It has usually been maintained by several scholars that the ecclesiastical situation reflected in the Pastoral Epistles is akin to that of the early second century, and therefore is much too developed to belong to the age of Paul.¹

If the evidence supports this claim it would, of course, be impossible to maintain the Pauline authorship of these epistles.

It is not our purpose to deal in this lecture with all the problems of the data and the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. We are only concerned with the question: is there a real difference between the Pastoral Epistles and the other letters of Paul with reference to church order. In other words: is there a difference between the Pauline elder and his colleague in the Pastoral Epistles suppose he is a non-Pauline office bearer?

It is often said in New Testament criticism since the time of Baur that Paul does not signify any concern about organisation within the church. The great Apostle had no interest in church government. He, on the contrary envisages a charismatic ministry to be operating in the Corinthian community.

It is often maintained that the Pastoral Epistles assume a rule-elder system which could not function in the apostolic age.

According to E. Käsemann the Pauline congregation did not know a presbyterium. He is of the opinion that the Pastoral Epistles were written by someone who was by circumstances to drop the "Paulinische Konseption einer Gemeindeordnung vom Charisma aus."²

Eduard Schweizer also denies explicitly that Paul himself knew something like an ordination, an initial appointment to a certain office in the congregation.³

When the writer of the Pastoral Epistles points to such an ordination, or to elders and deacons, it is an indication of the so-called "Katholieke decadentie," the "Frühkatholismus" in the New Testament. The original line of the gifted charismatic leaders of the congregations is transformed into officially appointed people. And this is the beginning of the Roman Catholic Church.

Hans Freiherr von Campenhausen also is of the opinion that the Pauline congregations did not know the institute of elders. The institute
of elders so says von Campenhausen is taken from the synagoge and therefore it is obvious that the congregations of Palestine did have presbyters, because they were close to the synagoge. 4)

On the other hand the Pauline congregations were still a "freie Gemeinschaft die sich im lebendigen Zusammenspiel der geistlichen Gaben und Diensten ohne amtliche Vollmacht und verantwortliche Aelteste entfaltet". 5)

THE "FRÜHKATHOLIZISMUS"

Behind this idea lies the great contrast which is made between charisma and office, which just like water and fire, cannot tolerate each other. Consequently, the history of the Church of the New Testament is split into two periods, the first is the charismatic period and the second the institutional period. The charismatic period is regarded as the original, the authentic one, while the institutional period points to a deviation from the right line, and culminate together with all its consequences, in the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore this deviation is called the "Frühkatholizismus".

An interesting question here is: when and where did this deviation begin? A. von Harnack thinks that the Apostolic Church ended simultaneously with the first century after Christ and he sees the so-called "katholieke decadentie" arising in the second century when the Greek spirit began to crush original Christianity. 8)

In the school of Rudolf Bultmann it is accepted that the deviation from the authentic line must be sought further back and that it can be found in the New Testament itself. In his tract "Amt und Gemeinde" E. Käsemann kept himself busy in a penetrative manner with the problem of the "Frühkatholizismus". He refuses to accept the "Frühkatholizismus" as an element of the New Testament and therefore he tries to correct the Canon. 7) In a sharply antithetical manner he places the "Church order" of the Pauline letter against that of the pastoral letters and Acts and he denies that Paul was the writer of the letters to Timothy and Titus.

B.S. Easton explains that the "Elders" are, by definition, the guardians and interpreters of the tradition; but they could not function until the tradition itself had been established, until the "faith" had been really "once and for all delivered to the saints". 8) But, we may ask, is not Easton's definition of "elder" too rigid? While there is no doubt that the elder system has modelled on Jewish precedents, as Easton clearly shows and we will explain furtheron, yet this is no justification for supposing that the Christian conception of the office was strictly limited by its Jewish origin. The protestant theologian Heinrich Schlier comes to the same conclusion as Käsemann and Easton that the "Church
order” in the Pauline Letters is against that of the Pastoral Epistles
and that the “Frühkatholisimus” could already be found in the New
Testament, but he draws a different conclusion from this and in 1955
goes over to the Roman Catholic Church. In his “Kurze Rechenschaft”
Schlier says that the Roman Catholic Church with his episcopal “Church
order” is the Church of the New Testament.9)

A whole series of theologians have already kept themselves
busy with this problem, but due to time we must be satisfied with
what has been mentioned above.

The whole problem comes to a peak in the contrast charisma­
office. Must we accept that there were in the history of the Church
of the New Testament two successive periods, namely a charismatic
and an institutional one?10) We can try to find an answer to this question
when we inquire into the figure of the presbyter as he is presented to us
by Paul and in the Pastoral Epistles.

THE ELDERS IN THE CORPUS PAULINUM

In the Acts Luke does refer to the elders of the Pauline congrega­
tions with the word presbyter (Acts 20:17), but with Paul the situation
is different. In Acts 20:17 and 28 Luke describes the elder of the Pauline
congregation. The interesting fact is that the same presbyters of verse
17 are called episkopoi by Paul in verse 28. Luke himself uses only the
word presbyter, but when he narrates Paul’s words he also uses the
word espiskopos.

Some exegetes therefore accept that in the New Testament
times there were two models of congregational leadership that existed
side by side: firstly the Jewish-synagogal model and secondly the model
of the Qumran-community. According to the Damascus-document the
“mebakker” is the leader of the congregation of the New Covenant.11)

Yet it remains doubtful whether the episcopos of the New Testa­
ment should be connected with the “mebakker” of the Qumran-
community as J. Jeremias wants us to believe.12) At the most we can
accept with Bo Reicke a “certain parallelism in the development of the
Church and of the Qumran community, since in both an office with
almost monarchic authority gradually took shape”.13)

It remains therefore a question whether there is in the New Testa­
ment really something like a mixture of two models of congregational
rule which according to Bomkamm, were formed by Luke into a new
model.14)

There is also a hypothesis that the Hellenistic congregation which
was instituted by Paul and which lived in the climate of the Greek
culture, borrowed the episcopos, the overseer, from the Greek world
where an episcopos always had to deal with supervision and financial
administration. *The presbyter* would then be of Jewish origin and *the episcopos* of Greek origin.\(^\text{15}\) We have to be careful with the hypothesis of an episcopos of a later Greek origin. H.N. Ridderbos has, in my opinion clearly shown that the episcopos of the New Testament cannot so easily be identified with a figure of the Greek world, even though they bear the same name.\(^\text{16}\) At the most we can assume that the Jewish Christians opted for the word presbyter while the Christians out of the Hellenistic world chose the word *episcopos* to designate the leaders of their congregation.\(^\text{17}\) Thereby, however, it is not yet proven that both concepts are also filled with a different content. This will become clear when we look at the elder in the Pauline congregations as we meet him in the letters of Paul.

When we search in the congregational letters of Paul to see how he describes the leading figures in the congregation, we find a rich variety. In Rm 12:8 we hear of the *prohistamenos*, he that is a leader. In 1 Cor 12:28 we learn of "*kuberneseis*", people with management qualifications. In Eph 4:10 we read of "*poimenes*" and in Phlp 1:1 the apostle uses the word *episcopos*. Thus there were in the Pauline congregations persons to whom the leadership of the congregations was entrusted.

With the exception of Phlp 1:1 it is striking that Paul in his congregational letters points to the capacities and qualities of the leading persons and not to their official competence. May we now conclude from this that the Pauline congregations did not yet know the office of the elder, but only the charisma? The fact remains however that every thing that Paul writes about the leading of the congregation must without question be applied to the elder, while he refers in Phlp 1:1 expressis verbis to the *episcopos*. Here the apostle explicitly denotes the leaders of the community as episcopi. It is rather significant that especially those who deny the existence of an instituted office in the Pauline congregation often try to eliminate Phlp 1:1 from the discussion.\(^\text{18}\)

H. Conzelmann pointed out that the word episcopi in Phlp 1:1 is in the plural so that here there is no possibility that it could refer to a monarchal episcopate.\(^\text{19}\) Therefore we must not connect the use of the singular of episcopos, as used in the Pastoral Epistles, with a monarchical episcopate, because the word presbyter is also used in the singular in 1 Tim. 5:1.\(^\text{20}\)

We however, want to agree with J.H. Roberts, because of his convincing arguments, that the *episcopi* of Phlp 1:1 is not a different group from the presbyterate, but just another title for the same office bearers.\(^\text{21}\)
Without doubt it is true that Paul does not speak of presbyters and *episcopoi* in Rm 12, 1 Cor 12 and Eph. 4, but at the same time it is also true that in these chapters he definitely brings to the foreground the substantial meaning of the elder. Besides, Paul reckons this own apostolic office as belonging to the *charismata*, the gifts that Christ gave to the congregation (1 Cor 12:28; Eph. 4:11). He who has received the gift of leadership is likewise called to function as an elder in the community.

In the congregation of the New Testament we find that certain charismata were generally recognised because they promote the order in the community. This recognition is the work of the Holy Spirit who also grants the charismata. It is God, it is Christ. it is the Holy Spirit who places, "gives", "allots", "entrusts", apostles, prophets and teachers in the community.

The congregation must identify and acknowledge a special gift, a special charisma. In this context H.N. Ridderbos says: "The charisma tends towards the office and the office cannot exist without the charisma". J.H. Roberts describes the charisma as the indicative of the Spirit to which the imperative to practice the office is inseparably bound. He who received such a charisma of the Spirit must also be placed in the office by the congregation, and the office must be acknowledged by the congregation as the authority of Christ.

Brought to a short formula, the office is really a gift openly acknowledged by the congregation. "The charisma of management and to lead (Rm 12:8; 1 Cor 12:28) was essential, and in that sense a prerequisite of the presbyter episcopos, thus says H.N. Ridderbos."

In the leaders of the Pauline congregations we discover once more the typical double function of office and gifts.

The presbyter *episcopos* in the corpus Paulinum is not meant to take the place of the non-official charismatic leader, but he is recruited from persons who are endowed with the gifts of management and leadership. The office is out of Christ and through the congregation.

**THE ELDERS IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES**

When we bring the Pastoral Epistles also into the scope of our research, we are struck by two things: Firstly that these letters use both concepts, presbyter and *episcopos*, promiscuously. The presbyters of 1 Tm 5:17 do not essentially differ from the *episcopoi* of 1 Tm 3:5.

The second striking fact is that in the Pastoral Epistles the task of the presbyter *episcopos* is described with the same word as used in the congregational letters of Paul. Especially significant in this case is the use of the word *prohistanai* (compare 1 Tm 3:5 and 1 Tm 5:17 with Rm 12:8 and 1 Th 5:12).
We will first take the famous presbyteros-passage in 1 Tm 5:17—25 and try to examine this pericope. It is my contention that this presbytero-passage does extend through to vs 25 and that this pericope has a chiastic pattern.

This pattern forms a chiastic structure of A-B-B-A. A gives a positive qualification and B a negative one.

So 1 Tm 5:17—25 can be diagrammed as follows:

A (positive)  
(good presbyteroi)  

B (negative)  
(sin)  

B (negative)  
(sin)  

A (positive)  
(good presbyteroi)  

vs. 17: principle (kaloos)  
vs. 18: proof  

vs. 19: accusation  
vs. 20: rebuke the sinners  
vs. 21: Impartial  
vs. 22: take no part in sin  
vs. 23: personal stimulation  
(this verse is the watershed of the two negative blocks)  

vs. 24: investigate candidates for possible sin  

vs. 25: investigate candidates for good deeds (kala)  

When we now try to analyze especially vs. 17, we will find out that there are a lot of problems in this verse.

Almost all the commentators agree that presbyteroi in this verse means church officials. The verb proestotes no doubt has the same technical, ministerial sense of 1 Th 5:12 and Rm 12:8. Here we find a conformity between the corpus Paulinum and the Pastoral Epistles.

It is very difficult to explain how many different groups of presbyteroi are mentioned in 1 Tm 5:17. We could conceivably distinguish four groups:

a. presbyteroi  
b. presbyteroi who preside  
c. presbyteroi who preside well  
d. presbyteroi who preside well especially by preaching and teaching.

If we take presbyteroi as a technical term, there are three groups of presbyteroi mentioned here:
a. presbyteroi who preside
b. presbyteroi who preside well
c. presbyteroi who exercise their leadership especially by preaching and teaching.

Of the presbyteroi who are engaged in preaching and teaching is said that they are kopiontes. The verb kopiao is often used in the corpus Paulinum as a term for ministerial activity (1 Th 5:12; 1 Cor 15:10; Gl 4:11, Rm 16:12; Phlp 2:16; Col 1:29).  

1 Tm 5:17 suggests that there was a special group among the presbyteroi who were devoted to preaching and teaching, a special class within the presbyterate. The importance of discerning a special class within the presbyterate can only be fully estimated when we turn to the list of qualities needed for an episcopos.

In 1 Tm 3:2 is said that the episcopos must be didaktikos; he must be a skillful teacher. It seems likely, therefore, that at Ephesus there was a board of presbyteroi, a kind of “executive board” that had general responsibility for and authority over the community. Different members of the “board” were engaged, more or less actively, in different ministries. A special group was devoted to preaching and teaching. It is remarkable that the expression preaching and teaching is used by the author without the article. The word didaskalia in connection with logos indicates that not the Word of God is meant here but the preaching of the Word of God and then especially the ethical implications of the kerugma.

As a conclusion we can state that the presbyteroi of 1 Tm 5:17 do not essentially differ from the episcopoi of 1 Tm 3:5. It seems to be that the word presbyteros is the normal term favored by the author of the Pastoral Epistles, while the word episcopos is embedded in the traditional list of qualities. The two terms can be applied to the same people although their origin may have been different (pagan hellenistic office versus the Jewish executive board of the synagoge).

We cannot however simply equate episcopos and presbyteros in the Pastoral Letters. While the two terms could be applied to the same people, their nuances remained different.

For this investigation we move to Tt 1:5—7. These verses contain a number of indications to see the difference in structures between the Church of Ephesus and the community at Crete.

In Tt 1:5—7 we also find a patron of parallelism. These verses can be diagrammed as follows:

vs. 5: presbyterous
vs. 6: tis
vs. 6: anegkletos

gar

vs. 7: ton episcopon
vs. 7: anegkletos

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Here we have a short list of qualities necessary for the presbyteroi. The presbyteroi in the plural are certainly to be identified with the tis in singular in vs. 6.

There is a switch from plural to singular which takes place in verse 6. Perhaps the singular in vs. 7 is due to the fact that the author is here quoting a set list of requirements, a list in which tou episcopou is firmly embedded. Such a list of qualities or virtues necessary for a particular office was well known in the hellenistic world. 301

We find in Tt 1:5—7 also a simple identification of the teaching episcopos with the presbyter. The author does equate the episcopos of the traditional list with the presbyteroi about whom he was talking.

Perhaps we may conclude that the older Church at Ephesus had already reached the point when a small group of teaching presbyteroi (the episcopoi) were coming to the fore and assuming a position of leadership within the presbyterate. 311 There was also in Ephesus something like a “functional specialisation”, a special group within the larger group of presbyteroi. 321 The more primitive churches of Crete had not yet developed to this point of evolution.

THE PRESBYTERATE

The fact that the community at Ephesus had already evolved to the point where a small group were coming to the fore seems to be evident when we give attention to the term presbyterion used by the author of the Pastoral Epistles in 1 Tm 4:14.

In this verse are a lot of questions which we must omit, e.g. the concept of charism 331, the rite of ordination. We must concentrate on the meaning of the word presbyteriou. The Sinaiticus and other MSS read presbyterou but this reading seems not to be very strong. When we accept the word presbyterion, the interpretation seems to be quite simple. Paul ordained Timothy by imposition of hands, while he was accompanied by the whole body of presbyteroi who also imposed hands. This site however has nowhere a precedent in the N.T. Therefore several commentators think we have a much better explanation if we understand the whole phrase as being a translation of the rabbinic technical term semikat zeqenim. 341

Then the genitive is a genitivus finalis and the phrase means an ordination to make one an presbyter, also an ordination to the presbyterate. Such an explanation has this advantage that it explains the use of the abstract presbyteriou; it eliminates any discrepancy between 1 Tm 4:14 and 2 Tm 1:6 and it gives an understandable picture of Paul acting above in commissioning his personal representative. 351

But all these arguments are not so strong as they might at first seem.
At first the rabbinic technical terms *šmikat zeqenim*: an ordination to make one an elder does not solve anything. C. Spicq states that the *šmikat zeqenim* did not appear in Judaism as a rite to install teachers and judges before the end of first century, and was not current until the second and third centuries. Also the rabbinic imposition of hands did not involve prayer or the communication of the Spirit.\(^{36}\)

According to the rabbinic interpretation Timothy should have received an ordination to the presbyterate, also an elder — ordination. But, we must remember that Timothy is never called a presbyteros in the Pastoral Epistles.

There is more reason to believe that the text simple means that Timothy received an ordination by Paul who was assisted by the “presbyterion”, the college of presbyters”. This explanation is In line with the use of the word presbyteros in the Pastoral Epistles, because for the author of these letters presbyteros refers to a more or less stable members of a stable group of rulers within a local community. It is a sedentary, not a peripatetic office.\(^{37}\)

There are some more interesting questions concerning the Pastoral Epistles in their relation with the corpus Paulinum i.e. what J. Jeremias calls the eldest Church-order (1 Tm 2:1—3:13) in comparison with Paul’s use of order in the wellknown chapter about the charismata (1 Cor 14:34), but this will be a lecture apart.

CONCLUSIONS

We must come to an end and therefore it is time to draw some conclusions.

1. In the Old Testament and in Judaism the word presbyter indicates in some cases local functionaries invested with legislative, judicial and disciplinary powers. Later on they formed the management of the synagogue and in other cases they were members of the sanhedrin, i.e. functionaries with supra-local powers. In the former case they represent the most important families, in the latter case they represent the aristocracy of the Jewish people.

   The Qumran-community also knows the office of elders.

   There is a certain relationship between the elders of Judaism and the elders of the Christian Church.

   Luke introduces the office in Acts (11:30) without defining it any further and without describing its origin. It seems as if the elders appear in the book Acts like the famous comet Kohoutek. Luke, it is sure, presupposes that the existence of the elder is known by his readers.

2. In the history of the office of presbyter we can distinguish two
traditions in the Christian Church: a Jewish tradition according to which the elders perform an important administrative and disciplinary task.

It is generally accepted that in the Jewish-Christian congregation linked to the Jewish tradition the growth of the presbyterate was a natural development. The presbyteros of the New Testament has his prototype in the elder of the Old Testament.

There is in the New Testament especially in the Corpus Paulinum also a Hellenistic-Christian tradition according to which the presbyteroi appear as spiritual leaders of the community. As such they have been entrusted with preaching as well as with instruction.

3. In the Pastoral Epistles we find a model of church-office which seems to have absorbed the two traditions. This is easy to understand when we know that both conceptions from the beginning were filled with the same content. This content can be described as the typical double function of office and charisma. The double function has already his roots in the Old Testament. The Old Testament model as recorded in Nm 11:16 and 11:24, already teaches us that the gift of the Spirit is necessary to be able to fulfil the office of elders.

In the corpus Paulinum we find the same. The episcopos is not meant to take the place of the non-official charismatic leader, but he is recruited from persons who are endowed with the gifts of management and leadership.

In the Pastoral Epistles we also find the same fundamental structure in the vision on the relation office-gift.

In so far there is a kind of difference between the corpus Paulinum and the Pastoral Epistles that in the latter one Paul not direct but more indirectly via his assistants comes to a more fixed pattern of regulations. But this can be understood when we remember that in the Pastoral Epistles we have already a later period in the history of the early Church. That is the reason why we find in the Pastoral Epistles a fixed presbyterate. But there is in the Pastoral Epistles nothing like a "Frühkatholizismus". It is not necessary to accept this. Frühkatholizismus is not a legitimate element in the Pastoral Letters. These Epistles teach us nowhere that we must accept in the history of the Church of the New Testament two successive periods, namely a charismatic and an institutional one.

NOTES
2) E. Käsemann, Amt und Gemeinde, Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen 1, 1960, p.129.
3) E. Schweizer, Gemeinde und Gemeindeordnung im Neuen Testament, 1959, p.188.

5) H. von Campenhausen, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, 1900, p.76.

6) A. von Harnack, *o.c.*, 1900, p.125.


31) A study of 1 Tm and Titus may provide us with more information on the relative age of the two communities in Ephesus and Crete.


