bank accounts, for the acquisition, maintenance, and sale of properties, and to be released from taxes, it is necessary to legalize our governmental structure in such documents as incorporation papers, association by-laws, and constitutions. Relational realities are reflected or expedient reasons in legal definition. This was unnecessary in New Testament times since Roman law would not recognize any authority in New Testament communities.

Second, the rediscovery of the role of Ephesians 4:11 gift-ministries requires an approach which broadens our understanding beyond the concept of the traditional pastor and his board. We purpose to herein describe what we consider on the basis of Scripture to be unacceptable models, even cultic models. We will also describe acceptable models. Lastly, we will lay out what we believe to be our preferred model on a natural relational basis.

A. Unacceptable Models

I. The Unaccountable Authority

Mistakenly interpreted and misapplied Old Testament Scriptures (and less so New Testament Scriptures) are used by the insecure and unaccountable to defend an authoritarian model of leadership. The Moses' model of leadership is amazingly defended as the biblical ideal. David's submission to Saul is described to define the necessity of submission to even anointed but sinfully off leadership. Yet, how far did David submit? He did not submit to the detriment of his life and was willing to escape from Saul and allow a band of rebels to gather around him. Further, he positioned himself to gain the kingship instead of submitting to Saul's dynastic successors.

The unaccountable head authority model is basically defended by a selective reading of biblical texts taken out of context. Those who defend it overlook the overwhelming evidence for the ba-

sic trends of Scripture which are plurality-consensus, anointing, recognition, decentralization and checks and balances.

This model is found in various forms. One model is that of the absolute final authority of a head pastor who can be disciplined or removed by no one else. A misreading of the New Testament also produces a misapplication of the meaning of Apostolic authority. In this model, final absolute authority is vested in the non-accountable apostle who is the decision-maker over many local churches.

Leaders who achieve this level of authority under this model are not subject to a Matthew 18 process of correction, discipline or even removal. It is true that a degree of accountability is maintainable even in this model. The pastor can lose the following of his flock. The apostle may lose the following of congregational leaders submitted to him. Yet we should recognize that in fallen human beings, even redeemed ones, power corrupts and is a great temptation. As we have seen in the books of Samuel, people too easily desire to opt out of responsibility to accept authoritarian leadership. It is not at all helpful to the cause of the Kingdom to further this sinful tendency by such false teaching. Indeed, the human tendency is toward either rebellion to legitimate authority or to opt out of responsibility to submit to tyranny. Neither should be fostered.

Such false models of authority preclude prophetic correction and lead to a thwarting of justice for the poor. A few examples of the disaster of such authority can herein be disclosed. In a day in which congregations give significant funds, buildings are purchased, and other significant decisions are made, let us note the obvious imbalance of these models.

Pastor A incorporates his congregation as tax exempt. The congregation gives generously, producing funds for the purchase of buildings, equipment and a base of giving toward other significant ministries. Since Pastor A has defended himself as the final authority, he has strengthened all his incorporation documents and by-laws accordingly. Unfortunately, Pastor A is discovered to have an adulterous relationship with his secretary. The other leaders seek to bring him to discipline. Because Pastor A is the ultimate authority, he refuses to follow a Matthew 18 process. He defends his behavior as right because his first marriage was not God's will, but that his adulterous relationship is his true spiritual marriage. The other leaders only recourse is to spread the word to a shocked congregation. Because Pastor A will not step down, the congregation leaves. Pastor A cannot keep up the properties. Therefore, he sells them and places over a million in the bank. He then pays himself a salary for ministry from the interest. This is not a speculative example.

There is no way to adequately deal with sin in the head leader by this very faulty model. Furthermore, is this of benefit in extending the kingdom? Instead of a continuing congregation under a new leader, a community has been ruined.

Under this false model, there is no way to remove even a demented pastor. Even one demented through physical injury could still claim his authority. This model usually leads to secretiveness in handling funds, decision-making, etc. Although we do not defend a democratic model of decision-making, it is certainly the case that disclosure is another safeguard. It requires that we pull the flock behind the directions of the leaders by persuasion. It helps God's people to mature.

Authoritarian models are based on insecurity. Countless lives have been wounded from such abuse. Without due process, people can be disfellowshipped, drummed out of community and ostracized, with no justice and due process.

Basically, this model of authority is dangerously authoritarian.

2. The Rejection of Authority

The other model of congregational life that is unacceptable is the total democratic model. In this model, all direction is by popular vote. There is no recognition of or defense given to the more spiritually mature in our midst (elders) or acceptance of the anointed offices of Ephesians 4:11ff through which the authority of the Spirit is mediated.

The problem with this model is twofold. First, it is nowhere found in the Scriptures. Second, it produces a situation whereby without leadership there is no clear vision and hence no significant extension of the kingdom of God.

B. Acceptable Models

All acceptable models have these characteristics. First, somewhere in the nature of the set up, the head leader is accountable to a plurality of leaders. Furthermore, processes are established so that leaders can be disciplined, corrected, and even removed. Lastly, there is a fair Matthew 18 process so that grievances may be justly adjudicated. There is a due process so that no one accused does not have a fair day in court with clear evidence presented. It should be stated that governmental authority in the body extends to the setting of congregational direction, to discipline and correct according to the Word, and to counsel and exhort. It does not extend to hearing God's will for another person. Everyone must himself confirm counsel and direction in his own heart. Within the boundaries of the Word of God, we need to recognize that each individual has the Holy Spirit and is shepherded by Him directly and is ultimately accountable to Yeshua through the Holy Spirit.

I. The Accountable Overseer Model (The Bishop)

In this model, the apostle (some would hold bishop) is the ultimate authority in decision-making for congregations under his authority. The person who functions on this model usually delegates decision-making authority to pastors and/or elders at a local congregational level for practicality. However, if push comes to shove, if disputes arise, the overseer-apostle has the final word. On this model, the overseer-apostle is accountable to a plurality of other apostles or overseers with whom he is in relationship. Matthew 18 processes are established whereby local congregational leaders act as the lower court and the bishop-overseer as the higher court. However, appeal can be made to the plurality of apostles for the discipline and even the removal of this Overseer. This model, which has been adopted by some charismatic renewal communities is amazingly similar to classical Episcopalianism.

Although this model is within the boundaries of acceptability, I believe it misreads the nature of Apostolic authority in the New Testament. Furthermore, it can vest too much power in the apostolic-overseer. It does seem to me that congregational government is primarily in the hands of local plural elders who are accountable to the influence of but not the final decision-making authority of the apostle. The elders live in closer relationship to the local flock. Such is this relational accountability that it is unlikely that the people would follow the apostle against their elder shepherds locally. Hence, the apostle must legally incorporate these principles to gain this authority to preclude against the possibility of losing his persuasion with local elders. Is this really desirable? I do not think it is. Yet it can be defended upon a certain reading of the meaning of apostolic authority and its place in today's congregations.

2. The Accountable Head Pastor

Under this model, authority is vested in the head pastor. He may serve with a plurality of elders or deacons in a local congregation, but he is ultimately the final decision-maker in the local congregation. Under this model, the head pastor finds accountability to a council (presbytery) of head pastors. This council may be led by a head-pastor or apostolic figure. However, he is not the final decision-maker in this council, but is subject to the consensus of the whole. Good leadership in this model seeks the support of those led. Matthew 18 processes are set up whereby the local elders under the head pastor serve as the lower court and the council of pastors serve as the higher court. The head pastor may be disciplined, corrected, and even removed by the plurality of leaders in the pastoral council.

Gift ministries may be recognized and deferred to. Apostolic authority may be recognized and deferred to. However, it is an authority by influence and persuasion whereby the plurality of the council must still come to consensus. Local head pastors seek to lead their local elders to consensus.

This model has been adopted by many congregations in the charismatic congregational movement known as the restoration movement. I have observed it to function quite well. One can see that the first model above with the head apostle might incorporate a presbytery or council level within its framework as well.

This model is amazingly like classical presbyterianism. My only comment on this model is that it seems to place too much emphasis on head pastors. The New Testament evidence seems to favor a plurality of leaders in localities. However, I am aware that the elders in the New Testament may be interpreted as the joint leadership from several local congregations. References in the church fathers to presbyteries could refer to councils of pastors or to local congregational elderships.

3. The Co-Equal Elder Plurality Model

This model is built upon the biblical evidence of elder plurality governance in the New Testament. The elders in plurality serve as the lower court in Matthew 18 processes. There may or

may not be affiliations with other congregations either locally, regionally, or nationally producing higher courts.

Models 1 and 2 above definitely reject the absolute autonomy of local congregations. In fact, they are incapable of functioning that way. This model may function in an autonomous congregation model or in a non-autonomous model where even legal authority is vested in a body which represents their congregations.

Experientially, I have seen weaknesses in this model. Plurality of authority does seem to be a correct stress. However, coequality overlooks the various levels of ministry anointing and leadership ability that God may grant. In any group of plural leadership someone usually stands out as anointed to lead the others even if final decisions are by consensus. Furthermore, the place of Ephesians 4:11 gift ministries and the importance of showing deference to the Authority of the Spirit when it manifests through these offices is important to recognize.

4. Democratic Variants

We should also note those variants of models which include a democratic voting dimension for the people. In democratic models which are acceptable, leadership can be recognized, deferred to, and respected. However, leadership can ultimately be removed or accepted by congregational vote. Hence leaders must bring congregants to a consensus for major congregational directions, must see the budget approved by the congregation and ultimately must recognize a mutual accountability between leaders and people.

On this model, Matthew 18 processes must be confirmed by the whole congregation affirming the discussions of the leaders with regard to major disciplinary cases.

At its best, those who use this model do so by a congregation affirming or not affirming the directions of the leaders and nominations to leadership made by leaders. At its worst, this model accepts people running against each other for spiritual office.

The problem with this model is that it is not found in Scripture. It is an accommodation to our democratic political organization in the West. It gives the weakest new member equal vote with the mature.

However, we should recognize that even Scripture holds forth the ideal of persuading the people to be in convictional unity with leaders.

This model may relate to leadership figures in the Ephesians 4:11 offices, but they would do so by congregational consensus. Furthermore, there may be affiliations with other bodies by representation. These bodies may form higher courts of appeal. However, the ultimate legal authority is in the local congregation. It can reject the decision of these bodies and leave such affiliations at the will of the people. The only recourse of the higher court body is to remove the local congregation from its membership.

This model is not presently popular in the charismatic renewal but there are exceptions. As we have outlined it, this model is a classical expression of congregationalism.

It should be noted that today's Presbyterianism, Lutheranism, and Episcopalianism have incorporated elements of democratic government through a constitutional system whereby some decisions are eldership decisions, other pastoral decisions, and others for congregational decision.

5. A Natural Scriptural Model

It is always the prerogative of an author to save his view for last and defend it most clearly. This paper is no exception.

However, let me first state that I believe no model of government insures success. All of the acceptable models can work in a God-centered people filled with the Spirit. None of the models will produce success where true godly spiritual life is lacking. However, my experience has brought me to the conclusion that due to the deceitful nature of the human heart and the dangers of the corruption of power, financial disclosure, checks and balances, and clear standards of due process are absolutely essential. With gratitude I can affirm these standards as adopted by the *Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability* that tie together the broadest representation of para-congregational organizations. These standards are no less important to congregational organizations.

The model of accountability I desire to present provides both for servant-leader authority and for accountability.

In my view, the ultimate legal authority in a congregation is best vested in a plurality of elders in a congregation. It is my view that the size of what we call congregations in the New Testament were probably similar in size to what we know as congregations today, even if at that time they represented a whole city. However, although I invest ultimate legal authority in local congregational elderships, this does not mean that these congregations may not be covenantally related through joint councils in local and national levels that provide courts of appeal. Furthermore, they may also be related through being connected to the same apostolic flow (influence of an apostolic figure). I see Apostolic and prophetic leadership as greatly needed in pastoring pastors, helping to establish new congregations and strengthening these congregations. However, I believe apostolic authority works best by covenant relationship, respect, and persuasion rather than by final legal authority. A congregational constitution may even include in its constitution its principles of appeal to higher bodies including other leaders, apostles, etc., in disputes that are too difficult to handle at the local elder level. Our local congregation, in fact, has incorporated the principle that the removal of the head elder (pastor) must be confirmed by other pastors and apostles with whom we are in relationship.

We have furthermore included financial disclosure to gain the convictional support of our people toward the programs we finance.

However, in my view, if a congregation and its leaders are not in sync with its affiliated body, apostle, etc., nothing is gained, in my view, by having the legal authority to force conformity. This only produces further alienation. However, a higher judicatory can declare a congregation to be in moral sin or cultic error, and hence disfellowship them from the larger body.

Hence, authority beyond the local congregation is covenantally relational and not primarily legal. If we look at authority as relationally based, and if we recognize the importance of unity to succeed in the power of the Spirit, I believe we shall see principles of accountability both upward and downward.

Furthermore, we need to take leadership anointing into account and recognize that some are leaders of tens, some of hundreds, some of thousands, etc. Co-equality models tend to produce little growth and kingdom anointing because they do not recognize and flow with levels of calling and anointing.

These two ideas lead me to this model as my ideal at this time, a model which outlines the inter-accountability of the people and various leadership levels.

Level one is the congregants and their relationship to elder plurality. Although the elders are the final decision-making body, there is a degree of mutual accountability between people and elders. If the elders do not bring the people to unity with their directions, they will lose the people. To do so, and if a mature people are desired, it is worth facing some criticism that will come from disclosing the directions, finances of the congregation etc., to the people and seeking a sense of their input and confirmation. By the same token, the people need to have a submissive attitude to their elders and to seek to see their viewpoint, be teachable, and swing with their directions, if possible. The people are to be correctable and teachable before their senior leaders.

Level two is the relationship between elder and head elder. Although I affirm plurality strongly, in my view, a group of elders will find in their midst one to lead their plurality. This simply works best in my experience. Such a person should be primarily pastorally oriented since the pastor has a heart for the sheep that sees best. The goal of elder plurality is agreement in the Spirit. Direction may come from the prophet motivated or others. Yet the key is that the head elder-pastor must bring the other elders in consensus. It is when there is agreement in the Spirit that we may find the power to see the vision fulfilled. Therefore, the head elder is accountable to the other elders and vice versa. I believe the elders can even remove, correct, and discipline the head elder, but this is so momentous, it is best to include apostolic leadership or at least other mature pastors to confirm this and to thereby gain unity in the flock. Let us note the organic community that God builds is more importantly to be preserved than the position of any one man.

Level three is the relationship of elders and the head elder (pastor) to apostolic leaders, councils of leaders, and larger bodies. Apostolic ministry is an important plus to congregations. These figures provide pastoral help to pastors, leadership to councils, and larger bodies, and help plant and strengthen congregations. First of all, I believe that councils of leaders can be led by either leading pastors or apostolic figures who still have sufficient local presence to provide leadership. These bodies provide more than fellowship and care for head elder couples and perhaps leaders of significant trans-local ministries. However, they can also be a significant court of appeal by either confirming or sending representatives to confirm or overturn decisions of local congregational courts when necessary. However, this is by voluntary acceptance. Local leadership can legally withdraw from the council.

In such bodies, the relationship of the council leader is very similar to the relationship between the head elder (pastor) and his local elders.

Congregations may relate similarly to national bodies which may also perform the function of providing a court of appeal. However, since national bodies relate such geographically distant groups, it is difficult for them as a whole to provide adequate relational accountability. Certainly, they may remove a congregation from membership and be called upon to adjudicate difficult situations when there is no other more adequate solution. Regionalization and decentralization is helpful.

National bodies form and naturally relate congregations together through their leadership. This may be done by congregations directly or through a representation of joint congregational councils. Efficiency is the null. National bodies hence perform best as service organizations. Due to their spread out nature, national bodies best function as the coming together of joint apostolic flows and councils that are accepted in their own authority while providing a place for apostolic leaders to develop covenant relationships leading to mutual accountability. These recognized leaders function in similar plurality and mutual accountability under a recognized leader (president, Apostle, director, etc.)

It can readily be seen that this model gives a great deal of autonomy to local congregations while providing for a place for higher-servant authority, courts of appeal, and relational accountability based on a plurality governance model without the extreme of coequality. It incorporates the truth concerning mans sinful nature, the dangers of centralized authoritarian leadership, the place for recognizing various levels of leadership (tens, hundreds, thousands, etc.) and is in keeping with the best insights on checks and balances from both the *Tanakh* and the New Testament. It provides for justice, due process and anointed charismatic gifting in leaders which recognizes authority given by the Spirit.

IV. Unity in a World of Differing Models

The call of Scripture for the unity of the whole body is a heart cry of the Word of God (John 17). One of the sources of disunity is the lack of providing congregational discipline that can be respected across the body. Today, we see only a partial revival due to moral laxity and lack of biblical discipline in the body of believers. In some groups, the willingness to discipline capital sin for the sake of the restoration of the offender and for the sake of the purity of the body is well nigh non-existent.

Furthermore, those communities that do discipline may not be within the boundaries of acceptable models of government. In addition, because there are differing acceptable models among congregations in the same locality, there is sufficient mistrust so as not to accept the others discipline. This furthers division as people in unrepentant sin are received in other congregations.

I believe it is time for the whole body of Bible believers to come together in unity on the issue of congregational discipline, despite their differences, if they hold to any one of the acceptable models. Once we ascertain that there are fair processes according to Matthew 18 with due process and justice in another congregation, council, apostolic flow, etc., we should seek to uphold the discipline of these various bodies. To not do so spreads division, mistrust and allows serious sin and impurity in our midst.

To accomplish this end, I believe that local loosely knit representative presbyteries should be formed in every locality to affirm these principles. Perhaps they could serve as a court of appeal when due process and justice is severely and grossly violated. However, since councils and apostolic flows are not defined by locality but by relationships, such a loose body must not usurp more primary relational accountability. Yet, it can be a place of voluntary submission for unsolvable disputes affecting a locality.

We also must respect differing convictions in certain doctrinal positions. For example, the Assembly of God precludes a divorced and remarried person from ordination forever no matter what the circumstance. They cannot impose this standard on everyone, yet in the broader evangelical consensus, we can cooperate while respecting their standards for their own communities.

Two areas that need to be addressed are the letter of transfer principle and the responsibility of the body as a court to issue clear decisions concerning divorce and the right to remand (the "get" in Judaism).

First of all, under all acceptable models, when due process according to Matthew 18 is part of the governance of a congregation or council, it is crucial that other congregations respect this discipline. I believe that it is time to reaffirm and reestablish the historic letter of transfer principle. This means that we will only receive members from other Bible believing congregations when a letter of transfer is given to clear the person for new affiliation. This is best done in writing. An oral transfer can be acceptable too. However writing is proof of just procedure.

Of course, this will not be possible with congregations that violate Matthew 18 processes, do not ever issue transfer, or consider anyone who leaves their membership to be automatically considered rebellious. Congregations and councils hence need to ascertain the reasons for transfer refusal. Such refusal should not in all cases be respected if the policies and procedures are not just in the transferring group. Secondly, the refusal to accept the freedom of members to transfer is an abuse of authority. A persons desire to transfer may be a spiritually off decision, but in my view only sin of a disfellowship level of seriousness or a present process of discipline connected to such sin should be a grounds of refuse to issue transfer. Scripture does outline disfellowship-levels of sin.

The greatest discipline problem in the body today, reflective of todays moral deterioration, is the problem of divorce and remarriage-especially with regard to leaders. We recognize that some denominations interpret the Scriptures to preclude divorce and remarriage for the believer under all circumstances. However, those communities that do believe that there are Biblical grounds for divorce [unrepented of adultery, incest, homosexuality, desertion (physical or psychological), or physical violence (as a type of desertion) with a right to remand need to issue a clear document giving that right. It is up to the leaders to seek all the evidence and to issue a spiritual judicial decision with regard to the divorce.

To not do so is to spread confusion, doubt and division in the body. of course, those believing congregations with stricter laws will refuse to issue such a document. At this point the person can either submit and never remarry or not divorce or find a congregation where the divorce can be granted. Congregations of stricter interpretation will, of course, not be able to recognize

the legitimacy of the divorce and remarriage. (We all should doubt the legitimacy of a man remaining in leadership, eldership or above, after a divorce until a time of restoration is provided.)

How do we deal with these differences of standard? It is by issuing clear statements of acceptance or rejection of the divorce in a context that outlines the standard used by the issuing group. This can provide a basis for the knowledge of future groups which can affirm the decision or reject it or issue a new judgment according to a possibly more tolerant standard.

Despite differences among Bible believing congregations, we can at least provide clarity in these situations. Presently, we have divorces and remarriages even among leaders (sometimes with no biblical grounds even under more tolerant interpretations) with no religious divorce document issued. Hence, confusion and doubt prevail concerning the right response to the individuals involved. This brings division in the body. We have much to learn from the Rabbis on judicial decisions in this regard. A civil divorce is certainly not adequate for the believer.

This paper is the result of years of observation and prayerful thought. I certainly hope it is helpful to our congregations.

Footnote: The Absolute Minimum

The leader who believes in a very strong level of authority is still able to see that accountability is built into its structure:

1. First beyond legal by-laws — He can develop strong relationships with others who will be a relational tie of sufficient strength to persuade him to step down if in real difficulty. These should preferably be peers not under his authority.

2. He can make provision to be removed by a fair process if he is found to be in gross immorality or gross doctrinal error. By specifying what these would be from Biblical lists that give grounds for disfellowship and by requiring the confirmation of pastoral peers, it is well high impossible to remove a pastor who doesn't deserve to be removed. Although a leader may fear a removal clause, such a fear is ungrounded. I know of no example where unjust removal has taken place where the safeguards of peer confirmation have been added as part of the process. This is after 25 years of congregational life.

It should be noted that when a disqualified person remains in leadership, people not only leave, but the fabric of Community and relationships is torn. Some are deceived and remain. Many are wounded and lost to the kingdom's core of effective servants. Not only the leader's position is to be protected, but the community (the sheep)!

Financial integrity is very important to accountability. Every individual is a steward of his funds. He should know what he is giving towards. It is grossly unjust that the non-accountable leader can invest the assets of the congregation (after destroying the community) in such a way that he is perpetually paid a ministerial salary from the interest. Gross removal clauses and financial standards prevent these abuses. In my view, such a policy is still too centralized in the authority of one man, but it is in the ballpark of what I can live with. I can positively relate to such a ministry. However, when there is no explicitly laid out, accountability and grounds for removal, I am quite troubled.

Several of the ECFA standards are valid for congregations as well as other organizations.