

ONE-THIRTEEN FROM BABYLON  
STEWARDSHIP AS A PATHWAY TO RESTORATION

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## ABSTRACT

### ONE-THIRTEEN FROM BABYLON

#### STEWARDSHIP AS A PATHWAY TO RESTORATION

One-thirteen From Babylon integrates the themes of church renewal and stewardship. It offers a modern approach to stewardship based on the covenant community's experiences during the Babylonian Exile.

Polarities within the exilic literature include the priest (law) calling for form, the deteronomist (prophets) calling for justice. In God's household both must exist in harmony. Within the Trinity, Father and Son exist in common substance, separate in function. The Spirit manages the tension that arises from such a relationship. To ensure such harmony within the covenant community a tension manager brings stability and communication to the law and the prophets. That tension manager is the steward. "Stewardship is the good and useful ordering of all resources for the purpose of ensuring justice."

It is the author's thesis that church renewal can be achieved through stewardship understood as a communicator between the element of form (law) and the element of vision (prophets). Within the Presbyterian Church in Canada the responsibility of stewardship is assigned to the Session through The Book of Forms section one-thirteen. Elders will be the leaders of congregations working toward renewal. Using the Exilic model, renewal will be a return from Babylon.

Stewardship (for Presbyterians, section one-thirteen) is the means for leaving Babylon. Thus the thesis title: One-thirteen from Babylon: Stewardship as a Pathway to Restoration.

Session elders were the focus group for the thesis project. To provide a learning tool for elders that they might take up the challenge to be responsible for stewardship, a stewardship booklet was written. Elders of three congregations read the booklet. The project tested for the occurrence of learning. The conclusion was that learning had occurred, that elders can assimilate the information on which to lay a renewal pathway.

- Caroline Lockerbie  
Burlington, Ontario

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- Caroline Lockerbie  
Burlington, Ontario



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## GLOSSARY

**Book of Forms.** The official guide to Ecclesiastical Procedure for the office-bearers of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. It sets forth the law and practise of the Church.

**Charism.** A charismatic or spiritual gift for the building up of Christ's Body, the church.

**Church Courts.** Decision making within the church is done by a group of people known as a court as opposed to decision making by an individual.

**Communion Roll.** A list of members of a congregation who have made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and are actively involved in the life of the congregation.

**Elder.** An elected member of a congregation who is set apart by ordination for decision making (ruling) within the courts of the church. Elders resign their right to rule when they resign a session, but they maintain their ordination.

**General Assembly.** Within the Presbyterian Church in Canada, this is the highest court. It establishes the contents of the Book of Forms. The other courts in descending order are synod, presbytery and session. All courts above the session level are composed of an equal number of ordained ministers and elders.

**Grass-roots.** In this document it refers to the congregation.

**Presbyterian Church in Canada.** A recognized religious denomination with historic roots in the Church of Scotland. Following the practise of Reformed theology, the church uses courts for decision making and implementation. In 1994 it had a communion roll membership of 154,000.

**Session.** This is the court at the congregational level. It is composed of the ordained minister and the elected elders of the congregation. Any business affecting other congregations within the boundaries of a higher court may be initiated in this court and addressed to the higher court.

This work is dedicated to  
three stewards of God's love in my life,

*Bill Woodley and  
our children, D.R.E.W and Alison.*

ONE-THIRTEEN FROM BABYLON  
STEWARDSHIP AS A PATHWAY TO RESTORATION

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A. NATURE OF THE PROBLEM OF THE PROJECT

The project is to develop a printed educational resource to educate elders about stewardship in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. It is intended specifically for Session members who have not received formal theological training. While drawing broadly on the guidelines and procedures outlined in the Book of Forms, we will concentrate on the doctrine contained in Section one hundred and thirteen. This is the section which bestows stewardship responsibility on the Session. We will also incorporate themes from the theory of the potential impact of Babylonian Exile experience on the development of the modern Christian Church in North America. This blending of themes leads us to the title of *One-thirteen from Babylon*. Since faithful stewardship will be a major stabilizing factor as the church works through the challenges created by the current period of exile, it will be a key element in smoothing the transition to the restoration of a church built upon and maintained by the covenants of the faithful.

Strathcona Presbyterian Church in Burlington, Ontario,

like the vast majority of congregations within the Presbyterian Church in Canada, is in a state of upheaval. While they are committed to being faithful to God, the leaders and active members are confused about the membership's lack of response to their visions of the church's role in their secular and spiritual lives. Less consistent attendance at worship, fewer participants in church programs, discouraged leaders and dwindling financial resources are the realities facing the congregation. The yearly statistical reports as presented in The Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada show the financial givings from congregations to the national church as having decreased by 22% (using constant dollars) between the years 1970 and 1992.<sup>1</sup> From a 1985 study of church attendance, including Presbyterian subjects, Reginald Bibby has concluded that "Organized religion in Canada has experienced a startling decline in service attendance."<sup>2</sup> Further survey work has led Bibby to conclude that "Since at least the 1940s, there has been a pronounced drop in weekly church attendance in Canada.... As service attendance has declined so has personal

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<sup>1</sup>Ronald E. Vallet and Charles E. Zech, The Mainline Church's Funding Crisis: Issues and Possibilities (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 60.

<sup>2</sup>Reginald W. Bibby, Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion In Canada (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1987), 22.

religious commitment."<sup>3</sup> A tracking of the worship attendance of Session elders of Strathcona Congregation for the months April through December in 1995 showed an attendance rate of 36%. The elders themselves suggested that a reasonable expectation of elder attendance for a healthy congregation was 80%. This is further evidence of a crisis in leadership. In 1992 the Session of Strathcona Church resolved to isolate and study one of the problems facing the church in general and Strathcona congregation in particular. That was the spectre of eroding financial resources.

It is a tradition of the Presbyterian church that financial resource management is a function of stewardship. Therefore, any review of finances entailed a review of stewardship. It was through the course of this review that the Strathcona Session identified a lack of published material to guide elders in their performance of stewardship duties.

Within the 123-year history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Sessions have always held the responsibility of fund raising for the General Assembly and the agencies under the high court's jurisdiction. Details for fundraising within their own congregations, however, were not articulated. It was not until 1983 that this responsibility was formally recognized in church law. Section 113 of the Book of Forms was revised to read that "The Session is responsible for all

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<sup>3</sup>Reginald W. Bibby, There's Got to be More!: Connecting Churches and Canadians (Winfield, BC: Wood Lake Books Inc., 1995), 15.

aspects of stewardship and mission, both spiritual and material, within the congregation." In the years surrounding 1983, church leaders were occupied with resolving the issues of protest raised in response to the ordination of women ministers and elders. As this storm abated, church leaders then shifted their focus to restructuring the General Assembly office and implementing a national fund raising campaign. The pragmatic aspects of a change to the Book of Forms paled in this light and were simply not given the attention befitting a fundamental shift in the congregational organization. This is a significant detail, since statements made by the General Assembly and policy changes to the Book of Forms have traditionally been complimented by extensive documentation and study materials for use within the congregations. For Section 113 these materials have not yet been produced.

The Strathcona Session is not alone in its interest in this aspect of stewardship. Associate Secretary John Bannerman, a senior administrator in the General Assembly Office, has commented on the numerous requests from sessions for assistance and his perceived need for educational resources in stewardship leadership.

The confusion experienced by Presbyterian congregations is not unique to the denomination or even to the Christian Church. The era of Modernity, which began in the eighteenth century, has been an instrumental force in the structural development of most Western institutions. Founded on a belief

that reason would answer all of society's ills, Modernity was an experiment in enlightenment. The collapse of this Enlightenment Experiment has led many institutions in society, such as government, education, and the health care system, into crises similar to that being seen in the Christian Church.

Recent literature in church studies suggests that the Christian Church is in a period of reconstruction similar to that experienced during the time of the Exile. Faithfulness to God, spiritual leadership and financial resources were issues for the Hebrews, not only during their exile to Babylon, but also upon their return to the land of the covenant. The Biblical story of the experience in Babylon, such as Psalm 137, or the prophecies of Ezekiel, offer hope for the church as its leaders deal with the problems of our day. The church needs to rediscover its heritage surrounding the Exile. The story needs to be told in a manner which the people of the modern covenant community can hear and understand.

An example of this can be found in the lamenting lines of the mournful Israelites who "... sat down and ... wept when [they] remembered... How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" Psalm 137:1,4. This Psalm is a picture painted of a community in despair. There is no sense that the Hebrews' harps were broken nor their voices silenced by disease. They simply could not muster the energy to sing, the one talent which had caused them to stand out from the crowd in their



unfamiliar surroundings. The lament speaks to a weariness akin to the weariness I see in the leaders of Strathcona and other Presbyterian congregations which I have observed. We weep because the tasks at which we once excelled no longer seem to work. We weep because we wonder where God is in our midst. We weep because the mercy and justice for which we stand seem silent from our lips and limp within our hands. We weep because the Presbyterian standard of 'decency and order' has disintegrated into chaos.

It is my theory that the issues of justice and order can be addressed through the catalyst which links the two, that is, stewardship. Where the catalyst functions properly, order and justice thrive. Where the catalyst is weak or broken, order and justice falter. Order provides a structure, justice constitutes an action, simultaneously constrained and supported by that structure. In concert, the two define a system.

In other words, justice is the essence manifested by God's will expressed through the relationships among people, creation and nature. This manifestation is a behaviour that can be seen, felt or otherwise described. These descriptions are then related to structure, being embodied by the physical church: its doctrine, laws, and general organizational practices.

Stewardship is the link between the two. As an element of justice, it is governed by the spiritual. As an element of

order, it is incorporated into the day to day, pragmatic functioning of the church. Therefore, a strong and healthy stewardship program will enable the differing polarities of justice and order to function in the same system. It is the egg which binds the oil and vinegar of theoretical and practical elements into the mayonnaise of real life in a real church in 1996.

Within the covenant community stewardship is not an end in itself, but rather the means by which the foundational theology of the law and the prophets can be maintained and God's mission for Christ's Church can be accomplished. Healthy stewardship is key to a healthy church.

The assumption of this project is that elders who are proactive in fulfilling the directive of Section 113 of the Book of Forms will be responsible for the spiritual and material aspects of stewardship within their congregations. This will in turn have a decided effect on the spiritual health of those congregations. The assumption also posits that elders can be adequately instructed, and can in turn teach the congregation, about stewardship.

This project will develop a tool to educate elders concerning stewardship and test its effectiveness in educating them for their leadership roles.

Will teaching stewardship theory lead to a lessening of the financial crisis within the congregation and denomination? Such a question would require many years of observation to

answer. It may be that there are factors other than stewardship knowledge and practise affecting the financial crisis. Such a study is beyond the scope of this project.

#### ACT OF MINISTRY

The Presbyterian system of government prescribes that each congregation be led by an elected Session. Members of the Session are known as elders. They are set apart by ordination to rule within the congregation and the higher courts of the church. The office of elder is further partitioned into teaching elders and ruling elders. Teaching elders are also known as Ministers. Ministers are also set apart by ordination, but are empowered to perform more functions within the congregation. It is in the role as teaching elder that the act of ministry for this project will be performed.

The minister is teacher, not just of the Session, but of the entire congregation. For the scope of this project the teaching function will be limited to the Session environment. Teaching within the Session will ultimately be for the benefit of the congregation. The long term goal would be the development of a more thorough understanding of the entire role of stewardship and its place within the normal functioning of a healthy and solid congregation. The project is aimed at elders, as opposed to other members of the congregation, to reflect their roles as ordained leaders.

## DOMINANT THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

### The Church

This project is part of a Doctor of Ministry study, one goal of which is the "renewal of the church." The church in this context is seen as continuous with God's community from the time of Creation through to the covenant community of the Old Testament. This sense of continuity is fundamental to the underlying theme of this project. Only when the church is seen as a community of hope can it proceed to explore renewal. The church, realizing that it has been entrusted with the charisms of the covenant, can strive for the wise and joyous use of God's gifts for the kingdom. The gifts of leadership have been entrusted to some for the vitality of the whole community.

### The Faith Community in Exile

The Hebrew experience of exile from the homeland in the foreign regions of Babylon brought about a renewal within the faith community of Israel. God's word in that experience is appropriate for the church of today. Portions of the Old Testament were written or edited to tell better the story of Israel's history to the people in and returning from exile. The themes and issues of those stories offer insights and directives for the modern church. In these writings the Priest and the Deuteronomist exist in a state of tension similar to the state of tension in the Godhead between the Father and the Son. Just as the Spirit monitors and maintains that tension,

so does stewardship act as a tension manager between the Priest and the Deuteronomist, later understood to be the law and the prophets, or less formally, order and justice. The tension is healthy. It allows both polarities to serve one another without becoming one another and losing the benefits of their individual attributes.

### The Church as the Household of God

Within the Household of God, the faithful act as stewards of the resources given to them as individuals and as community. The actions of the steward are a reflection of his or her understanding of, and relationship to, God. The resources of the church include the New Testament gifts of the gospel message, the charisms of the Holy Spirit, the traditional three Ts of time, talent, treasure and the twentieth century Ts of tissue and trash.<sup>4</sup>

### The Church Within Society

The church exists within the larger society of its day. All of the internal structures of the community exist to provide for the mission of the proclamation of the gospel to the end that all people might be reunited with the creator.

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<sup>4</sup>The Rev. Dr. Perry Bell, in a classroom lecture at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois in July of 1994, referred to these two twentieth century Ts of tissue and trash. Modern Christians have as useable resources human body tissue (blood, organs etc.) and the recyclable components of trash.

Communication with society is essential for the mission to proceed. To facilitate that communication the church must have knowledge and understanding of the dynamics at work in the society of its day. The issues of post-modernity include possessions and money, for they are the marks of success in the society and hold the status of an idol. The church must understand their lure and unseen strength.

#### Providing Financial Resources

The tithe was the solution proposed by both the Priest and the Deuteronomist when faced with the challenge of material support for the clergy and landless people of the exile period. The tithe is not a goal for giving, but rather an attitude that exists in a healthy covenant community. In a community in exile (a community surrounded by foreign values) the tithe acts as a reminder of God's presence and promises.

#### Managing Financial Resources

Over the years the church has developed an array of instruments to motivate members to give, to record and to manage those resources. Pledging makes external an internal commitment to God. Narrative budgeting helps to tell the story.

#### Managing Human Resources

The talents and gifts of the members of a congregation

are a limited and fragile resource. Faithful stewardship requires special attention to the human realities. Renewal in the church implies change, and the human system resists change in its primary need to remain stable for its own protection. The tension between the need for change and the desire for stability is a crucial factor affecting the role of a steward. The responsible steward must be able to motivate his or her fellow householders with an understanding of, and an appeal to, the rituals of worship.

#### The Defining Question

The question which defines the project is this: Can church renewal be facilitated through an understanding of stewardship as the means of communication between the law and the prophets?

#### METHODS AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Using the "Case Study Method" supplemented by "Quantitative Method" for information gathering, the project was the development of a resource for Presbyterian Elders concerning the subject of stewardship.

After a thorough literature search the first manuscript for the educational booklet was written. It was reviewed by two practicing Presbyterian ministers, one with expertise in stewardship, the other in theology. Their comments and feedback were incorporated into the final text.

A questionnaire was composed to evaluate the elders' current understanding of stewardship. The questionnaire was developed in consultation with two non-Session Strathcona elders, one a banker, the other an accountant. The questionnaire was distributed to elders of the Strathcona Session, and several of them answered the questions as described in greater detail in chapters three and four. Then the educational booklet was made available for further study and review by the congregation's elders. A second questionnaire was then composed to evaluate the amount of learning that had occurred by reading this booklet. Through written and oral responses the elders provided feedback on the booklet's value to them as it applied to their stewardship roles.

Using the pre-presentation questionnaire, the presentation of the booklet and the post-presentation questionnaire, the Sessions of two other Presbyterian Congregations in the Presbytery of Hamilton were led through the stewardship study. One was a larger, urban congregation, the other a smaller, rural congregation. The results of the questionnaires and the written and oral feedback were analyzed.

The manuscript was revised as necessary, but the final form of the booklet will ultimately be decided by the publishing committee of Church Offices. Several informational and study resources have been published in the last several



years in a booklet format. The final text given to the elders for study in the project was printed following this booklet format.

#### INTENDED OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT

The project was intended to offer to the elders of Strathcona Church Session a well researched and focussed resource to use in their stewardship studies. This resource was meant to have a clear and pronounced emphasis on fostering the rediscovery of the varied roles within the covenant community. Elders gained the knowledge, which will be combined with their own inherent skills, in order to convey this message to the members of their districts. The project will also offer to the Presbyterian Church in Canada a stewardship resource for its Sessions.

Under the umbrella of Stewardship both short term financial campaign materials will be discussed as well as a consideration of a long term approach to the development of stewards as part of the transition to a renewed church.

I hypothesize that there will be a marked resistance to the acceptance of the responsibility of stewardship by the Session. The biblical background may present a challenge to those elders who have a limited knowledge of the scriptures. The suggestions of a transformation of attitudes and practises which will be presented will be too great for some elders. The material will be new and threatening for others.

For many elders the information in the booklet will provide a new opportunity for service. It will begin a transformation in the lives of some leaders which will be part of the trek of the church out of Babylon. These people will come to know the hope that is the church, the glory that is in service, the joy that is in knowing the Lord of the stewards.

It is these negative and positive stories surrounding the teaching and learning of stewardship which I want to record for the Christian church. They will offer a view of some of the danger zones as well as the success stories surrounding stewardship for others doing ministry.

Concerning the narrower focus of the project question, namely stewardship as the communication link between the law and the prophets, I hypothesize that it will offer a means to begin the move from a short term view of stewardship to a long term view of stewards in the household of God.

Reaction to the booklet will offer for ministry a benchmark as to the progress of renewal within the church.

#### B. MINISTRY SETTING OF THE PROJECT

Strathcona Church is a congregation within the Presbyterian Church in Canada. It was constituted, or in Presbyterian terminology, "erected", by the Presbytery of Hamilton in 1957 for the growing population of the suburban area of east Burlington. For the first years worship and church school were held in the newly constructed local high

school. A permanent church building was dedicated in 1961 and to this an addition was built in 1991.

Canadian population statistics show the general demographics of the parish's geographical location to be comprised predominantly of persons claiming British origin. The percentage of this dominant ethnic group has declined steadily from the 80 per cent mark recorded when the church first opened, due in part to the immigration of a significant number of Dutch, French and second generation British Canadian families to the area. In the 1990s approximately 60 percent of the population claimed Protestant affiliation. The average household income in the city of Burlington in 1991 was \$64,000.

Within the congregation, approximately 70 percent of the members are Canadian-born of British ancestry, another 20 percent are British born and the remaining ten percent include Dutch descendants and South African and Jamaican immigrants. The congregation has 243 members on the Communion Roll, another 50 with adherent status and some 70 children. The average age of the adult members of the congregation is 49. The average age of the adult women who comprise 59 percent of the congregation is 52. The average age of the adult men who comprise 41 percent of the congregation is 44.

The members of the congregation are well educated. The majority of the members have education beyond high school, many with multiple university degrees. The majority are upper-

many with multiple university degrees. The majority are upper-middle class with the dominant professions represented being accounting, engineering and nursing.

The average Sunday attendance ranges from 50 in the heat of the Summer to 150 at quarterly communion services. From mid-September to mid-June the attendance is about 110, much less than half of the congregational membership. In 1984 with a total offering income of \$68,000 the average gift was \$212 per person or \$450 per giving unit. In 1994 with offering income of \$76,000 the average gift was \$311 per person or \$517 per giving unit. The average gift per person in the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1992 was \$517. Using the statistic of the Burlington household income average of \$64,000 as the average for the congregation, the 1994 offering is less than 1% of income for each giving unit or household.

The members of the Session are elected from the membership of the congregation. The Session's size fluctuates somewhat, but in 1995 when the project was completed there were 21 active elders. Their ages ranged from 33 to 70 with an average age of 56. The minister, also a member of the Session, but not referred to as an elder, was 45. Eleven of the elders were men. Ten of the elders and the minister were women. Over half had university degrees.

The minister was inducted into the congregation in 1988. Eleven of the elders have been elected since then. Four of them had joined the congregation after the arrival of the

minister.

Since 1992 the members of the Session have been engaged in an ongoing study of stewardship. There have not been any successful attempts by the elders at using the results of this 1992 study in broadening the congregation's understanding of stewardship.

It is for the leaders of this fairly affluent, well educated, poorly attending and poorly giving congregation that I have written a stewardship booklet designed to assist them in raising the awareness of stewardship within the congregation. The project included input and feedback from the members of Session, elders ordained but not on the Session and volunteer members of the congregation.

## CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

### A. CREATION, COVENANT AND CHURCH

#### CHURCH: COVENANT, COMMUNITY, CHARISM

With great alarm, the faithful of the Christian Community of the late twentieth century have begun to realize that the stage is being set for our era to be recognized in history as the time of the collapse of the historic church militant. Racing with time honoured, but antique and outmoded traditions, the faithful appear to be losing ground in the fast paced society in which the church finds itself. For some, the struggle is overwhelming, yet for others it offers the hope of an opportunity to share in the divine joy that accompanies any new activity in God's realm. For we, through Christ, have an alternative to the finality normally associated with death. Because of the Resurrection we have certain knowledge of new life. Watching the decline of one of God's glories is a cause for sadness. Yet even with approaching death is the anticipation of the excitement of a new creation which is about to begin.

The church is not without models for responding to crisis. Many times the survival of the community has been threatened by a changing environment. From the children of Israel exiled in Babylon to the post-Nicene fathers through to the Reformation leaders such as Luther and Calvin, the people

of God have responded to the challenges before them. The circumstances of each case are different but the initial reaction of the prophetic leaders has been to study the scriptures and explore, in the light of their creative energy, a new life for the people of their era. "In the crisis of its tradition and in the opportunities afforded by its hope, the church will take its bearings from its foundation, its future and the charge given to it."<sup>5</sup> "Origen taught Christian theologians to go back always for their inspiration to the sacred texts of Scriptures."<sup>6</sup> The church turns again to these tools which have served generations past and have always proved sufficient for the task at hand.

Modern religious sociologist David Moberg identifies seven different meanings for the concept of church.<sup>7</sup> All are helpful for some aspect of church study, however for this thesis "church" will refer to the people of God.

Fundamentally, the church of Jesus Christ is neither a building nor an organization. Rather, it is a people, a special people, a people who see themselves as standing in relationship to the God who saves them and to each other as those who share in this salvation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Jurgen Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1977), xiv.

<sup>6</sup>Georges Florovsky, Aspects of Church History (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1975), 34.

<sup>7</sup>David Moberg, The Church As a Social Institution (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), 16.

<sup>8</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, Theology for the Community of God (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 472.

Even within this narrower framework of ecclesiology there are many avenues of consideration. It is the theoretical essence as explored through the nature of the church that will form the basis of this chapter.

"The real essence of the real Church is expressed in historical form."<sup>9</sup> The people of God begin their history at the time of creation. "The creation of the world is the first of the majestic and gracious acts of the triune God."<sup>10</sup> As each element of creation is completed God declares it "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Finally, in the image of God, humanity is created.

God existing as trinity is subject for much theological reflection. For the purpose of this thesis the creator God is seen in trinitarian form. "When Christians speak of God as eternally triune, they simply affirm that the love of God that is extended to the world in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is proper to God's own life."<sup>11</sup> As a God of love, the persons of the trinity exist in a relationship which defines love and community. "God's will for community with and among the creatures is an expression of God's faithfulness to God's own eternal life, which is essentially communal."<sup>12</sup> The communal

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<sup>9</sup>Hans Kung, The Church, trans. Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden, (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), 5.

<sup>10</sup>Daniel L. Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 80.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 69



nature of the trinity is reflected in the community of God's people from the time of creation.

The image of God incorporated through creation is a community image. Further it was an image not solely given to individuals, but meant to be the image of the community. Biblical scholars point out that the statement of Genesis 1:27 uses a plural form of the word "man" so as to appoint humanity as the receiver of the image of God. "Humankind is a community, male and female. And none is the full image of God alone. Only in community of humankind is God reflected. God is, according to this bold affirmation, not mirrored as an individual but as a community."<sup>13</sup> "Human beings are created for life in relationships that mirror or correspond to God's own life of relationship."<sup>14</sup> Humans were created to be one within a community, existing in loving relationships as the persons of the trinity exist. As creatures of God, the humans of this community are thus the people of God.

When the created community ceased to reflect the image of creation a second form of the image of God manifested itself in creation. Jesus Christ in his human form portrayed that image in

his readiness to turn from himself toward creation and toward his fellow creatures. In Jesus Christ, we are offered a new discernment of who God is and of who humankind is called to be. And as Jesus

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<sup>13</sup>Walter Brueggemann, Genesis, Interpretation series (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 34.

<sup>14</sup>Migliore, 122.

models a new disclosure of God, so he embodies a call for a new human community.<sup>15</sup>

Even when the original community was destroyed the recovery of the people of that community was brought about through community. Just as one aspect of the trinity carried out the acts of creation, so too an aspect of that same trinity was responsible for the acts of restitution. The relational God of creation is the same relational God of salvation. And as such "salvation is through participation, for human development goes together with divine dispensation."<sup>16</sup> The community, the people of God, are integral to creation and to new creation.

The creation community was not set adrift in the tides of the universe. The creation community was called through Abraham and the Israelite nation to be a covenant community. Under Moses the people were called from slavery to freedom and established as the chosen of God.

The Israelites are the chosen people, holy and righteous, just and upright; they know Yahweh, cry to him, seek him, fear and love him, trust and wait for him. God and his people belong together, linked by that covenant which God in his free and powerful mercy has made with this small, insignificant, weak and sinful people: a covenant that is more than a contract, that means a way of life and community. The cause of the people is God's cause; God's cause is theirs. Life and blessings are given by God to the people of the

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>16</sup>Eric Osborn, The Emergence of Christian Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 165.

covenant.<sup>17</sup>

The Septuagint scholars translated the Hebrew word which described these covenant people into the word *ekklesia* meaning the "called out ones." As the early Christians began to gather in community they took for themselves this name *ekklesia*. "Their choice of *ekklesia* as their self-designation suggests that the early Christians linked themselves as the followers of Jesus to what God had begun in the wilderness with the nation of Israel."<sup>18</sup> Bound to God through the same trinitarian expression as creation, set free through Christ and brought together by the Spirit, they were indeed a people standing in covenant with God.

The fellowship of the disciples saw itself as more than the community surrounding Jesus Christ. It was also the fulfilment of the Old Testament covenant people. "But in addition to Israel another people of God is envisaged, a people of God - and this is the revolutionary idea - composed of Jews and Gentiles."<sup>19</sup> This new community is to include the old, but is extended to all of creation. The individual who makes this fellowship possible is Jesus Christ. Commenting on the Ephesians 2:15 reference to Christ as the cornerstone, Augustine wrote

What is a corner but the joining of two walls

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<sup>17</sup>Kung, 117.

<sup>18</sup>Grenz, 473.

<sup>19</sup>Kung, 120.

coming from different directions, which then, so to speak, exchange the kiss of peace? The circumcised and the uncircumcised, that is the Jews and the Gentiles, obviously were mutual enemies; ... He led both to Himself.<sup>20</sup>

Clement in his *Protrepticus* describes the people of Israel, the Old Covenant, in these terms:

these are the first-born enroled in Heaven, who hold high festival with so many myriads of angels. We too are first-born sons, who are reared by God, who are the genuine friends of the first-born, who first and foremost attained to the knowledge of God.<sup>21</sup>

The community of God's people is further described by the nature of both the leadership and relationship between leader and people which was integral to the covenant. The Old Testament clearly designates God as the supreme ruler and sovereign within the Israelite community. "Your God is king" (Isaiah 52:7), marked God's right to rule. The people of the covenant were the people of God's kingdom. The realm was not limited to the Israelites in either territory or time. Yahweh's dominion is universal (Psalm 103:19) and everlasting (Psalm 145:13). "God's right to rule properly extends over the entire world.... One day all nations will follow Israel in this confession (Zechariah 14:9,16)."<sup>22</sup>

It is the concept of "one day" which imprints the people of God with another nature, that is one of eschatology. Even

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<sup>20</sup>Thomas Halton, Message of the Fathers of The Church (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1985), 67.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>22</sup>Grenz, 481.

though God's reign is constant and universal, not all of creation has fully realized that truth. The people of God live now in a world where they proclaim and celebrate God's universal reign and enjoy the benefits of the relationships which that reign entails. Yet, they also recognize the reality that not all people have come to realize and honour that reign.

The sovereignty of God requires of the people an allegiance to all that God is. This includes God's love, relational nature and universal and everlasting power. It is the commonality of their allegiance which binds the people of God together.

It was on the subject of the inevitable reign of God to which Jesus Christ addressed much of his teaching. "According to Mark, Jesus' message centred around the proclamation of God's rule."<sup>23</sup> The word *basileia* was the word he used for kingdom when he referred to the Kingdom of God. Yet, it did not "mean an area or dominion situated in place and time, but simply God's rule, the reign of the king."<sup>24</sup> Jesus was more than a teacher, he was also the embodiment of the Kingdom of God. Through his earthly presence, during the time of his first coming, the kingdom was made known to the world. His resurrection confirmed his Lordship and his ascension marked the anticipation of a future return when the consummation of

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 482.

<sup>24</sup>Kung, 20.

the divine reign would herald in the ultimate form of the Kingdom of God. "The kingdom of God is both present and future."<sup>25</sup> The liberating rule of God can thus be understood as the immanence of the eschatological kingdom, and the coming kingdom can be interpreted as the transcendence of the believed and experienced rule of God in the present.<sup>26</sup>

At the time of Christ's ascension, the word of God concerning his reign had not been universally proclaimed. Another method of information circulation had to be established. Maintaining the formula for trinitarian relationship and reaffirming the covenant concept, the church was formed to continue the mission of Christ. The church was called to be all that the people of God in community had been before it. Yet, the reign of God offered a new dynamic which had not been known in either the creation or the Israelite communities. Both the power which the *basileia* of the present offered and the eschatological hope of the future were new natures for God's community.

As the eschatological future the kingdom has become the power that determines the present. The messianic life is life in anticipation. Its freedom lies in its transcending of the present through the power of hope for what is to come. This is also its pain: it has to seize the new against the resistance of the old, so that a new beginning cannot be made without an ending, and freedom cannot be realized without struggle.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Grenz, 484.

<sup>26</sup>Moltmann, 190.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 192.

Created both to live and to proclaim the kingdom, the church cannot be equated with the kingdom for the kingdom is broader in scope. "The church is called forth by the proclamation of the kingdom of God. It is a product of the kingdom, produced by the obedient response to the announcement of the divine reign."<sup>28</sup> Further, the church is "a foretaste of the eschatological reality that God will one day graciously give to his creation. In short, it is a sign of the kingdom."<sup>29</sup> The church is both product and sign of the kingdom.

Whereas the people of God are people within the kingdom, they are not the reigning force in the *basileia*. The reign of God cannot be identified with the people of God, the Church, any more than the saving act of God can be identified with the human reception of salvation.<sup>30</sup>

The covenant nature of God's people is maintained in the church through the community of those who have declared their covenant with God as before but have further included Christ. As in any community of God's people it is a common allegiance which acts as the binding force. The newness of the allegiance demonstrated in the church is a belief in a further revelation of God through the Son.

Jesus spoke of the community of God's people in terms

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<sup>28</sup>Grenz, 486.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 487.

<sup>30</sup>Kung, 74.

which the church would one day model itself, but its founding was a later happening. "Not until Jesus is risen from the dead do the first Christians speak of a 'Church'. The Church (and in this sense the new people of God) is therefore a post-Easter phenomenon."<sup>31</sup> The church took its origins in the followers' belief in the resurrection. Such an origin allows the church the flexibility throughout its history to begin anew with each moment of resurrection belief.

With God so clearly revealed in the Son, the church began to be a witness for the Son in the society of the day. What it witnessed to was the revealed image of God. Ultimately through that witness the church itself became that image of God. Just as the creation community had mirrored the image of God known at creation, so the church mirrored the image of God revealed through Christ, the Son. No individual was the totality of that image. Yet the people together could be the mirror.

To be the people in covenant with God who serve as the sign of the kingdom means to reflect the very character of God. The church reflects God's character in that it lives as a genuine community - lives in love - for as the community of love the church shows the nature of the triune God.<sup>32</sup>

Within the trinity the bond between the Father and the Son is the Spirit, the Spirit of love. As the Spirit of God functioned in creation, so that same Spirit functioned in the

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>32</sup>Grenz, 491.



new creation of the church. "The Holy Spirit is the facilitator of the covenant that forms the foundation of Christ's community.... Christ institutes the church, the Spirit constitutes it."<sup>33</sup>

Christianity is not yet the new creation, but it is the working of the Spirit of the new creation. The church witnessed to the kingdom of God as the goal of history in the midst of history. In this sense the church of Jesus Christ is the people of the kingdom of God.<sup>34</sup>

The fundamental tenet of the old covenant was freedom. Israel was led to freedom by the gracious hand of God. The new covenant reflects the spiritual essence of the freedom God would have for the people.

Ultimately it is not because freedom has to be struggled for and won that it is granted, but it is because it has been granted that it can and must be lived. True freedom is not rooted in man's existence, but comes to him from outside. The Spirit gives the believer this threefold freedom from sin, law and death. Freedom is given to us when we accept the spirit which supports us. The Spirit is only given to the individual through being given to the community, the Church.<sup>35</sup>

As a community the church mirroring the image of God in the Son acts as the body of Christ. As the New Israel the community's mission is defined. Christ provides the model for the mission. The eschatological hope offers a motivating factor. The ordering Spirit of creation provides the power whereby these separate factors can be melded together to

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 489.

<sup>34</sup>Moltmann, 196.

<sup>35</sup>Kung, 162.

accomplish the work of God.

In the mystical theology of the Eastern Church the union between God and the people of the church happens through a means of divine energy. Unable to participate in either the essence or the hypostases of the divine trinity the call to people to participate in the divine nature takes place through a divine power and energy common to the nature of the three known as the energy of God.<sup>36</sup> "In this dispensation, in which the Godhead is manifested in the energies, the Father appears as the possessor of the attribute which is manifested, the Son as the manifestation of the Father, the Holy Spirit as He who manifests."<sup>37</sup> Reflecting on this theology Philaret of Moscow has written in a sermon: "It is in creatures that the infinite and eternal energies abide, making the greatness of God to shine forth in all things.... this is the Kingdom of God where the righteous will shine forth as the sun."<sup>38</sup> In more traditional western thought, the divine energies can be understood as the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit empowers the church for the sake of the mediation of the kingdom. People are by this manner opened for the future of the new creation. "Through the processes and experiences of the Spirit the church becomes comprehensible to itself as the messianic fellowship in the

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<sup>36</sup>Lossky, 70.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 76.

world and for the world."<sup>39</sup>

The energies for new life which come from the Spirit are called by Moltmann as *charismata* (charis, singular form) and by Kung as charisms. "Through the powers of the Spirit, the one Spirit gives every individual his specific share and calling, which is exactly cut out for him, in the process of new creation."<sup>40</sup> The *charismata* exist to build up the eschatological community. As well they serve through individuals as a means of exposing the world to the new creation through the believers' daily life encounters. Kung describes charism as: "the call of God, addressed to an individual, to a particular ministry in the community, which brings with it the ability to fulfil that ministry."<sup>41</sup> Charisms are given to individuals to be used in the context of the community for the proclamation of the messianic message.

The whole congregation has "spiritual" and charismatic gifts. The whole congregation and every individual in it belong with all their powers and potentialities to the mission of God's kingdom. ... As the *corpus christianum* decays, the congregation will again recollect the wealth of its own *charismata* and thrust forward to the total testimony of salvation which leaves no sphere of life without hope, from faith to politics, and from politics to economics.<sup>42</sup>

The Spirit is God's eschatological gift with which the

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<sup>39</sup>Moltmann, 198.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 295.

<sup>41</sup>Kung, 188.

<sup>42</sup>Moltmann, 10.

community and the individual is blessed in the last days."<sup>3</sup>  
"The outpouring of the Spirit is the signal for the eschatological event."<sup>4</sup>

The decay of the church as we know it has become a reality for our generation. Yet even in the midst of decay the evidence of charism within the community is the sign of promise that God's reign will not fail, indeed that it is coming to fruition. There are many examples to be cited of the outpouring of the Spirit. I look at one that is somewhat unique to our day. The charisms traditionally associated with ordained ministry have been recognized as having been showered upon women. In service to the church, the gifts of these women will surely prove to be valuable.

Despite the modern controversy over female images and individual participation within the life of the church there have been very powerful feminine associations with the church throughout its history. Even as late as 1534, Calvin referred to the church as the mother of believers. In discussing the visible church he said:

let us learn even from the simple title 'mother' how useful, indeed how necessary it is that we should know her. For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels. Our weakness does not allow us to be dismissed from her school until we have been

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<sup>3</sup>Kung, 164.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 163.

pupils all our lives."<sup>5</sup>

Following a similar presentation of the image of church as mother Clement of Alexandria wrote concerning those pupils:

the new people, like the assembly of little ones, are pliant as a child. The little ones are indeed the new spirits, who have newly become wise despite their former folly, who have risen up according to the new Covenant. Then the New People, in contrast to the Old, are young, because they have heard the new good tidings. The fertile times of life is this unaging youth of ours during which we are always at our intellectual prime, ever young, ever childlike, ever new. For those who have partaken of the New Word must themselves be new. Whatever partakes of eternity ipso facto assumes the qualities of the incorruptible. Therefore the name 'childhood' is for us a life-long season of spring, because the truth abiding in us is ageless and our being, made to overflow with that truth, is ageless too. For wisdom is ever fruitful, ever fixed unchangeably on the same truths, ever constant."<sup>6</sup>

Not all of the women with charisms for ministry are biological mothers. However, motherhood is a characteristic commonly associated with the feminine aspect. This new consciousness of motherhood within the church may very well lead to a renewed understanding of the childlike nature of each member. The realization of the "ever new" nature of Clement's "little ones" may be the softening of the soul which allows the Spirit to be more abundant in its gifts of charisms to the parched soul of the church.

The charisms are more than just signs of the new kingdom,

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<sup>5</sup>Migliore, 185 quoting Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, 4.1.4.

<sup>6</sup>Halton, 64, quoting Clement of Alexandria in Paidagogos SC 70.144,146.

they are means of achieving the new creation. Just as at the time of creation the image of God given to humanity was a corporate image so too the individual charisms of the people of God when they are used in community become the new image of God in the body of Christ for the new creation.

The Canadian church, which is intended to be evidence of the new creation in the world, is experiencing an overwhelming case of "the fears." I suspect that it is through complacency as much as anything that the messianic hope which is integral to the church has been ignored. A renewal of a healthy understanding of the eschatological nature of the church would go a long way toward eliminating the paralysing fear. Working within a society where individualism dominates, it is a great challenge to present a viable church in terms of community and a covenant. Yet God's creative Spirit continues to break through and as it does points humanity to the new creation.

The end for which the world was created and redeemed is deep and lasting communion between God and creation, a commonwealth of justice, reconciliation and freedom based on the grace of God. While flawed and always in need of reform and renewal, the church is nonetheless the real beginning of God's new and inclusive community of liberated creatures reconciled to God and to each other and called to God's service in the world.<sup>47</sup>

## B. THE FAITH COMMUNITY IN EXILE

### STEWARDSHIP AND EXILE

On a superficial level the themes of stewardship and the

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<sup>47</sup>Migliore, 186.

Exile do not appear to have significant links. They are not traditionally studied together. My attempt to relate the two emerges from my quest to "reflect on the overall renewal of the Church"<sup>48</sup>, through the process offered to students in the McMaster Doctor of Ministry Programme.

A theological and biblical reflection on the theme of stewardship often begins with a study of the creation story, particularly that found in Genesis 1:1-2:4. Walter Brueggemann in his commentary on Genesis begins this scriptural section with the paragraph

This text is a poetic narrative that likely was formed for liturgical usage. It is commonly assigned to the Priestly tradition, which means that it is addressed to a community of exiles. Its large scope moves in dramatic fashion from God's basic confrontation with chaos (1:2) to the serene and joyous rule of God over a universe able to be at rest (2:1-4a).<sup>49</sup>

Another familiar stewardship theme is the tithe. Old Testament references to the tithe were written or redacted during the exilic period.

Within the Doctor of Ministry Programme, the author began reflection on the theme of stewardship. The placement of traditional stewardship references in exilic literature was at first only an interesting observation. It was an article by Brueggemann on church models in scripture that suggested

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<sup>48</sup>William H. Brackney, message as forward to The Doctor of Ministry Programme by McMaster Divinity College (Hamilton: Privately printed, 1993), 1.

<sup>49</sup>Brueggemann, Genesis, 22.

expanding to reflection on the Babylonian Exile. "This exilic, post-exilic period after the collapse of the temple hegemony is one to which we must pay considerable attention for it may, *mutatis mutandis*, be echoed in our own time and circumstance."<sup>50</sup>

There are themes which emerge from the writings which have relevance for us.

- The exiled Israelites assimilated with the Babylonian culture. *The priests called them back to the covenant through separation.*

- The stories of the faith had been forgotten. *The priests renewed and retold them.*

- The Israelites moped in despair. Their God had been humiliated. God appeared to desert them. *Hope was the tune of the prophets' songs.*

## HISTORY OF THE EXILE

The kingdoms of Israel were united under the Davidic dynasty until 931 B.C.E. when lethargy and exhaustion allowed them to drift apart. Bombarded by external forces and weakened by internal revolt, the Northern Kingdom, also known as Israel, fell to the hands of the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E. The elite were deported. The Southern Kingdom, known as Judah, withstood the challenges of the Assyrians, but fell to

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<sup>50</sup>Walter Brueggemann, "Rethinking Church Models Through Scripture," Theology Today 48, (July 1991): 133.



the advancing Egyptians in 609. The prophet Jeremiah writes of his exploits in Egypt as an exile. Judah, still under the control of Egypt, fell to the rising Neo-Babylonians in 587. The temple was destroyed in 586. The ruling class and community leaders were transported to Babylon. The prophet Ezekiel writes of his experiences as an exile in Babylon. Another transition of power began as the Medes rose in military strength. Their empire became known as Persia. Under Cyrus, the Persians captured Babylon and added its vast territories to its empire in 539 B.C.E. His governing policy was one of tolerance concerning local autonomy, indigenous culture and religious life. By the edict of Cyrus the Jewish exiles were allowed to return to their homeland and begin rebuilding their temple. "The leadership within the restored Jewish community was split into civil and religious spheres of responsibility, respectively delegated to a governor and a chief priest."<sup>51</sup>

The homecoming was not without peril and conflict. Land claims had to be settled. Political and religious authority had to be re-established. Much time and energy were needed to provide for even the basics of life. Temple restoration was neglected for a generation. The rebuilding of Israel and the temple in Jerusalem did eventually come about in 515 B.C.E.. The experience of the Babylonian Exile was to affect

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<sup>51</sup>Norman K. Gottwald, The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 429.

permanently the life and faith of the People of God.

In his book Exile and Restoration, Peter Ackroyd explored the wealth of thought and the importance of that great century in which out of the seeming utter failure of Israel's life there were those who had the depth of insight into the nature and purpose of God to enable them to see both the meaning of what they experienced and the outline of the unfolding purpose of God. It may serve to point to the importance of a deeper appreciation of the later years of the Old Testament as a time not of sad contrast with the brilliance of the prophetic age, but as a time of deep concern with the problems of the meaning and ordering of life.<sup>52</sup>

#### THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Scriptural record of the exile includes writings from pre- and post-exilic times as well as the days of separation from the Land.

Exile did not lead Jews in the Old Testament to abandon faith or to settle for abdicating despair, nor to retreat to privatistic religion. On the contrary, exile evoked the most brilliant literature and the most daring theological articulation in the Old Testament.<sup>53</sup>

There are writings particular to the Northern experience in the area known before the exile as Israel. Amos and Hosea are representative of that time and place. There are writings from the Southern experience. Micah and Nahum addressed the people of Judah. There are prophetic accounts from Egypt (Jeremiah) and from Babylon itself (Ezekiel). There were

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<sup>52</sup>Peter Ackroyd, Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 256.

<sup>53</sup>Walter Brueggemann, "Preaching to Exiles," Journal for Preachers 26 no. 4 (Pentecost 1993): 4.

changes due to the integration of Northern and Southern Hebrews and the returning exiles (the Jews) to the Southern Kingdom. Haggai, Malachi and Joel represent this restoration period. Some of the record is in chronological prose, some of it law, some of it poetry and much of it is apocalyptic. The vision of the rebuilding phase is eschatological.

The conditions of the exile promoted the recording of the history of the Hebrew faith story. "Scholars are now largely agreed not only that we had no biblical text before the exile, but that the exile itself was an evocative force in generating the text."<sup>54</sup> The stories of the ancestors did exist in the memories of a few. In order to preserve and interpret those memories for a people who cried for old memories in a new place, the priestly writers recorded them with pen and ink. "This text, then, has its odd authority in a major social displacement. It is a text emerging in and addressed to the emergency of exile, when the political and religious supports of Jerusalem had collapsed."<sup>55</sup>

The biblical books of the exile are probably the least studied of the text in modern churches. However, they are truly rich with information, imagery and a message of hope. They are the source of many New Testament quotations and images.

The theological voices out of this time of crisis

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<sup>54</sup>Brueggemann, Texts, 63.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 64.

in Israel's story are clear witness to the capacity for hope, creativity, renewal, and survival of the faith community even when it is forced to live as a permanent cultural minority in an environment hostile to some of its basic values and perspectives. Such a witness surely has obvious value as a moral witness pertinent to many modern challenges faced by the church.<sup>56</sup>

## THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

Common to the writings of and surrounding the exile is the theme of the Law and the Prophets. From the tension between the two there emerges a platform for reform and restoration in the covenant community.

The postexilic political and religious lines of power are reflected in the arrangement of the Law and Prophets and in the ongoing interpretive interaction between the two collections. The Aaronid priests stood behind the P document and their decisive shaping of the Pentateuch showed forth in the rocklike stability of the cult revealed to Moses, whose detailed instructions and regulations form the single largest sweep of materials in the finished Pentateuch. The demoted Levitical attendants of the priests were not so clearly unified in purpose or program as the Aaronids, but it is likely that they shared with other non-elite groups of the Judahite populace in a more dynamic historical and moral view of the meaning and function of the cult, as expressed in Deuteronomy.

The result was to combine, both within communal life and within the newly published Law, two rather different ways of looking upon law and cult and, at the same time, to set the stage for the eventual inclusion of prophecy as an authoritative voice of the community alongside law and cult.<sup>57</sup>

The exilic scriptures were for the most part written by

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<sup>56</sup>Bruce C. Birch, Let Justice Roll Down (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 281.

<sup>57</sup>Gottwald, 462.

or at least edited by a priest and a Levite. The priestly writer begins with the creation story, where all is ordered. The laws and the community of separation are recalled, at his hand, to bring form to the community. Then there is the Levite, the Deuteronomist, the one who calls for justice, the one who cries for mercy, the one who champions reform.

Kings and prophets were the representatives of the polarity between form and reform, and their interaction served as a reminder that God's community needed to embrace both the laws and the structures which ordered human existence and the ongoing process of reform which challenged and supplanted any structures that became instruments of the privileged in the exploitation of the weak.<sup>58</sup>

The law represents the structure, the form, the stability which existed between God and the covenant community. In the time of tranquility after the conquest of Canaan, the loosely federated tribes lived in a very stable society and the law protected the people and their rights to mercy and justice. With invasions, that stability was threatened. The leadership of Israel was shared between the king and the prophet. The king represented the law. However, as society changed the mercy and justice of the people were not maintained under the old law. The prophet's call for reform was with the goal of reforming the law to ensure appropriate mercy and justice.

The Old Testament teachings concerning the law and the prophets were assimilated into the church as Christians developed the foundations of the new community of God's

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<sup>58</sup>Hanson, 63.

people.

For Christians experiencing the church as Christ's body, a body growing daily in relation to the living God who is ever active in the world to bring the dead to life and the sinner to repentance, form and reform are not mutually exclusive alternatives at all. They constitute a tension-filled polarity which defines the very field within which the Christian lives out his or her response to God's grace."<sup>59</sup>

#### STEWARDSHIP

The Law and the Prophets were polarities which existed to ensure the protection of God's people. "Only if form excludes reform is it oppressive. In turn, pure reform without form is chaos: social, political, spiritual chaos."<sup>60</sup>

The trinity is described in terms of polarities. God the Father and God the Son are seen as two ends of a pole. Between the two, acting as tension manager, is God the Spirit. Many of the themes of the exile follow this polarity model. At poles are holiness and righteousness, land and justice, temple and mercy, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, name of God and glory of God, creation and freedom, law and love. Between the two poles there exists a tension, a tension that must be managed or chaos will result. Between the Law and the Prophets I suggest that tension management can be defined as "stewardship."

Stewardship is the management of the resources which the

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

form or the structure produces so that the prophets may have support and resources of their own. Stewardship communicates back to the structure the new information about society which the prophets have gained, information which will modify the structure so that God's provisions are available to all.

Using the polarities of the Law and Prophets as seen in the literature of the exile, stewardship could be defined as a good and useful ordering of all resources for the purpose of ensuring justice.

In the Church, law cannot exist without the prophets, form cannot exist without justice.

We may want to rush in where the final editor of the Bible did not dare to tread and resolve the tension by adjudicating which side was right....The tension had to be endured. But how? Either creatively, leading to new depths of insight into the purposes of God and the human values they implied, or nihilistically, leading to the destruction of the most exciting experiment in freedom and justice which had thus far entered the stage of human history.<sup>61</sup>

Sometimes the prophets of reform become institutionalized, forced into form where they are intended to be visionary. In the tension between form and justice, if one triumphs over the other or one is emphasized to the neglect of the other, then the church is unbalanced. There are times when they are not necessarily equal; those are the times when the church is striving to regain a balance.

L. E. Siversns, in writing about the current situation of

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<sup>61</sup>Hanson, 26.

decreased funding to the national office of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, has suggested that such an imbalance exists today. "Power in the denomination has moved from those who were visionaries to those who are managers and experts on the law."<sup>62</sup> There is perceived an imbalance of form and justice in the church today. Siversns has suggested that justice is being dominated by form. It may be of an unhealthy nature or it may be as a means of adjustment. Mead asserts that form is necessary for church renewal.

Congregations, following the example of those who returned from exile in Babylon, have first the task of rebuilding the city wall so that the people can once again grasp their identity in this alien and confusing world. The wall defines the community that is a training ground for disciples.<sup>63</sup>

The shift to emphasis on form in the Presbyterian Church in Canada may be part of the wall building process.

#### EXILIC MODELS FOR MODERNS

Brueggemann has suggested six conditions of exile which apply to the modern church and are addressed by the scriptures. These interfaces include:

1. Exiles must grieve their loss and express their resentful sadness about what was, and now is not and will never again be.
2. Exile is an act of being orphaned or uprooted. Exiles need to take with them old habits, old customs, old memories, old photographs.
3. The most obvious reality and greatest threat to

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<sup>62</sup>L.E. (Ted) Siversns, "A Pastor Views Denominational Mission," Journal of Stewardship 46, (1994): 45.

<sup>63</sup>Mead, 116.



exiles is the power of despair.

4. Exile is an experience of *profaned absence*. That is, the "absence of God" is not only a personal, emotional sense, but a public, institutional awareness that "the glory has departed."

5. Exile is an experience of *moral incongruity*.

6. The danger in exile is to become so preoccupied with self that one cannot get outside one's self to rethink, reimagine, and redescribe large reality.<sup>64</sup>

My goal in reading in the exile was to discover the components necessary to begin to build a blue-print on which to re-establish a renewed covenant community. What I discovered was not so much a how-to-manual, but rather a model of a process. What I discovered were stories about God's relationship with people, truths which are not the stuff of blue-prints, but rather of visions. The exile community was a future oriented community. The definition of parameters, the remembering of the stories of the patriarchs and the messages of hope were not intended to create Israel in Babylon, but to prepare the community for a future life in the homeland. The life to be lived was a life of vision.

We are the generation whose gift to the future may not be a complete vision of the new society or even the new church, but the example of holding steady and faithful as the landmarks of the work we have known disintegrate. Our task is to go on holding on, studying and teaching the story of the faith, acting in service to the world, trusting God in the middle of ambiguity, refusing to back away from God's claim upon us. If we hold steady, God will provide the vision when the time is right.<sup>65</sup>

The Presbyterian Church in Canada professes that "the

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<sup>64</sup>Brueggemann, Preaching, 5-10.

<sup>65</sup>Mead, 114.

Bible has been given to us by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life....Both Old and New Testaments were written within communities of faith."<sup>66</sup> It is appropriate that the models of life in one community when they reflect the glory of God be models for faith and life in a community of similar circumstance.

As confused moderns look to their churches for signposts to guide them along paths found on none of the maps available to the agora, it is incumbent upon the pastors and teachers of those churches to be attentive to the trajectory and the paradigms plotted in the Bible.<sup>67</sup>

The exile offers to the modern church a model of covenant community life during a time when change dominates every aspect of life, both religious and secular. Into the life of confusion comes a word of a "new spirit" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). The promised spirit of God will mediate between a renewed commitment to the laws and the exhibition of that commitment in a life of justice and righteousness. The spirit will mediate between the Law and the prophets, between form and reform.

The promised spirit of God came to bring new life to the exiles. The lifeless bones were to take breath (Ezekiel 37:4-6) and live again. So with the people of the modern church, the spirit of God is a promise of new life. The spirit, as

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<sup>66</sup>The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief (Winfield, B.C.: Wood Lake Books Inc., 1984), 14.

<sup>67</sup>Hanson, 41.

the tension manager between the poles of the Father and the Son, came as the new spirit of Babylon to be the tension manager between the law and the prophets. The modern church will come alive with the revitalization of the tension manager. Stewardship is the tension manager which will give new spirit to exiled Christians. A recovery of biblical stewardship will lead the way from Babylon, it is the pathway to restoration.

#### CHANGE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Communities in exile are communities of change. Change within any system is devastating to the stability which systems strive to achieve. A system exists where components are in relationship to other components. Life in a social community is determined by relationships, making it a typical system. "Everyone needs a web of social connection."<sup>68</sup>

Rabbi Edwin Friedman in his book Generation to Generation<sup>69</sup> explores the family as a system. His family system theory concerning relationships between people extends to more than biological relationships. The family system exists at a congregational level as well. Individuals within a system are

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<sup>68</sup>Elaine Ramshaw, Ritual and Pastoral Care, Theology and Pastoral Care Series, ed. Don S. Browning (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 29.

<sup>69</sup>Edwin H. Friedman, Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue, Guilford Family Therapy Series, ed. Alan S. Gurman (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985).

affected by others, just as they affect others. A family system moves to conserve its energy and establish the best possible harmony with the resources available to it. Harmony with those resources is the area known as Stewardship. The state at which optimum stability is reached is known as homeostasis. Any change in the system will ultimately threaten the stability of the system. To preserve the homeostasis the rest of the system will react to stabilize the irritant. An influx of resources can destabilize a system as thoroughly as a depletion of resources.

Exile is not the only source of change within a system. The life cycle itself brings change which affects the community. Biologically people progress from birth to death and the ways they relate to other people change through that progression. Serious changes occur around the events of birth, puberty, marriage, parenting and death. Other changes also occur such as divorce, bereavement, job relocation and house moving. The church has traditionally marked these rites of passage in the life cycle with some form of ritual. Such rituals serve to affirm the community's central meaning and define the normative Christian life cycle. The life cycle is normal, but the change it brings as people make transition from one stage to the next is a threat to the homeostasis of the community. Ritual is used to mark those rites of passage as part of the stabilizing process of the whole church system. Rituals can help to modify the stress.

Changing states is a threat to the family system because the person in transition is not in a clearly defined state and others do not know how to relate to that individual. So, too, in the exile the community was in a changing state. It was necessary to define the community and relations within it so as to disperse the uncertainty of transition. The priests addressed that challenge.

A common response to a threat to the homeostasis of a system is anxiety. Its emotional pain is meant to be a trigger to the system to activate an action plan for help. Within a faith community where the anxiety is not resolved the anxiety can become chronic. The despair of the Babylonian exiles typified such chronic anxiety. Habitual anxiety becomes a vicious circle which is broken only by exposure. The anxiety circle needs intervention by imagination, something it lacks. In Egypt and in Babylon, the prophets' role was to provide the vision, to be the imagination of the anxious exiled community.

Exilic literature offers a wealth of worship rituals which were used to address the stress of transition and the unknowns of Babylon. They are a gift from the ancients to today's leaders whose challenge it is to address the stresses of the modern condition of the faith community.

The Babylonian Exile was an experience within the history of the people of God through which the faithful processed from feeling abandoned by their separation to affirming their

mission as people separate from the world. "The purpose is not to separate the 'pure' people from the 'impure' people, but rather to maintain a nonconformity to the world as the *basis from which to work for change.*"<sup>70</sup> People of exile learn first how to deal with the stresses of change and then to be change agents. Brueggemann's interpretation of Isaiah 43 summarizes the situation of any community of God's people who have come under the influence of the theology of exile. "There is only an assurance that to be odd in the world is God's intention for this people. And now this weak, exilic community must decide what to do with its oddness."<sup>71</sup> The modern church is coming to realize its oddness. Form and vision will be as foundational in this odd community as in the Israelite community in Babylon. God's spirit will provide the tension management, the stewardship essential for the community to blossom on such a foundation.

### C. THE CHURCH AS A HOUSEHOLD OF GOD HOUSEHOLD IN STEWARDSHIP STUDIES

In part A of this chapter, the church was described in terms of the Hebrew concept of covenant community renewed by the blessing of Pentecost, the gift of charisms. The people of God's creation are called into community. As individuals

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<sup>70</sup>Daniel L. Smith, The Religion of the Landless (Bloomington, Indiana: Meyer Stone Books, 1989), 213.

<sup>71</sup>Brueggemann, Texts, 38.

possessing unique and varied charisms the potential for a chaotic association exists. Even though the creation story of Genesis was late in its origins in the Hebrew faith, it sets as foundational within the community a sense of order. Such an order provides a framework to alleviate the chaos of individualism and establish a structure to facilitate co-operation for the accomplishment of the mission of the community.

The Hebrew community of the Old Testament was ordered by way of the covenant. The rules of the Law provided the framework of organization. As the church began to emerge following the Resurrection the gospel writers utilized familiar Greek terms in redefining the ordering of the community of God's faithful. To the Old Testament metaphor of community was added the New Testament metaphor of household. The Church Fathers expanded the use of the term household in their writings.

Both Douglas Meeks in his book God the Economist<sup>72</sup> and John Reumann in his book Stewardship and the Economy of God<sup>73</sup> begin their presentations with a study of the word 'economy' and its derivatives. Douglas Hall in his book The Steward: A

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<sup>72</sup>M. Douglas Meeks, God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989).

<sup>73</sup>John Reumann, Stewardship and the Economy of God (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992).

Biblical Symbol Comes of Age<sup>74</sup> does a similar study of the word 'steward.' The modern North American stewardship understanding of household emerges from those studies.

#### OIKOS

The Greek word which has been translated into English as 'household' is *oikos*. In the Mediterranean society of the early church such a household was usually an extended family. Where the family (with its servants) was small the wife of the head of the household managed the private activities of the family. Where the *oikos* was larger, an appointed *oikonomos* or steward managed the affairs of the household. The word *oikonomos* was derived from *oikos*, household, and *nomos*, law or management. From this word meaning 'steward of the household' comes the word 'economy' which means 'the law or the management of the household.' Using this ancient meaning of the word economy, Meeks has proposed that "Economist" is an appropriate metaphor for God.

[A]ccording to the faith shaped by the biblical traditions, the metaphor *Economist* is a decisive and fully appropriate way of describing the character and work of God. Retrieving this metaphor should help in overcoming the church's paralysis in bringing its faith to bear on economic life in our time.<sup>75</sup>

The household of antiquity was normally an economic unit,

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<sup>74</sup>Douglas John Hall, The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1990).

<sup>75</sup>Meeks, 2.



free standing within the community. It could provide for all of its own needs. Religious ties could also bind it together. "For the first centuries of Christianity, the 'house church' was the fundamental unit of ecclesiastical structure."<sup>76</sup> Within the Greek culture, of which the early church was a part, the term *oikos* also applied to the city-state. Management and administration existed at that level of society as well. *Oikonomoi* or stewards were the civil servants who kept charge of the financial records of the state. Their role also found its way into the guilds and religious cults. Another derivative of *oikos* was the word *oikonomia* which referred to the ordering of one's affairs or thoughts. Finally, the term *oikos* was also applied to the largest household of all, that is the world. The ordering of creation came under this category. "The world, its various parts, and its peoples were understood to have a certain order to them, an arrangement or regulation by God or nature."<sup>77</sup>

It was within the *oikos* or household that the necessities of life were produced, distributed and consumed. The laws of management which facilitated those functions were particular to each household. Each household had its own economy. Within the larger household, the world, God's laws for the economy of creation were in effect. "God's 'law of the

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<sup>76</sup>Reumann, 12.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 15.

household' is the economy of life against death."<sup>78</sup>

The concept of household is prevalent in the Old Testament even if the words of economics are not common. In the Septuagint the Greek word *oikos* is used over 1600 times, but the derivatives are found much less frequently. *Oikonomos* occurs only twelve times and *oikonomia* only twice. The stories of the Old Testament speak to the intention of household relationships which has led Meeks to affirm that "oikos is a principal way of speaking of God's covenantal bond with Israel."<sup>79</sup>

#### MANAGEMENT - THE CHURCH'S MISSION

The New Testament is much more reflective of the ancient Greek thought. Some two-thirds of the synoptic gospels refer to or deal with the economy. From his letter to the Colossians it can be interpreted that "Paul viewed stewardship as God's plan for salvation."<sup>80</sup> Paul in his other epistles describes the mission of the church as *oikonomia tou theou* or the management of the household of God.

The 'Household of God' is a metaphor describing all that the person and the church can become. Stewardship is a relational concept, and the symbol of the household helps to understand it. Living as members of the household, with all the rights and

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<sup>78</sup>Meeks, 3.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>80</sup>J. Perry Bell, God's Housekeeping: Thoughts on Personal Stewardship (Amherst, Wisconsin: Palmer Publications, Inc., 1991), 3.

responsibilities which that involves, is a stewardship matter.<sup>61</sup>

*Oikos* and its derivatives imply relationship. Within God's activity those areas of relationship include creating, reconciling and redeeming.

From the perspective of the biblical traditions *oikos* can be understood first as the household in which God wants to give people access to life; second, it is the household of the creation in which God wants God's creatures to live together in symbiosis; third, the *oikos* is the world that God wants to make into a home by establishing God's justice and peace among the peoples and nations. God's oikic work integrates economy, ecology and *oikoumene* and demonstrates that redemption must be found interdependently in all of these dimensions.<sup>62</sup>

#### ORIGINS OF THE WORD STEWARD

The Greek word *oikonomia* is translated in English versions of the scriptures as "steward." The Oxford Dictionary definition of steward is a "person entrusted with management of another's property." The word originates in Old English where the keeper of the pigs was known as the *sty-ward*. Charged with managing the pigs in the summer so that food would be available to the household during the unfruitful winter months, the *sty-ward* held enormous responsibility for the household's well being, indeed, survival. The steward of the biblical text implies a person in a role with corresponding responsibilities to that of the *sty-ward*.

Stewardship involves relationship. The steward relates

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>62</sup>Meeks, 34.

to the owner whose trust she or he is managing. The steward also relates to the trust. The steward functions as the communicator between the owner and the trust.

The steward is a particularly apt metaphor for humanity because it encapsulates the two sides of the human relatedness, the relation to God on the one hand and to the nonhuman creatures of God on the other. The human being is, as God's steward, accountable to God and responsible for its fellow creatures.<sup>83</sup>

#### MODERN USE OF STEWARD

The word steward was not common in the language of the culture of the last few hundred years. It has emerged again and is used quite frequently in business in the late twentieth century. Peter Block's best seller Stewardship is a text for business managers. He writes as a means to offer hope for those people in economic institutions who are facing the changes of workplace. For Block "Stewardship is the umbrella idea which promises the means of achieving fundamental change in the way we govern our institutions. Stewardship is to hold something in trust for another."<sup>84</sup> Block cites the next generation as the recipient of the trust in the business world. Considering stewardship in a theological light, Hall has suggested that "Stewardship occurs under the conditions of

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<sup>83</sup>Hall, The Steward, 26.

<sup>84</sup>Peter Block, Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993), xx.

an awareness that sovereignty belongs to Another."<sup>85</sup> In the household of God the steward holds the trust for the creator. In our changing world it is the steward who will lead the change of the institution known as the church. For Meeks

The church is meant to be that place in history where God's interests for the world meet the interest of the world in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit seeks to transform a portion of the world into the church so that, as transformed world, the church may live for the future of the world.<sup>86</sup>

The steward and the Holy Spirit appear to play a common role in the household of God.

Block has seen hope for business in a stewardship practise which emphasizes service. Ronald Vallet has seen hope for the church "if it takes seriously the assumptions and household rules of the Bible."<sup>87</sup> Stewardship is a common theme in any household restoration. Relinquishment is also part of each. However, for the two households, the one of business and the other of the church, there are different ends for the households. The household of God is entrusted with creation, the public household is entrusted with the market place. Within the household of God the rules must be defined very clearly. They are not the same as the rules for the public household, the household within which the Christian Church finds itself immersed today. Just as the people of the

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<sup>85</sup>Hall, 151.

<sup>86</sup>Meeks, 23.

<sup>87</sup>Vallet, The Mainline Church's Funding Crises, 159.

covenant community in Exile learned to distinguish themselves from the foreign, but dominant society of Babylon, so the people of the church must separate themselves from the dominating market economy of the twentieth century. "The mission of the church is to enable people to answer to and live by the logic of the gospel of Jesus Christ, rather than by the logic of the prevailing culture."<sup>88</sup>

#### FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY

The logic of the prevailing culture in North America is the logic of a market economy. It joins other deadly economies by making the necessities of life into commodities. When the essentials of life can be exchanged, surpluses and deficits develop and some people are deprived of the very basics of life. "The commodity system leads to death. In the household of God whatever is necessary for life should not be a commodity."<sup>89</sup>

It was the dramatic act of God saving the Hebrews from the commodity economy of Egypt that led to the establishment of the covenant community. Famine in the land of Egypt led to Joseph's program of commodity exchange. It was to Joseph that his Hebrew family travelled when famine threatened the livelihood of God's people. They exchanged their freedom for

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid, 159.

<sup>89</sup>Ronald E. Vallet, from the course Foundations of Stewardship, Unpublished Lecture Notes, McMaster University Divinity College, 1995.

the very basics of life. The public household in which the household of God grew in Egypt was a household of death. The necessities of life had become commodities. God, through the steward Moses, led the Hebrews from slavery, a symbol of death, to a new land. The covenant between the two was a covenant that established a household of life. The rules of that household were the rules of the covenant agreement. The steward had a frustrating role to play. Twice Moses had to mediate the agreement and constantly he presented cases before both parties. The enormity of the steward's function ultimately led to the creation of elders. Following Jethro's counsel, Moses called for wise leaders of the community to assist him in hearing disputes over the rules of the household. Such stewards gained a permanent place in the organization of the household. They were incorporated into the emerging church of the first century and reconfirmed by John Calvin in his reformation community.

It was from slavery that God led the people to freedom. It was from a household of death that God led the people to establish a household of life. Within the household of life there are two elements which keep it from reverting to a household of death. Those elements are God's promise and God's command, the essence of the covenant. To hear the promise is to believe. To hear the command and to respond is the act of stewardship. The covenant community affirms the promise and the command. Membership in the covenant community

depends upon accepting the promise and the command. Within the Christian Church, that acceptance is marked with baptism.

#### ACCESS TO LIFE

For any society to survive, access to life is essential as a fundamental component of its foundation. "The household of God exists as an agent of God's work to make the world into a household in which all of God's creatures will find access to life."<sup>90</sup> Not all households offer access to life. In the case of the modern public household where "intrinsic worth derives from what we accumulate"<sup>91</sup> the disparity of distribution of goods necessary for life will eventually result in death for those not able to accumulate. Death will also come to nature as it is scavenged and depleted under the pressure within the household to accumulate. The household of God offers an alternative.

The Torah is God's economy for Israel; the Gospel is the new economy for the New Israel. The God of Israel and of Jesus Christ seeks to create a household from whose livelihood no one will be excluded. Indeed God's economy serves God's promise that the whole creation will have eschatologically the shape of such an inclusive access to life.<sup>92</sup>

The 'church' is the household of God, called to be the source of life for the world. The word concerning the rules

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<sup>90</sup>Meeks, 45.

<sup>91</sup>Vallet, The Mainline Church's Funding Crisis, 161.

<sup>92</sup>Meeks, 40.



of management in God's household, the economy of the creator, can only be heard within that household and communicated by the household's stewards to the world.

## HOME

The church, as God's household, is called to be a home. Meeks has identified four characteristics of 'home.'

Home is:

- where everyone knows your name.
- where you can always count on being confronted, forgiven, loved and cared for.
- where there is always a place for you at the table.
- where you can count on sharing what is on the table.<sup>93</sup>

In its attempt to create these conditions of home, the church uses the elements of The Word, water, bread and stole. The Word is the Word of God found in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Particular to the church is the gospel, the word concerning the Resurrection. It is The Word that tells the story, provides a memory to confront and forgive. Water is the sign of baptism, the naming of the householder being received as well as the cleansing from death and the nourishing for life. Water is a symbol for justice. Bread is the sign of communion, the Lord's table, with a place always available to the householder. Bread and wine in the household of God means having available to all, the basics of nutrition. Finally, the stole (or in its ancient form, a towel) is the

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 36.

sign of love and care available within the household.

#### THE ECONOMY OF THE HOUSEHOLD

The economy, or the rules of management, of the household of God incorporate both Old and New Covenant statutes. "The church's sacred Scriptures are infused with economic concerns: the care of the earth, just commercial relationships, and responsibility for the poor."<sup>94</sup> The Ten Commandments were the original rules of the household of Israel. These were interpreted and recorded by the writers of the Exilic period. The Covenant Code (Exodus 20:22-23:33), the Deuteronomic Code (Deuteronomy 12-26) and the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26) provide the household rules which protect the weak and offer life for all of God's people. Within these laws provision for the poor or landless included gleaning rights, low interest loans, provision for debt cancellation every seventh and fiftieth year, hospitality for the stranger, Sabbath rest on the seventh day and the tithe. Whether wealthy or poor all members of the household enjoyed these privileges of the family.

"In the New Testament, building on the traditions of the Hebrew scriptures, particularly the prophetic literature, Jesus announced the beginning of a new kind of human

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<sup>94</sup>John H. Westerhoff III, Building God's People in a Materialistic Society (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 22.

community."<sup>95</sup> In Jesus Christ the rules concerning membership in the household were expanded. The household of God was a household of freedom. In the Greco-Roman world of first century Palestine, only land owners were considered free. Jesus' radical move was to declare everyone free, everyone who belonged to the household of freedom. Membership was extended to the destitute poor, the sick, the outcast, the tax collector and all manner of sinners. "The table community of Israel's household is now to include women and even notorious sinners."<sup>96</sup> As the post-Pentecost church grew, even Gentiles were included in the family. The powerless and the powerful were to become equals as claims to domination were relinquished.

#### THE CHRISTIAN STEWARD

The writers of the New Testament expanded the understanding of the role of the steward in the household of God. Characteristics of the Christian steward include:

- faithfulness in one who is permanently faithful (Luke 15:11-32),
- joy (Luke 15:1-10),
- awareness of human servanthood (Matthew 13:1-9),
- confirmation in a person's humanity by the model of Jesus'

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<sup>95</sup>Loren B. Mead, Transforming Congregations for the Future (Washington: Alban Institue, 1994), 41.

<sup>96</sup>Meeks, 95.

- servanthood (Luke 7:31-35),
- recognition and use of talents and gifts (Matthew 25:14-30),
  - extravagantly generous (Matthew 20:1-6),
  - ability to risk (Matthew 13:44-45),
  - shrewd (Luke 16:1-8),
  - just (Luke 12:13-21),
  - caring (Luke 10:25-37),
  - ecologically aware (Matthew 21:33-41) and
  - openness to change (Luke 5:34-38).

Aware of the household's promise of life for all, the steward seeks a lifestyle that does not further the inequality of access to the necessities of life, but rather seeks equality for all. In the management of the material and spiritual effects of the household, the steward also has responsibility for the gospel. Paul, in I Corinthians 4:1-2, calls the church to be "stewards of the mysteries of God." Hall comments:

Here the property for which the Christian stewards have responsibility is not the material effects of a royal household, nor noble prisoners like Daniel and his companions, nor the accoutrements of a feast as in John 2:8, but the mysteries of God: that is, the gospel itself, which is intended for the whole family of humanity, God's household."

The biblical story makes clear two important understandings concerning the steward. The metaphor of steward is helpful only when these are carefully observed. First, the steward is the holder of the trust. "Ownership,

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"Hall, 37.

mastery, ultimacy of authority, and sovereignty are attributable to God alone."<sup>98</sup> Secondly, the Christian steward is accountable to the creator.

We are stewards, managers, administrators of a trust. We can arrange, manipulate, employ, develop, but God owns the title. We are to so manage our personal and corporate trust that it will benefit all humanity, now and in the future."<sup>99</sup>

Yet, even as the steward is expected to be responsible 'to' God, the steward is given authority 'with' which to be responsible. The steward is identified with the owner. Vicariously the steward assumes the authority of the owner. The Body of Christ, the church, acting as God's steward has been given authority in the household. The gifts of the Spirit, the charisms of Pentecost, are the instruments by which such authority is transmitted from owner to steward. "As stewards we must render an account to God of the way we use our time... As stewards, we must render an account of the way we use our abilities...As stewards we must render an account to God of the way we use our possessions."<sup>100</sup>

A Christian steward is a manager who has been entrusted with the care of resources. The Being who does the entrusting is God. Secondly, the trust is given to the body of Christ, that is the Church. The elements over which the steward has

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>99</sup>Westerhoff, 23.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 35.

a trust are threefold. First are the elements of the created world, the world that was created by God. Secondly, the trust includes the gospel or the good news of the new life of the resurrection. Thirdly, the gifts or charisms of the Holy Spirit, the tools of the Church in its mission, are also part of the trust.

The Church gives expression to this responsibility by delegating varying stewardship functions to individual members. Such a division of labour is made possible by the varieties of gifts given to believers. Responsibilities will vary in degree and type due to the variety of gifts of the Spirit.

A Christian Steward manages the worldly and spiritual resources placed in her or his care according to the principles of justice, mercy, love, faithfulness and joy which the Biblical and Church traditions reflect in her or his society.

The use of the term 'manager', with regard to the Christian steward, is an acceptable expression from my own personal experience. However, where the role of manager has assumed a component of power, which has been used to abuse others or nature, then the use of the term is not helpful.

#### SUSTAINING THE HOUSEHOLD IN MODERN TIMES

Within the household of God, the steward of today struggles against what Walter Brueggemann calls the "seduction

of modernity." That seduction has evoked within the people of the modern covenant community amnesia, greed and despair. Yet there is counteraction available to the steward.

Thus it is counterimagination to:

- remember a rich past in the face of entrenched amnesia,
- entertain a covenantal present in the face of a regnant commoditization, and
- hope a marvellous future in the face of an established, resigned despair.<sup>101</sup>

The strongest resistance to such a change in the attitude of the community will not come from the outside, but rather from within. Modernity infects all within the mainstream of society. The covenant community by its very existence within mainstream society has believers whose lives and attitudes reflect the dominant values of our age. Those values of modernity held by modern believers will not be challenged lightly. Transformation is possible. "Congregations with imagination and a willingness to live by the household rules of the gospel can escape the chains of modernity and consumerism and move to a household of freedom."<sup>102</sup> Transformation will not be easy. Those households built on sand are hard to shift to the rock. "If they are to become the household of Jesus Christ, they will have to forsake the false gods conjured up by the logic of the market society of modernity and turn again to the living God whose servants they

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<sup>101</sup>Walter Brueggemann, Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 55.

<sup>102</sup>Vallet, The Mainline Church's Funding Crisis, 161.

claim to be."<sup>103</sup>

The expressions 'covenant community' and 'household of God' both apply to the church, first as it was called into being from the margins of Palestinian society, spread through the margins of the cities of the Roman Empire and finally stands to face the transitional society of the twentieth century. The legalism inherent in the term 'covenant' may cause it to be a less than useful expression within some segments of the church and society. However, its rich heritage and theological implication cannot be ignored by the modern community. The concept of the church as 'household' may be more inviting for people looking for security and belonging. Whichever expression is used there are fundamental concepts which cannot be ignored. The church is a community of God's people with not only freedom from death, but also responsibility for offering life. God's economy, the rules of management in the household, offer the framework to ensure that such life happens. Just as the society of our day is in transition, so is the church. God's promise to sustain the community through transition is ancient, yet it is reliable.

God gives gifts of new Heart and Spirit in every generation. The ultimate source of our stewardship stems from God's graceful gifts that enable us to fulfil God's call to live as God's people in the world. The Spirit of God makes an obedient response possible.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 164.

<sup>104</sup>Vallet, Foundations of Stewardship.



The modern steward is God alive for the world. The modern steward is gifted to ensure that all of creation has access to the life God intended. The modern steward is a member of a household built on the economy of God.

#### D. THE CHURCH WITHIN SOCIETY

##### AFTERMATH

It was while working on another facet of my Doctor of Ministry Programme that I had an experience of disjointedness which depicts some of the confusion in the church today. My work involved the introduction of a financial tool into the Strathcona Congregation. The nameless pledge project was intended to collect data for church budgeting purposes, yet allowing congregants anonymity in the process. For the purposes of my study, the participants were asked to answer a few questions evaluating the project. Included in the replies was a written comment "that the minister should be at coffee hour immediately following worship to participate in the fellowship." Willimon's description of the church as "often a conspiracy of cordiality"<sup>105</sup> was evident, yet what struck me more profoundly was the out-of-context situation in which it was made. When Sweet in Faithquakes described the reality of the church today as "if an earthquake had hit it,"<sup>106</sup> he was

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<sup>105</sup>Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, Resident Aliens (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 138.

<sup>106</sup>Leonard Sweet, Faithquakes (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 11.

not far off. We appear to be trying to fit together pieces of strata that do not line up. Mead describes the strata as paradigms and observes that the dichotomy is painful:

More and more we have lost our home in the familiar paradigm of Christendom, but we have no clarity about how to find a new home in the turbulence of the emerging world. The fault lines run through our own hearts.<sup>107</sup>

The church is faced with a project as massive as the resurrection and reconstruction that takes place in the aftermath of a major earthquake.

#### THE IMMEDIATE SITUATION

The familiar paradigm of Christendom was not suddenly visited by a transcendent intervention. As in all paradigm shifts, the evidence has been mounting for some time that the old definitions could not contain the new reality. The confusion of our time is the necessary stage during which a new paradigm is being composed. The church is only one of many institutions now experiencing such a time of transition. Two historical developments have had a tremendous influence on the shifting of strata which we experience today. The first is ancient, in the establishment of the Constantinian Empire in the fourth century. The second is more recent in the effects of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Enlightenment as it lead to Modernity and subsequently our experience of

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<sup>107</sup>Loren B. Mead, The Once and Future Church (Washington: The Alban Institute, 1991), 23.

post-modernity.

The theologians of the church continue to explore the subject of being and the place within the paradigm shift of the historic understanding by the people of God of their creator and the creation. Hengel suggests that the 'essence' of humankind is always in crisis and that one continually critical element of that essence is 'possession'.<sup>108</sup> As the new paradigm is defined it must include opportunities for the faithful to exercise their entrusted stewardship of creation's resources.

The history of God's faithful is not without paradigm shifts. The Exiles of Jerusalem faced a strange new life in Babylon where the expression of the Hebrew covenant needed to be reworked. The newly emerging Christian church was forced into prominence when in 324 A.D. Constantine declared it the religion of the Empire. Christendom was born. Now as that Christendom painfully fades into the shadows, the experience of the Exiles is being replayed. "This earthquake has made us strangers in our own land."<sup>109</sup>

Christendom was conceived as the solution to the problem of divided loyalties in the expanding Roman empire. "In the Empire there was a hunger for salvation and a vague sense of

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<sup>108</sup>Martin Hengel, Property and Riches in the Early Church, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1.

<sup>109</sup>Sweet, 8.

fear."<sup>110</sup> The Jesus movement of "God with the people" (where fear was replaced with grace, joy, liberation and hope) was transformed into a system of beliefs.

You cannot run a world without people believing in something. Our best minds were enlisted in the Constantinian enterprise of making faith credible to the powers-that-be so that Christians might now have a share in those powers.<sup>111</sup>

In an instant, by royal decree, Christianity became a religion whose goal was success.

Growing out of the Hebrew tradition, early Christianity had maintained the ancient concept of God as "other" in temporal and ethical terms. The Greek philosophy which dominated the Roman Empire could not tolerate the Hebrew idea of a suffering God. The head of the success story was to be the Almighty Father.

In the Establishment of Christianity a religion designed to serve the purposes of empire cannot present the spectacle of a God whose kenotic long-suffering detracts from 'his' majesty. A less-than-absolute deity; a deity torn between judgment and mercy is not the God designed for empire.<sup>112</sup>

Losing the Jerusalem sense of love and justice, the Christian church adopted the hierarchy of the empire.

In 321 the church had been granted "the right to receive legacies and thereby the privileges of the church as a

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<sup>110</sup>Jacques Ellul, The Subversion of Christianity, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1986), 29.

<sup>111</sup>Hauerwas, 22.

<sup>112</sup>Douglas John Hall, Professing the Faith (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 106.

corporation acknowledged."<sup>113</sup> The institution was formalized. The church and emperor formed an alliance dedicated to mutual success. Throughout the growth of Europe and the colonization of America the principle continued to be practised. "The reputation of 'the Almighty' is bound up with the might (economic prowess etc.) of the Republic making 'God' dependent upon the success of the American experiment."<sup>114</sup>

However,

there is a tragic flaw in the religion of the Almighty Father. A god who consistently negates the negation satisfies, to be sure, many perennial human needs: the need of the psyche for a fulfilment mythos: the need of the mind for a transcendent guarantor of its ambition to possess controlling knowledge; the need of a society for order and of a nation for coherence and might. But such a god is credible only under certain well-defined sociological conditions. ...The deities created by empires seldom survive the empires that fashioned them; for supernatural power has nothing to say in the face of our finally unavoidable, natural weakness. The whole continent of Europe is a museum of Theology, a pantheon to failed gods whose failure is directly attributable, not to their lack of power, but to their incapacity to come to terms with historical human weakness. In North America too the Father Almighty is failing fast. For a society whose fulfilment impulse has become clouded, whose sense of transcendent purpose has given way to narcissistic individualism, and whose empire is being eaten away from without and within-for such a society, that God could indeed be ...'dead.'<sup>115</sup>

As the empire died, its symbiosis with Christianity

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<sup>113</sup>Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church, 3rd. edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 105.

<sup>114</sup>Hall, Professing the Faith, 112-113.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 108.

resulted in the death of the 'Almighty Father' leaving the church a spiritless shell. Supporting this image, Hauerwas describes Protestantism as "an aging dowager, living in a decaying mansion on the edge of town, bankrupt and penniless, house decaying around her but acting as if her family still controlled the city."<sup>116</sup>

In the eighteenth century the Constantinian model was under new management, but still dominant when the age of Enlightenment moved across the West. Characterized by the emergence of the absolutist human person, Kantian critique and mechanism, this period of modernity challenged everything in its wake. Christianity was not spared.

The Enlightenment hoped to produce people who were free. Detached from oppressive claims of tradition and community, holding the significance of their lives within themselves as an individual, natural right, being given the independence to fashion their own future, they were to become free. ...What we got was not self-freedom but self-centredness, loneliness, superficiality, and harried consumerism. ...The adventure went sour.<sup>117</sup>

The Enlightenment had begun with the goal of finding all the answers to all of the questions and resolving all of the mysteries through human reflection. Instead, "the modern era gave out graduate degrees in doubt."<sup>118</sup>

In the early twentieth century the Enlightenment Project collapsed on a global plane. The post-modern era was a rift

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<sup>116</sup>Hauerwas, 29.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>118</sup>Sweet, 48.

in the reality which the world had known. Standing on one side of that historical fracture the world had no means of communicating with the other side.<sup>119</sup> The rift has left our paradigm shattered. The Constantinian model which had begun to be challenged in the modern era has broken in post-modernity. The dowager church was slow to realize the implications of the end of Modernity and now must cope with the implications of a new era.

#### REDISCOVERY OF THE TRADITIONS

The move forward most certainly will require the employment of all the insights gained throughout the history of God's people.

Because mainstream Christianity in North America had allowed itself to be carried along by the bravado of modernity, it had practically lost touch with any of the profound teachings of the tradition on whose basis the tragic, pathetic, and downright evil aspects of the human condition could be recognized, named and challenged.<sup>120</sup>

Rediscovery of those traditions must be one of the initial phases in the renewal process. The tradition of Jerusalem and "the minority traditions of historic Christianity which were suppressed by the dominant theological convention named 'the Father Almighty'"<sup>121</sup> offer sources. Sweet envisions an

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>120</sup>Hall, Professing the Faith, 260.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 135.

"AncientFuture" faith in which the old is rediscovered and transformed to become the new. Memory will provide identity in what will be a mixture of oldfashionedness with newfangledness.<sup>122</sup>

The belief of the modernists that "the secular worldview would convert all mystery into ignorance that time, perseverance and enough resources will one day dispel"<sup>123</sup> proved less than sufficient to master the disorder and evil in the world. In the move to post-modernity, the "social powers (science, technology, industry and democracy) which formerly we absolutized have now become relativized....Postmodernity [will need to be] a balance between 'anything goes' and 'uniformity'".<sup>124</sup> Kung suggests that the key to the future is the acceptance by humans of their responsibility. They "must become more than they are; they must become more human."<sup>125</sup> Hall reminds humanity of the means to become more human through Christ. He refutes the Athanasian teaching that Christ became human in order that we might become divine and replaces it with the teaching that Christ became human in order that we might become truly human.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup>Sweet, 19.

<sup>123</sup>Richard Waddell, Stewardship: A Response to the Gift of Creation (Washington: Alban Institute Publication, 1986), 6.

<sup>124</sup>Hans Kung, Global Responsibility - In Search of a New World Ethic (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 21,22.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>126</sup>Hall, 338.



The affirmation of humanity which began in Modernity has forced the faithful to explore the issues of transcendence and immanence. To sustain the Constantinian hierarchy a strongly transcendent God was necessary.

The consequence of predilection to hierarchic ontologies that place spirit at the top and matter at the bottom of the ladder of being is that the whole undertaking ends in a basic confusion: it confuses the meaning of human life with its alleged value on the scale of being. ...It must be adjudged a fundamental distortion of at least the most weighty and contextually relevant elements of biblical testimony to the nature and destiny of humanity, as well as to those minority traditions that throughout Christian history have attempted to be faithful to the tradition of Jerusalem.<sup>127</sup>

As humanity asserted its newly found talents, such a transcendent God was pushed aside. Emerging humanity was left without a spiritual component. The faithful raised the immanent presence of God within the spiritual community. Such a profession removes the eschatological component of hope. A theology of transcendence is necessary to deal with a postmodern era obsessed with endings.

Kung in affirming humanity and holding before it the responsibility of creation places such responsibility in a yoke with hope.<sup>128</sup> Immanence and transcendence do fit together. To facilitate humanity's orientation to its responsibilities astonishing gifts are given to its people. In this manner the transcendence of God provides for immanent

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 282.

<sup>128</sup>Kung, 31.

activity. "The chief end of the human being cannot and must not be regarded as the perfecting of these endowments as isolated capacities, but their faithful deployment in realizing the communion for which we were and are called into being."<sup>129</sup> Kung proposes "humanum". "True humanity is the presupposition for true religion, true religion is the fulfilment of true humanity."<sup>130</sup>

The Reformers have been the most recent theologians to have a significant effect on the exploration of a true religion. In their search they affirmed, against the prevailing tides of their society, the foundational importance of the scriptures. In regaining the place of the covenant community within the church they began to retell the story of creation in terms of relationships. However, they did not challenge the Athenian principle of Christology and thus failed truly to affirm humanity. To continue the Reformers' discoveries into a postmodern world has meant that affirmation, in a new light, of the Jerusalem tradition. Without the Constantinian need to support the state with a wholly other and hierarchical God, the truth of the biblical faith can reemerge. That truth is that the ontic core of faith is "relation" and its derivatives.<sup>131</sup>

God is the center and source of all relatedness,

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<sup>129</sup>Hall, 326.

<sup>130</sup>Kung, 91.

<sup>131</sup>Hall, 320.

the ground of our human capacity for being-with, the counterpart from whose presence creatures can never wholly escape. And the creatures...as of them, are living things whose life is dependent upon their interaction.<sup>132</sup>

Defying the law of intercommunion is sin.

Kung asserts that the ordering of the interdependent elements of creation can be achieved only through a world ethic.<sup>133</sup> The Christian ethic, interpreted in the Jerusalem tradition and not the Athenian tradition, offers an ethic which provides for the interdependency of creation. Using the model of the Sermon on the Mount, the early church attempted to interpret the Covenant in a manner which was different from what the world taught.

The Sermon implies that it is as isolated individuals that we lack the ethical and theological resources to be faithful disciples. The Christian ethical question is not the conventional Enlightenment question, How in the world can ordinary people like us live a heroic life like that? The question is, What sort of community would be required to support an ethic of nonviolence, marital fidelity, forgiveness, and hope such as the one sketched by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount?<sup>134</sup>

The ultimate motivation for doing justice and helping the needy was the covenantal relationship with Yahweh. Because Yahweh is the God he is, and because he is Lord of this people, they are to be holy as he is holy; they are to measure themselves against God, and not against the specious power of idols. Because God himself is the measure of their existence, they are not to oppress or work

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<sup>132</sup>Ibid., 322.

<sup>133</sup>Kung, 34.

<sup>134</sup>Hauerwas, 80.

injustice.<sup>135</sup>

The means by which God revealed the terms of the measure was what Hall calls the "creation project". The image of God as put forth at creation sets forth the standard of holiness, the foundation of the relationships amongst the world's creatures. Humanity's place within the creation is defined in

the command to have dominion. ...As representative (image) of God that we are given capacity for power in the world. This is not the granting of absolute human prerogative to do with the earth what we will. ...It is as representatives of divine rule that we exercise authority. We are not absolute monarchs in the world, but trustees or stewards acting in behalf of God's sovereignty as Creator. Thus, the implied moral norm is a measuring of human actions by reference to their faithfulness in reflecting God's will and ultimate rule.<sup>136</sup>

#### POSSESSIONS

When God is recognized as ultimate and absolute and the stewards of the creation worship the creator the interconnectedness of the system is maintained. However, when stewards in their freedom choose to treat as ultimate and absolute that which is not, then idolatry claims the attention of those stewards.<sup>137</sup> The power of the idols is not equal to the power of God and is therefore not sufficient to maintain the interconnectedness within the created system. Creation

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<sup>135</sup>Luke T. Johnson, Sharing Possessions (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 94.

<sup>136</sup>Bruce C. Birch, Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 89.

<sup>137</sup>Johnson, 49.

begins to disintegrate. Injustice and conflict are the results. People's chosen object of worship, whether it is God or an idol, is reflected in the patterns by which they live their lives.

There is a pattern to our lives which manifests itself in the many small responses we make moment by moment, day by day. The patterns in our lives form about the deep and usually unarticulated attitudes we hold toward ourselves, the world, and others. Within this fundamental orientation of our lives, our personal project of existence is being formed.<sup>138</sup>

Orientation to God allows for sufficient power to enter the system for the steward to maintain the interconnectedness of creation. Orientation to any idol does not, for idols are less than God.

One way in which the steward's orientation is made evident is through the use of possessions. "The way we use, own, acquire, and disperse material things symbolizes and expresses our attitudes and responses to ourselves, the world around us, and, most of all, God."<sup>139</sup> Possessions used in a manner which reflects the creator's ethic of justice and peace will contribute to the stability of the creation system. Possessions used in a manner which affirms idolatry will be considered sinful for their power works against the order of interdependence. "An appropriate attitude toward possessions

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<sup>138</sup>Ibid.

<sup>139</sup>Waddell, 11.

is to perceive them as gifts of God."<sup>140</sup>

Johnson describes possessing, possessions and human ownership as a mystery. This "mystery has to do with the dimension of human existence in the world, with 'being' in the world, with our own lives involved in and called to by Being."<sup>141</sup> Possessions are for the steward an essential element in the authority inherent in humanity's role in creation. Stewardship is the accountability to God concerning that authority. Stewardship is the responsibility to make possible the release of the power within creation in a means suitable to maintain the interdependence between humans and God. The wise and faithful use of possessions contributes to the release of that power.

The creation story recorded in Genesis is typical of the accounts of paradise that have their origins in antiquity. In the idyllic state there was no need of possessions for everything was provided for everyone. The early church fathers joined the Stoics, the Egyptians and the Greeks in condemning private possessions as contrary to the order of God's Kingdom. John Chrysostom has written "that concerning things that are common there is not contention, but all is peaceable. But when one attempts to possess himself of anything, to make it

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<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>141</sup>Johnson, 6.

his own, then contention is introduced."<sup>142</sup> In the Christian tradition it was the fall that brought about the condition of possessing. Influenced by other philosophies of the day, the early Christians sought a return to the utopia which creation described. It was marked by a possession free society and for that reason when some of the Christian communities came together in anticipation of the Kingdom all goods were held in common. "When the earth again offers its gifts in abundance, and without being violated by man's techniques, there will no longer be any need for private property. ...the time of the great peace has dawned."<sup>143</sup>

The Jerusalem tradition accepted the reality of possession, although its use was highly criticized. In the Decalogue, the prohibition of envious covetousness of a neighbour's property recognized that possession of that property by the neighbour did exist. As the land to be known as Israel was settled provision was made for property allotments to eleven of the twelve tribes. The tribe without such means of support was to be supported from the sharing of the goods produced by the other tribes. "The Land" in ancient Israel was the physical representation of the covenant agreement between God and the people. It also was a symbol of the ancestors who had shown faith in God. When the land was

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<sup>142</sup>Martin Hengel, Property and Riches in the Early Church (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 2.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., 6.

handled in a manner reflective of the good ordering of creation the interconnectedness between the creator and creation flourished. Abuse to the land meant abuse to the covenant and the creation system faltered. Abuse to the land meant taking advantage of those in accidental circumstances, taking control of their land and produce and robbing them of a means of support. For this reason the Jerusalem tradition demanded justice and mercy that everyone in the community would have food and protection.

By the time of the New Testament and the heightened interest in the coming kingdom, the abuse of the land and possessions which the prophets had sought to curtail had actually escalated. The result was the establishment of two social classes, the very wealthy and the economically impoverished. There was no middle class, an important historical note for anyone trying to make the biblical truths relevant to modern western society with its large middle class.

References to the poor in the New Testament are more of a comment on the means by which they arrived in economic poverty than in the state itself.

The 'poor' person is one who has undergone some unfortunate personal history or circumstance. The 'poor' rank among those who cannot maintain their inherited status due to circumstances that befall them and their family, such as debt, being in a foreign land, sickness, death(widow), or some



personal physical accident."<sup>144</sup>

The lands and goods which they once had must have gone somewhere. Indeed, they went to others who in time kept them for themselves and ultimately became wealthy. "In a moral context, rich meant powerful due to greed, avarice, and exploitation, while poor meant weak due to inability to maintain one's inherited social station."<sup>145</sup> "Jesus' injunction to give one's goods to the poor is not about self-impoverishment but about redistribution of wealth; and motives for giving to the poor are not rooted in self-satisfying charity but in God-ordained, socially required restitution."<sup>146</sup>

The wealthy, those with possessions, played a very important role in the life of the Roman world of the first century.

During certain periods they were crucial to the overall economy, making direct donations called liturgies to subsidize the food supply, to meet military needs, or to finance public festivals or the construction of public buildings. ...In the practice of benefaction, however, the sense of the mutual and continuing obligation established by the giving and receiving of gifts emerges as a strong factor in every request for money.<sup>147</sup>

Aristotle counselled that one should give only to the right

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<sup>144</sup>Bruce J. Malina, "Wealth and Poverty in the New Testament and Its World" Interpretation 41 (October 1987): 356.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., 357.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 366.

<sup>147</sup>Jouette M. Bassler, God and Mammon: Asking for Money in the New Testament (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 30, 33.

people. The cynics in their philosophy accepted begging as a way of life because they taught that everything was held in common and therefore they were entitled to the goods of others. But, they were warned to beg only from the worthy.<sup>148</sup>

The church began its mission in the rural areas of Palestine, where agriculture was the backbone of the economy. Latifundia was commonplace so the peasants who worked the land did not possess it, but paid rent and taxes to have access to it. The fish markets were controlled by wealthy merchants and the fisherfolk made little profit. The peasants and labourers formed a social class very distant from and hostile to the wealthy. The church initially spread among this lower class. "In this unsettled atmosphere, full of fear and resentment, of crushing poverty and messianic expectations, the Jesus movement began."<sup>149</sup> The expectation of the followers was for economic justice in God's Kingdom. All were to be equal in the Kingdom.

As the Christian peasants returned the gift of peace to their benefactors, those people of wealth began to hear and to take seriously the gospel of God's Kingdom. With the conversion of the wealthy, the church moved into the city where "the tradition religions were aimed at not merely ensuring individual salvation or gratification, but to unite

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<sup>148</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>149</sup>Justo L. Gonzalez, Faith and Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), 75.

the city, to give it social cohesion, to establish consensus."<sup>150</sup> Very quickly the form of the church changed from what it had been under the peasant movement. With the mingling of the social classes "the original forms of the church, namely community of life and goods, began to disappear; they could not continue."<sup>151</sup>

One of the institutions which allowed the city to develop was the institution of money. With no land to grow crops, another system of providing food for the people was necessary. The exchange of goods and services was facilitated with money. "Humanity can survive without money; a barter society satisfies the basic needs of life. Surplus increases the possibilities of life. Surplus is sacred."<sup>152</sup> Money is the instrument to accommodate the surplus. Money is the raw material of wealth. In ancient Greece the city used to celebrate a feast around the hearth, the central fire dedicated to the memory of family ancestors. At feast time a sacrificial bull was slaughtered and cooked over the fire. The dismembered parts were apportioned to each member of the clan.

A portion, called the 'surplus,' was always left on the spit to be totally consumed by the fire. The 'surplus' is the offering to the heroic ancestors

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<sup>150</sup>Ellul, 29.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>152</sup>Robert J. Sardello, "Money and the City" in Money and the Soul of the World (Dallas: The Pegasus Foundation, 1983), 7.

who now reside with and have the character and powers of gods....The spit and the meat consumed by the ancestral fire is called the obelos, which translates as 'coin.' Obelos connects with our word 'obligation,' and thus what remains over and above the necessary is money.<sup>153</sup>

For the Hebrew faithful who had paid homage to their ancestors through the possession of the land, this Greek alternative offered them comfort within the city life. The obelos or coin could symbolize the land. Foreigners at these feasts were given a metal coin to use as a meal ticket. This process is reminiscent of the old Church of Scotland practise of distributing communion tokens, a sign to the congregation's elders that a person had been properly prepared to receive communion. The coin could be exchanged for other goods. The coins began to acquire power.

Added to the Greek tradition of sacrificial coins was the Roman development of the term 'money.' The word is derived from the mythological names Mnemosyne and Moneta. Mnemosyne was the Greek goddess of memory, also known as the mother of the Muses. Moneta was a name for Juno, Queen Mother of Heaven. The story is told that the Roman army in distress was encouraged by Moneta to hang on until more money arrived. The troops persevered and in time the funds did appear and the army won the day. In thanksgiving to the goddess the Roman treasury and mint were established in Moneta's temple. "All this puts money matters in the realm of the mother. We see in

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<sup>153</sup>Ibid., 6.

this the dramatic image of matter being minted into money in the temple of the mother."<sup>154</sup>

Money was the soul of the city and as the church moved into the city it was influenced by its power. Jacques Ellul suggested that

the fall of the Church occurred when it succumbed to the world of money. The combination of money and religion, he constantly reminded us, is lethal. It is an invitation to the invasion of sin and the destructive tyranny of Mammon over our lives.<sup>155</sup>

Money was one of the instruments of institutionalization of the church by the Constantinian authorities.

#### RECONSTRUCTION

With the closing of that long and influential era, the church must reexamine the faith of the people in God's community. The church is not alone. All areas of society are affected by the paradigm shift which the world is experiencing. People are aware of the fragile interconnectedness of creation and of the need for people to be given the opportunity to work together and to assume responsibility. The word "stewardship" has entered the vocabulary of the universe with the connotation of "excellence." In the world of business management Block

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<sup>154</sup>Russell A. Lockhart, "Coins and Psychological Change" in Soul and Money (Dallas: Spring Publications, Inc., 1980), 19.

<sup>155</sup>Robert Wood Lynn, Christian Ideas of Money (Bangor Theological Seminary, 1994), 7.

describes stewardship as choosing service over self-interest.

The revolution is also about the belief that spiritual values and the desire for economic success can be simultaneously fulfilled. Spirituality is the process of living out a set of deeply held personal values, of honouring forces or a presence greater than ourselves. It expresses our desire to find meaning in, and to treat as an offering, what we do. ...Patriarchal institutions cannot serve their customers.<sup>156</sup>

The western church of the late second millennium is very much a church of the city. Even congregations with a rural location reflect the dominant society which functions in the manner of a city. As this post-modern church turns to the stories of the ancient past in reformulating the faith, the reality of the city church must be accounted for. The justice and mercy reflected in the Jerusalem tradition speak to a typically agrarian people. The church must find faithful ways to describe creational interconnectedness in the context of the city. The challenge of redefining the paradigm is great.

#### E. PROVIDING FINANCIAL RESOURCES

##### THE TITHE

It is the sense of wholeness which pervades the writings of the Old Testament that has led me to a fuller understanding of the intended role of the tithe in the life of the Hebrew people. Traditionally, tithe research has not held a place of prominence in the disciplines surrounding scripture

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<sup>156</sup>Peter Block, Stewardship (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993), 48.

exploration. References to it in the scriptures are minimal. Yet, I believe that the tithe is an important component of the covenant agreement. Also, it is an area worth exploring in the face of the challenge of church renewal.

In order that I might include within this tithe study some reflection on modern literary criticism, feminist biblical interpretation and the Bible and social sciences, I have used Micah 6:1-8 (see Appendix A) as a scriptural passage to focus the exploration. My research began with the basic question "What is the tithe?" That which follows is my reflection on what I have learned about the subject. Micah and the tithe have three connections. The first is the predominance of the covenant law in the understanding of both. The second connection is olive oil mentioned in Micah 6:7 and used by the Hebrews as a symbolic reference to the tithe. Finally, in Matthew's gospel, Jesus combines the two.

Tithe references in the Hebrew scriptures are found most frequently in the Pentateuch. The etiological tales of Genesis 14 and 28 are older in origin than those which readdress the covenant law. The directive or legal accounts of the tithe are in writings which stem from an era surrounding the exile. The Priestly references are Leviticus 27 and Numbers 18. The Deuteronomist references are Deuteronomy 12:6-7, 11-12, 14:25-26 and 26:12-15. (These are printed in Appendix A.)

A review of the dating of the texts from Micah,

Deuteronomy, Leviticus and Numbers would be extensive. Authorities on Micah and Deuteronomy place composition dates on both which range from the late-monarchy to post-exile. The Priestly writings seem to range from pre- to post-exilic. For no other reason than perhaps to establish some order in the chaos of dating, I have chosen to adopt the theories of Wolff and McConville.

Whereas the first five chapters of Micah could be attributed to an eighth century prophet, Wolff proposes that chapters 6 and 7 are much later in origin and redaction. The mention of rivers of oil in verse 7 would suggest that olive oil production was common. Both the southern city of Ekron (Tel Migne) and the northern city of Dan (Tel Dan) had extensive oil presses by the seventh century.<sup>157</sup> Such information would suggest that neither the northern nor the southern kingdom can be excluded as a place of origin of the document. "All significant data in Mic. 6:3-5 in essence belong exclusively to specific Deuteronomic-Deuteronomistic traditions."<sup>158</sup> The mention of Miriam along with Moses and Aaron in verse 4 suggests a late date even within this tradition. The only other reference to Miriam is in the priestly writings, where she is mentioned with no reference to a familial connection with a male, nor with any explanation as

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<sup>157</sup>Philip J. King, Amos, Hosea, Micah-An Archaeological Commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988), 161.

<sup>158</sup> Hans Walter Wolff, Micah, A Commentary, trans. Gary Stansell (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 170.



to who she was. Her independent status and the fact that she as a woman was a known and respected character in Israel's history, reflect an acceptance of women found only during the exile. "Presumably it [Micah 6] did not receive its present form until the postexilic period."<sup>159</sup>

The legislative statements concerning the tithe are in conflict in the Pentateuch. Traditionally, the sequence in the dating of the P and D documents has been used in an attempt to resolve the conflicts. McConville has suggested an alternate interpretation of the conflicts. Following Child's canonical approach as a wholistic view,

McConville treats biblical tithe law as a theological statement that effectively links the two dominant legislative traditions, P and D. Indeed, the tithe law fulfils an important role as a catalyst that provides P and D with theological coherence.<sup>160</sup>

In dating, he assigns D to a time prior to Josiah and P preceding that<sup>161</sup>, although he sees them as roughly contemporaneous. "There was in ancient Israel a single, basic tithe-institution, which is reflected in different ways in the laws of Deuteronomy and P, and whose essential character was that of a sacral due paid to the temple and its personnel."<sup>162</sup>

The sixth and seventh chapters of Micah and the tithe

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<sup>159</sup>Ibid., 172.

<sup>160</sup>Herman, Tithe as Gift (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1991), 33.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid., 31.

texts of P and D may have a similar composition date and very likely a common redaction date. They have their origins in similar circumstances of Israel's history.

#### MICAH 6:1-8

The passage begins with a verse of redactional transition<sup>163</sup> in which the people of Israel, and through the mountains and hills, the nations as well, are summoned to a law court. Verses 2-5 follow the style and language of the legal practice in Israel and are an example of the literary type called a court-saying which appears primarily in prophetic materials.<sup>164</sup> The natural elements are used as an appeal to items of Israel's normative history. The mountains represent the land which in turn represents the Law. In the Ancient Near East the foundations and the mountains also referred to witnesses and enforcers of the treaty made between a monarch and his client states. In Micah the monarch was God and the client state was Israel. The trial reflects a "rib" pattern and is known as a covenant lawsuit speech<sup>165</sup> or a prophetic covenant lawsuit.<sup>166</sup>

It would appear that the people of Israel have a

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<sup>163</sup>Wolff, Micah, 169.

<sup>164</sup>James Luther Mays, Micah: A Commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 129.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., 129.

<sup>166</sup>Delbert R. Hillers, Micah, Hermeneia Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 77.

complaint against Yahweh which he calls them to settle in court. This is the last resort for a resolving of the conflict. However, no final judgement is given, for in defence (verse 3-5) God shows that Israel really does not have a case. God affirms a commitment to Israel and suggests that it is not God who is the guilty party, but Israel herself. The people as exiles "live in circumstances which have exhausted their patience and hold YHWH responsible."<sup>167</sup> Yahweh defends himself with a short history of his saving deeds. The community was originally constituted through redemption from Egypt, inspired leadership, deliverance from unhealthy schemes and entrance into the land. Moses is mentioned as the lawgiver, Aaron as the priest and Miriam as the prophetess. In the end it is concluded that it is not God who has broken the covenant, but rather the people themselves. In verse 6-8, the passage "concludes with the solemn "liturgical Torah" proclaiming God's code of holiness."<sup>168</sup>

#### Prophetic liturgy

is the name given by form critics to passages in the prophetic writings in which the prophet seems to offer a 'liturgy' of words of prayer through which they might come to Yahweh, and then of answering words of God which they would hear if they did so. Micah shares with other writers of pre-exilic prophetic literature a concern for moral obedience rather than merely excessive cultic

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<sup>167</sup>Mays, 133.

<sup>168</sup>Juan I. Alfaro, Justice and Loyalty: A Commentary on the Book of Micah (Grand Rapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1989), 64.

zeal.<sup>169</sup>

Wolff isolates both Priestly language and a Deuteronomic theology in these verses. The dialogue conveys a sense of urgency and the poetic form of heightened speech is used for emphasis.

John Gammie in his book Holiness In Israel<sup>170</sup> cites Micah 6 as one of the five high points of Old Testament ethics. The question is posed in verse 6 as to the process of establishing a proper relationship with God. The person who remembers Yahweh's redemptive and guiding actions comes to a contemporary knowledge of Yahweh and is able to correct the misdeeds in his life.<sup>171</sup> The teacher suggests several directives from the covenant agreement as means of correcting the misdeeds of one's life. They include references to sin atonement through sacrifice and covenant affirmation through offerings. The list grows from a simple holocaust presentation to an extravagant gift of a child. While these reflect the acceptable covenant practises they do not fulfil, even in their extravagance, all that is required. God is served not through sacrifices and offerings but through an inner religious life made manifest through humility before God and through mercy towards one's neighbour. This was the

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<sup>169</sup>R. Mason, Micah, Nahum, Obadiah (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 177.

<sup>170</sup>John Gammie, Holiness In Israel, Overtures in Biblical Theology Series (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989).

<sup>171</sup>Wolff, Micah, 177.

essence of the Covenant.<sup>172</sup>

The last two offerings mentioned in verse 7 are ten thousand rivers of oil and the first born, the fruit of my body. Child sacrifice was practised in some of the pagan religions to be found in Israel and the surrounding nations. It was part of some of the fertility cults. Despite their popularity amongst the Hebrews, fertility cults were forbidden in the monotheistic faith of Israel. The prophets of the previous centuries had railed against Jezebel, the queen, for her support of Baal.<sup>173</sup> Yet with the status of women dependent upon their offspring, especially their sons, fertility cults maintained their patrons. More common than a physical sacrifice was a monetary "first-born offering." This was common even in the cult of Israel. With Micah's use of the phrase "fruit of my body" there may have been a reference to the tradition of the offering of first fruits. It along with the tithe were practised throughout Israel's history. The tithe was a gift of one tenth of the agricultural produce. It was referred to as the tithe of "grain, wine and oil." These were the staples of Israel's lifestyle and were preserved as religious symbols in the temple. In Micah the offering of oil may refer to a votive offering, yet I see the teacher's argument to be more complete if it is understood as a tithe

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<sup>172</sup>Alfaro, 68.

<sup>173</sup>A.Brenner The Israelite Woman (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 26.

offering. Whereas the number ten is a symbol for completeness the tone of the passage is not completeness but exaggeration.

The ten thousand rivers of oil may be a play on the one tenth concept of the tithe. It inverts the tithe requirement from one tenth to ten times. The tithe was a much despised tax and the anger at having to pay it would reflect in the near ranting tone of verse 7.

Micah moves beyond the cultic rites surrounding the covenant to address the root meaning of the covenant for Israel. The harmony and well being of the community was the purpose of the laws within the covenant. This community of discontent had not been abandoned by God, rather it had abandoned its own regulations for good health, that is justice, loving kindness and humility (righteousness). The Israelites were reminded that it was God's gift of the land which provided for them. Abusing it through the injustices of distribution and debt and tax collection threatened the gift itself. The call was to a right relationship with both God and the other people of the land. "Only by remembering God's saving deeds and his saving will does one become aware of God's goodness which brings blessings to him and to his neighbor."<sup>174</sup>

#### COVENANT THEOLOGY AND THE LAND

The recalling of Israel's history in the lawsuit speech

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<sup>174</sup>Wolff, Micah, 183.

of Micah 6 ends with the crossing of the Jordan River and the acquisition of the land. "The land promise is very old and deeply rooted in patriarchal tradition."<sup>175</sup> This old land possession tradition is a recurrent theme in the exilic writers as they focus the Hebrew attention to the Covenant for the nation's spiritual renewal.

The exile represents the end of the whole scheme of salvation history. The issue of the exile was a profound alienation, alienation from city and temple, from land and accustom, but most of all from Yahweh and his promises - which now seemed false. [There developed] a quest for ways of fidelity in a setting of estrangement.<sup>176</sup>

In antiquity a landed king lived in terror of land loss.<sup>177</sup> The Hebrews, too, feared the loss of their land for land implies rootage, belonging, and location within the community.<sup>178</sup> By the time of the Exile their fear had become full blown estrangement from both the land and God. In the midst of that fear the people were reminded that "the land was to be handled as a gift and managed as an arena for justice and freedom."<sup>179</sup>

In the land of gift, the landed are not the ones above the law, but rather the ones called to Torah,

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<sup>175</sup>Walter Brueggeman and Hans Walter Wolff, The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 107.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid., 117.

<sup>177</sup>Walter Brueggeman, The Land (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 107.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 187.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid., 191.

to honor it without tampering or modifying or compromising. Torah exists so that Israel will not forget whose land it is and how it was given. Only the landed are tempted to forget and torah is to preserve the memory.<sup>180</sup>

Long before the time of the prophets the torah had been assumed into the temple cult. Along with the monarchy, the temple was a monopolizing institution in ancient Israel. "The temple monopoly had become a source of exploitation from which the justice questions had been eliminated. Controlling people's access to well-being is an enormous power."<sup>181</sup> Through controlling the torah, the temple cult controlled this well-being. The theme of those writing in and around the time of the exile was the reformation of access to the torah and what it taught. Micah, along with the others of the Deuteronomist school looked to abolish the temple cult. The priestly writers looked to re-establish it properly.

The move to recover the torah was done in conjunction with an affirmation of the importance of the land. It was the physical sign of the covenant agreement. It was also the foundation from which God would produce the elements of support for the nation and the means by which the people would live in community.

The Priestly writings strive for recovery with words of authorization and empowerment, marked by God's blessing. The

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<sup>180</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>181</sup>Walter Brueggeman, Interpretation and Obedience (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 187.



retelling of the creation story in Genesis 1-2:4a is meant to point to the restoration of the land. It demonstrates the overcoming of chaos to parallel the return to success in the land. "Creation comes to be expressed in conquest language."<sup>182</sup> As a means of bringing order to the chaos the creator began with acts of separation. "With the Priestly writers, the northern Deuteronomists taught that holiness required separation."<sup>183</sup> Separation became associated with holiness. The "defining of boundaries and defending them against exit and entry"<sup>184</sup> was symbolized by the entrance into the land at the crossing of the Jordan. In the torah this concept of separation was formalized in purity laws. By controlling the laws of purity the temple cult could exert social control by letting some people in and keeping others out. This was the source of their power to control people's access to well being.

## HOLINESS

It is within the Hebrews' quest for restoration to life with God and the land that it became apparent that the solution was to be found in holiness. Holiness was separation. Just as God was holy because God was separate

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<sup>182</sup>Brueggeman, The Vitality, 108.

<sup>183</sup>Gammie, 107.

<sup>184</sup>Jack N. Lightstone, Society, The Sacred and Scripture in Ancient Judaism (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier U. Press, 1988), 13.

from the other gods, so were the people to be separate from the spiritual and physical world which surrounded them. The purity laws of the torah were rituals which reflected that separation. In obedience to the law were to be found blessings and life.

Under Moses, the separation had been defined in the Covenant. Not only would the people be separate, that is holy, but they would live in their own separate (holy) land. "To be called a holy people is to be called to be a separate people, abiding by the covenant, obeying the laws, pursuing justice, and worshipping God alone."<sup>185</sup> "In response to the divine holiness the priests perceived that God required an ethical and ritual purity as well as the ingestion only of foods the priestly logic of separation and appropriateness would allow them to declare as clean."<sup>186</sup> It is within this framework of purity laws that the tithe references are found in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

As part of an anthropological study of purity, Mary Douglas has reflected on the dietary laws of ancient Israel. She saw the laws as a means "to train the Israelites in self-control as the indispensable first step for the attainment of holiness."<sup>187</sup> Within the discipline of the laws of first

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<sup>185</sup>Gammie, 110.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>187</sup>Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger (London: Pelican Books, 1970), 57.

fruits and tithes a similar form of self-control was exercised. There was a conscious activity in setting these offerings aside and maintaining their purity until they could be presented to the priest. She observed in the dietary laws a need to keep distinct the categories of creation. Holiness is seen to be order, not confusion. "The dietary laws are like signs which at every turn inspired meditation on the oneness, purity and completeness of God. By the rules of avoidance holiness was given a physical expression in every encounter with the animal kingdom and meals."<sup>188</sup> The tithe was also a sign for meditation on the completeness of God. Its variation on the complete number of 10 reflected the wholeness of God. It, too, was a physical means of reminding the Hebrew of holiness. It was in an orderly fashion that these offerings were separated and protected.

#### THE TITHE

The tithe was an important element in the ordering of life in the covenant community.

Tithing in Israel meant setting aside 10 percent of the food one produced from the land of Israel for the needs of Israelites who had none of this land to produce food for their own sustenance. Tithing is essentially a symbolic activity by means of which all Israel could be nourished on the produce of the "holy land," the property of the God of Israel.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup>Ibid., 72.

<sup>189</sup>Bruce Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels (Minneapolis: Fortress

By the covenant provisions the keepers of the cult, the priests and Levites, were not given land in the general distribution. As landless they had no means of producing food and thus were the original entitlement of the tithe. Natural disasters and other impediments meant that some Israelites were forced to sell their land to purchase food. These landless poor also were entitled to the tithe, although provision was made for them to receive back the land after seven years. One of the major abuses that arose during the monarchy was the failure to maintain the seven year and fifty year realignment of the land to the original family. Such abuse created a system of poverty caused by landlessness which traditional tithing could not alleviate.

The tithe references in Leviticus are found within the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-27), in Numbers in the March to the Plains of Moab (Numbers 10:11-21:35) and in Deuteronomy in the Deuteronomic Code (Deuteronomy 12-26) and in particular the section on cult and religion. Leviticus 27 is considered to be a textual addendum. Historical-critical scholars see it as late and secular. Others, such as Milgrom who utilize a literary approach see features which hold chapter 27 in common with the rest of Leviticus and treat it as a literary composite.<sup>190</sup> The narrative strand of the Numbers passage is difficult to isolate so that it too is regarded as a composite

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Press, 1992), 145.

<sup>190</sup>Herman, 51.

work. In these chapters in Numbers along with the tithe directives are found the other priestly (and Old Testament majority) references to Miriam. The one reference in Deuteronomy (24:9) has her amidst a program of care. I am beginning to wonder if it was the voice of women, as their public social status began to rise, which may have been at least partially responsible for the affirmation of the tithe as a social responsibility in the exilic times. The tithe legislation in Deuteronomy is much more fully articulated than in the two P sources. "This has led scholars to recognize the tithe as a marked example of Deuteronomic covenant doctrine."<sup>191</sup> "McConville believes the tithe to be a prime symbol among covenant statements in Deuteronomy that speak of God's blessing and Israel's loyalty."<sup>192</sup>

The basic conflicts between the P and D sources have to do with the named recipients and the number of tithes mentioned. Leviticus calls for one tithe and that to be on goods from the land, namely grain, wine and oil, and from the herd and flock. In Numbers 18:12 the order is "new oil, wine and grain." "For McConville 'corn, new wine and oil' constitute a pars pro toto representation of all goods."<sup>193</sup> In Numbers the payment of the tithe to the Levites is specified. It is as compensation for their duties as protectors against

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<sup>191</sup>Ibid., 80.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid., 68.

lay encroachment at the sanctuary that they receive the tithe. From their tithe the Levites were to take another tenth to be presented to the Lord for the priests. This reflects the Ancient Near Eastern tradition of covenant of grant. These tithe bestowals are seen as the grant from God for the Levites' and Priests' services. Thus, in P we have a single tithe going to the Levites who in turn tithe for the support of the priests.

The Deuteronomist speaks of tithe as a means of providing food for a sacred meal for all Israelites. The author was opposed to the priestly cult of Jerusalem and likely intentionally neglected to mention any support for the people involved. (In reality it was likely that a substantial amount of food was left from the tithe-meal and used for the support of the priests.) As a means of providing for the local Levite a mention was made in reference to the tithe not to forsake the Levite. Whereas a legal rite of the Levite to the tithe is implied in Numbers it is not in D. The first issue of concern over the plight of the Levite is made in chapter 12 following the directive to dismantle the local altars. Having been charged with their protection, the Levites found themselves without their traditional function to perform. Landless from the covenant provisions they could either move to Jerusalem or take early retirement. The Deuteronomist initiates the first pension plan through gifts from tithes, firstlings, offerings and feasts. "It is likely that

Deuteronomy, at this point, knows of the tithe-law of Numbers, and therefore that the tithe-law of Deuteronomy is framed in cognizance of it."<sup>194</sup> In the third year that which appears as more than one tithe is likely just one tithe being designated for different uses. The tithe of the third year is to be set aside for the Levites, the resident aliens, the orphans and the widows, in other words those without land and thus no means of producing food.

Historically, there are no records of any tithe payments having been made and the practical execution of any of these tithe-laws is questioned. Tithing was not unique to the Israelites, it was known within Mesopotamian and Semite traditions. As part of the Covenant Law of Israel it serves to enhance the theological understanding of that Law as it defines the relationship of God with the people. In P "the tithe is a tangible response to God's protection for His people."<sup>195</sup> However in D "the tithe is presented as a concrete representation of covenant. It teaches the virtues of obedience and establishes a connection between divine blessing and Israel's response."<sup>196</sup> The consumption of the tithe at the sanctuary is an affirmation of the holiness of the people.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup>J.G. McConville, Law and Theology In Deuteronomy (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 71.

<sup>195</sup>Herman, 76.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>197</sup>Ibid., 84.

The tithe was not to be a means of oppression, but rather a celebration of commitment to God.

The abuse of the tithe, and thus the Covenant, was one of the subjects for reform which the prophets addressed. It was also a theme in the teaching of Jesus as he too expressed his divine displeasure with Israel. In affirming his credentials by quoting scripture, Jesus refers to Micah 6:7-8 in his call to a right interpretation of the Covenant. Instead of using the holocaust and votive offerings which Micah lists, Jesus refers specifically to the tithe. It is possible that verse 7 of Micah 6 had a tithe understanding by the first century. This would be possible if the mention of "oil" in verse 7 was understood to refer to tithe. In Micah 6:4, Miriam is mentioned as the author recounts Israel's salvation history. The other mention of Miriam's role in the salvation history of Israel is in Numbers in the same section where the tithe is outlined. In Numbers the listing of agricultural products of the tithe offering begins with "oil." If Micah's awareness of Miriam stemmed from Numbers, he likely was aware of this ordering of the agricultural products and could have used the first named "oil" as a symbol for the tithe.

Micah, along with the other writers of the pre-, post- and exilic period were concerned with Israel's return to holiness. "To the authors of the priestly tradition, the Holy God clearly extended a call to ritual purity, right sacrifices and separation. To the prophets, holiness clearly issued the



summons for the purity of social justice and equity in human relations."<sup>198</sup> The redactor of the scriptures obviously believed that both components were necessary for a healthy relationship with God. The tithe represents both aspects of Israel's holiness. It spoke to the theology of separation and purity, and of order. As a means of support for the Levite and the poor it was a reminder of the social justice expected in the Covenant. Because the tithe supported those who were landless, it was a symbol of the place of the land and the responsibility Israel had for the land in the agreement with God. I believe that the tithe represents a clear, physical affirmation of faith in the God of Israel.

The textual community of the scriptural passages used above was in many ways similar to the community situation in which the church finds herself today. "There is no biblical evidence that the God of the Bible cringes at the prospect of this community being one of wilderness and exile."<sup>199</sup> So, I think it fitting that the church of the late twentieth century turn to the scriptures of the wilderness-exile periods as foundations for a new expression of faithfulness to God. Both the theology and the practicality of the tithe offer a worthwhile component within such a reflection on the wholeness of creation.

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<sup>198</sup>Gammie, 2.

<sup>199</sup>Walter Brueggeman, Rethinking Church Models Through Scripture in Theology Today, 48, July, 1990.

## F. MANAGING FINANCIAL RESOURCES

### USEFUL TOOLS

Resources available to stewards within the Christian community include the gospel message, the spiritual gifts of members, the time and talents of people in and surrounding the community, the ecological system of God's creation as well as the financial resources available to the community. All resources need to be carefully managed by the stewards of God's household. In this section the focus will be on the management of financial resources.

Financial management is a profession within modern society. The accounting principles accepted by government and the professional societies are important for accurate and comprehensible reporting within the church institution. Congregations often rely on the time and talent of individuals with such expertise to be treasurers and to serve on financial committees. The household of God, while incorporating the technical details of accounting, relies also on God's principles of management.

The modern church has developed a number of tools for managing financial resources. Such tools are useful, but are not the ultimate goal for the steward. They provide only a means for wholeness within the covenant community.

Within many congregations and denominational offices, funding has become a major concern. An increase of time and energy devoted to research and development within the area of

fund raising has generated production of a number of tools to assist in the fund raising process. R. E. Vallet cautions "A new and growing awareness of financial development techniques and lore will not save the church from the mission funding crisis. While such techniques and solutions are useful, they are not sufficient to resolve the funding crisis."<sup>200</sup>

Fund raising and financial management must be part of the steward's knowledge and skill set. Included below are a number of resources which are useful for stewardship leadership within a congregation.

#### PRINT AND VIDEO RESOURCES

Wayne Barrett, in his book More Money, New Money, Big Money<sup>201</sup>, offers a comprehensive profile of financial strategies for congregations. He identifies and develops three sources of increased funding. They are the current membership, new members and major or planned gifts. From his observations and congregational experience he has proposed what he calls "Barrett's Law." The Law "recognizes that giving and attendance are linked and declares, 'When they park it in the pew, they plop it in the plate.'<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup>Vallet, The Mainline Church's Funding Crisis, 109.

<sup>201</sup>Wayne C. Barrett, More Money, New Money, Big Money: Creative Strategies for Funding Today's Church (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1992).

<sup>202</sup>Ibid., 11.

Perry Bell's booklet, More Bread and Fish<sup>203</sup> provides background information on liturgical resources which offer a useful model in developing the stewardship theme within a worship service. Bell introduces and explores the Faith-Promise or Nameless Pledge and the concept of "tithers in process," making provision for a growth process rather than dependence upon a conversion experience concerning tithing.

Well known Canadian authors and actors, Bill Carr and Don Herron joined their talents with Religious Television Associates and the Ecumenical Center for Stewardship Studies to create a videocassette called Charlie Takes the Pledge<sup>204</sup>. The Canadian Inter-Church Stewardship Committee commissioned this video to engage people in a discussion around the act of signing a financial commitment card. Using three well known Canadian actors, the story is told of the impending Stewardship visit to the home of Charlie Farquharson. The standard protests are made, but in the end the visitors present an understanding of Christian Stewardship which empowers Charlie and his wife to take more seriously their commitment to the church. The seriousness of the subject is softened by the good humour of the script.

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<sup>203</sup>J. Perry Bell, More Bread and Fish (Madison: Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ, 1994).

<sup>204</sup>Bill Carr and Don Herron, Charlie Takes the Pledge (Toronto: A Religious Television Associates Production, in co-operation with the Ecumenical Center for Stewardship Studies, 1992), Videocassette.

Eugene Grimm, in his book Generous People<sup>205</sup>, presents a very positive approach to stewardship, emphasizing in his writing his thesis that stress must be on the need of the giver to give, rather than the church to receive. Stewardship is explored in terms of commitment. The chapter on pledging includes the suggestion of the term "estimate of giving" to alleviate some of the traditional negative connotations associated with pledging.

Ronald Vallet, in his book Stepping Stones of the Steward<sup>206</sup>, explores the biblical characterization of the steward as found in fourteen gospel parables.

During the early 1990s, the Presbyterian Church in Canada produced stewardship resources in the area of fund raising campaigns and planned giving. As a result of "Live the Vision", a financial campaign and enhanced stewardship programme of General Assembly, a permanent campaign binder was produced. It offers outlines of programmes for fund raising suitable for the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Each congregation was supplied with the resource. Planned giving has been an area of emphasis in North American churches as the members of congregations begin to age. Information booklets have been produced for congregations and individuals on the subjects of planned giving, gift annuities, life insurance and

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<sup>205</sup>Eugene Grimm, Generous People, Effective Church Series, ed. Herb Miller (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).

<sup>206</sup>Vallet, Stepping Stones.

wills and bequests.

#### PLEDGING

Managers of financial resources within the covenant community have often found some form of pledging to be a useful tool. Pledging suggests that an individual or family offers a commitment (usually written) to the church of a specified financial offering or other such gift. Pledging can be toward a designated project and the obligation can be spread over a few weeks to several years. Other pledges are for the general operating and/or mission funds of a congregation and are usually for a year's duration.

Healthy stewardship begins with commitment to God. A pledge requires that the believer reflect on that commitment and use the pledge as one of the signs of understanding and response to that commitment. The biblical tradition links commitment and tithing. It becomes natural when exploring the biblical tradition of commitment to God to include tithing references and interpretations. The tithing "tenth" allows for some objective goals when asking for objective money commitments on the pledge card.

In addition to purposefully focusing people to consider their commitment to God, the pledge does provide useful financial information for the budgeting process. The congregation often needs to have a more accurate means than the treasurer's "best guess" of anticipating offerings for

budgeting purposes. Whether the reason is increased commitment or planning, the pledge process does appear to produce very positive financial effects. Grimm's statistics suggest that the givings in congregations which use pledging are 30% higher than in non-pledging congregations.<sup>207</sup> One small, but helpful, piece of information, is the statistic that even in congregations where pledging is practised, only 50% of the members make an estimate.<sup>208</sup> In other words, even if there is less than a 50% response rate the information can be used to project a reliable estimate of offering for the budget.

Pledging is a useful tool; yet, there is widespread objection to its practise in many congregations. In some cases the negative feelings may have stemmed from the practise during the Depression of selling pledges to the banks. Those negative feelings are passed to succeeding generations.

Whereas pledging offers a solution, there is a component of the congregation which strongly opposes the practise on the grounds of desiring anonymity in financial commitment. Initiating the process of collecting the information and at the same time maintaining the anonymity of the congregants, can be handled through a "nameless pledge" or what Perry Bell refers to as a "Faith-Promise."<sup>209</sup> The programme is structured

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<sup>207</sup>Grimm, 49.

<sup>208</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>209</sup>Bell, More, 15.

so that people are challenged to consider a financial commitment, given a means to communicate that commitment to the congregation, but are not obligated to identify themselves.

#### INTEGRATION WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD

The modern Christian steward, in utilizing the tools of financial stewardship, practises those tools within the confines of the household of God and with co-operation from and co-ordination with many other offices of the household. Worship and communication are integral to the implementation of many of the tools. The commitment of other leaders and the minister is necessary for the successful use of the tools.



## CHAPTER THREE: THE PROJECT

### A. THE DEVELOPED STEWARDSHIP BOOKLET

#### DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURE

The project, "One-thirteen from Babylon," sought to test the hypothesis that church renewal can be facilitated through an understanding of stewardship as the means of communication between the law and the prophets. The project included the writing of the booklet titled "For the Eldership on Stewardship," prepared to provide stewardship information for elders of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The information offered in the booklet was gleaned from the author's own reading and experience as a parish minister.

The booklet was intended to be read initially by Session elders from three Presbyterian congregations within the Presbytery of Hamilton. These elders were to form the test groups. Once the booklet served its purpose within the parameters of this project it was to be given to the Presbyterian Church in Canada for publication for use by elders in other congregations. The primary goal of the elders of the test groups was to read for understanding. They were also given the opportunity to offer editing comments for future publication.

The booklet was developed as an educational tool

concerning stewardship. Using the booklet as the teaching tool, stewardship learning was tested through a set of two questionnaires. The first questionnaire evaluated the stewardship understanding and attitudes of the elders before reading the booklet. The second questionnaire evaluated the understanding after reading. The two responses were compared to determine if there was evidence of learning having occurred.

The booklet as presented on the next pages has received only minor revisions from the text presented to the elders of the test groups. It has been read by a Professor of Theology for doctrinal accuracy and a stewardship facilitator for subject appropriateness. Both are practising Presbyterian ministers. It has been read by a professional editor and several editing revisions will be necessary before it is formally published. Layout and textual highlights will be considered at the time of printing.

For clarity within the context of the project the title of "For the Eldership on Stewardship" was used. In its final form a more appropriate title will be chosen.

The booklet develops the concept of stewardship within the covenant community in which the law and the prophets offered a balance of form and reform to provide both stability and activity for the people of God. As the people of the church regain this exilic concept, the church will move forward as a faithful expression of the Body of Christ.

## THE BOOKLET

The text of the booklet developed for the "One-thirteen from Babylon" project is included on the following pages.

## FOR THE ELDERSHIP ON STEWARDSHIP

### CONTENTS

Introduction

Stewardship for the Future

History of Stewardship in North America

The Congregation Defines its own Mission

The Covenant Community

Stewardship Within the Covenant Community

God's Stewards

The Resources of the Trust

Change Within the Covenant Community

Collecting Financial Resources

Scriptural References

Print and Video Resources on Stewardship

## FOR THE ELDERSHIP ON STEWARDSHIP

"That the church may be continually renewed and nurtured for her ministry, Christ furnishes her with officers, among whom are ruling elders."                      Ordination Preamble

From the day when you stood with your fellow elders to be set apart within Christ's Church, you have carried the responsibility of the Lord's words, first said to Peter and then to you: "Feed my lambs." All of the people of the congregation take sustenance from you and the members of the Session. Feeding the lambs extends beyond serving the elements from the Communion Table. Feeding the lambs includes offering people things that will make them healthy. Teaching people about God and acting as a role model in the church are some of an elder's functions in the process of feeding the lambs.

Leaders who have sought to have a positive influence on the church have never suggested that theirs was an easy road. Elders of every age have been challenged by many forces both in and outside of the congregation. The elders of the Presbyterian Church in Canada face a unique set of challenges as Canadian Society approaches a new century, a new millennium and a new way of life whose parameters are just now being defined. Feeding the lambs in our world will require a special kind of elder who can learn from the faithful leaders

of the past and transform that knowledge into useful food for the people of a very new day.

The pages which follow are offered as a resource to the elder who is looking to expand her own knowledge, to develop his own understanding of God and to be one with a Session which is seeking to renew and develop the congregation's relationship with the Creator.

#### STEWARDSHIP FOR THE FUTURE

I am assuming that the reason you and your Session have developed an interest in stewardship stems from a financial crisis within your congregation. It is a common reaction of Sessions looking to find a solution to the problems of the modern congregation. The writers of the 1995 State of the Church Report have observed that financial concerns dominate the thinking within congregations. I know that you would like a simple how-to-manual to use to fix the problem. Our clerk of Session is a professional engineer and he has asked me repeatedly for such an instruction booklet. After years of looking for such a guide for myself, I have concluded that none exist. As with so many problem solving journeys in life we discover that it is a long and complicated route to get to solutions. For some of us the thought of such a journey is discouraging. I know, I am one. Yet, for me the study of stewardship has proven to be most fascinating and has offered me much hope for the future of the church.

Stewardship has for this century been associated with raising money for mission and support of the local congregation. In the last three decades shrinking memberships have meant shrinking incomes. It is to stewardship that elders are looking for miracles. The situation reminds me of a conversation which I had with my children some years ago. A tooth had come out and it had a silver filling. One of the children wanted to keep it as a souvenir. The other encouraged leaving it for the tooth fairy with the reasoning that she needed it to collect the silver to mint the coins to exchange for other teeth. The souvenir collector suggested that counterfeiting was illegal and he was not contributing teeth for that purpose. No matter how much we would like it to, a study of stewardship is not going to provide us with a licence to print money, nor will funds appear like magic.

A study of stewardship helps us to understand the purpose of the church and points to a direction for the congregation of the future. Money does become a part of the study and financial issues are included.

#### HISTORY OF STEWARDSHIP IN NORTH AMERICA

Some of the confusion which exists around the subject of stewardship stems from an evolution of the understanding of the term within the church. The expression "stewardship" was the name given to the "act of giving" by the leaders of the churches some one hundred years ago as they attempted to be

more modern in their terminology. It replaced earlier expressions such as benevolence, tithing, charity and alms giving. Most of us know stewardship as a program in the church rather than a lifestyle. Yet, this lifestyle interpretation is becoming the new wave of stewardship understanding.

When funding for church work began to show serious declines in the 1970s, leaders within the mainline denominations began to take a serious look at the biblical meaning of stewardship. Stewardship from a biblical perspective did not come across as a fund raising program at all. As the studies of these inquisitive leaders continued it became apparent that the scriptures said an awful lot about stewardship and very little about fund raising.

The elders of the Presbyterian Church in Canada also began to move in the direction of understanding stewardship as a lifestyle. In 1982 a proposal was made at General Assembly to include it as one of the functions of the Session. In 1984 revisions to the Book of Forms Section 113 were approved. Section 113 now states that: "The Session is responsible for all aspects of stewardship and mission, both spiritual and material, within the congregation." If you have been feeding lambs for more than 10 years and missed the change, count yourself in the majority. I did not remember it happening, nor did any of the ministers or elders I spoke to about it.

## THE CONGREGATION DEFINES ITS OWN MISSION

In our churches a lack of funding has caused us to finally ask the questions "What is it we are raising funds for and why are we doing it?" As we strive to find the answers we may move to tighten and improve our mechanics of fund raising. Yet short term solutions are only stop gaps. They may keep us going a little bit longer or they may get us through a period of change. It will be necessary though for elders to eventually answer the "what and why" questions or the congregation will not respond.

An answer which satisfies your congregation will come from within the congregation itself. As elders you will find much useful information available from church offices to help you with your work of defining what you are, yet the ultimate answers will come from within. There was a time in our fair land when each Presbyterian congregation was a carbon copy of every other as defined by Forms and Confessions and Standards and Common Orders and Books of Praise, all holding together people of a common heritage. As the people of the land changed, the people of the congregations changed and the Forms and Orders began to be done a little differently from place to place. Distinct congregations began to emerge. In the Presbyterian Church in Canada four national surveys on church life were conducted between 1968 and 1995. In the 1995 report on the "State of the Church" it was observed that three of the four reports from those surveys suggest the importance of the



"grass roots" or the congregations of the Church. The courts which once existed to keep the congregations focused on national goals, "now exist (or should exist) to support, encourage and strengthen the local congregation."<sup>210</sup> Once the mission work of both St. Andrew's, Fort MacLeod and Town of Mount Royal Church, Montreal was focused on the Beal Field in India. Now the people of those congregations continue to share that work, but are also seriously called to be in mission in their own communities. The elders of MacLeod and the elders of Mount Royal may lead the Presbyterians of their congregations to very different answers to the "what" question.

#### THE COVENANT COMMUNITY

John Calvin, understanding the church as the New Israel, used the expression "covenant community" to describe the faithful Christians of Geneva. As individual as each Presbyterian congregation may be, within the Reformed Tradition each congregation is a covenant community. In his book This Presbyterian Church of Ours<sup>211</sup>, John Congram expands on this in the section headed "Oriented by and to community." The term covenant community implies a covenant or a legal agreement between God and the people. The terms of the

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<sup>210</sup>Special Committee re State of the Church in The Acts and Proceedings of General Assembly, 1995, p.396.

<sup>211</sup>John Congram, This Presbyterian Church of Ours (Winfield, BC: Wood Lake Books Inc., 1995).

agreement apply to every aspect of the daily lives of the members of the community.

In the ancient Hebrew community there were a number of laws in place to ensure the smooth running of the community. As the church of the New Testament took shape, the laws were recast for a new age. In the modern community a number of basic forms also mark the people of God and those forms should bear a striking resemblance to the laws of the biblical communities.

The ancient community operated as a household, not like our households of one or two people, but as an extended family. Individuals were defined according to the household to which they belonged. The bold move by Jesus was to create a new household detached from traditional biological households, yet including all of the normal aspects of household life. This new household was ultimately to become the church. It was the household of God. Within the household of God the laws of the covenant were in place. Those laws distinguished God's household from the other households of society.

The church, called to be in society, but not of society remains apart from other households by following the laws or rules of God's household rather than the rules of the world's household. It is to explore the meaning of stewardship within the covenant community, the household of God that we now turn.

## STEWARDSHIP WITHIN THE COVENANT COMMUNITY

Stewardship is what stewards do. Just as elders have a list of responsibilities, so stewards have a set of functions which we call stewardship. Within the English language the word steward means a manager of another's property. Its origins are in the word sty or pig pen. The sty-ward was the manager of the pigs, the person responsible for ensuring that food was available to the family during the winter season when regular farming was not possible. Good management was necessary to meet that goal.

The biblical stories are full of people who managed things on earth. Sometimes they managed the king's affairs, sometimes they managed God's people, sometimes they managed a master's household. It is to these management models that we turn to discover the functions of the biblical steward. There are twenty-six direct biblical references to stewards and stewardship. From the stories two observations can be made. One is that the steward represents the master and carries his authority where it has been given. The second is that the steward is responsible to the master and is held accountable for every use of the master's goods and property.

The biblical stories describe what stewardship means within the household of God. Stewards within God's household are never the owner, only the server. However, as representatives of the owner they carry appropriate authority for their tasks. They are responsible and accountable to God.

In the New Testament the Greek word which has been translated for us as steward is the word *oikonomos*. The Greek word *oiko* translates as household, the word *nomos* as law or management. The steward is the manager of the household. Stewardship in the Greek form is *oikonomia*, more commonly translated into English as economics. (See I told you we would eventually get to money!) The steward is the economist in the household of God. Concerning the theme of economics, some two-thirds of the teachings in the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke are about the economy. So there is much New Testament material for the steward to study in learning about management in the household of God.

Jesus represented the ultimate steward in the household. He leaves us with the models of relinquishment and transformation. Jesus gave up first his family and then his life for the household. Through his resurrection the possibility of transformation was shown to the household. One of the most common expressions church leaders hear concerning offerings is "I give all that I can now." Indeed most people saying that actually do give all that they can. Within the household of God there is potential for change, there is room for relinquishment. It may mean the giving up of material wants to fulfil spiritual needs. An elder could feed the lambs by leading in a change to a less materialistic lifestyle. No one wants to give up things. Our society frowns on it. Yet, with encouragement, example and guidance

people can begin to trust and learn to lead a simpler lifestyle. With a simpler life, with less materialistic want, there may be a freeing of the cash flow so that more can be given to God and to the work of the church. People can transform their lives to make room for giving more.

#### GOD'S STEWARDS

The first biblical appearance of the manager within the household of God is found in the creation story of Genesis. The people created in God's image were made responsible for the earth, all of the earth: its physical resources, its plant and animal life and the people of creation. Ecology, the study of the household, originated with Adam and Eve. Modern ecology studies the relationships of the components of creation, biblical ecology was much less technical in its approach but conscious of relationship none the less. The big difference is that biblical ecologists recognize God as the owner of the earth and acknowledge responsibility to the creator for the use and the abuse of the earth.

The image of God in which people were created was the image of community. It is the Trinity of Father, Son and Spirit that is imprinted on the household of God. With three roles to play in the action of loving creation, God has internal rules to guide the function of all three parts of the Trinity. Those internal rules are referred to as the economy of the Trinity. To keep the Father and Son from collapsing in

on one another there exists a positive tension between them. The Spirit acts as the manager of the tension. The Spirit plays the role of steward.

Creation carries with it relationships. The steward acts to maintain those relationships for the creator. Sometimes that maintenance becomes very complicated. Where disease has entered some of the relationships need to be changed. Sometimes raw resources need to be transformed so that they can be useful in relationship. An effective household of God depends heavily on wise and caring stewardship.

Within the creation community God established the Sabbath. It offered a day of rest for the people because it was the day of rest for God. For the covenant community in Exile it offered a reminder that God was in charge, that the people could cease from work and the world would carry on in God's care. Stewards of God's household need to remember the Sabbath and use it carefully.

God, the creator, continues in relationship with the people of the earth's community working with the stewards to bring about a living, breathing household. The Bible records for us some of that story. It is a story that has become extremely important in our day as we work to make sense of our changing environment and work to maintain the integrity of the relationships established at creation. For that story offers us a model.

The people of God's household have struggled with change

before. Of particular prominence in the Old Testament was the time surrounding the Exile. Israel had progressed from a faithful tribe under Abraham and Moses, through a period of loose tribal connections under the judges, to a time of respected power under the kings. With power and affluence had come a move by the leaders to independence from God. The steward claimed ownership status and God was all but ignored within the covenant community. Israel suffered enormous military and political losses. The community leaders were carted off to Babylon. The lives of the people were in chaos. Into this chaos came the word of God reminding people of the ordering of things in the creation story and in the laws of Moses. Eventually a new order emerged, the Hebrew faith was renewed and the covenant community was restored. Into this separation from God also came the word from the prophets reminding the people of their responsibility to the creator, reminding them of the justice for all that was expected under the covenant agreement. From this time in the history of God's people comes the standard of the Law and the Prophets, so important to succeeding generations of Hebrews and Christians.

Reading the books of the Exile period took me back to a rainy night in Philadelphia in October of 1993. Blue Jays fans will remember that fourth World Series game which seemed to never end. Inning after inning the lead changed hands. The tension as to who would win was almost unbearable.

Finally, well past the four hour mark, the Blue Jays held on to the winning run and crawled from the park with a 15 to 14 win. The victory was hardly recognized. Everyone, fans included, were too weary to care anymore. So it was with the two schools of thought recorded by the Exilic writers. The back and forth of how God should be recognized and the tension between the ideas of the writers drained me of energy. One school called for form, the other called for justice. In reading them the competition between the two appears to be fierce, but neither getting the upper hand. Such lack of clarity frustrated me until I realized that it is not meant to be a competition, but rather the co-existence of two extremes. In fact, both are blessed in the covenant community.

The Law and the Prophets exist in positive tension as the foundation of the covenant community very much like the Father and Son of the Trinity. The Spirit is the tension manager of the Trinity. It is the steward doing stewardship who is the tension manager between form and justice in God's household.

The Law and the Prophets, form and justice, exist in tension for a reason. The intention of creation was the establishment of a community to receive, sustain and uphold the love of God. Life was ordered to support that community. As people break away from that order, creation's harmony is broken. Justice was raised up to act as a reminder of the ideal, the reason for the harmony. It was to act as a counter that people might see the source of disruption in their lives



and strive to reform so as to return a good order consistent with creation.

The new law given to Moses incorporated clauses which would ensure God's justice. The new law worked for many generations. People had land and thus food. The widow, orphan and foreigners were cared for. Under the kings, the harmony broke down and the prophets were sent to speak again of justice. The law was again renewed, reformed for a new day. Harmony existed for awhile, then order broke down once more. The prophets spoke again and the law was rewritten during and after the Exile to incorporate their observations of the need for justice.

It is on the form or structure which the community depends for its harmony. Yet, when the structure no longer provides for everyone the prophets of justice declare the need for a reworking of that structure. The form exists that all might know God's love. Justice exists as a reality check that the form is working. Form and justice need to be in constant communication. Stewardship is the means of communication.

It is from form or structure within the household of God that the resources are produced to ensure that all receive adequately of the creator's love. The steward manages those resources to ensure justice. When justice is not fulfilled the steward also relays the message back to the structure. The structure can reform to produce more useable resources or

it can remain rigid and continue to be the cause of disharmony in the household. During such a period of disharmony the steward may get tired and work with less energy and efficiency. Even the useful resources which the structure produces are not transformed or transported for the work of justice. The operation of the whole household appears to grind to a halt.

To people inside the church today the structures appear to be rigid, the issues of justice are being left unaddressed and the stewards are perplexed. The leaders of Israel in the Exile came to similar conclusions. They knew that something had to change to keep the covenant community from extinction. In their despair a word of a New Spirit came to the seemingly lifeless bones that had been Israel's structure. A new Spirit, a new manager, a new steward was given to the people. Life returned to the community.

The new spirit of our day will be the transformation of the people of the church into the stewards which they were created to be. As elders, the nurturing necessary to bring forth that new spirit is in your hands. People need to understand that they have a commitment to God, that they are not volunteers, but members called by God into the covenant community. Baptism takes us from the household of the world (with its market economy rules) and places us in a new household where God's rules are the economy of the community. Members of the covenant community must know of their

responsibilities so that they can fulfil them.

#### THE RESOURCES OF THE TRUST

The steward in God's household has been entrusted with the care of the resources. The resources are of three kinds:

- 1) the elements of the created world
- 2) the good news of the gospel message
- 3) the charisms or gifts of the Holy Spirit for the building up of the church.

Initially, the elements of the created world were the sources of food, clothing and shelter for the community. Once people began to leave farming and turn to crafts and other trades a means of exchange was developed to provide them with a source of food. Money became the means which ultimately led to our complicated system for exchange of goods and services. Very few of us continue to have direct access to the elements of the created world. The resource which has replaced it in the modern covenant community is money. We have more than money, though, to manage. Most of us grew up on the three "T"s of stewardship, time, talent and treasure. For the '90s two "T"s have been added. They are trash and tissue. Trash brings in our ecological awareness, and tissue refers to body organs and blood. These too constitute resources of the created world.

Christian stewards reflect the degree to which they believe that God is the owner by the attitude shown concerning

the use of the created resources in their care. As people grow in their understanding of God a changed response to God will be evident in their use of those resources. As people come to realize their accountability to God they will begin to use their resources to show that they accept that they are accountable.

In the market economy of our modern world the place of money holds a place similar to the place held by the gods of the Bible stories. Money commands such reverence in our society that we are uncomfortable to discuss it at all. Our attitude toward our use of money speaks more of our understanding of God than does all the hymn singing of a month of Sundays. When people show a reluctance to speak about their financial resources, that is money, I believe that they are placing money before God in their lives. This is idolatry. Money is so entrenched in our society and in our church that we often do not notice the homage we pay to it. It exists as the deity of the world's household, but it cannot be the deity in God's household. From Matthew 6:24 we know that "No one can serve two masters."

Slowly, gently, patiently and lovingly the elders of today's covenant community must work to re-establish the God of creation as the head of the household. It will be painful. It will be painful! It will be painful!! Moses wore out his shoes going up and down Mount Sinai as he worked to overcome idolatry within the Hebrew household. The disciples

strained their voices in retelling the stories of the ordering of life in the Christian household. So too for us, it will be slow and frustrating. For every change we make and problem we solve in the process, there will be three more to replace them. The future of the church lies in the household's ability to reaffirm its commitment to God. There is "good news."

That "good news" is the gospel message which announces a day of change. The resurrection points to transformation into a new life. Everything is possible. People can change from their allegiances to money to a commitment to God. They can move toward managing creation's resources so that those resources are transformed to be useful in the service of justice. Then having experienced just such a transformation within themselves, the steward becomes missionary (that other part of Book of Forms Section 113) when the gospel resource is shared with the world.

At Pentecost the covenant community received a new resource which made it possible for it to be the church. The gifts of the Spirit allowed the community to truly be the body of Christ alive for the world. Those gifts are called charisms. They include wisdom, knowledge, healing, miracles and prophecy. Like any resource they need wise management to make them useful.

As stewards of the church of the twenty-first century one of our important roles will be looking at our available

resources as a means of defining what we as a church should be. Just as a manager whose land sits on oil reserves pursues a place in the petroleum industry and not gold mining, so we are able to direct the activities of the church in a direction which will utilize the resources we have, not those that we might like to have or that other congregations have. Those resources include:

land - maybe the congregation sets up an informal parking lot hockey league or basketball competition in its infrequently used parking lot.

buildings - a place for elders to meet with their districts in informal gatherings and group discussion.

people - if a large number of your members are in medical professions maybe you can think about developing a ministry for AIDS affected families or if you have a few home economists perhaps the congregation gets behind a nutrition and food preparation program in conjunction with a local food bank. Or, or, or: the possibilities are endless. People with their talents and their charisms are a huge potential within the congregation's resource pool. Freeing that talent and those charisms will be the challenge of the twenty-first century church. Wise stewardship of human resources is essential for the church's future.

#### CHANGE WITHIN THE COVENANT COMMUNITY

Some members of the congregation may readily make the

transformation into spirited stewards. Others will respond more slowly. Whatever the speed, the presence of such stewards will mean that change is happening. The form and structure of the congregation also will be affected by the stewards and that will be another site of change. Where there is change there will be anxiety. It is part of our well developed internal system of self protection that causes us to protest change. Our survival depends upon our stability. Any change, no matter how well intentioned, is perceived by the church as a threat. Experience helps us to develop mechanisms to deal with the changes which do occur. We will need to utilize those mechanisms often over the course of the next several decades for it appears that changes will be frequent and will affect every aspect of our lives.

Our lives by nature cycle through periods of change. In the church we have developed rituals to bring support to people going through the transitions of new birth, maturing, marriage, parenting, aging and death. We are able to take away some of the anxiety of other areas of change by recognizing the change that is happening and blessing it through a ritual of worship. It does not have to be as formal as the jargon makes it sound. A brief repetition of familiar scriptural verses may be ritual enough to greatly lessen the anxiety of change.

I know that just reading these pages will be causing you some disquiet because many of the ideas are a challenge to the

way we have been doing things. They were challenging to me when first I began to explore the writings of respected church leaders. Once you start feeding your lambs there will be further protests for you to deal with. You will both be on a pathway of change, perhaps at different points, but sharing a common sense of displacement. The following few lines are the words which I would share with you were we able to speak them together. They come from the passages which I have used in developing my own ritual for dealing with the anxiety of the newness and change which I have experienced as I have studied in preparation for the church's future. Whenever I read them (or sometimes I sing them) I feel better. I feel connected to the past and confident of God's activity in the future.

I might hear you say:

*"There we sat down and there we wept when we remembered... How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"*

*(Psalm 137:1,4)*

Then we might hear God say:

*"A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you... I will put my spirit within you."*

*(Ezekiel 36:26-27)*

Then together we might say:

*"Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."*                      *(Romans 5:5)*



## COLLECTING FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The charge to the Session in Section 113 of the Book of Forms to be "responsible for all aspects of stewardship" carries with it the need to be aware of some of the tools associated with the practise of stewardship. Within this booklet I have focused on the steward as manager and the attitudes which influence decisions concerning use of resources. There is another facet of the steward's role and that is the collection of the resources for use within the covenant community. The Bible refers to two major means of collecting resources. One is the tithe, the other is collecting for a cause. In 1 Corinthians 16, Paul describes the Great Collection for the poor in the Christian family in Judea.

By its name the tithe implies an offering of one-tenth of a person's wealth or earnings. When the twelve tribes of Israel finally entered the promised land each tribe, but one, was given a parcel of land to provide for the needs of all of the tribes' members and adherents. The one tribe set aside as landless were the clergy and their families. It was a tenth offering from the produce of each of the landed tribes which would supply the needs of the religious leaders. As life got more complicated in Israel not everyone had access to land. By the time of the rewriting of the Mosaic law for the people of the Exile, the tithe was extended to support all of the landless: the widows, the orphans and the foreigners, as well

as the clergy. When it was presented in the temple, a portion of the tithe was also used to have a party of thanksgiving.

The tithe called for one tenth of the produce of the land. Those of our farmers who belong to the Foodgrains Bank offer from their harvest; however, today most of us would be hard pressed to take the tithe directive literally. The land at our home produces grass clippings. I have difficulty knowing what to do with all of them. A few truck loads a week of members' grass clippings on my lawn would soon have the neighbours in full rebellion. Within the household of God we are called to take the tithe directive seriously, if not literally. The original elements of the created world have been transformed for us into money, so it is of our monetary income that we are called to give one tenth to the household of God. The social programs which are supported by taxation within our province and nation do provide for many of the concerns which the tithe was originally intended to cover. For that reason the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1994 suggested that congregations use as an offering goal that which is known as the "modern tithe." It represents a gift of 5% of income. The tithe is not a legalistic approach to stewardship. Rather, the tithe represents the level of resource sharing which would go on in a healthy covenant community. Leaders of the congregation should set their sights to the building up of an environment which will foster tithing rather than imposing a prescribed giving level.

In an attempt to encourage members to reflect upon their commitment to God some congregations ask that people make some sort of formal financial pledge. Congregations which use pledging report 30% higher giving levels than congregations where pledging is not used. Leaders of those congregations encourage people to explore their relationship with God and to work at making their commitment that of a faithful steward. Within our congregations there is sometimes a hesitancy to sign one's name to a pledge card. Using a nameless pledge allows for the individual to explore his or her commitment while keeping financial data totally anonymous.

#### SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

Each Session of the Presbyterian Church in Canada has the challenge of painting a picture of a modern day steward which will be useful in providing a model for people as they change to meet the new day about to dawn. There are a number of biblical references which suggest some of the attributes of stewards within the household of God. The following list should assist you in working on your own picture.

Genesis 1:27-28 The steward is created.

Genesis 47:13-21 Joseph as steward in the household of Egypt.

Exodus 16 A new household is built.

I Kings 19 Patience and perseverance for God's stewards.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 A new covenant for the household of God.

Matthew 23:1-13 Equality within the household.

Matthew 25:1-13 The steward stays alert to God's activities.

Matthew 25:14-30 Resources are to be used not hidden. The trust is to be exercised.

Mark 12:38-44 Sacrificial giving.

Mark 14:1-8 Stewards are confident of God's time.

Luke 16:1-8 Prudence mixed with compassion.

Luke 19:1-10 Zacchaeus is transformed from sinner to steward.

John 2:1-10 Transformation calls for rejoicing.

Acts 9 Aeneas, steward of the gospel.

I Corinthians 12:1-27 The charisms.

I Corinthians 16:1-4 A new life for service.

#### PRINT AND VIDEO RESOURCES ON STEWARDSHIP

There are a number of books and resources available for individual and group study on various stewardship themes. The following is a list of resources which I have found to be useful.

Barrett, Wayne C. More Money, New Money, Big Money. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1992.

Bell, J. Perry. More Bread and Fish: A Comprehensive Stewardship Program for Congregations. Madison: Bell Press, 1994.

Brackett, John K. On the Pilgrims' Way: Christian Stewardship and the Tithe. New York: Episcopal Church Center, 1988.

Grimm, Eugene. Generous People. Effective Church Series, ed. Herb Miller. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.

Vallet, Ronald. Stepping Stones of the Steward. 2nd ed.  
Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, 1994.

Publications of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

The Live the Vision Campaign Strategy Binder provides useful information for the leaders of major fundraising campaigns in the congregation.

The Planned Giving Staff have produced four pamphlets:

- 1) Planned Giving
- 2) Gift Annuities
- 3) Life Insurance
- 4) Wills and Bequests.

Videos

Carr, Bill and Don Herron. Charlie Takes the Pledge. A Religious Television and Associates Production, in co-operation with the Ecumenical Center for Stewardship Studies. Toronto, 1992.

Celebrate Curriculum of the Presbyterian and Reformed Educational Ministry, The Adult Journey - Stewardship and Interpretation

- 1) The Stewardship of all of Life, 1989.
- 2) Caesar and God: Ethics and Stewardship, 1990.
- 3) Personal but not Private: Theology and Stewardship, 1991.

## B. THE BOOKLET TESTING

## PARTICIPATING SESSIONS

The booklet was read by the elders of three sessions. The congregations to which they belong include:

- Strathcona Presbyterian Church in Burlington,
- St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Hamilton and
- Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Walpole.

The Strathcona congregation is the ministry base of the researcher. It is described in the introductory chapter. The congregation is suburban. There are 21 elders on the Session. Twenty participated in the project, with 16 completing the second questionnaire. Elders range in years of service from four to 30 with the average number of years of eldership as 12. Using modern sociological generational titles, on the Strathcona Session there are no Generation X's, 4 (21%) Boomers, 12 (63%) Silents and 3 (16%) pre-Silents.

St. Paul's Church is in the downtown core of Hamilton. It is one of three Presbyterian congregations in a four block area. In 1996 it will be 163 years old. It is typical of a financially well endowed congregation with an aging and declining membership. Of the 30 elders on the Session, 18 began the project and 11 completed the reading and second questionnaire. Elders range in years of service from one to 30 with the average number of years of eldership as 11. The Generational breakdowns include 1 Generation X (6%), 4 Boomers (22%), 5 Silents (28%) and 8 (44%) pre-Silents.

Chalmers Church is a rural congregation set on a crossroads within a district called Walpole. It is five kilometers east of Jarvis, Ontario. In 1996 it will be 153 years old. It is typical of a rural congregation with declining membership as the population of the community declines. Until recently it experienced a yearly "break even" financial situation. However, a recent substantial endowment has alleviated financial concern. There are seven elders on the Session, all of whom began the project. Five elders completed the reading and questionnaire. Elders range in years of service from 15 to 35 with the average number of years of eldership as 24. The generational breakdowns include 2 Silents (29%) and 5 pre-Silents (71%).

In total 45 elders began the process and completed the first questionnaire. (One Strathcona elder did not answer the age question and is therefore not included in the generational picture shown above.) Thirty-two (71%) elders read the booklet and completed the second questionnaire.

#### INSTRUCTIONS TO THE PARTICIPANTS

The researcher met with the members of each Session, explained the Doctor of Ministry programme, briefly outlined the context of the project, administered the first questionnaire, introduced the booklet and gave verbal instructions concerning the elders participation in the project. The booklet was designed to measure 8.5 inches by 5

inches. To allow for comments in the margins the text was printed on paper measuring 8.5 by 7 inches. A summary of the verbal instructions was included on a cover page for the booklet. Each booklet had been given a code number and as the booklets were distributed the elders were instructed to assume the code number on the booklet received. That code number was used on both questionnaires.

The written instructions given with the booklet were:

Before you begin to read this document, please fill out the questionnaire called "Before Reading the Booklet."

The following pages represent the first draft of a booklet to be prepared for elders of the Presbyterian Church in Canada as a resource to assist them in their function to be responsible for stewardship.

Please read the pages. Editing will happen on the next draft.

Please concentrate on the content. As an elder, think about the scope of your calling and consider the effectiveness of this as a resource for you. Note in the wide margins any areas that you do not understand or think need to be clarified.

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THE BOOKLET. YOU CAN PUT YOUR NAME ON THE COLOURED COVER PAGE AND THEN REMOVE THAT PAGE WHEN YOU HAND BACK THE BOOKLET NEXT MONTH.



Please return your booklet at the Session meeting on October 24. At that time you will be asked to fill out another questionnaire. If you cannot be at the meeting please contact me to make other arrangements to complete the process.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

#### MEETINGS WITH THE PARTICIPANTS

The elders who received a copy of the booklet at the meeting were given a month to read the text. As the meeting date for the session of St. Paul's congregation approached it became apparent that few elders had read the text. Another month was given to read the booklet. Each elder on the session was sent a letter of encouragement and notification of the change of date. Concerning the Chalmers Session, the notice of meeting was not communicated to the elders. Two were in attendance. A second meeting was arranged at which time the researcher made the initial presentation and led the follow-up with the two who had read the booklet. The minister of Chalmers was left to collect the booklets, administer the second questionnaire and return them to the researcher. The elders in the Chalmers group were given three weeks to read the booklet.

## THE BOOKLET DISCUSSED

At the second meeting with the sessions, the researcher led a discussion concerning the booklet and the theme of exile. The questions asked were:

1. What is Babylon and what is Babylon as a symbol?
2. Should the church work at leaving Babylon?
3. Do you think that you could lead a group of people through a stewardship discussion?
4. Do you think that you are able to be a leader in a church preparing to leave Babylon?
5. Do you have suggestions of other resources which you could use to improve your leadership skills in developing stewards?
6. Are there areas of the booklet which need to be changed?

Responding to the first question (What is Babylon and what is Babylon as a symbol?), answers ranged from "I don't know" to "a country in the Middle East." A few elders appeared to understand the symbolism of Babylon as a place of exile and a time of upheaval in Israel's life. Many did not understand the symbolism of Babylon or its place in the modern church.

Responding to the second question (Should the church work at leaving Babylon?), another question was put to the researcher. "Why was the question asked?" It was suggested that a preamble to the booklet should include a statement as

to where the writer was coming from. It was suggested that two exiles should be noted, one a cultural exile and the second a religious one. Some elders despaired of the very little impact such an approach to stewardship would accomplish. It was "like one small voice in the wilderness." Another suggested that the exile of the church was self-imposed to maintain our comfortable lifestyle and situation in society.

The third question (Do you think that you could lead a group of people through a stewardship discussion?) had a spectrum of responses. Some felt inadequate to lead any kind of discussion. Others volunteered to lead a discussion with members of their district. The majority felt that they needed to develop other skills before leading a discussion, but that the material in the booklet was sufficient resource for the knowledge component.

The fourth question (Do you think that you are able to be a leader in a church preparing to leave Babylon?) was answered with hesitancy. Most people felt unfamiliar with the concept of exile, uncomfortable with the need to change, unsure of what change was needed and ill-prepared to lead any change. However, of those further along the pathway, some asked to participate in a workshop to develop the next stage before committing to a march from Babylon.

Discussion of the fifth question (Do you have suggestions of other resources which you could use to improve your

leadership skills in developing stewards?), produced suggestions for a study and use guide for the booklet and for the inclusion in its final form of a list of questions and points of discussion for elders to use with members of their districts.

The sixth question (Are there areas of the booklet which need to be changed?) brought out the problems people had with the booklet. Several people asked for copies to keep for themselves. They found the content most helpful. Other replies suggested that it was too complicated and too difficult to read. To quote one elder: "I graduated from university 40 years ago and I have no intention at this late date to be reading university level materials again. It is too demanding for elders to be expected to do this."

Use of some of the words and expressions caused problems for a few elders. Some did not feel comfortable with the word stewardship and did not know what it really meant. Covenant community was an uncomfortable word for a few people. One elder suggested that covenant community was not a Presbyterian term and implied it was not proper for a Presbyterian congregation. In all her years at church she had never heard the expression. (She may not have heard the words, but its revitalization within the church at the time of the Reformation was part of the foundational theology of Calvin and later Presbyterian doctrine.) Those opposed to the term "covenant community" did find more favourable the expression

"household of God." The expression "collapsing in on one another" used in reference to the Father and the Son, caused some difficulty. I suggested that "melding" of the two might be a more useful term. I think that it is the traditional model of the trinity as a triangle which might be the source of some of the confusion here. The Father and the Son need to be seen as poles on a line. Without the Spirit keeping them separate they become a point on the line, so the line disappears. The strength which lies in the diversity of the Father and the Son is lost.

Although it was a written comment on the questionnaire, the following was on the theme of this sixth question and so I have recorded it here. "Note: I've read this book at least 3 times. In my 80s. I'm really past studying - Language difficult for average person."

As a general comment on the booklet it was suggested that a two-page precis might be most helpful for busy elders. It was suggested that such a goal might be accomplished by highlighting key ideas in the final production.

#### WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM THE RETURNED BOOKLETS

Those elders reading the booklet were asked to record comments on the content of the text in the booklet itself. The comments fell into two categories: those of editorial nature and those of reaction to the material of the text. The editing comments will be reviewed at the time of preparation

for printing and have not been included here. The comments on the material are included, for they offer insight into the learning that occurred. Written comments were included in eight booklets when they were returned.

#### Concerning the Text in General

1. "This treatise should be a series of building blocks which bind together to reach a plateau - or conclusion, there is none."
2. "I found it hard to get into the 'meat' - it engaged me more as I got into it, but the intro. was slow. Lots of food for thought as the thesis developed."
3. "Careful with the inclusive language."
4. "OK but you have stopped addressing the average elder."

#### Concerning Specific Points in the Text

1. Three respondents affirmed the need to define a mission.
2. A comment on the paragraph on the move to congregational definition of mission: "Carbon copies? Is this possible in this decade '90? So often sincerity is lacking and GREED takes hold of mankind." Concerning tithing the same person wrote: "An excellent word! Sharing with others and "it" always comes back to you in some form or other." Concerning a move to a simpler lifestyle it was written: "Very difficult! So many must keep up with their peers."
3. Also concerning the transition to a simpler lifestyle, one

elder wrote: "I don't think I have the authority to tell people how to spend their money."

4. On the phrase "the scriptures said an awful lot about stewardship and very little about fund raising" one respondent wrote "very valid point."

5. Concerning the steward's duty to remember the Sabbath and use it carefully the question was posed: "How can we do this as a session - in unity?" The same respondent likened the movement under the kings away from God to the situation of today.

6. Another respondent asked the question at the conclusion of the section on the Covenant Community: "What is a steward and how does it relate to our church?" However several pages later under the heading of the Resources of the Trust in reference to Moses' frustration with the Israelites a second comment was written: "as I read further I realize an elder and a steward must be one and the same."

7. One respondent asked concerning the section on Collecting Financial Resources: "Is this the 'meat' of the brochure if so you need to state this before the final paragraph and rename the brochure 'stewardship=money'."

8. The written note beside the sentence "To people inside the church today the structures appear to be rigid, the issues of justice are being left unaddressed and the stewards are perplexed." was the word "BINGO!".

9. Concerning the scriptural reference to Zacchaeus, the

comment was written: "This is a popular children's story and confirms my belief that children should be made aware of stewardship."

#### ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES TO THE BOOKLET

The theory that the church is in a mode similar to that experienced by the Israelites during the Exile in Babylon appears to be a foreign theory for the elder leaders of the church. From the text of the booklet, some were not able to comprehend the theory, but others were, leading to the observation that learning was happening.

Developing the biblical concepts of covenant community, tithing, Sabbath, the household of God, stewards and charisms was judged by some to be a positive move for congregational renewal. Again, not everyone who read the booklet reacted positively to this approach, some did not understand it, some disagreed with it, but others saw it as a move forward.

The elder who first asked "what a steward was" and then later in the comments observed "that an elder and a steward were one and the same" demonstrated that learning had happened.

The goal of the project was to test learning. Some learned very little, some took issue with the concept of stewardship being presented, but other elders clearly demonstrated learning and were willing to apply that learning within the context of their congregations and districts.



## CHAPTER FOUR: EVALUATION

### A. THE QUESTIONNAIRES

#### DESIGN

The pre-presentation questionnaire was to be completed by the participants before reading the project booklet "For the Eldership on Stewardship." It was designed to fulfil three functions:

1. Stimulate thinking concerning stewardship so that the respondents had given stewardship some thought before answering questions which would be directly used in testing their learning.

2. Present questions which would produce the data necessary to form the baseline level of knowledge of the participants before reading the text.

3. Collect sociological data for a profile of the session of the participating congregations.

A copy of the Pre-presentation questionnaire is found in Appendix C.

Recent studies in sociology have suggested that within modern society there exist five distinct generations of people with thought and behavioral characteristics in common. A summary chart of these distinct generations, prepared by The Rev. Dr. Perry Bell and presented at a seminar at Garrett

Evangelical Theological Seminary in July of 1994, is included as Appendix C. The values and lifestyle of the various generations are helpful in studying congregational situations. Further studies in the stewardship field have shown that there are distinct giving patterns associated with each generation.<sup>212</sup> For example, Generation X members do not support pledging, Boomers will pledge if given adequate information and Silents will pledge by being asked. To obtain the generational breakdown of the elders responding to the questionnaires, question 15 of questionnaire 1 asked the elders to indicate their age range.

To ensure that the responses on the second questionnaire were made after reading the booklet, the introductory question (Have you read the booklet?) was asked. Questionnaires, where the respondent had not read the booklet, were disregarded.

#### COLLATION OF THE DATA

Once all of the questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher, the responses to the questions were entered onto a spreadsheet using the EXCEL computer software program. The data was arranged by congregation and by questionnaire number. For the majority of the questions,

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<sup>212</sup>Such patterns are referred to by Manfred Holck in Church Finance in a Complex Economy, Creative Leadership Series, ed. Lyle E. Schaller (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983) and by Perry Bell in classroom notes in the course "Stewardship Ministries in the Local Church" taught at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, July 1994.

an analysis of the data produced three results:

1. The totals of the responses for each question,
2. The percentage of the response compared to the total number of people responding to the particular question and
3. The percentage of the responses compared to the total number of people answering the questionnaire. (Not all participants answered all of the questions.)

To distinguish percentages generated in the second analysis from those of the third, elders in the second category will be referred to as respondents. Elders in the third category will be referred to as participants. All of the respondents are also participants, but not all of the participants responded to every question. In some of the questions the reply rate was low enough that it was necessary to note such.

Questions 8a, 10 and 16 on questionnaire 1 and questions 2, 13 and 14 on questionnaire 2 produced data which could not be subjected to such analysis. Individual functions were performed on them. These will be noted in the analysis section.

A similar analysis was done on the data of the total test population. The following seven pages include the statistical summary of the test population. The results of the third analysis are not reported, but are included in the evaluation of the results where that information is appropriate.

## B. STATISTICAL SUMMARY FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

## QUESTIONNAIRE 1: BEFORE READING THE BOOKLET

1. As an elder you have your own understanding of the goals of your congregation. In terms of your own understanding do you think that your congregation is reaching its goals?

Yes 9 (20%) No 35 (80%).

2. Do you think that your congregation needs to change?

Yes 40 (89%) No 5 (11%).

If your answer is "yes", should that change be toward:

a) tightening the rules and regulations

Yes 9 (28%) No 23 (72%).

b) concerning itself with people's needs.

Yes 37 (92%) No 3 (8%).

3. Do you think that your congregation has a financial problem?

Yes 35 (78%) No 10 (22%).

4. What is "Christian Stewardship?"

34 (76%) gave a written answer. 11 (24%) did not.

The responses included: looking after the gifts of God, constant attendance in worship (3), free adequate money to congregation (2), using the gifts of God (9), care and service to others (11), giving thanks and supporting our faith (3), understanding work of the church, people all work together, encouraging use of time, talent, treasure (4).

5. Do you think that your congregation is practising "Christian Stewardship" as you have defined it?

Yes 16 (43%) No 21 (57%).

6. What is the "covenant community?"

13 (32%) gave a written answer. 28 (68%) did not.

7. Are you familiar with any biblical passages which deal with stewardship?

Yes 23 (55%) No 19 (45%).

If your answer is "yes" list some passages or stories which you remember:

22 (92%) gave a written answer. 2 (8%) did not.

8. Should people give of their financial resources to support the church?

Yes 43 (98%) No 1 (2%).

If your answer is "yes" what percentage of their total income would be an appropriate giving of their financial resources?

58% of the elders responded.

The average of the answers was 7.5 percent.

9. Should Christian people discuss the use of their money?

Yes 38 (86%) No 6 (14%).

10. Should discussion of money happen at church?

Yes 39 (89%) No 5 (11%).

If you answered "yes" please check those areas of church life where discussion of money is appropriate.

	Yes	No
Church School Class	<u>23 (62%)</u>	<u>14 (38%)</u>
Bible Discussion Group	<u>18 (45%)</u>	<u>22 (55%)</u>
Session Meeting	<u>42 (98%)</u>	<u>1 (2%)</u>
Finance or Board Meeting	<u>42 (100%)</u>	<u>0</u>
Congregational Meeting	<u>42 (100%)</u>	<u>0</u>
Sermon	<u>19 (48%)</u>	<u>21 (52%)</u>
Service of Worship	<u>25 (63%)</u>	<u>15 (37%)</u>
Elders' Visits	<u>33 (80%)</u>	<u>8 (20%)</u>

11. Have you as an elder talked to individual people of your district or congregation about giving money to the church?

Yes 23 (51%) No 22 (49%).

12. If the congregation is to change do you think that people's attitudes about the use of money need to change?

Yes 32 (76%) No 10 (24%).

13. Do you think that the people of your congregation are willing to change their attitudes toward their use of their money?

Yes 14 (39%) No 22 (61%).

14. Do you think that you have the knowledge to help the people of your congregation to understand the need for change and to help them make that change?

Yes 14 (34%) No 27 (66%).

15. To which of the following age groups do you belong?

under 33 1 (1%), 33-49 8 (18%),  
50-65 19 (43%), over 65 16 (36%).

16. How long have you been an elder?

The average length of service is 14 years.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE 2: AFTER READING THE BOOKLET

Have you read the booklet? Yes 32 No 0.

1. Does Section 113 of the Book of Forms designate the Session as having the responsibility of all aspects of stewardship within the congregation?

Yes 29 (97%) No 1 (3%).

2. Is the modern trend to focus inwardly and strive for self achievement to the exclusion of God similar to the turning away from God which is seen in the Old Testament stories of the Exile when the faithful were transported to Babylon?

Yes 23 (85%) No 4 (15%).

3. Do you understand the title of this project "One-thirteen From Babylon: Stewardship as a Pathway to Restoration?"

Yes 9 (30%) No 21 (70%).

4. Which of the following characteristics describe the covenant community? (check as many as you think apply)

15 (47%) existed from the time of creation

16 (52%) depends upon a legal agreement between God  
and people

24 (75%) has a biblical basis

20 (63%) has a set of rules which are different  
from worldly ones

28 (88%) is the household of God

5. Do the majority of people of your congregation understand themselves as members of a covenant community?

Yes 4 (14%) No 25 (86%).

If your answer is "no" should they be developing that understanding?

Yes 24 (100%) No 0.

6. Is it your role as an elder to assist people to develop their understanding of covenant community and their role within it?

Yes 30 (97%) No 1 (3%).

7. Do you have the knowledge to assist people in developing their understanding of covenant community and their role in it?

Yes 11 (37%) No 19 (63%).



8. Do you think that the majority of people of your congregation would want to belong to a covenant community which practised the principles of stewardship which are defined in the Bible?

Yes 11 (46%) No 13 (54%).

9. What is "Christian Stewardship?"

27 (90%) gave a written answer. 3 (10%) did not.

The responses included: the care and nurturing of God's gifts both material and spiritual (7), giving in adequate portions to the church (3), sharing of material items, justice (4), managing God's resources (8), lifestyle (4).

10. Within the covenant community who is the owner?

27 (84%) responded "God". 5 (16%) had no answer.

11. Within the covenant community is it the steward who is the manager for the owner?

Yes 30 (97%) No 1 (3%).

12. Concerning the resources available to us as part of creation, do the majority of people within your congregation consider themselves to be: (please check one answer)

a) owners of those resources 10 (36%).

or

b) managers of those resources 18 (64%).

13. What percentage of total income would be an appropriate giving of financial resources within the modern covenant community?

81% of the elders responded.

The average of the answers was 5.9 percent.

14. Which of the following resources does your congregation have? (check as many as you think apply)

32 (100%) people with skills and talents

29 (90%) people with spiritual gifts

24 (75%) people with time for Christian service

28 (87%) financial

28 (87%) buildings and property

15. Are those resources well managed within the congregation?

Yes 17 (53%) No 15 (47%).

16. Should Christian people discuss the use of their money?

Yes 27 (90%) No 3 (10%).

17. If the congregation is to change do you think that people's attitudes about the use of money need to change?

Yes 28 (93%) No 2 (7%).

18. Do you think that your new understanding of stewardship within the covenant community will assist you to encourage the people of your congregation to commit a greater portion of their resources to the work of the church?

Yes 17 (61%) No 11 (39%).

### C. EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

The evaluation will follow the question numbers on the questionnaires.

#### Questionnaire 1

1. As an elder you have your own understanding of the goals of your congregation. In terms of your own understanding do you think that your congregation is reaching its goals?

A large majority of the elders do not perceive the congregation to be meeting its goals. Yet when broken down by congregation, 86% of Chalmers elders did perceive the goals to be met. When that is factored out, over 90% of the elders in the two city congregations said goals were not met.

2. Do you think that your congregation needs to change? Concerning a need to change, 89% agreed. At Strathcona the number was 100%, at Chalmers less than 50%, putting the city congregations in a category of over 95%.

If your answer is "yes", should that change be toward:

- a) tightening the rules and regulations
- b) concerning itself with people's needs.

Concerning the area that needs to change 28% said it was in the tightening of rules and regulations, while 92% said it was in concern for people's needs. (Some said both areas.)

3. Do you think that your congregation has a financial problem?

78% of the respondents thought that their congregation had a financial problem. Strathcona elders were 100% in supporting

the 'yes' opinion, while Chalmers were 0%. The city churches were over 90% in responding 'yes' to a financial problem.

5. Do you think that your congregation is practising "Christian Stewardship" as you have defined it?

Only 43% responded 'yes'. At Strathcona the reply was 24%, whereas at Walpole the reply was 100% and at St. Paul's it was 50%. The city congregations have less than 40% fulfilling stewardship responsibilities.

The results of these four questions paint a picture of chaos. The rural church appears to be far less chaotic, but there is no doubt that the city churches are unstable. Goals are not met, change is needed, but traditional abhorrence for change will make any move in that direction painful, and the financial resources to support the congregation are stressed.

Justice, as opposed to law, seems to be the preferred route to change. Yet, stewardship, the component of church life which moderates the two, is not being fulfilled.

4. What is "Christian Stewardship?"

The question called for a written answer. 76% of the participants responded with an answer. This will be used as the baseline and the percentage of respondents in questionnaire 2 will be compared to it to determine learning.

6. What is the "covenant community?"

Concerning "covenant community", only 32% replied with some knowledge of the term.

7. Are you familiar with any biblical passages which deal

with stewardship?

Only 55% of the respondents (51% of the participants) were familiar with biblical passages dealing with stewardship. Walpole reported a 0% knowledge, while the city churches were both near 60% responses. Of these, 92% were able to name at least one passage.

Assuming that the elders as leaders of the congregation possess more knowledge and experience of church life, their very low level of appreciation for stewardship as a biblical theme in a denomination which places the biblical imperative for church life at a very high level, suggests that a great chasm exists between the ideals of the denomination and the reality within the congregations.

8. Should people give of their financial resources to support the church?

The giving of financial resources to support the church was affirmed by 98% of the respondents.

If your answer is "yes" what percentage of their total income would be an appropriate giving of their financial resources?

Only 58% suggested an appropriate percentage of giving and the average of their replies was 7.5%.

9. Should Christian people discuss the use of their money?

Christian people discussing the use of their money was affirmed by 86% of the respondents.

10. Should discussion of money happen at church?

Discussion of money at church was also high, with 89% of the respondents reporting 'yes'.

If you answered "yes" please check those areas of church life where discussion of money is appropriate.

Of the areas of church life and activity where the discussion of money was appropriate the areas of church school class and service of worship showed moderate approval, the areas of Bible discussion group and sermon showed moderate disapproval and the areas of session meeting, finance or board meeting, congregational meeting and elders' visits showed very high approval.

The two areas of disapproval were both areas dominated by biblical reading, teaching and interpretation. Money appears to be separated from biblical comment. To place money outside the realm of the Bible may be placing it in a realm outside the care of God. Once this happens, it is set up as an idol separate from the creator. Such an attitude toward money suggests idolatry.

11. Have you as an elder talked to individual people of your district or congregation about giving money to the church?

While money discussions during elders' visits were deemed appropriate by 80% of the respondents or 73% of the participants, only 51% reported having talked to people about giving money to the church. There appears to be a huge gap between theory and practise.

12. If the congregation is to change do you think that people's attitudes about the use of money need to change?

The need for change was affirmed by 89% of the elders (question 2.) 76% of the respondents replied that for such change to happen attitudes about the use of money needed to change.

13. Do you think that the people of your congregation are willing to change their attitudes toward their use of their money?

Concerning the willingness of the people of the congregation to change their attitudes toward their use of money, only 39% of the respondents (31% of the participants) thought that the people were willing to change.

With a need to change affirmed, yet a willingness to change denied, the challenge is enormous for elders to be successful leaders within a congregation.

14. Do you think that you have the knowledge to help the people of your congregation to understand the need for change and to help them make that change?

A large majority of the respondents, 66%, do not think that they have the knowledge to help the people understand the need for change and to help them make that change.

15. To which of the following age groups do you belong?

Concerning sociological generations, of the total test population, 2% were X'ers, 18% were Boomers, 43% were Silents and 36% were Pre-silents. 80% of the test population was

over 50, 43% of retirement age. Several of the elders in the retired group said in the booklet responses that they were too old to read such demanding material. I suggest that many of them may be too tired to be the kind of leaders needed to lead the congregation through the stresses associated with change.

16. How long have you been an elder?

The analysis of this question produced only a number for the average length of service of the elders tested. The range was from one year to 35 years with an average of 14 years. The sessions with such long service suggest a stability which borders on a model of permanency. With the leadership being so fixed, a model for change will be difficult to establish.



## Questionnaire 2

1. Does Section 113 of the Book of Forms designate the Session as having the responsibility of all aspects of stewardship within the congregation?

During the verbal discussions the researcher had with the elders before they read the booklet, no one came forward as being aware of Section 113 in the Book of Forms. I assume that the knowledge of this Section was low to non-existent. After reading the booklet 97% of the respondents affirmed that Section 113 designates the responsibility of stewardship to the Session. Not all of the elders answered this question. 81% of the participants affirmed the statement. I conclude learning has occurred.

2. Is the modern trend to focus inwardly and strive for self achievement to the exclusion of God similar to the turning away from God which is seen in the Old Testament stories of the Exile when the faithful were transported to Babylon?

Only 64% of the elders responded to the comparison of the modern trend to the exile. 36% may have not understood the question or not known the answer. Of those who responded, 85% agreed. This suggests that they read and learned from the booklet. The 15% who disagreed may not accept the theory. Learning has occurred.

3. Do you understand the title of this project "One-thirteen From Babylon: Stewardship as a Pathway to Restoration?"

Only 30% of the readers understood the title "One-thirteen

From Babylon: Stewardship as a Pathway to Restoration." One third of the elders' understanding shows a move toward the education of the leadership of the congregation.

4. Which of the following characteristics describe the covenant community?

On the first questionnaire only 32% of the elders offered an understanding of covenant community. On the second questionnaire, 100% showed some knowledge of the term. With five correct responses offered and 32 forms completed the total possible responses was 160. There were 103 or 64% responses identifying characteristics of the covenant community as included in the text of the booklet. This represents a movement, concerning covenant knowledge in the population, from 32% to 64%. Learning has occurred.

5. Do the majority of people of your congregation understand themselves as members of a covenant community?

Only 14% of the respondents thought that the members of the congregation understood themselves to be members of a covenant community. Given that covenant community or household of God is the biblical model as well as the Presbyterian model, the congregations must be in practise very far away from the tenets the denomination affirms.

Of those who responded to the second part of the question which asked if the congregation should be developing such an understanding, the response was 100% in agreement. However, this represented only 67% of the test population. Some of the

elders of the test population did not respond to this question because they already believed the congregation to be a covenant community. Yet, for those who came to understand the need to move to a covenant community, learning has occurred.

6. Is it your role as an elder to assist people to develop their understanding of covenant community and their role within it?

Of the respondents, 97% agreed that it was the elder's role to assist in the development of the understanding of covenant community. 83% of the participants supported this concept. This concept was presented in the text. Learning has occurred.

7. Do you have the knowledge to assist people in developing their understanding of covenant community and their role in it?

Knowledge to assist people in developing their understanding was lacking in 63% of the respondents. The teachings of the booklet were obviously not sufficient for the task, yet at least 37% felt that they had the knowledge. Learning has occurred.

8. Do you think that the majority of people of your congregation would want to belong to a covenant community which practised the principles of stewardship which are defined in the Bible?

Only 46% of the respondents (31% of all of the participants) thought that the majority of the people of the congregation

would want to belong to a covenant community as described in the Bible.

The elders of the congregations are caught between acknowledging the importance of covenant community theology and the reality that the members of their congregations are not desirous of living in such a community. They think themselves ill-equipped to lead the congregation to change.

9. What is "Christian Stewardship?"

When asked again, what is "Christian Stewardship", 90% responded with a written answer. This compares to 76% response on questionnaire 1. **Learning has occurred.**

10. Within the covenant community who is the owner?

90% correctly responded with the answer "God", the answer from the booklet. **Learning has occurred.**

11. Within the covenant community is it the steward who is the manager for the owner?

Asked if the steward was the manager, as stated in the booklet, 97% replied yes. **Learning has occurred.**

12. Concerning the resources available to us as part of creation, do the majority of people within your congregation consider themselves to be: (please check one answer)

a) owners of those resources or

b) managers of those resources.

Concerning the attitude toward resources by the members of the congregation, 36% thought that members considered themselves to be the owners, while 64% thought that members considered

themselves to be managers of those resources. The attitude of the covenant community exists, but it is not strong.

13. What percentage of total income would be an appropriate giving of financial resources within the modern covenant community?

The percentage of total income deemed appropriate has dropped from 7.5% to 5.9%. The number of responses of the 5% figure has risen from 5 to 17, resulting in the lowering of the percentage. In the booklet, the suggested percentage goal, or 'modern tithe', was 5%. The percentage is lower, but the number of people in the test population offering an answer has risen from 58% to 81%. Learning has brought boldness on a sensitive issue. Learning has occurred.

14. Which of the following resources does your congregation have?

According to the replies, the congregations have plenty of resources, with the possible exception of people with time for Christian service.

15. Are those resources well managed within the congregation? The response of only 53% to 'yes' suggests that the resources are not particularly well managed. Stewardship is not healthy. At Chalmers the respondents all thought the resources were well managed, at St. Paul's 70% thought they were well managed, while at Strathcona only 29% thought the resources were well managed.

16. Should Christians discuss the use of their money?

90% responded 'yes'. In questionnaire 1, only 86% had said 'yes'. The increase was not significant enough to make any conclusion concerning learning.

17. If the congregation is to change do you think that people's attitudes about the use of money need to change?

The response was 93% 'yes', compared to 76% to the same question on questionnaire 1. The elders appear to be learning that the attitude to money is an important factor in a covenant community. To begin to reduce, even by a small degree, its place as an idol in the community is an important step. **Learning has occurred.**

18. Do you think that your new understanding of stewardship within the covenant community will assist you to encourage the people of your congregation to commit a greater portion of their resources to the work of the church?

61% of the respondents (53% of the participants) thought that the booklet offered them an understanding of stewardship to assist them in their leadership role. **Learning has occurred.**

Of the 13 questions where the occurrence of learning was being tested, 12 showed evidence for learning. On one question the evidence of learning was not great enough as to be significant.

## CHAPTER FIVE: LEARNINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

### RENEWAL

The project began as an exploration in search of a pathway to renewal within the church. As Easter people, Christians know that often death happens so that new life might begin. Resurrection followed the cross. So, within the church, it is almost implied that to search for renewal, one needs first to concede a death. In April of 1994, while grieving over the death of an elderly leader of the congregation, I became aware that I was, through his death, also able to let die the church institution which I had been born into and trained in for service as an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments. A way of church life for a former generation was quickly losing its viability as an instrument for the proclamation of God's grace. The new form of the Body of Christ is still in the embryonic stage. Yet, God, through the scriptures, has given to the people a structure to nurture the growth and development of a new community.

### THE BIBLICAL COVENANT COMMUNITY AS MODEL FOR RENEWAL

The covenant community of the Old Testament and the household of God of the New Testament, are models of life for the people of God living in relation to the creator and

creation. Faced with the death of their own religious institution, the leaders of the Hebrew community in exile in Babylon, laid down the foundation of the covenant community. As God's household, that covenant community was affirmed in the New Testament. It formed the basis of the development of the early church. In a modern search for an appropriate model for God's people, the covenant community serves the church again.

The covenant community is described by the Bible as a community where the law and prophets form polarities which are kept in balance and moderated through stewardship. As Christians we are called to live in such a community.

Elders and other leaders of the church have begun to perceive and acknowledge the growing chaotic order of the institution. Lack of biblical knowledge and experience hampers them in being able to use the scriptures as a resource for identifying problems and moving to solutions to those problems. Some have begun to understand the likeness of the modern situation to that of the Babylonian Exile. Even without understanding the exile, many have grown to appreciate the ideals of the covenant community and the importance of those ideals to the modern church. The challenge to leaders is the implementation of those ideals within a resistant congregation.

The project's defining question was posed in the Introduction. It was: "Can church renewal be facilitated



through an understanding of stewardship as the means of communication between the law and the prophets?" The booklet, "For the Eldership on Stewardship" was written from the perspective of stewardship as the manager between form and justice, the law and the prophets. The results of the questionnaires show that the elders who read the booklet learned about stewardship from this perspective. Some were confident of the knowledge they had gained, but need further skill development, while a few were prepared to begin the process of leading others through a similar approach to stewardship.

Attitudes to money are a component of this approach to stewardship. It was obvious that attitudes need to change, but the elders were reluctant to lead the process of change and they were not confident that change would happen. Money is part of stewardship. It is a resource on which the institution of the church has come to depend. Yet, because of its elevation to the status of an idol in our society, God may be calling the church away from its dependence on money as a resource. It may be necessary to explore other resources for the household of God to fulfil its mission. Unexpected resources may be forthcoming. The Spirit works in mysterious ways. The Spirit parallels, motivates and empowers the steward in many functions within the household of God. The Spirit works in consort with the steward. Together the two will bring new life to God's community. Yes, church renewal

can be facilitated through an understanding of stewardship as the means of communication between the law and the prophets.

#### A FUTURE FOR THE STEWARDSHIP BOOKLET

The stewardship booklet was written for publication and use within the Presbyterian Church in Canada. With the completion of this dissertation, its future as a published document is uncertain. Should the booklet be published there are a number of additions which would be helpful for the elder user. These include:

1. A more appropriate title and a professional layout.
2. A layout to include the highlighting of major points.
3. An additional section on the role of the elder as model of the steward. This section would emphasize the importance of the elder living a lifestyle consistent with that of the biblical steward. It would offer practical suggestions of such a lifestyle and a means of opening lifestyle discussion with others. If possible, it would include personal stories of stewards whose relationship to God has been further defined or enhanced through their stewardship experience.
4. A section on conversation initiators and example conversations suitable for use as discussion starters for elders.
5. A study guide for single workshop or long term study

situations.

In addition the booklet may need serious revision to be useful for those elders who identified a need for a less academic approach to stewardship.

#### BEYOND ONE-THIRTEEN

When Loren Mead suggested that stewardship was "the least explored area of theology in our day"<sup>213</sup> he opened the door for the potential discovery that stewardship is an important component of the process leading to renewal within the church. For The Presbyterian Church in Canada, stewardship is a pathway to renewal. One-thirteen may be the section of the Book of Forms to which sessions need to devote serious study and activity. Other denominations within the Christian family will surely find that stewardship as a pathway to renewal is true in their situations.

Presbyterian theology and structure lend themselves to the renewal pathway which I have studied. Yet, because that study has been biblical in its foundation, it should be applicable to other denominations professing a biblically based theology. Professors and authors from the Baptist and the United Methodist denominations have been a major source of information for the study. I assume that the project would be received as acceptable to the theology of those denominations.

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<sup>213</sup>Loren Mead, informal interview by author, Toronto, Ontario, 17 May, 1995.

The Presbyterian Church USA and the United Church of Canada have theology and practise so compatible with The Presbyterian Church in Canada that I assume that the project would be appropriate in those denominations as well.

Stewardship, as I have presented it, recognizes and affirms the polarities of form and justice within the Christian church. It allows the two to remain, or even in some cases to become, connected so that the community might enjoy the wholeness which God intended for creation.

APPENDIX A  
SCRIPTURE REFERENCES FOR THE TITHE

## SCRIPTURE REFERENCES FOR THE TITHE

All scripture references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1990. The Holy Bible copyright is held by National Council of the Churches of Christ.

Micah 6:1-8

Hear what the Lord says:  
Rise, plead your case before the mountains,  
and let the hills hear your voice.  
Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord,  
and you enduring foundations of the earth;  
for the Lord has a controversy with his people,  
and he will contend with Israel.

"O my people, what have I done to you?  
In what have I wearied you? Answer me!  
For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,  
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;  
and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.  
O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised,  
what Balaam son of Beor answered him,  
and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,  
that you may know the saving acts of the Lord."

"With what shall I come before the Lord,  
and bow myself before God on high?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?  
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?  
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"  
He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the Lord require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?

Leviticus 27:30

All tithes from the land, whether the seed from the ground or the fruit from the tree, are the Lord's; they are holy to the Lord.

Numbers 18:

21 To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for a possession in return for the service that they perform, the service in the tent of meeting. 26 You shall speak to the Levites, saying: When you receive from the Israelites the tithe that I have given you from them for your portion, you shall set apart an offering from it to the Lord, a tithe of the tithe. It shall be reckoned to you as your gift, the same as the grain of the threshing floor and the fullness of the wine press. Thus you shall set apart an offering to the Lord from all the tithes that you receive from the Israelites; and from them you shall give the Lord's offering to the priest Aaron.

## Deuteronomy 12:

6-7 [You shall go there,] bringing your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, your votive gifts, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks. And you shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your households together, rejoicing in all the undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you.

11-12 then you shall bring everything that I command you to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, and all your choice votive gifts that you vow to the Lord. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you together with your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levites who reside in your towns (since they have no allotment or inheritance with you).

## Deuteronomy 14:

22 Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field.

23 In the presence of the Lord your God, in the place that he will choose as a dwelling for his name, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, your wine and your oil, as well as the firstlings of your herd and flock, so that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.

27 As for the Levites resident in your towns, do not neglect them, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you.

28 Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your towns.

## Deuteronomy 26:12-15

When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year...you shall say before the Lord your God: "I have removed the sacred portion from the house, and I have given it to the Levites ... in accordance with your entire commandment that you commanded me: I have neither transgressed nor forgotten any of our commandments: I have not eaten of it while in mourning; I have not removed any of it while I was unclean; and I have not offered any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the Lord my God, doing just as you commanded me. Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us, as you swore to our ancestors - a land flowing with milk and honey.

APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRES



ONE-THIRTEEN FROM BABYLON  
STEWARDSHIP AS A PATHWAY TO RESTORATION

FOR THE ELDERSHIP ON STEWARDSHIP  
QUESTIONNAIRE 1: BEFORE READING THE BOOKLET

1. As an elder you have your own understanding of the goals of your congregation. In terms of your own understanding do you think that your congregation is reaching its goals?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

2. Do you think that your congregation needs to change?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

If your answer is "yes", should that change be toward:

- a) tightening the rules and regulations Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.  
or  
b) concerning itself with people's needs. Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

3. Do you think that your congregation has a financial problem?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

4. What is "Christian Stewardship?"

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5. Do you think that your congregation is practising "Christian Stewardship" as you have defined it?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

6. What is the "covenant community?"

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7. Are you familiar with any biblical passages which deal with stewardship?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

If your answer is "yes" list some passages or stories which you remember:

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8. Should people give of their financial resources to support the church?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

If your answer is "yes" what percentage of their total income would be an appropriate giving of their financial resources.

\_\_\_\_\_ percent.

9. Should Christian people discuss the use of their money?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

10. Should discussion of money happen at church?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

If you answered "yes" please check those areas of church life where discussion of money is appropriate.

	Yes	No
Church School Class	_____	_____
Bible Discussion Group	_____	_____
Session Meeting	_____	_____
Finance or Board Meeting	_____	_____
Congregational Meeting	_____	_____
Sermon	_____	_____
Service of Worship	_____	_____

## Elders' Visits

11. Have you as an elder talked to individual people of your district or congregation about giving money to the church?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.
12. If the congregation is to change do you think that people's attitudes about the use of money need to change?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.
13. Do you think that the people of your congregation are willing to change their attitudes toward their use of their money?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.
14. Do you think that you have the knowledge to help the people of your congregation to understand the need for change and to help them make that change?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.
15. To which of the following age groups do you belong?  
under 33 \_\_\_\_, 33-49 \_\_\_\_, 50-65 \_\_\_\_, over 65 \_\_\_\_.
16. How long have you been an elder? \_\_\_\_\_ years.

Please do not identify yourself on this questionnaire. The results will be reported as a composite.

Thank you for participating in this project. This questionnaire forms part of a Doctor of Ministry Project for McMaster Divinity College of McMaster University in Hamilton.

Caroline Lockerbie - September, 1995

Your ID code: \_\_\_\_\_

ONE-THIRTEEN FROM BABYLON  
STEWARDSHIP AS A PATHWAY TO RESTORATION

FOR THE ELDERSHIP ON STEWARDSHIP  
QUESTIONNAIRE 2: AFTER READING THE BOOKLET

Have you read the booklet?      Yes \_\_\_\_      No \_\_\_\_.

1. Does Section 113 of the Book of Forms designate the Session as having the responsibility of all aspects of stewardship within the congregation?

Yes \_\_\_\_      No \_\_\_\_.

2. Is the modern trend to focus inwardly and strive for self achievement to the exclusion of God similar to the turning away from God which is seen in the Old Testament stories of the Exile when the faithful were transported to Babylon?

Yes \_\_\_\_      No \_\_\_\_.

3. Do you understand the title of this project "One-thirteen From Babylon: Stewardship as a Pathway to Restoration?"

Yes \_\_\_\_      No \_\_\_\_.

4. Which of the following characteristics describe the covenant community? (check as many as you think apply)

\_\_\_\_ existed from the time of creation

\_\_\_\_ depends upon a legal agreement between God and people

\_\_\_\_ has a biblical basis

\_\_\_\_ has a set of rules which are different from worldly ones

\_\_\_\_ is the household of God

5. Do the majority of people of your congregation understand themselves as members of a covenant community?

Yes \_\_\_\_      No \_\_\_\_.

If your answer is "no" should they be developing that understanding?

Yes \_\_\_\_      No \_\_\_\_.

6. Is it your role as an elder to assist people to develop their understanding of covenant community and their role within it?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

7. Do you have the knowledge to assist people in developing their understanding of covenant community and their role in it?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

8. Do you think that the majority of people of your congregation would want to belong to a covenant community which practised the principles of stewardship which are defined in the Bible?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

9. What is "Christian Stewardship?"

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10. Within the covenant community who is the owner? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Within the covenant community is it the steward who is the manager for the owner?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

12. Concerning the resources available to us as part of creation, do the majority of people within your congregation consider themselves to be:  
(please check one answer)

- a) owners of those resources \_\_\_\_\_ .  
or  
b) managers of those resources \_\_\_\_\_ .

13. What percentage of total income would be an appropriate giving of financial resources within the modern covenant community?

\_\_\_\_\_ percent.

14. Which of the following resources does your congregation have?

(check as many as you think apply)

- ☐ people with skills and talents
- ☐ people with spiritual gifts
- ☐ people with time for Christian service
- ☐ financial
- ☐ buildings and property

15. Are those resources well managed within the congregation?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

16. Should Christian people discuss the use of their money?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

17. If the congregation is to change do you think that people's attitudes about the use of money need to change?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

18. Do you think that your new understanding of stewardship within the covenant community will assist you to encourage the people of your congregation to commit a greater portion of their resources to the work of the church?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Please do not identify yourself on this questionnaire. The results will be reported as a composite.

Thank you for participating in this project. This questionnaire forms part of a Doctor of Ministry Project for McMaster Divinity College of McMaster University in Hamilton.

Caroline Lockerbie - September, 1995

APPENDIX C  
GENERATIONS

## GENERATIONS

At the Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary Summer School in July of 1994, The Rev. Dr. Perry Bell presented a seminar on recent sociological studies of the Generations. The following is a copy of the summary information which he presented and offered for reproduction. The information presented was based on the American population, but its relevancy for the Canadian population has been verified. The Queen's Alumni Review, July/August 1995 edition, cites several recent Canadian studies on the Generations.

### SILENT GENERATION 1924-1942 40 million

- Born just prior to or during the depression
- Fought 2-3 wars
- Traditionally the most generous and loyal to the church
- Like stately hymns
- Recognizes and yields to authority
- Key Words: Love it or leave it!
- Willing to change for the good of the church, but not if seen as a personal challenge
- 35% - 65% of those attending church

\*Religious Key: Thanksgiving for faithfulness

### BOOMERS 1943 - 1963 69 million

- Grew up on change; like it; see change as challenge
- View challenge positively
- Want growth and innovation
- Into personal growth
- Have a "new world" view
- Want to make the world a better place
- Turn to no single authority
- Non-institutional but do want to belong, to be recognized; want a sense of community
- Not sure they can trust their children
- Not bound to the past
- Need for the positive
- Want to know how to do things; how to apply a sermon to today and tomorrow
- Family is very important
- Addictive behaviors
- Judgmental
- Key Word: Irrelevant
- Want to feel good
- Women's issues important to 60% Boomers; 6% others
- Pretty tolerant: Pick and choose what they like
- Huge financial impact
- Are realizing material stuff doesn't satisfy the heart
- View stately hymns as funeral music

\* Religious Key: Celebration of relationships and love



**X'ERS/BUSTERS/13TH GENERATION 1964 - 1981 79 million**

- Sceptical; pessimistic; whiners
  - More X'ers have already died than Boomers, from
    - 1) suicide 2) accidents 3) violence
  - Anti-institutional
  - In conflict with Boomers: Get our of our way!
  - Anti-establishment; crude
  - High rate of teen pregnancy
  - Determined to reshape prevailing values
  - Key Words: It's wrong. Boring.
  - Will challenge status quo
  - Expect quality
  - Fast pace
  - Do not know traditional heros.
 

Hero: B/Butthead
  - Fashion drive all: grunge
  - View education as necessary evil
  - Materialistic to the max
  - Entertain Me!! or are bored
  - Short attention span: 7 min.!!
  - TV generation: MTV is the adolescent version of Sesame St. and the cruder the better
  - See no brighter tomorrows. First generation told not to expect a better life than parents
  - Politically correct; emotionally uncertain: Don't know how they really feel about things
  - See no absolutes
  - Leisure is more important than work: Highest absentee rates
- \* Religious Key: Bring hope to their lives. Help them connect to the Silent Generation.

**MILLENIALISTS 1982 - 2003 33 million, to date [1994]**

(not much information is available yet.)

- Joiners
- Bright
- Optimistic

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