UNDIVIDED PLURAL MINISTRY

Ordered Ministries and Episcopé in the Presbyterian Tradition

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The 18th Plenary of the Consultation on Church Union was convened in January, 1999 to inaugurate a new relationship among nine churches. Together, the churches were to affirm "visible marks of Churches Uniting in Christ," including the reconciliation of ministries. The Plenary came close to failing, in part because Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) could not resolve their differing convictions regarding ordered ministry. The Episcopal Church's commitment to the historic episcopate and the Presbyterian Church's understanding of corporate *episcopé*, together with the Presbyterian Church's commitment to the ordained elder and the Episcopal Church's understanding of the "three-fold ministry," made it clear that reconciliation of ministries was impossible. Even mutual recognition of ministries seemed problematic. Yet the Plenary found a way forward.

The desire to achieve a fuller measure of visible unity resulted in the inauguration of "Churches Uniting in Christ" that included a provision for ongoing theological dialogue to provide a foundation for mutual reconciliation of ministries, with the goal of accomplishing full reconciliation of ministries by 2007. The Presbyterian Church and the Episcopal Church also entered into a bilateral dialogue focusing on the issue of ordered ministries – *episcopé* and episcopate, elders and the three-fold ministry. At the same time, the Presbyterian Church joined with other Reformed churches in a dialogue with the Moravian Church, focusing on ministries of oversight. It is in this context that I wish to explore the Reformed-Presbyterian understanding of ordered ministry and *episcopé*, elders and bishops.

The Reformed tradition=s understanding of ordered ministry and *episcopé* is complex, embracing a long history of theological and ecclesiastical discussion and disagreement. Reformed churches throughout the world embody presbyterial, congregational, and mixed polities, as well as differing patterns of ordered ministry. (The diversity of Reformed church life as well as its congruity is symbolized by the formation in 1970 of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches by the union of the World Presbyterian Alliance and the International Congregational Council.) Nevertheless, while consistency among Reformed churches is elusive, several typical features of historic Reformed ecclesiology endure in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

A CHURCH OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT

It is appropriate to give sustained attention to Calvin, not because he stands as a privileged authority, but because his distinctive approach to the church and its ministry has influenced Reformed church life for centuries and is clearly evident in current Presbyterian polity. Calvin=s subtle treatment of the shape of ordered ministry and faithful ecclesial

governance is a consequences of his highly developed doctrine of the church. Together with other sixteenth century reformers, Calvin understood the church as *creatura verbi*. ("The holy Christian Church, whose only head is Christ, is born of the Word of God, and abides in the same, and listens not to the voice of a stranger."[1]) Because the church is a community called into being by the incarnate Word and shaped by witness to that Word in the word of Scripture, the church's faith, worship, and order must obediently proclaim and reflect the Word. Institutional structures are not signs of the church; even at their best they are only evidence of the power of the Word to transform corporate and personal life. Thus, the ordering of ministry is neither a fundamental institutional given nor a matter of practical preference; ministry and governance must be tied to the church's origin, mission, and goal.

How do we know this creature of the Word when we see it? Word and Sacraments are the marks by which Athe church comes forth and becomes visible to our eyes. Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ=s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists."[2] Calvin=s use of the two marks is explicitly communal. He does not speak of a church=s doctrinal deliverances and sacramental theology, nor does he focus exclusively on the exercise of the pastoral office. Instead, the marks concern the faithfulness of preaching *and hearing*, and the fidelity of sacramental *practice*, within the community of faith. Theological purity and ritual precision are not the real issue, and pastoral office is not the only issue. The criteria are matters of fundamental ecclesial faithfulness that allows the gospel to be received, believed, and lived.

Calvin=s placement of Word and Sacraments together at the core of the church=s true life is a visible expression of the church=s existence as the body of Christ. He takes it as "a settled principle that the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace."[3] Baptism and Eucharist have the same function as Scripture and preaching: to disclose the presence of the living Christ, uniting the church to him in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus the church, born of the Word, abides in Christ through word and sacraments.

Reformed churches have sometimes added a third mark – "ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered as God=s Word prescribes, whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished."[4] There is no doubt that Calvin appreciates the centrality of discipline in the church=s life, but he never elevates it to the status of an essential mark, for discipline=s purpose is to ensure that Word and Sacraments have free space within the church. Where there is unconstrained room for the Word of God – preached, heard, seen, felt, tasted – there is the church. Where Word and Sacraments are suppressed, distorted, veiled, or marginalized, there is no true church – even if ordered structures endure. Discipline is important, not in itself, but because it seeks to establish a community capable of hearing the Word and prepared to celebrate the Sacraments. Discipline (what we might understand today as a combination of "order" and "formation") is the church=s systematic effort to cultivate the Word, providing conditions for growth in Christian faith and life.

ORDERED MINISTRY

The church=s ordered ministry is an essential component of discipline, indispensable to ensuring the church=s fidelity to the Word. It is well-known that Calvin commended four offices of ministry: pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons. It is misleading to think of them as a differentiated quadrilateral, however, because Calvin understood them as plural offices within two ecclesial functions: ministries of the Word performed by presbyters (pastors, teachers, and elders) and ministries of service performed by deacons (distributing alms and caring directly for the poor and sick). In turn, these presbyterial and diaconal ministries are plural expressions of the church=s one undivided ministry.

Calvin=s distinctive approach to the church=s ordered ministries may be clearly seen in his transformation of the office of deacon.[5] The Catholic Church=s deacons were assistant ministers (future priests), and thus part of the clergy as distinct from the laity. In the emerging Lutheran churches, deacons were no longer clergy, but laity – usually civil servants – charged with care for the poor. But for Strasbourg-Geneva Reformed ecclesiology and practice, deacons were lay people who held ecclesial office as an essential component of the church=s ministry. Diaconal functions – care for the poor, sick, widows and orphans, refugees, and others in need – are the responsibility of all Christians, of course, but for Calvin, ordered deacons were charged with leading the whole church in *officia caritatis*. Deacons were no longer a sub-set of another order of ministry nor were they removed from the church=s orders of ministry. Instead, deacons were persons with dual vocations, secular and ecclesial. They were members of the church called and ordained as one of the "four orders of office instituted by our Lord for the government of his Church."[6]

Calvin=s understanding of the deacon reflects two key features of his approach to the church=s ordered ministries, features that endure in current Presbyterian polity. First, Calvin resists clericalism. Most continental Protestants rejected the Catholic Church=s teaching on holy orders, replacing the Catholic pattern with a pastoral office centered on proclamation. Calvin, on the other hand, constructed a pattern of ministry that breaks down the distinction between Aclergy" and Alaity" by instituting two "lay" ecclesial ministries – deacon and elder. Second, the church=s various ministries are corporate, not only within each order of ministry, but among the orders. No person can exercise an ordered ministry independently, and no order of ministry can function apart from its essential relationship to other orders.

The corporate character of Calvin=s orders of ministry is evident in the exercise of ecclesial discipline. Pastors are called "to proclaim the Word of God, to instruct, admonish, exhort and censure, both in public and in private, to administer the sacraments and to enjoin brotherly correction *along with the elders and colleagues*" [emphasis added].[7] Discipline, the Asinews" of the church, is a corporate responsibility shared not only among pastors, but within a council of pastors and elders. Indeed, pastors and elders are but "two kinds of presbyters: those who labor in the Word, and those who do not carry on the preaching of the Word yet rule well."[8] Thus, *shared* presbyterial responsibilities include proclaiming the word and administering the sacraments, instructing the faithful in true doctrine, and administering discipline that ensures free

space for Word and Sacrament to take root in the life of the church and its members. Pastors fulfill all three presbyterial functions; teaching is sometimes shared with persons who give formal instruction in school settings; discipline is always shared with elders who, like deacons, are "laypersons" ordained to ecclesial office.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), following Calvin and the development of Reformed ecclesiology, has two kinds of presbyters: ministers, traditionally called "teaching elders," and elders, traditionally called "ruling elders."[9] Identifying ministers by their teaching role emphasizes the primacy of the Word and the centrality of the pastoral office within the *ecclesia docens*. The designation "ruling" elder is easily misunderstood, however. It is essential to note that the historic understanding of the "ruling" exercised by elders has far less to do with managerial governance than with *ruling out* or *measuring* the work of ministry, the fidelity of communal and personal lives, and the progress of the gospel in the church.[10] Elders= responsibilities for measuring the Word of God, sacraments, and discipline within the body of Christ place them squarely within presbyterial functioning – *ruling elders* are *canon presbyters*. The ruling/measuring ministry of elders is liturgically evident in their essential responsibility for ensuring that Scripture is read and proclaimed, and for ordering and participating in celebrations of Baptism and Eucharist.

The presbyterial partnership of elders and ministers is, at its heart, an expression of the Reformed conviction that ordered ministry must represent the ministry of the whole people of God. Thus, pastors cannot function in isolation from so-called "laypeople" who also exercise ministry on behalf of and for the sake of the whole congregation. Reformed understandings of ordered ministry and the exercise of *episcopé* intentionally break down the distinctions between "clergy" and "lay."   The very terms "clergy" and "laity" are ill-suited to Reformed ecclesiology, for the Reformed pattern of ordered ministry attempts to overcome this distinction.

Calvin=s plurality of ministries seeks to break open the ministry of the whole people of God. His ordering of ministry in the church gives visible form to the "priesthood of all believers" while protecting the church against the potential abuses of clericalism. Moreover, all of the ordered ministries are bound together in the common task of ensuring the church's fidelity to the Word. However the church's ministries might be ordered, they remains undivided. When a minister – pastor, elder, deacon – performs any ministerial act, it is performed on behalf of the whole ministry; no one may act alone as the representative of Christ. This indivisibility of the plural ministry is a theological principle made concrete in the corporate functioning of pastor and elder presbyters in sessions, presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies, as well as in their joint oversight of the ministry of deacons.

Calvin was not dogmatic about the specific ordering of ministry, and Reformed churches have always felt free to develop variations. Although Reformed ecclesiology seeks to be faithful to scriptural precedents, it is not tied to a specific historical model. Calvin himself recognized a fluid pattern of ministry in the earliest churches, understanding that New Testament references to bishops, presbyters, and deacons is not precise: "But in indiscriminately calling those who rule the church 'bishops,' . . . 'pastors,' and 'ministers,' I did so according to Scriptural usage, which

interchanges these terms."[11]   He also acknowledges that none of these biblical terms means precisely the same thing in contemporary church life. Although they may be applied appropriately to contemporary ministries, New Testament usage refers to ecclesial *functions* rather than to ecclesiastical *offices*.

Nevertheless, Calvin is quite clear on several points. First, however offices are ordered, they must fulfill the two basic functions: ministry of the word (presbyterial) and ministry of service (diaconal). Second, these ministries must not be confined to "clergy," but are to be shared by ecclesial officers, only some of whom are pastors. Third, these ministries must not function independently, but only in a web of mutual responsibility and accountability. The Presbyterian Church preserves these Reformed convictions in its *Book of Order*:

> All ministry of the Church is a gift from Jesus Christ. Members and officers alike serve mutually under the mandate of Christ who is the chief minister of all. His ministry is the basis of all ministries; the standard for all offices is the pattern of the one who came "not to be served but to serve.@ Matt. 20:28) One responsibility of membership in the church is the election of officers who are ordained to fulfill particular functions. . . . The Church offices mentioned in the New Testament which this church has maintained include those of presbyters (ministers of the Word and Sacrament and elders) and deacons. While the ministry is one, specific forms of ministry may emphasize special tasks and skills and the ordering of the offices of ministry shall reflect this variety[12]

EPISCOPÉ

As Calvin discussed the ordering of ministry in light of New Testament church life, he noted that "to all who carry out the ministry of the Word it accords the title of 'bishops.'"[13] Calvin understood "bishop" as a designation for the pastor of a congregation, responsible for preaching and sacraments. Pastor/bishops do not function alone, of course, for they are joined in ministry by elders chosen from the people. "Each church, therefore, had from its beginning a senate, chosen from godly, grave, and holy men, which had jurisdiction over the correcting of faults."[14]

Nevertheless, as he traced the development of governance in the early church, Calvin noted with understanding and approval the church=s practice of designating one of the pastors in a locality to serve as bishop, presiding over the assembly of the presbyters "in order that dissensions might not arise (as commonly happens) from equality of rank."[15] His approval did not necessitate a pattern of Reformed bishops, however, for he viewed episcopacy as an optional office, "introduced by human agreement to meet the needs of the time."[16] Calvin approved of the reforming bishops of the English church and even advised the establishment of bishops and an archbishop for the Reformed church in Poland, "that by this bond of concord, the bishops might remain more closely united among themselves."[17] In all of this, however, Calvin distinguished bishops from other pastors in a purely functional manner; episcopacy is never conceived as an *office* of oversight but only as a *function* of presbyterial ministry shared with elders.

Calvin=s letter to the King of Poland reveals four significant elements in his tentative openness to bishops. First, the realities and needs of church life in particular times and places may allow or even call for the establishment of episcopacy, although it is not Calvin=s preferred order. Second, Calvin remains suspicious of the tendency in episcopacy to the corruption of power, making clear that a bishop is "not to lord it over others or to arrogate to himself a right of which [others] were forcibly deprived." Third, bishops are to function only within councils, and even then only "for the sake of order." And finally, the episcopal ministry of unity is paramount, for the role of the bishop is to "cherish a holy unity between his colleagues and brethren."[18]

The normative Reformed practice has been not to establish an office of bishop distinguished from pastors, but rather to understand each pastor as fulfilling the proper responsibilities and performing the proper duties of bishop together with the council of elders. One factor in the continuing Reformed refusal of bishops may be that Calvin=s relatively benign view of episcopacy was followed by the much harsher perspective of his successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza. Beza distinguished three types of episcopal office: godly, human, and satanic! The first, granted by God, is simply the pastor of a congregation – the 'bishop' charged with the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in a particular Christian community. The second type of episcopal office, "introduced into the church on the basis of purely human insight in conflict with the explicit Word of God,"[19] attributes to one particular pastor power over "his companions in the ministry." The third, satanic episcopal office grows inevitably from human episcopacy as a tyrannical dominion in which bishops "are not only the superiors but as it were the supreme controllers of the clergy."[20]

Sixteenth and seventeenth century political and ecclesiastical struggles in Scotland and England confirmed Presbyterian-Reformed hostility to episcopacy. American Presbyterianism was defined by the history of the Scottish church's century-long resistance to domination by royally appointed bishops, and so followed Beza and the Church of Scotland in disdaining episcopacy. Although "bishop" has been understood as one of the designations appropriate to pastors, its significance has been restricted to Beza=s "first" episcopal office. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has recently restored to its *Book of Order* historic language that describes the *office* of minister of Word and Sacrament in terms of its various *functions*:

> The person who fulfills this responsibility has, in Scripture, obtained different names expressive of his or her various duties. As he or she has oversight of the flock of Christ, he or she is termed bishop. As he or she feeds them with spiritual food, he or she is termed pastor. As a servant of Christ in the Church, the term minister is given. As it is his or her duty to be grave and prudent, an example to the flock, and to govern well in the house and Kingdom of Christ, he or she is termed presbyter or elder. As he or she is sent to declare the will of God to sinners. And to beseech them to be reconciled to God, through Christ, he or she is termed ambassador. And as he or she dispenses the manifold grace of God and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he or she is termed steward of the mysteries of God. Both men and women may be called to this office.[21]

Reformed rejection of the office of bishop did not obviate the need for ecclesiastical organization beyond the congregation, however. A pastor/bishop surrounded by a group of presbyters may be a useful model for congregational life, but the need for unity, order, and peace

among congregations calls for a form of ecclesial life embracing all congregations in a region. Calvin understood that the development of city bishops in the early church grew from the church=s need for ordered relationships, doctrinal agreement, and sacramental sharing among congregations, but he believed that this need could be met in a way that avoids what he considered the characteristic abuses of personal episcopacy. Calvin=s Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances proposed the establishment of two ecclesial institutions in Geneva: the Consistory and the Venerable Company of Pastors. The Consistory, composed of pastors and elders, was responsible for church order and discipline. The Company of Pastors was responsible for examination and ordination of ministers, continuing biblical and theological education, mutual theological and ethical encouragement, and missionary work in neighboring countries.[22] The Company of Pastors' responsibility for ordination and mission have joined the Consistory's responsibility for order and discipline as major functions of modern presbyteries (although sustained theological work and mutual encouragement are no longer central to governing body life).

The Geneva pattern was adapted by Knox and Melville in the Scottish church. The old bishoprics were replaced for a time by "dioceses of the superintendents," with one of the pastors taking on limited responsibilities for administration. However, this system was understood as a temporary expedient, was never fully implemented, and soon gave way to presbyteries. Regional assemblies of ministers and elders, rather than personal office, assumed responsibility for the fidelity and good order of the churches.

Clearly, the Reformed tradition embodies conceptions of *episcopé* that are understandable in light of the early church=s experience. Episcopal oversight was originally and properly the responsibility of the one charged with proclaiming the Word and presiding over eucharist and baptism in a local Christian community. This bishop/pastor was surrounded by presbyters and deacons within the congregation. It is from this earliest pattern that contemporary Reformed pastors might be understood as bishops. Yet the early church's expansion required the exercise of *episcopé* on behalf of a number of congregations, shifting the office of bishop from congregation to diocese. As a consequence, presbyters assumed a new role, becoming the pastors of local eucharistic communities. Most Reformed churches have resisted this move, however, preferring to lodge trans-congregational *episcopé* in collegial assemblies of presbyters B *both pastors and elders*.

Together with pastors, elders exercise *episcopé* at all levels of the church – locally in sessions, regionally in presbyteries and synods, and nationally in the General Assembly. Personal *episcopé* exists only within the corporate *episcopé* of these "governing bodies." The episcopal functioning of presbyters – elders and ministers together – is of two types: '*episcopé* of jurisdiction' is exercised corporately in church assemblies while '*episcopé* of order' is exercised personally and corporately in admonition, comfort, defense of the gospel, and so on. Thus, in exercising *episcopé,* governing bodies of the church:

> frame symbols of faith, bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in life, resolve
> questions of doctrine and of discipline, give counsel in matters of conscience, and decide issues

properly brought before them under the provisions of the *Book of Order*. They may authorize the serving of the Lord=s Supper . . . They have power to establish plans and rules for worship, mission, government and discipline of the church and to do those things necessary to the peace, purity, unity, and progress of the church under the will of Christ. They have responsibility for the leadership, guidance, and government of that portion of the church which is under their jurisdiction.[23]

The *Book of Order* is clear that "The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be governed [read, *episcopé*] by representative bodies composed of presbyters, both elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament."[24] Furthermore, the *Book of Order* is explicit in its identification of presbytery as "a corporate expression of the church consisting of all the churches and ministers of the Word and Sacrament within a certain district."[25]

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Ecumenical discussions since the *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* process have revealed a gap between cherished Presbyterian understandings of ordered ministry embedded in the *Book of Order*, and the realities of life in congregations, presbyteries, and the General Assembly. An unintended consequence of dealing with the Consultation on Church Union, the Formula of Agreement, and a range of dialogues and conversations is a growing awareness that Presbyterian ecclesiological understandings have diminished under the weight of American cultural realities.

Presbyterians have become comfortable with the un-Reformed distinction between "clergy" and "laity." The terminology itself is used widely, even finding its way into the *Book of Order*,[26] and "ordained ministry" is routinely taken to mean ministry of word and sacrament. The easy acceptance of this distinction is both cause and result of a diminished sense of elders and deacons as persons called to ordered ecclesial ministries.   Too many Presbyterians view the office of elder as a three-year term on the local congregation's board while the office of deacon is limited to providing tokens of care for members of the congregation. Too often, church sessions (elders and pastors) become committee-dominated, agenda-driven business meetings while boards of deacons flounder in search of purpose, or are discontinued altogether. Episcopé within presbyteries and synods is too often replaced by administrative, regulatory, and judicial structures dominated by ministers, while annual meetings of the General Assembly, also dominated by ministers, focus on legislative business and internal warfare.

The picture may not be as bleak as the preceding paragraph suggests, but it would be misleading to present deeply theological-ecclesial understandings of ordered ministry and episcopé as if they were accurate representations of everyday reality throughout the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). There is good news, however, in a growing awareness of the situation we face, and a hope that ecumenical conversations will help us to recover the best in ourselves and to open ourselves to new possibilities of faithful church life.

Will Presbyterian recovery of the historic understanding of ordered ministry help or hinder prospects for the "full reconciliation of ministries" envisioned by CUIC and implied in

the Episcopal-Presbyterian Dialogue? It is clear that Episcopalian and Presbyterian commitments are incompatible *in their current forms*. Presbyterians are not likely to adopt the Episcopal pattern, and Episcopalians will not adopt the Presbyterian pattern. Nor is reconciliation of ministries a simple matter of Presbyterians adopting bishops while Episcopalians recognize elders as genuine presbyters. It would be presumptuous to comment on Episcopalian possibilities, but I can suggest ways in which Presbyterian understandings could be both honored and modified.

The Reformed conviction that the church's ordered ministries are not restricted to "clergy" is an essential feature of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s ecclesial self-understanding. Elders and deacons, *ordained* to their ministries together with ministers of word and sacrament, are formal and material expressions the ministry of the whole people of God. One reason for the Presbyterian Church's resounding "no" to COCU's original proposal for Covenant Communion was the perceived denigration of the ordered ministry of elders.   The COCU proposal relegated elders to the generic category, "ministers of governance," who were to be "recognized" but who were not included in the reconciliation of ministries" as were *real* presbyters. Ministers of word and sacrament cannot function in isolation from so-called laypeople; elders and deacons exercise ordered ministries in and for the whole church.

A second essential feature of Presbyterian ecclesiology is the conviction that ministers, elders, and deacons exercise their ministries corporately, both within each office and among the offices. Corporate patterns of mutuality are formal and material expressions of the variety of gifts, ministries, and actions that are given by the Spirit for the common good of the body of Christ. Another reason for the Presbyterian "no" to COCU was an entrenched suspicion of bishops, particularly when they are understood individualistically as (in COCU's words) "pastoral overseers" and "administrative leaders." All ministry in the church is corporate and mutual.

The ordained, fully presbyterial offices of minister and elder, together with the ordained office of deacon, function as an undivided plural ministry. Of course, their functions and responsibilities are different; they are bound in patterns of mutuality, not homogeny. For instance, while ministers and elders serve together as the session of a congregation, the pastor is always the session's moderator. Presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies elect one of their number – minister or elder – as moderator. While moderatorial authority is modest, it nonetheless expresses a recognition that good order requires a form of presidency. It also incorporates a hope that presidency will both represent and lead the ministry and mission of the church.

None of the essential features of Presbyterian ecclesiology is necessarily incompatible with a ministry of bishops. It is even possible to imagine an episcopal ministry within a plural, fully corporate, non-clericalized order. A few Reformed churches worldwide – in Hungary, Indonesia, for example – have bishops that function within a broad ministerial collegium. Imagining the possibility of bishops in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) – however improbable that may be – might begin with the four elements in Calvin's tentative openness to bishops,

expressed in his letter to the King of Poland.

     1. Do the realities and needs of contemporary church life in North America allow or call for the establishment of episcopacy?

     2. Could an episcopal order be established that would guard against the temptations of "position" and proscribe the appropriation of rights and powers at the expense of other ordered ministries?

     3. Can the "undivided plural ministry" of the Presbyterian system incorporate a truly conciliar episcopacy that would enhance good order?

     4. Would an episcopal ministry of unity build harmony and concord within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

The questions should be asked in reverse order, proceeding from the ministry of unity through conciliarity and collegiality to utility. I believe it is possible, though not necessary, to answer positively questions 4, 3, and 2 within a thoroughly Reformed and Presbyterian ecclesiology. Positive answers to the first three would then provide a rich context for determining if the current ecclesial situation calls for an ecumenically satisfactory Presbyterian episcopate. The task is not simple, of course, and the prospect of approval by the church's governing bodies is uncertain at best. (And this without even addressing the difficult issue of the "historic episcopate.") However, wide Presbyterian discussion beyond the current dialogues will achieve several important benefits First, discussion among Presbyterians will enhance appreciation of our own understandings of ordered ministry and *episcopé*. Second, it will help to overcome a merely reflexive opposition to bishops. Third, it will suggest *possibilities* for a Reformed episcopate that might help to overcome the current ecumenical impasse.

Calvin wrote a long letter to Archbishop Cranmer, commending a free and universal council to put an end to the division of the churches. His eagerness for a council of unity led him to the exuberant pledge that "could I be of any service, I would not grudge to cross even ten seas, if need were, on account of it."[27] Calvin's heirs may be able to cross the waters of creative imagination in order to explore new possibilities for an ecumenically undivided plural ministry.

NOTES

1. "The Ten Conclusions of Berne" (1528) in John H. Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Churches* (Garden City: Anchor Doubleday, 1963) p. 129.

2. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John T. McNeill, ed., Ford Lewis Battles, trans. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) 4.1.9., p. 1023.

3. *Ibid.*, 4.14.17., p. 1292.

4. The Scots Confession, *Book of Confessions: Study Edition* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1999) 3.18., p. 42.

5. For a full treatment, see Elsie Ann McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1986)

6. Calvin, *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances,1541* in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, J.K.S. Reid, ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954) p. 58.

7. *Ibid*.

8. Calvin, *Institutes* 4.11.1., p. 1211. References to the dual presbyteriate can be found throughout Calvin=s writings. Note especially commentaries on Romans 12:8, 1 Corinthians 12:28, and 1 Timothy 5:17.

9. Calvin's fourth office – teacher – is usually incorporated into ministry of word and sacrament.

10. Geddes MacGregor, *Corpus Christi: The Nature of the Church According to the Reformed Tradition* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958) p. 216f.

11. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) 4.3.8., p. 1060.

12. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Book of Order* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 2001) G-6.0101-.0104

13. *Ibid*.

14. *Ibid.,* p. 1061.

15. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.4.2., p. 1069.

16. *Ibid*., 4.4.2., p. 1069.

17. John Calvin, "Letter to the King of Poland" in *The Letters of John Calvin* (4 vols.), Jules Bonnet, ed. & trans. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication) vol. III, p. 106.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Theodore Beza, "De Triplici Episcopatu" in W. Nijenhuis, *Ecclesia Reformata* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1972) p. 143.

20. *Ibid*., p. 157.

21. *Book of Order*, G-6.0202a.

21. For a detailed discussion, see Robert M. Kingdon, "Calvin and 'Presbytery': The Geneva Company of Pastors." *Pacific Theological Review*, XVIII.2., pp. 43-55.

23. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Book of Order* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 2001) G-9.0102b.

24. *Book of Order,* G-9.0101.

25. *Book of Order*, G-11.0101.

26. *Book of Order*, G-13.0202d.

27. John Calvin, Letter to Thomas Cranmer, April 1552, in Bonnet, *op. cit.*, vol.2, p. 348.