

THE ORIGIN, FORM AND EVOLUTION OF ECCLESIAL MINISTRY IN THE PAULINE COMMUNITY

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Whoever reflects and speaks on the theme of “ministries” in the Church, always does so from a precise place in the Church that conditions his or her point of view. This is true even when the matter calls into question the testimony of the beginnings, as in our case. In this regard it is not a question of following, by means of one’s personal methods of research, an improbable ideal of neutrality, but rather to lend an ear to the message that the witnesses, while being critically aware of their conditioning, are still able to transmit to us today in a significant way.

First of all, a clarification of the concept. The word “ministry” will be used in the sense of a precise and lasting undertaking developed for the advantage of a group. We think of the functions and services necessarily required by the sociological structure of the group which – having reached a specific size – develops such “ministries.” This fundamental sociological reading of “ministries” ought to allow a correct understanding of their evolution, as they gradually unfolded in the Pauline community, without overlooking among other things their theological importance.

In putting together this present essay the use of the word “thesis” seemed to me the most appropriate for offering an overall vision of an undoubtedly complex theme. I have therefore decided against a confrontation with highly specialized writings in the field as would have otherwise been required in a particular monograph. To every thesis, succinctly set forth, a synthesized argument on the abridged passages drawn from the Pauline letters follows.

Precisely because of the evolution of “ministry” in the Pauline community we wanted to divide this essay into two parts, thus doing justice to these historical changes. In the first part our attention will be directed to the “authentic”¹ Pauline letters; in the second to those considered “not-authentic,”² in particular the pastoral letters (1 Tm, 2 Tm, Titus).

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PART ONE: “MINISTRY” AND “CHARISM” ACCORDING TO PAUL

THESIS I

To Paul, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, was given a ministry consistent with a multiform service of the Gospel.

Our question has to do with the Pauline community, but objectively it would not be correct to overlook the figure of Paul himself. His considering himself an apostle throws light on the communities founded and profoundly influenced by him.

1. Paul’s mission is not the fruit of human initiative (Gal 1:1), but is a call from God who revealed his Son to him (Gal 1:5). The scope of his mission is to serve the Gospel (Rm 1:1; Gal 1:16; 2 Cor 3:3-6), which expresses itself in the proclamation of the good news (Rm 1:16f; 2 Cor 4:3-6) and in a tireless concern for the community (1 Cor 3:5-15; 9:15-18; 2 Cor 11:28f). The direction and goal of the mission is made concrete in the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18-21).

¹ Belonging to these are 1 Th, 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Ph, Gal, Eph, Rm.

² An expression that will be explained at the beginning of the second part.

2. Paul's missionary self-awareness – in which the humanly non-deducible character of his mandate is reflected – motivates his distant relationship with Cephas³ and with those who were apostles “before him” (Gal 1:17-19; 2:11-14). Paul, however, did everything possible to remain in union with the church of Jerusalem “lest he should have run in vain” (Gal 2:2). The collection “for the poor” of Jerusalem (Gal 2:10; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9; Rm 15:25, 30-32) shows the seriousness of his intentions.

3. Paul's authority finds its basis in his vocation and mission. Founder of communities, he maintains contact with them through his letters – which document very well his claims to authority⁴ – and through his collaborators; but he does not personally become the animator of any local community. Such a role is assumed by others.

4. Romans 15:16 speaks of his apostolic ministry using a sacred metaphor. God's grace has rendered Paul fit for the “sacred ministry” (*leitourgia*), and it is as a priest that he fulfills his service to the Gospel (*hieourgounta to euangelion tou theou*) in such a way that the sacrificial offering of the Gentiles (*he prosphora ton ethnon*) is found pleasing, sanctified in the Holy Spirit. The expression is taken from the liturgical field, but the reality has nothing to do with the traditional significance of the cultic act. For Paul this is a fact so clear that he is able to express himself in this way without fear of being misunderstood.⁵ If the pagans (the Gentiles) by means of his preaching find the path to faith and are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, it means that he has fulfilled his “priestly” ministry.

THESIS II

Every ministry in the community is a gift of God by means of His Spirit. In it the multiform richness of the community, as well as the principle of its unity are manifested. In fact, the gifts of the Spirit are poured out over all the baptized.

1. The place for which the ministry is destined is the community. Paul intends it as a living reality, sustained thanks to the variety of the gifts of the one God through His Spirit (1 Cor 12:4-11). The dynamic reality of the community is expressed in the image of one body with many members (1 Cor 12:12; Rm 12:4f).

2. The different gifts of the Spirit (*charismata*) are made concrete in the different ministries (*diakonai*) by means of which the action (*energema*) of God is manifested (1 Cor 12:4-6). The three terms are used and understood by Paul in a single context. To understand how the Apostle understands his ecclesial ministry, it is essential that such a context be assumed, or not, as criteria for the interpretation of the text. The difficulties arise from the fact that this concept is changeable.

3. By virtue of baptism all Christians become members of the same body of Christ, and in Him all receive, without exception, the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28).⁶

THESIS III

To reduce the different ministries to the action of the Holy Spirit presupposes a vision of the Christian life and community which confirms and legitimates its variety. The primacy of the Spirit provides the foundation for the ordering of the community. There is no opposition between charism and order.

³ The Aramaic word *Kephas* (cf. Jn 1:42) may indicate the special position of Peter in the hierarchy of the apostles (cf. 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14). The use of *Petros* appears only in Gal 2:7f.

⁴ This does not mean that his defense was always recognized by the community. 2 Corinthians relates a bitter dispute between the so-called “Super Apostles” (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11), who, while appreciating Paul's letters willingly emphasize his small physical size and his lack of oratorical skill.

⁵ Other examples of similar language can be found in Rm 12:1; 1 Cor 3:16f; 6:19; Ph 2:17; 4:18; etc.

⁶ Also see, THESIS VI.

1. It was probably his awareness of the phenomena of Christian enthusiasm in Corinth that brought before the Apostle's eyes the vivacious plurality of that church, apart from the fact that his lengthy stay at Antioch could have served him as a preparation. That, however, does not mean that Paul, in the course of his missionary activity, had come up against charismatic manifestations only in Corinth. The exhortation: "Don't stifle the Spirit or despise prophecy" (1 Th 5:19f) only makes sense if the community of Thessalonica was also aware of the efficacious presence of the Spirit. The problem, however, is only treated as a theme in 1 Corinthians.

2. With respect to the action of the Spirit, what is true for the community is also true for the individual. The affirmations regarding the Spirit of God who lives within men (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19f), on his work within the hearts of believers (Gal 4:6), his "fruit" in the conduct of everyday life (Gal 5:22f), show human existence as an open field in which God acts gratuitously by means of his Spirit.

3. Paul considers a gift of the Spirit that which he sees in the community as functions and capacities placed at the service of other believers. Not all, in fact, are apostles or prophets or doctors (1 Cor 12:29).

4. The gifts of grace reveal themselves as authentic when they contribute to the edification of the community (1 Cor 14:5, 12). The principle according to which the Spirit alone guarantees the unity among the many gifts (Thesis II), is realized only when it is understood in connection with the ultimate goal of the charisms. A dynamic order that can be opposed by many tensions is involved here. The Pauline letters show us this. The Apostle disapproves both a charismatic libertinism which affirms that "all things are permissible to me" (1 Cor 6:12) and refuses every limit, as well as a rigid regimentation that would inconsiderately suffocate at its birth the vivacity of the Spirit (1 Th 5:19).

THESIS IV

Since the Spirit of God works in full sovereignty, its gifts cannot be transmitted by means of human initiative. Only action inspired by the Spirit guarantees the validity of the gifts of grace.

1. Paul's assertion to have been appointed "not by men, nor through a man" (Gal 1:1), has a positive parallel in 1 Cor 12:28a: "God has appointed some in the Church..." with the list that follows.⁷ As Paul, independent from any human intervention whatsoever, is able to present himself as an apostle of Christ, so Christians who exercise a ministry are not in debt to the community for their mandate, but to God, the author of every gift. The role of the community consists in verifying and confirming the authenticity of the gifts.

2. Certainly not every Christian is required to experience his own vocation with the same awareness as Paul had. The Apostle however offers the key to acquire the sense and scope of one's own skills and hence to place them at the service of the community. If someone wants to act as a teacher, his ability will prove if he has truly been called to act as such in favor of the community. The community itself will certify him. Whoever then claims to have been called to be an apostle will have to demonstrate through his conduct that he has the talent.

3. Under these conditions a transmission of ministries through delegation on the part of the community or by "ordination" by a work of other ministries is unthinkable. Just as Paul did not insert himself into the succession of the Apostles, so there is no succession in the ministry by way of the community.

⁷ Also see, THESIS V.

THESIS V

While all believers are destined to receive the gifts of the Spirit, some ministries show special evidence of them (1 Cor 12:28; Rm 12:6-8).

1. The list in 1 Corinthians 12:28 presents at the outset a precise classification with reference to the differing importance of the ministries: 1. apostles; 2. prophets; 3. teachers. The two which follow are linked to the preceding with a “then” (*hepeita*): miracle workers (*dynameis*) and those with the gift of healing (*charismata hiamaton*). Other charisms are simply listed: helpers (*antilempseis*), administrators (*kyberneseis*), and speakers in a variety of tongues (*gene glosson*).

2. The emphasis given to the first three ministries is explained in the first place by their being anchored in tradition. According to Acts 13:1, in the church of Antioch there were prophets and teachers. When the community sends Barnabas and Paul on mission (Acts 13:2f), they take on the persons of apostles who act as itinerant preachers.⁸ They also laid claim to an effective priority and relevance in the process of publicly proclaiming the faith for the life of the community. The apostle “re-presents” the Lord wherever his path leads him. The prophet interprets and announces the word of God in the concrete situations of the community. The teacher/master places his wisdom at the service of the transmission and deepening of the faith.

3. The list is not to be understood in an exclusive way: 1 Corinthians 12:10 adds to the gift of prophecy that of the discernment of spirits; to the gift of speaking in tongues that of their interpretation, thus rendering them understandable (cf. 14:5; 13:27). This integration is attached to the respective character of the gifts and to their effect on the community. Reference to the Spirit with regard to prophecy includes the gift of the discernment of spirits, so as to staunch any possible abuse of the charismatic skill; speaking in tongues does not serve the edification of the community if there is not present someone who knows how to interpret what is said.

4. The list in Romans 12:6-8 presents some variation with respect to 1 Corinthians 12:28:

<i>1 Cor 12:28</i>	<i>Rm 12:6-8</i>
... apostles (<i>apostolous</i>)	
<i>prophets</i> ⁹ (<i>prophetas</i>)	<i>prophets (propheteia)</i>
<i>teachers (didaskalous)</i>	<i>helpers (diakonia)</i>
miracle workers (<i>dynameis</i>)	<i>teachers (ho didaskon)</i>
healers (<i>charismata hiamaton</i>)	<i>exhorters (ho parakalon)</i>
<i>helpers (antilempseis)</i>	<i>givers (ho metadidous)</i>
<i>administrators (kyberneseis)</i>	<i>leaders (ho proïstamenos)</i> ¹⁰
speakers in tongues (<i>gene glosson</i>)	<i>mercy givers (ho eleon)</i>

We notice that in Romans 12:6-8 the “gifts of grace” – the working of prodigies and healings, speaking in tongues – recognizable above all for their exterior efficacy are lacking (in 1 Corinthians 12:28 the fervid spiritual climate of the community of Corinth is felt in some way). Also we note the absence of the apostles, and this is not easy to explain, seeing that Paul calls Andronicus and Junias¹¹ “prominent among the apostles” (Rm 16:7); a sign that apostles were at work even in the church of Rome. – As far as the particular sequence that concludes the list (Rm 12:8), we have to ask ourselves if “to give generously” (*ho metadidous*) and “the exercise of mercy” (*ho eleon*) don’t pertain specifically to the one who presides (*ho proïstamenos*).

5. It is not clear whether service or *diakonia* (Rm 12:7) is to be understood in general as helpful intervention – in which case it would be synonymous with *antilempseis* in 1 Cor 12:28 –, or

⁸ *Didachè* 11 mentions the three figures in a different order: teacher (11:2), apostle (11:4-6), prophet (11:7-12). In order to distinguish the true from the false charismatic the case presented takes us to a later phase in the tradition.

⁹ The offices presented in both lists are written in italics.

¹⁰ Also see THESIS VII.

¹¹ See also THESIS VI, 1.

if it does not already indicate a precise function of service in the community as that of Phoebe, the “deaconess” (*diakonos*) in the community of Cenchreae (Rm 16:1).

6. Among the gifts of grace that are listed, only prophecy and speaking in tongues have some relationship with worship insofar as they are preferably exercised on the occasion of liturgical reunions. Nonetheless a precise reference to the corresponding function is lacking. The annotation in *Didaché* 10:7, that to the prophets is left “to render thanks at their pleasure,” makes us think that these, by reason of their gift, would proclaim the “great prayer of lauds” during the Eucharistic reunions. Besides, who would dare on his own initiative pronounce the prayer of thanksgiving so that at the end the entire assembly might express with their Amen its intimate adherence? The texts don’t say anything in this regard.

THESIS VI

That even women participate in various ways in the service of the Gospel is a consequence, more than a confirmation of Thesis II.

1. *Women apostles.* The name Junias (*Ioulias*), alongside that of Andronicus in Rm 16:7, clearly indicates a woman. The hypothesis that it is “an abbreviation of the popular Junianus” is discounted by reason of the fact that this abbreviated form “is not found anywhere else.”¹² Junias is named along with Andronicus not because she is his sister, but because she is his wife, as is the case of Prisca and Aquila (Rm 16:3). We are dealing here with a Judeo-Christian couple – probably from Hellenistic Judaism – who on some occasions shared prison with Paul and now are distinguished by their “apostolic activity” in Roman surroundings.

2. *Women Prophetesses.* For Paul it is altogether normal that women take part in the Eucharistic celebrations pronouncing the public prayer and prophetic word. The parallel expressions in 1 Cor 11:4f leads us to understand them in this sense:

v. 4: While every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered...
(*pas aner proseuchomenos e propheteuon kata kephales echon...*)

v. 5: While any woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered...
(*pasa de gyne proseuchomene e propheteuosa akatalyptoi tei kephalei...*)

The controversial question remains exclusively over the covering of the woman’s head, which Paul claims should be maintained as a custom of the churches of God (1 Cor 11:16). The “equal right” to participate in the liturgy through prayer and prophecy is clearly presupposed. That means that women are destined, equal to men, to be given consideration regarding speaking in tongues and prophesying during liturgical assemblies. This is true also for the opportunity that each believer has to give his contribution to the liturgical celebration by means of a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a discourse in tongues, or an interpretation (1 Cor 14:27).

3. *Women Deaconesses.* The only woman explicitly recognized in this role is Phoebe, deaconess in the community of Cenchreae (Rm 16:1), the port east of Corinth and place of transit for travelers from and to Asia Minor. Paul defines her role as *prostatis* – that is helper, benefactor...–“to many people and even to me” (Rm 16:2). One could think that Phoebe may have offered hospitality to Christians passing through Cenchreae, making space and means available to fulfill such a service.

4. *Community Guides.* The “domestic churches” are not often named (Rm 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 2) but their importance for the consolidation and spread of the Christian communities cannot be overvalued. In the places cited we always find women. – Paul meets Aquila, a Hellenistic Jewish Christian from Pontus, and his wife Priscilla, for the first time in Corinth after the couple had left Rome following the edict of Claudius (Acts 18:1-3). Later they moved to

¹² W. Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, Berlin/New York 1988⁶, 770f.

Ephesus (Acts 18:18f), where their house became a meeting place for the community (1 Cor 16:19). We find them anew in Rome where they received Paul's greeting (Rm 16:3-5). Even here the community gathered in their house. Both have, in some occasions not recounted, risked their lives for Paul. The Apostle thanks them not only in his own name, but also on the part of all the Jewish-Christian communities. Aquila and Priscilla are always named together. And though the role of Priscilla is not specified, it must have been in every case equal to that of her husband. – Regarding Philemon 2, another place where the “domestic church-community” is spoken of, there is nothing more to say. Apphia is probably the wife of Philemon. – The letter to the Colossians is the oldest document of the “secondary-Pauline” letters. The author greets the brothers of Laodicea and hence Nympha with the church that meets in her house (Col 4:15). As in the case of Junias, even the name Nympha could refer to a woman as well as to a man, depending on whether you read *Nympha* (feminine) or *Nymphas* (masculine). The traditional manuscript has it both ways: “the community in his house (*autou*)” and “in her house (*autes*).” Departing from the authority of the *Codex Vaticanus*, which uses the feminine version, it is easier to hold that an original feminine form had been mutated into a masculine form and not the opposite, for which the feminine is to be preferred. Differing from the texts considered earlier, here Junias is named alone. Even if her roles remain unexpressed, she could have undertaken the function of a leader of the “domestic church.”

THESIS VII

Among the multiplicity of gifts of grace that are manifested in the different ministries/services, the gift of “governing” or “presiding” will assume a special importance although in both lists (1 Cor 12:18; Rm 12:6-8) it doesn't occupy a preeminent place. Even when speaking of the “leaders of the community” it is done without explicit reference to the gifts of the Spirit. Recognition of their role is in connection with the apostolic dedication that they express.

1. *1 Th 5:12f.* In the passage that treats of the end of time (4:12-5:11) a parenthetical text follows (5:12-24). Two infinitives that direct the approach of the community toward a particular group of persons are found in the exhortation/prayer of v. 12 (*erotomen*). The first verb (*heidenai*) signifies “to know in order to appreciate”: a recognition that revolves around how many in the community labor for the others (*tous kopiontas en hymin*), who preside with the authority of the Lord (*tous proïstamenous hymin en kyrioi*) and admonish the brothers (*kai nouthetountas hymas*).¹³ The second infinitive (v. 13: *hegeisthai*) indicates the esteem which the community must reserve for such persons by reason of their work (*dia to ergon auton*). The verb *kopiao* (“tire oneself out”) is applied by Paul to his own apostolic fatigue (1 Cor 15:10; Gal 4:11; Ph 2:16), but also to the fatigue of all those who have dedicated themselves to the apostolic ministry/service. Such dedication, which bases its authority within the Church, must be recognized by the faithful.

2. The case of the household of Stephanas “who devoted themselves to the service of the saints” (1 Cor 16:15) is similar. As with *heidenai* in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, the Corinthians should “recognize/appreciate” (1 Cor 16:18: *epignoskate oun tous toioutous*) and “obey” them (16:16: *hypotassesthe*), however not only them but also “whoever labors and works as they do” (*kai panti toi synergounti kai kopionti*). Recognizing the “leaders” (*proïstamenoï*) in Thessalonica has the same motivation (*tous kopiontas en hymin*: “those who labor and work among you”). The two meanings of *proïstemi*: “preside, lead, govern” and “take care, provide, interest themselves”¹⁴ seem to converge in those who are leaders of the community.

¹³ Admonition is a duty of the whole community, not only of the one who presides. Cf. 1 Th 5:14: believers are invited, for example, to correct whoever leads a disordered life.

¹⁴ Thus W. Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch...*, cit., 1415f. Cf. also B. Reicke, ThWNT VI, 702f: “In every case it is shown that the verb (*proïstemi*) means for the most part to guide and to take care of, and this in keeping with the characteristics of New Testament ministry.”

3. *Ho proïstamenos en spoudei* in Romans 12:8 is understood in this sense. The diligence of the one who presides must manifest itself in his spending of himself for the others.

4. Maria receives similar recognition in the church of Rome (Rm 16:6) as do Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis (Rm 16:12), who “have worked so hard” in the Lord for the community.

5. There is no reference to a link between the function of the leader with any role in the liturgical field.

THESIS VIII

How those who undertake the function of leader are called is not specified, for which we find a notable flexibility in the terminology. The expression “bishop and deacon” (Ph 1:1), which constitutes a problem in and of itself, shows this.

1. The primary recipients of the letter to the Philippians are “the saints in Christ Jesus” (1:1), but associated “with the bishops and deacons” (*syn tois episkopois kai diakonois*). In the “authentic” Pauline letters the two terms recur only in this place. This unusual use solves some problems.

2. *The significance of the dual denomination.* Nothing is said in the immediate context; however it is evident that in some way believers made a distinction between the “saints in Christ Jesus.” One cannot absolutely equate with the “bishop” and the “deacons” of 1 Timothy 2:3, 8 the figures and functions belonging to a later phase in the structural development of the community. For the same reason the “bishops and deacons” in *Didaché* 15:1 are also out of discussion. – Some indications in the letter suggest however a clarifying hypothesis. The Philippians are singled out as generous supporters of the Apostle. Paul names Epaphroditus, an envoy sent from the community to “minister to me in my need” (2:25). Even after Paul moved to Thessalonica, the Philippians did not cease providing for his needs (4:16). In closing the letter (4:18), he speaks of the gift received from the community, this time through Epaphroditus. Even though nothing is said explicitly regarding the nature of this help or gift, it must surely have been monetary,¹⁵ with which the Apostle could handle the various necessities in the development of his missionary work. This is the result: but who organized all these works of mercy in such a way that they would concretely achieve a good end? – The word “bishop” (*episkopos*) according to the dictionary means “supervisor-overseer,” but the areas to which this function could be applied are many. In general, it is a matter of an appointed office in the area of the administration of a city, an association, an organized group.¹⁶ In this sense it becomes obvious to draw from this formulation in Philippians 1:1 an echo of this use of the language. The *episkopoi* were those Christians to whom in the community were attributed an appointed office and as a consequence occupied a position of status. We don’t know if Epaphroditus belonged to this category, but he must however have fulfilled a special role. On the occasion of his return to Philippi the faithful were to “receive him in the Lord full of joy,” as also “to honor persons like him” (Ph 2:29: *kai tous toioutous entinous hechete*¹⁷). – The term *diakonos* enjoys a larger semantic extension. The two words *episkopos*-*diakonos* are not to be found in secular Greek literature. In this case one can presume that the *diakonoi* were the collaborators of the bishops in carrying out their functions.

3. *The origin of these titles.* This unique and isolated formula in Philippians 1:1 is explained by the fact that Paul, indicating also “bishops and deacons” as recipients of his letter, accommodated himself to the language of the community. The frequent contacts he had earlier had with this church, besides the interventions of aid organized in his favor by some who were “sent”, had familiarized him with the terminology in use in Philippi. Evidently there were some other

¹⁵ The verb *apecho* (Ph 4:18) does not only mean “I receive,” but also “I acknowledge (having) received.”

¹⁶ See the relevant documentation in: G. Schrenk, *episkopoi*, ThWNT III, 607-610.

¹⁷ Cf. 1 Cor 16:16: *hypotasseste tois toioutous*.

communities, in the circle of the missionary activity of the Apostle, who had been motivated to make a similar expression their own.¹⁸

THESIS IX

Basic to the express Pauline understanding of charism and ministry there is a theological principle: independently of every ethnic, sociological and natural diversity, the salvific event of baptism gives to all believers the Spirit who makes them fit for service in the community (Gal 3:28). The concrete application of this principle to the life of the communities was conditioned in the first place by the number of its members. Secondly, Paul himself, with his own authority and with the help of his collaborators, personally or by means of his writings, contributed to the creation and the conservation in the churches of a “charismatic order” with a minimum of structural organization.

1. The translation into reality of a theological principle is conditioned by various actual situations. A community that gets together in the house of a Christian in order to share their faith experiences, to celebrate the Eucharist, to sustain one another in difficulties, and to discuss common problems, is necessarily made up of a rather limited number of members.¹⁹ Only in these conditions can a “charismatic order” “function” well. Some instructions serve to confirm this: to speak in tongues let there be two, or at most three, and someone should act as interpreter (1 Cor 14:27). For reasons of order it is necessary to observe some simple rule: All can prophesy, one at a time, so that all can learn and receive encouragement (1 Cor 14:31).

2. The exchange of letters with the Corinthians²⁰ exemplifies very well the strict relationship between Paul and the communities that he founded. The information channels are varied: Chloe’s people (1 Cor 1:11), oral reports (5:1), clarifications requested by letter (7:1). In this way Paul became conscious of the *problems* that the community had not resolved: one person living with his father’s wife (5:1-8); others abandoning themselves to lewdness (6:12-20); women with their heads uncovered taking an active part in the liturgical celebrations (11:1-17). – There are also questions before which the community is disoriented: one’s behavior in the area of matrimony and sexuality (7:1-40); eating meat sacrificed to idols (8:1-13); the variety and value of the gifts of the Spirit (12:4-31; 14:1-33a, 37-40); the body of the risen (15:35-57). – Finally, conflicts, of differing gravity, with which the communities must themselves deal: the formation of parties in Corinth; the infiltration of Judaizing Christians in Galatia and Philippi, etc. – Paul approaches all these needs, proposing a solution. And he does so calling them back, from time to time, to the Gospel he had preached (Gal 1:11), to the traditions transmitted by him (1 Cor 11:2), to the traditions that he himself had received (1 Cor 11:23; 15:3), to the customs of the community (1 Cor 11:16). To add weight to his thought he gives himself to different rhetorical flourishes: he passes from the condemnation of his adversaries (Gal 1:8) to the subtle art of persuasion (Phm 8-20). But the real key to recognizing his role and his message lies in the depth of his theology and in the unparalleled eminence of his thought. The fundamental exigency of the apostolic ministry in Paul’s vision, or better the annunciation and defense of the “truth of the Gospel” (Gal 2:5, 14), reaches its full

¹⁸ Cf. P. Pilhofer, *Philippi*. B.I: *Die erste christliche Gemeinde Europas* (WUNT 87), Tübingen 1995, spec. 142-147. The inscriptions indicate that in Philippi every person, not excluding slaves, was identified basically by “the profession or position that he occupies” (Ibid, 144). This use is reflected in the prologue of the Pauline letter. The title *episkopos* is not later documented in Philippi, but it is necessary to observe that many epigraphs are in the Latin language (Ibid, 147, n. 26). Moreover for functionaries the title was often used in the singular. “This made plausible the supposition that even the Christian community would feel the need to attribute to its *proïstamenoï* a title that was more expressive.” Thus the term *episkopoi*.

¹⁹ No precise number is ever given. Due to the fragmentary character of the data at our disposition, it is only possible to form an idea of the size of a community which cannot go beyond a well-founded conjecture.

²⁰ They were far more numerous and perhaps diversely formulated than in the two letters which have come down to us.

realization by means of his solicitude toward his communities. – It is with this background in mind that we must follow the later evolution of the Pauline communities.

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PART TWO: “MINISTRY” AND “CHARISM” ACCORDING TO “PAULINISM”

The influence of Paul’s action has found an initial literary expression in the writings that were published under his name after his death. The definition of “non-authentic” Pauline letters should not be understood almost as if it dealt with genuinely false literature. Their authors are Christians who – for whatever reason – felt themselves to be the heirs of the spirit of Paul. The pseudonym makes sense and fulfills its purpose when the personality of the Apostle is known and accepted also by the potential recipients of these letters. The places of origin of such a phenomenon, already some decades after his death, were the communities founded by him, where the reach of his activity had not yet been obliterated.

At this point the so-called “pastoral letters” come into question. In comparison with Paul, these propose a highly diversified understanding of the ministry and charism. Instead of the “charismatic order” one must speak of “order as charism.” The theses which follow strive to present above all this order; in second place they will seek to offer an explanation of the fact that Christians have created, under Paul’s name, an organization of the community that is widely diversified.

THESIS X

The motivation and the historic place of the use of the term “charism” (charisma), solely used in reference to the transmission of “ministry” – viz., through succession by means of the laying on of hands – is significant.

1. The variations in the terminology of Paul can be easily seen. Instead of numerous “gifts of grace,” as numerous as the members of the body and extended to all the baptized, now there is a working charism operating in a single direction: the leadership of the community. These charismata are only spoken of in two places.²¹

2. According to 1 Timothy 4:14 the charism was conferred (*hedothe*) on Timothy when, “guided by prophecy, the council of elders laid hands upon” him. It is thus that his aggregation to the priesthood in the Church is understood. Timothy is exhorted not to neglect this “gift of grace” which is in him (*me amelei tou en soi charismatos*). In the artificial communicative situation of the letter this signifies that he must realize the assignment that has been attributed to him by the authority of Paul.²² – In 2 Timothy 1:6, *charisma tou theou* is spoken of and the imposition of hands is executed by Paul without any reference to the priesthood. The text wants to show the link between the ordained ministry and the Apostle, but at the time of the pastoral letters – here we are at the turn of the first to the second centuries – the imposition of hands was usually handled by the presbyterate (cf. 1 Tm 5:22). Even here it is God who acts as author of the “gifts of grace,” which

²¹ In Paul the things are quite different: See Rm 1:11; 2:6; 1 Cor 1:7; 7:7; 12:4, 8, 28, 30, 31. The vocabulary compares also with Rm 5:15, 16; 6:12; 2 Cor 1:1.

²² This communicative situation also explains why Timothy and Titus, two important and well-known collaborators at the time of Paul (about Timothy see 1 Th 1:1; 3:2, 6; Ph 1:1, 19; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; Phm 1; Rm 16:21; on Titus see 2 Cor 3:13; 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18; Gal 2:1, 3) were chosen as recipients of the letters. Timothy is also presented as a young person (1 Tm 4:12) who before the community still has to show some evident progress (4:5). Everything possible is done to give the impression that the letters were written by the Apostle – by now in the final phase of his mission – to his faithful collaborators who, as leaders of the community, now inherit his mantle. When the letters were edited the two disciples were probably already dead.

however are necessarily²³ transmitted²⁴ through the mediation of a group in the community; in this case the presbyterate.

3. When Timothy receives his ministry through Paul's intervention (2 Tm 1:6), or through the presbyterate (1 Tm 4:14), and when he himself later transmits this ministry by repeating the imposition of hands (1 Tm 5:22), a succession in the ministry takes place.²⁵

THESIS XI

Remaining with the literary form, 1 Timothy and Titus figure as regulators of the community regarding the structure of the ministry. In 1 Timothy three groups are evident: bishops (3:1-7), men and women deacons (3:8-13), and priests (5:17-20). Titus (1:5-9) only mentions priests and the bishop. This latter was probably chosen from among the line of priests. From the texts it is not possible to come up with a clear definition of the role and authority of the bishop.

1. Different from the recipients of Philippians 1:1, among whom both "bishops and deacons" figure, in 1 Timothy the bishop is spoken of in the singular. His role would have to be well defined if it is said that whoever aspires to this ministry (*episcopo*) "desires an honorable task" (3:1); however the same passage (3:2-7) furnishes us with a picture that is otherwise indistinct. The qualities that are required of the bishop correspond essentially to the ideal image of the good head of his household (or "father of a family"), who incarnates authority and goodness, as well as enjoys a good reputation with outsiders (v. 7). How he is to express his ability to teach (v.2: *didaktikos*) is not specified. In the community he acts as the one who presides, who takes care of the "Church of God" (v. 5). Obviously such an office would never be assigned to any recent convert ("neophyte," v. 6).

2. Like the bishop, deacons also have to be worthy persons, not given to wine, not attached to money or greedy for material gain (v. 8) and under every aspect honorable. Teaching skills are not expected of them; but the requirement to keep with a pure conscience the "mystery of faith" (*to mysterion tes pisteos*) presupposes that they are involved in preaching. Mention of the deacons along with the bishop as "president," suggests the idea that they are subordinate to him. But the texts don't express the modality of their collaboration.²⁶

3. 1 Timothy 3:11 lists the qualities required by the gifts. Since the comportment of deacons toward their wives is treated in 1 Tm 3:12, one asks if the women of which he speaks in 3:11 may not be deaconesses. The analogy of the requirements obviously comes down in favor of this theory.

1 Tm 3:8-9 (DEACONS)

v. 8: Likewise they must be honorable persons
not two-faced in their speech
not over-indulgers in wine
not greedy for material gain
v. 9: adhering to the mystery of faith

1 Tm 3:11 (DEACONESSES)

v. 11: Their wives too must be honorable
not given to slander
temperate
trustworthy in all things

As will result from the following thesis, the pastoral letters attest to an evident limitation on the part of the early Christian women of their field of action.²⁷ Notwithstanding this some of their roles remain in vigor even if they are hard to equate with a true and proper feminine diaconate.²⁸ That the corresponding term does not appear may be explained by the fact that the Greek *diakonos* expresses both males as well as females. Had it been used an additional clarification would have been required.

²³ The imposition of hands on the part of the presbyterate for introduction into the ministry was not an optional act.

²⁴ See above, THESIS IV, 1.

²⁵ See above, THESIS IV, 3.

²⁶ It is surprising that in Tt 1:5-7 priests are named first, then bishops but not deacons.

²⁷ See also THESIS XI.

²⁸ See above, THESIS VI, 3.

4. Mention regarding the “priests who preside” (5:17: *proestote presbyteroi*) confirms the link between leading, presiding and taking care.²⁹ This is true above all for the priests “who labor at preaching and teaching” (*hoi kopiontes en logoi kai didaskalia*). For this reason they merit a “double compensation (honor).” Timothy refuses to accept accusations against them, a least unless they are confirmed by two or three witnesses. – The priests form an important group within the community, namely the presbyterate; among their other duties they have that of transmitting their ministry by means of the imposition of hands (4:14).

5. A comparison between the qualities required of the bishop and those required of the priests shows numerous affinities and few specific requirements. This list follows the order found in 1 Timothy 3:2-7.

<i>1 Tm 3:2-7</i>	BISHOPS <i>Tt 1:7-9</i>	PRIESTS <i>Tt 1:6</i>
v. 2: above reproach married only once temperate prudent respectable hospitable skillful in teaching	v. 7: well regarded v. 8: lover of the good prudent upright hospitable of sound teaching	v. 6: blameless married once one who labors at preaching and teaching (1 Tm 5:17)
v. 3: not a drunkard not a bully gentle not contentious not a lover of money	v 7: not given to drink not quick-tempered not arrogant not aggressive not greedy for sordid gain (cf. 1 Tm 3:8)	self-disciplined
v. 4 <i>f</i> : manages well his household and the Church of God	God’s steward	should preside well (1 Tm 5:17)
v. 4: keeps his children under control		with believing children
v. 6: not a recent convert		
v. 7: has a good reputation		

Above all it would seem that if required “social” qualities and behavior define the figure of the head or leader, it would hardly seem adequate to characterize a Christian ministry. The only requirement that clearly expresses the central theme of the pastoral letters³⁰ is contained in Titus 1:9 and is addressed to the bishop: “[that he] must adhere to the true word as it was taught so he’ll be able both to offer encouragement with sound teaching and to refute opponents.”

6. Since the relationship between the deacon and the bishop is not spelled out, it is likewise true of that between the priests and the bishop. The figure of the bishop, described in analogy with that of the priesthood in Titus 1:6-9, would indicate that the bishop comes from the line of priests, even if greater details are not given. Was he elected from the priests? Did the community play some role in this regard? The authority of the bishop is certainly not understood in the sense of a “monarch.” One might better consider him first among equals (*primus inter pares*), who together with the priests is responsible for the various needs of the Church, even though the texts do not enable us to establish precisely the area of his competence.

7. Since to both the bishop and the priests is attributed the job of “presiding,” one could deduce that this entails also presiding in the liturgical assemblies. But in this regard we do not possess any proof.

²⁹ See above, THESIS VII, 2.

³⁰ See also, THESIS XIII.

8. To this scarce information could in some way be superimposed the picture of the duties attributed to Timothy and Titus. In the literary style of the pastoral letters these first collaborators of Paul occupy a position of “instant hierarchy,” in force of which the responsibility for the well-running of all things dealing with the community is recognized. To fulfill these functions in an orderly manner they are equipped with the necessary doctrine and authority. In both cases the author of the letters introduces that geographic distance that motivates both the intervention of Paul as well as the attribution of full responsibility to Timothy and Titus. Timothy is settled in Ephesus (1 Tm 3:1, 3), Titus in Crete (Tt 1:5), and there they must put into practice the dispositions of Paul. In this their authority is based. – Here what interests us is their rapport with the other “ministries.” Their competence is remarkable: they must be watchful that the candidates to an ecclesial ministry possess the qualities that are necessary (for the bishop: 1 Tm 3:2-7; Tt 1:7-9; for deacons: 1 Tm 3:8-13; for priests: Tt 1:6), by means of the laying on of hands (1 Tm 4:14) they set priests up in their own cities (Tm 1:5), warning all the while that none of this be done too hurriedly (1 Tm 5:22); they transmit Paul’s message to certain trustworthy persons so that in their turn they can instruct others (2 Tm 2:2); they can also hear accusations against the priests, but only when they are well-founded (1 Tm 5:19). In this situation they must call the accused before the whole community (1 Tm 5:20). – If we ask who among the ministers – the bishop, priests or deacons – enjoys at the highest degree the role of “disciple of the apostles,” it seems that it is limited to the bishop. However it remains problematic to recognize a competence already institutionalized. Timothy and Titus receive their authority and legitimization directly from Paul through his letters. Given the reality of the churches toward the end of the first century this will no longer be possible, and the sphere of competence of the various ministries would little by little be subjected to a process of crystallization, as seen precisely in the pastoral letters. These, in fact, reveal the tendency to a progressive “preeminence” of the bishop which will be reinforced by the evolution of the communities in the succeeding decades.

THESIS XII

If we assume the assertions in Thesis VI as an element of controversy, then the limitation of the role of women in the community is undeniable, even if the “deaconesses” continue to perform their services. This depends in part on new problems within the churches, but also on other more profound theological reasons.

1. The woman is prohibited to act as a teacher, and must even keep quiet (1 Tm 2:12). Her subordination is shown in the fact that she must let herself be instructed (2:11), without pretending to dominate her husband. She will find her salvation in the exercise of motherhood. The home is the appropriate place for her activity (Tt 2:5: *oikourgos*), where she is able to express her own talents: sensible, chaste, devoted homemaker, good, generous, submissive to her husband. Any public role in the community by means of a contribution to liturgical celebrations or other initiatives (v. Thesis VI) is not foreseen.

2. The same picture emerges from the paragraph in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36, which in the present research is often considered a later gloss, precisely at the time of the pastoral letters. Even here women are not allowed to speak in the assembly; if they want to know something they should ask their husbands at home.

3. On the basis of the more probable meaning of 1 Tm 3:11, deaconesses are also active in the community. Besides this mention, however, nothing is said with regard to the ways in which they exercise their service, keeping at the same time to the given norms. Obviously the participation of women in the life of the community as took place during the time of Paul remained in practice (cf. Rm 16:1). Later testimonies speak of the presence of the feminine diaconate until the third century.³¹

³¹ The famous letter of Pliny to Trajan (Ep. X, 96, 68 – ca. 112) contains an important note in this regard. The Roman governor had sought, even through torture, to obtain “from two handmaids (*ancillae*) who were called ministers

4. The tendency that emerges in the pastoral letters can be explained, at least in part, by two things. In the first place, approximately 40 years following Paul's death the conditions in the communities had changed under many aspects. The Christians of the second generation had to deal with manifestations quite different from those of the beginnings.³² As we observed above, the use of the term "charism" must have influenced even the offices within the community, and one of the consequences had to do with the role reserved for women. Secondly, the letters present a vision of women that – according to the perception of the compiler – justifies her limited sphere of intervention in the community. 1 Timothy 2:14: "It wasn't Adam who was deceived, but the woman who was deceived and fell into sin"; in her weakness Eve let herself be deceived (cf. 2 Cor 11:3). This weakness lasts even to the present. Certain false teachers, against whom the letters warn, "worm their way into homes and mislead poor weak women who are burdened with sins and influenced by all kinds of passions" (2 Tm 3:6f.). – Women had played an important role in the spread of the evangelical message as is demonstrated by the collaborators of Paul (cf. Rm 16!) and other feminine figures (cf. Acts 16:13-15; 17:4, 12, 34; 21:5).³³ A generation later the tone changes. It seems that Christian women voluntarily lent themselves to listening to preachers who did not faithfully present "sound doctrine"; they intervened in the internal polemics of the Church, and adhered to heresies and other forms of moral depravation. What is said of the women in 2 Timothy 3:6f corresponds exactly to this way of seeing things. – It is also to be noted how in Gnostic circles women occupied positions of importance. Possibilities were open to them there which in the larger Church by now were no longer to be found.³⁴

5. Similar motivations must not lead us to undervalue the dangerous removal of a fundamental theological principle. Refusing to allow women to speak or to teach in public assemblies introduced a certain discrimination between men and women, almost such that it can no longer be thought to be from the Spirit for women to play a prophetic role in the community. The theological principle of the unconditioned efficacy of the Spirit in all the baptized – "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there's neither slave nor free, there's neither male nor female" (Gal 3:28) – would thus suffer a preoccupying restriction.

THESIS XIII

The defense of "sound doctrine" enjoys absolute priority of intention in the pastoral letters (1 Tm 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tm 1:13; 4:3; Tt 1:9; 2:1), which contained the "good entrusted to him" that Paul transmitted to his disciples (2 Tm 1:3f; 2:2; 3:14). At another level the "sound doctrine" is concretized in the ordering of the community which has to correspond to it. The comprehension, form, and significance of the ecclesial ministry are strictly linked to defending the truth of the faith. The new conditions in which the communities found themselves represent in this regard the historical frame of reference.

1. That which is properly understood as "sound doctrine" is not made explicit or summarized in any place. Some expressions can however indicate the essential contents, as for example: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tm 1:15); "God wishes that all men might be saved

(*ministrae*)" more precise information about the Christians. Were these two "ministers" deaconesses? The fact that Pliny expects from them, more than from other ordinary women, a greater knowledge regarding Christians, can make us suppose that they fulfilled a particularly significant role in the community. –The *Didascalia siriaca* (beginning of the 3rd century) contains instructions revolving around deacons and deaconesses (16).

³² For more details on this historic picture see the following thesis, XIII, 4.

³³ Only a pagan could accuse women of their inadequacy in promoting Christianity. Celsus (2nd century), a Greek philosopher and bitter critic of the new religion, speaks of the subversive tactics of the Christian missionaries, who while they work as artisans in private homes, do all they can to attract the little ones to themselves and some foolish women, exposing them to their stories full of wonder and empty chit-chat (Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3:55).

³⁴ Cf. R. Rudolph, *Die Gnosis. Wesen und Geschichte einer spätantiken Religion*, Göttingen 1978, 227: "They held various leadership positions, as teachers, prophetesses, and missionaries or even as ministers of cult (baptism, Eucharist) and as exorcists."

and may come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tm 2:4); “God saved us and called us to a holy way of life” (2 Tm 1:9, etc.). Other elements are integrated in more solemn and elaborate pronouncements: the profession of the Christian faith (1 Tm 2:5f), Christology (1 Tm 3:16; 6:15f), Soteriology (2 Tm 1:9f; 2:11; Tt 3:4-7).

2. As concerns the adversaries (of “sound doctrine”) it is not possible to give a single idea. The “interminable genealogies” in place of the “plan of salvation” (*oikonomia*) of God (1 Tm 1:4; Tt 3:9), recourse to the “antithesis” of so-called “knowledge” (gnosis: 1 Tm 6:20), make us think of the primitive forms of the Christian gnosis,³⁵ with its clear rigorist tendencies: prohibition of marriage and renunciation of certain foods (1 Tm 4:3). The assertions of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who said that the resurrection had already come (2 Tm 2:18) – perhaps an “orthodox” conclusion from what is stated in Colossians 2:12 and Ephesians 2:6, which however at the time of the pastoral letters could not have been considered orthodox – could also have played a part. A Jewish or Judaist influence on the heretics can be deduced from 1 Timothy 1:7 (“out of a desire to be teachers of the Torah”) and Titus 3:9 (“controversies and disputes concerning the Law”). – The appearance of heretics at the end in the last days (1 Tm 4:1; 2 Tm 3:1) is a recurring theme (cf. 1 Jn 2:18; 2 Pt 3:2), as is also their moral depravation (1 Tm 1:8-10; 4:1f; 2 Tm 3:2-5).

3. In order that the truth of the faith be preserved intact and pure across generations, its precise formulation is not sufficient. To remain faithful to this truth, every expression must be correctly interpreted and eventually translated into a new language. Besides, there is a truth of the faith that does not allow expression in words, but must be realized in a new way every day through practice. – So long as Paul was alive, the community could have recourse to him to resolve debated questions, when he himself did not take the initiative.³⁶ But after his death the communities had to seek and find a way to confront problems by themselves.

4. In the meantime a totally new situation was created. The “Pauline Christians” could no longer answer these emerging questions simply by having recourse to the Apostle’s letters. The spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire had as a consequence an increased diversification in the size and composition of the communities, as well as in their lifestyles. Widows, for example, were by then so numerous as to form a group of their own, organized in such a way as to be able to furnish help to “true” widows who had fallen into need, so as not to impact the community unreasonably (1 Tm 5:3-16). There were also other categories of the elderly who had need of special assistance (1 Tm 5:1-2; Tt 2:2-8). But above all the attitude of the Christians vis-à-vis the world and the times had changed. By now, the certainty that “the world as we know it is passing away” (1 Cor 7:31b) could no longer influence their state of mind, as much as the experience of the continuity of the social context with which they also had to find themselves in agreement, “so as to lead a peaceful, quiet life, holy and respectable in every way” (1 Tm 2:2). – The “charismatic order” in use at the time of Paul was no longer sufficient to guarantee the compactness and functioning of the community. New structures, even in the running of the Church, sought to meet these new challenges and needs.

5. Concern for “sound doctrine” in the orderly functioning of the churches is therefore tied to these new situations. Timothy and Titus personify the “supreme court” delegated to authoritatively decide the truths of the faith.³⁷ Information regarding the “bishop” (1 Tm 3:2-7; Tt 1:7-9) does not go very far, and yet the orientation for future development is already foretold. On this point in the pastoral letters a phenomenon, not unique in the history of Christian antiquity, is reflected. The constitution of a similar “supreme authority” seems to be called for above all when the truth of the faith is placed in peril. Apart from any particular charismatic weight, it was surely not the case when many years earlier in Jerusalem, the apostle James set himself up as such a figure of reference

³⁵ Here again no systematic description is offered. And this is evidence against a much later date (ca. 140) for the pastoral letters.

³⁶ See above, THESIS IX, 2.

³⁷ See above, THESIS XI, 8.

and guarantor of the “Gospel of the circumcised” (Gal 2:7) and even sent his emissaries to Antioch to verify the correct functioning of that church (Gal 2:12). Where the Antichrist appeared in the disguise of a heretic, a similar task was undertaken by the “priest” in the letters of John who asserted his authority prohibiting the offering of hospitality to foreign missionaries who did not teach the doctrine of “Jesus Christ come in the flesh” (2 Jn 7, 10). The title of “bishop” is not attributed to James or to the priest, but these represent something more than a first among equals (*primus inter pares*). More determining than the terminology is the function or role which they assume and they activate principally when the problem of the truths of the faith comes to the fore. – On the basis of this reading, the evolution regarding the form and understanding of the ecclesial ministry, how it developed from the first days of the Pauline mission until the pastoral letters is not the product of a purely theological reflection, but is rather the consequence of the changing social situations which influenced the life of the community. The theme of the “truth of the faith” comes into play here, in its turn understandable only in the global context of the renewed historical scene.

CONCLUDING NOTES

The theses presented here have the Pauline letters as a point of reference. The question concerns the relevance and the consequences of the exegetical results for understanding the nature and the form of Church ministry – always presuming that these results are in some measure acceptable. In keeping with the literary genre adopted, I propose again under the form of theses, some brief conclusions:

1. Ministry in Paul’s mind, as “a gift of God” for service in the community, belongs to the essence of the Church. The forms of this service are changeable. In the course of history they assume different aspects as is shown by the evolution of the Pauline communities.

2. From the fact that the evolution is verified in the communities who claim a Pauline heritage, one can understand that Pauline theology was not understood and transmitted in an atmosphere subtracted from the influence of history. It would likewise be unilateral to base one’s understanding of the ministry exclusively as the product of the “authentic” Pauline letters or exclusively of the “pastoral letters”.

3. The necessary adaptation of Pauline theology to the question of ministry does not mean that every phase of its evolution is under every aspect of equal value. The Pauline understanding of human existence establishes a theological criterion on the basis of which every form of ministry is judged. Two aspects are inseparable from this theme:

4. The gift of the Spirit in baptism establishes the dignity of every believer before God and of each one before the others. To this reality nothing can be added. Ministries, however diverse, do not modify in any way the constitution of the person before God.

5. Every ministry in the Church, therefore, makes sense only if put at the service of the Gospel. Independently from every form of ministry this holds true: a ministry that does not serve the cause of the Gospel deprives itself of its own legitimacy.

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