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A TOP- DOWN, BOTTOM - UP APPROACH TO MINISTERING CARE (GAL. 6:6)

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to point out that just as winning a game takes a collaborative effort between the coach and the players, caring is a top-down, bottom-up service in which the clergy and laity are mutually supportive, caught in an inescapable network of reciprocity and symbiosism. The church is designed to be a mutual improvement society and the members like the stones of an arch, strengthened in position by their joint presence and pressure. Textually, caring is dyadic responsibilities reciprocated in human relationality where clergy and laity not only share together in leadership and responsibility but also give each other countenance and maintenance. Divided into two main sub-outlines, (1) The taught and (2) The teacher, the writer uses the technique of narrative synthesis and recommends that Pastoral leadership and congregation join hands in mutual co-operation in Christian work.

Keywords: Church, Pastoral Method, Ministering Care, Clergy, Laity.

Introduction

The thrust of this essay is the need for mutual and wholistic caring ministry to exist in the church. In the Galatian church, it seems the ministry of caring was a unilateral thing. Alan Cole (1989), thought as much when he asked, "were the Galatians perhaps refusing financial support for an erring or even Judaizing Pastor?" It was the absence of this orthopraxy that warranted the apostle Paul to instruct thusly "let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6).

Topically, the terms "top down, bottom up" are simply a metaphor referring to the leader and congregation respectively and the idea that they cooperate with each other in ministering care in the church. It is not the intention of the writer to write a thesis on "top down and bottom up" approaches in the leadership of the church. Rather, the theology of retrieval is adopted to drive home the point of the mutual, symbiotic and reciprocal nature of the ministry.

I. The Taught

Contextually, the taught refers to the church or the congregation. The apostle Paul commanded her to support the teacher (Pastor) with material things and by extension money. Paul himself did not most of the time depend on the gifts of his followers. He worked at his trade as a tent maker to support himself. Clearly however, he was not against being supported. This is seen in the instruction he gave the Galatian brethren to support their Pastor.

> The Christian church needed teachers, persons in residence locally who were trusted, who could stay at the task, and who could give the time necessary for teaching. These persons were to be supported materially as well as otherwise (Maxie, 1982).

It was not only the church in Galatia that Paul asked that teachers be supported. He also wrote to the church in Corinth, reminding them among other things that he and Barnabas had rights to food and drink (I Cor. 9:11, 14). He used some supporting illustrations to support the proposition that servants of God had the right to be supported with food and drink and other necessities of life as they labour in the work. He pointed out the soldier supported at royal expense, the vineyard keeper who eats of the grapes he gathers and the shepherd who drinks milk from his flock. All these illustrations depict the caring nature of God (Frank: 1976). The over aching thesis or proposition is, "the Christian worker who sows the spiritual seed of the gospel has a right to be supported materially by those who benefit from the gospel". In other words, any person who labours to produce harvest has every right to share in it.

> No soldier has to provide his own rations, why should the soldier of Christ have to do so? The man who plants a vineyard shares in the fruits. Why should the man who plants churches not do so? The shepherd of the flock gets his food from the flock, why should not the Christian Pastor do likewise?

The church should show beneficence to the Pastor in temporalities with liberation. This does not mean that the Pastor should empty the purse of the church. The purpose of the liberality is not for prodigality but very much enough so that the Pastor can take care of himself and members of his family. If the Pastor is not a professional, it then means he is on full time and totally depends on the congregation for his livelihood. The purpose of supporting the Pastor is to enable him take care of his needs and that of the members of his family. It is not to make him wealthy so that he begins to compete with business people in the church, living a flamboyant life.

> Some men abuse the privilege of the Pastorate by seeking to become wealthy. They are in the ministry for the money (and so are their wives, in some cases), and so they 'fleece' their flocks. Others abuse the pastorate by becoming lazy and thus fail to give their congregation a good return on their investment. Creed and slot are two of the deadliest vices for ministers (Philip: 2005).

> Even scripture says that the ox who works the threshing machine is not to be muzzled but is to be allowed to eat of the grain (Deut. 25:4). As any Rabbi would, Paul categorizes that instruction and makes it apply to the Christian teacher (William: 1975).

The New Testament instructs that the church must honor its leaders (I Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:7; I Tim. 5:17). It is wrong for anyone to think that Pastors should not be too well off. Low salaries have left many Pastors poor. While the Pastor must not be driven by money (I Tim. 6:6 – 10; I Peter 5:2), no Pastor chooses ministry and poverty, the same time. While some churches seem to do well about caring for their Pastor, some others seem to be selfish about it.

The congregation can take undue advantage of the Pastor by refusing to pay her tithes and give generous offering. It is possible to use the purse power to control the Pastor and at same time keep him in the state of relative poverty. This is not good at all. When a Pastor is fully taken care of, he may not be distracted by financial concerns.

> When a Pastor is supported financially, he keeps his mind on the work of the ministry. It should be noted, the ministry of the word of God is twice as important as just making a living. It costs the Pastor just as much to live as it does any other believers and if the Pastor cannot properly care for his family, he will be distracted from the ministry (Clifford: 2010).

It is not only financial support that a congregation can give the Pastor. There are other things such as realizing the humanity of the Pastor, showing him the respect, he deserves and taking your spiritual growth seriously. Others are praying for him, and following his leadership. Pastors must not be unduly criticized because it will discourage them.

> Respect for Pastor should be manifested though attitude and actions. When a Pastor is not duly respected, it hinders his work to the church and the entire cause of Christ. You can guess what happens when disrespect of Pastors grows within the church (Clifford: 2010).

Financial support can be a thing of necessity and obligation. If the teacher is not a residential Pastor but an itinerant missionary, it means that he does not have a fixed salary and consequently must live by the gifts of the brethren. The text seems to suggest a reference to the office of an ordained service. It points out to the fixed status of the ministers in the church (Hermen: 1953).

Ann (1999) pointed out that the direction that anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor was a common understanding particularly in Pythagoreanism, Epicureanism and stoicism and the virtuous goods gained from living the philosophical life. She asserted;

> Many teachers charged fees for their instruction; many Greek teachers insisted that they and their students should share all things in common, and some groups of teachers and disciples lived communally. In Asia minor (including Galatia), a fee was exacted from those entering temples. Here, Paul urges the Christians to support their teachers who could provide sound teaching.

II. The Teacher

The second sub-outline is "The Teacher". The teacher refers to the teaching elder or the Pastor in charge of the local church. Just as the congregation ministers materially to the teacher or Pastor, so also the teacher shares spiritual truth to the congregation. The teacher shares spiritual treasures and truth from the word of God. The congregation needs good, solid teaching from the Bible and a teacher because he as a minister of the word blesses the church through his exposition of the word of God.

Inferentially, the subject of teaching shows there was a highly developed catechetical system in the early church. Teachers in the early church served as repository of oral truth to the congregation. The Bible Teacher is one of the fivefold ministries that God uses to perfect His church (Eph. 4:11). The Pastor/teacher, teaches the congregation, the whole counsel of God. The Pastor teacher is not limited to teaching only. He has other duties such as:

a. The oversight of the church (Acts 20:28)
b. Resolving doctrinal issues (Acts 15:6)
c. Praying for the sick (James 5:14) and
d. Being godly example to the church (I Pet. 5:1 – 2).

> Other duties include administration, Christian education, church discipline, counseling, evangelism, prayer, sermon preparation, teaching and preaching, visitation in the home, weddings, premarital counseling, funerals and visiting the sick (Clifford:2010).

Paul the apostle was supported during his earthly ministry. There was an occasion he willingly received financial support and indicated that it was a sweet-smelling aroma before God and that God was pleased with such gifts of helps. Deductively, preachers in the early church were accused of being in the job for what they would get from it. It was perhaps because of this that Paul claimed repeatedly that he has not coveted anyone's goods. Rather, he himself worked with his hands to meet his own needs so that he was never a burden to anyone or any church (Acts 20:33; I Thess. 2:9; I Cor. 9:12; II Cor. 12:14). Because the salaries paid Pastors were small, many of them may have coveted more (1 Tim. 3:3; 8; Titus 1:7, 11). This was what informed warnings against filthy lucre (I Pet. 5:1 – 4). Support of Pastors cannot be overlooked, but it is a secondary thing. The Pastor must not enter the ministry because of what he will gain from it. There is always the danger or tendency for the Pastor to want to enrich himself. One of the things the church needs to do is to pay the Pastor well. In addition to salary, there needs to be other emoluments such wardrobe, children education, medical expenses, books allowance and others, a little here, a little there. Pastors must be accountable to the church not only how they spend the church's money but also, how they live their lives.

The Pastor is not above the church and he is not above anyone. So as the Pastor cares for the church, the church also cares for the Pastor by paying the Pastor's salary and by holding him accountable for his actions and life. Greed and selfish interest are handy in every heart that Pastors must cautiously and consistently guard against them. They must not accept office because of the salary attached to it but because God has called them into the ministry. In the apostolic age, there were opportunities for gain (Titus 1:11; II Tim. 3:6) and also the temptation to enter ministry for the sake of money. It is the command of God that the church should discipline any leader who sins, and this includes the senior Pastor or the teaching elder (I Tim. 5:19 – 20).

While there are good teachers, there are also heretical or false teachers. Historically, the epistle of Paul to the Galatians deals with the Judaizing controversy that eventually resulted in the ecumenical council of "Acts of the Apostles" chapter fifteen. The question is, should Gentile Christians be required to submit to circumcision and practice the Jewish way of life, as was required of Gentile proselytes into Judaism? (Robert: 1970). "The source of the trouble was the extreme "right wing" group of the Jewish Christian church, probably emanating from

Jerusalem though no doubt James was perfectly right in disclaiming any official connection with them" (Alan Cole: 1989).

They taught that people must be circumcised in order to be saved. This view also included an obligation to keep the whole law perfectly. It was very surprising to Paul that the Galatian brethren capitulated to them. "Paul's astonishment is due to their so quickly turning away from grace (i.e. that of Christ), to be ensnared by law. The two are mutually exclusive options" (New Bible Commentary, 1970).

Though the false teachers were never directly addressed by Paul, they were known enough to both him and the original recipients of the letter (Ronald: 1989).

> Paul now mentions the false teachers for the first time, though not by name, presumably because he does not want anyone to think his remarks were originating from a dislike of certain personalities rather than from concern for the truth. He objects to two aspects of the conduct of these teachers. (1) they were perverting the gospel and (2) they were troubling the church.

Paul the apostle sees the teaching of the Judaizers as a perversion of the true gospel which proclaims the good news of salvation by grace through faith alone. To him, a man is not justified by law – works but only through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:10; Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:4 – 7). It is this gospel that the Galatians were abandoning in favour of a different gospel, one which proclaimed faith plus law-works as the way of salvation (William: 1979).

Conclusion

This essay addresses "A Top Down, Bottom Up" approach to ministering care. The objective is to point out that caring is a dyadic responsibility reciprocated in human relationality where clergy and laity share together in church responsibility. It recommends that Pastoral leadership and congregation need to join hands in mutual co-operation in Christian work.

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