



The Pastoral Office in the Early Church

CARL A. VOLZ

Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota

The New Testament has no exclusive form or terminology for ministry. Some churches have bishops and deacons, and others do not. Some have presbyters, while other ministers are called prophets, teachers, pastors, and evangelists (Eph 4:11-12). Paul and Barnabas, referred to as apostles, are commissioned by prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1ff.). The all-inclusive term which describes every gift of leadership is that of ministry (*diakonia*), but no single minister is universally recognized as holding primary authority. Rather than “offices,” we find people who possessed gifts or functions of service which St. Paul calls “varieties of ministry” (1 Cor 12:5), understood to be given by the Spirit, who “apportioned to each one as he wills.”

To be sure, the twelve are prominent in a leadership role, clearly under a symbolic title reminiscent of the twelve patriarchs. They were witnesses of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord (Acts 1:4-11); but later writings tend to refer to the apostles, who included others besides the twelve. Paul never suggested he was one of the twelve, but he vigorously insisted he was an apostle (1 Cor 15:8-10). The twelve and the apostles were directly associated with Christ’s earthly ministry and called by him. These were the earliest leaders of the primitive church.¹

By the time Paul wrote the letters to the Corinthians two other ministries had emerged, those of prophets and teachers (1 Cor 12:28), as well as others ranked below them. By enumerating these in a hierarchical pattern, Paul suggests a triad of leadership—apostles, prophets, teachers. These ministries were perceived as gifts of the Spirit for building up the community. They were often itinerants serving the church-at-large, their role as leaders authenticated by their possession of the gifts of the Spirit. They were not elected to their position, nor was there an ecclesiastical ceremony to set them apart. Prophets, who were not always present in the local communities, emerged in Jewish/Christian communities (Acts 11:27), but they

¹Scholars do not agree whether the twelve actually were companions of the historical Jesus or whether the designation is a creation of the early church. I believe the evidence supports the former thesis, that they were in fact with Jesus before his death. See B. Rigaux, “The Twelve Apostles,” *Concilium* 4/4 (1968) 4-9; A. Hultgren, “Forms of Ministry in the N. T.” (unpublished paper from Consultation on Expanding Forms of Parish Ministry, 1978).

were also found in Jewish/Gentile churches and in purely Gentile communities (Acts 11:27; Rom 12:6-7). Corresponding in rank to the prophets we find prophetesses (Acts 21:9).

Prophets/prophetesses proclaimed God’s Word, and they exercised a special role in church discipline. Given their far-ranging activities, not being responsible to a single community, it is

not surprising that we find charlatans among them; hence the warnings against false prophets (Matt 7:15) who must be tested (1 John 4:1).

Teachers appeared to function much the same as prophets, with duties often overlapping. Paul was called both a prophet and a teacher (Acts 13:1-3). A distinctive task of the teachers was preparing catechumens for baptism and providing advanced instruction in the faith. Whereas prophets seem to have ceased by the end of the second century, we find teachers well into the fourth century. Eusebius refers to contemporary “presbyters and teachers of the brethren in the villages.”²

A second triad of ministries developed alongside the first, that of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. At first, bishop and presbyter (elder) were interchangeable titles (Titus 1:5). The bishop was clearly the holder of an “office,” probably derived from the function of “overseers” in Hellenic culture. Presbyters were first mentioned in connection with the collection of famine relief for Jerusalem (Acts 11:30); the office was undoubtedly patterned after the Jewish elders who governed the synagogues. By the time of the Pastorals, presbyters were clearly recognized as office-holders. It seems likely that all bishops were at first presbyters, selected to chair the council of elders which governed each local church.

The ministry of the seven represents an advance in that a new position was established by the church (Acts 6:3). Inasmuch as “the brethren” selected them, we can assume they were selected by some form of democratic process, followed by the laying-on-of-hands and prayer. In time, these “deacons” assumed the tasks of distributing alms, maintaining physical properties, reading lessons at the Eucharist, and assisting in the distribution of Holy Communion. We read of various other forms of ministries in the Pauline churches, but by the time of the Pastorals the triad of bishop, presbyter, and deacon had become recognized leaders in the churches.

Clearly this overly-simplified account of New Testament ministries is filled with unresolved problems, but it seems certain there was a gradual movement from the Pauline multiplicity of varied ministries to the fixed office-bearers of bishop, presbyter, and deacon. Rudolph Sohm considered this development as being unfortunate, since the church lost its deeply spiritual character.³ Adolph von Harnack, however, saw this development as necessary, because any social organization requires an ordered governance to exist.⁴ He popularized the two-triad theory of early Christian ministry, setting the apostle, prophet, and teacher against the bishop, presbyter, and deacon. In practice such a distinction is far too rigid, as there was overlap not only between the two triads but also within them.

But Clement of Rome’s letter to the Corinthians indicates the direction in

²Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.24.6.

³Rudolph Sohm, *Kirchenrecht*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Dunker and Humboldt, 1892 and 1923) and *Wesen und Ursprung des Katholizismus* (1909; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967).

⁴Adolph von Harnack, *The Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries* (New York: Putnam’s, 1910). A contemporary revision of Harnack’s thesis is by Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1969). The author supports the two triad theory but sees it in much less rigid or exclusive terms than does Harnack.

which things were moving. He cites the Old Testament hierarchy of high-priest, priest, and Levite to justify order in the church, although he does not mention bishops. In chiding the Corinthians for removing their presbyter from office, Clement for the first time makes a

distinction between clergy and laity: “A layman is bound by the ordinances of the laity.”⁵

We do not know how the various ministers in the Pauline churches were selected, and there is no mention of any special induction to their tasks. The twelve were appointed by Jesus, and “God has appointed” apostles, prophets, and teachers. Paul’s term for the “appointment” of elders can also be translated “select by election”—which appointment Paul and Barnabas did not exercise in every church. The imposition of hands was not universal, and it was not limited to clerical induction. But by the time of Timothy (“Rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands”—2 Tim 1:6) we find induction to office associated with the hands and even synonymous with it: “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands” (1 Tim 5:22). The practice of laying on of hands for induction to office rests on Jewish precedent. Moses laid hands on Joshua and thus appointed him his successor (Deut 34:9). Rabbinical students at the time of Jesus were thus ordained in the presence of witnesses, indicating that the “chain of tradition” reaching back to Moses had added a new link, authenticated by other rabbis. Since Numbers 27:15-23 served as a basis for the rabbinate, the intentional borrowing from that pericope in Acts 6:1-6 is designated to show that the institution of the seven is meant as a type of ordination following the Jewish model. It was given only to those who had shown themselves capable of leadership, and it was a sign of continuity of the tradition. Clement of Rome refers to such an ordination of presbyters who were selected by those “of proper standing with the consent of the whole church.”⁶

Early in the second century it is clear that two triads of ministry were recognized in the church. In the *Didache* the prophets were held in higher regard than bishops and deacons, but in the absence of prophets, Christians were encouraged to “elect for yourselves bishops and deacons” (who would serve as prophets and teachers) “and do not despise them.”⁷ But in Ignatius, a near contemporary, we have the well-known exaltation of the episcopal office, with “the bishop presiding as the counterpart of God and presbyters as the counterpart of the apostles. You must do nothing without the bishops and presbyters.”⁸ Ignatius’ views were occasioned by threats to the unity of the church in the face of the Gnostic heresy. He based the authority of the offices not on apostolicity but on establishing an earthly type of a heavenly pattern. The dual challenges of Gnosticism and Montanism contributed significantly to the development of the clerical office. Montanism was a revival of the prophetic ministry which challenged the ascendancy of the bishop; the Gnostics were independent teachers who were suspect because of their autonomy from received and accepted traditions.

In the face of such free-lance teaching, the concept of apostolicity gained prominence for authenticating teaching and office. Clement of Rome insisted on a

⁵Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians*, 40. He makes no direct equation between the Old Testament hierarchy and that of bishop, priest, and deacon, but the inference is clear.

⁶Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians*, 44.

⁷*Teaching of the Apostles*, 11-13.

⁸Ignatius, *To the Magnesians*, 6-7.

linear succession of office bearers whose line could be traced to an apostle. “Jesus Christ was sent from God. Thus Christ is from God, and the apostles from Christ.”⁹ It was a succession based solely on order in keeping with the universal harmony of creation. At the end of the

second century, Irenaeus was interested in a succession of apostolic teaching which he found to be guaranteed through a demonstrable chain of elders leading back to the apostles, something the Gnostics could not produce. In his polemic he coined the term “charism of truth” as that which presbyters and bishops possess. “By this order and succession the tradition of the apostles in the church and the preaching of the truth have come down to us.”¹⁰ Tertullian, writing about the same time (A.D. 200), is very clear that apostolic succession refers to teaching. When he was asked whether bishops in Carthage were in apostolic succession, he wrote, “Because they agree in the same faith they are reckoned to be no less apostolic through their kinship in doctrine.”¹¹ He says nothing about a chain of ordinations. The test of apostolicity came to be applied as the criterion of orthodoxy—an apostolic creed, apostolic canon, and apostolic ministry, developed largely in reaction to the threats of Gnosticism and its vagaries.

Clerical candidates were those who gave evidence of an aptitude for ministerial functions, including a virtuous life and fidelity to the apostolic tradition. The possession of these gifts was acknowledged through the imposition of hands. Tertullian is the first to refer to “ordination,” borrowing from the Roman idea of office bearers being in an “ordo” or a recognized cadre of officials. It was the rule that every community elect its own bishop and presbyters. But “the process of selection was not completed until the bishop had received the acceptance, approval, and ordination of at least one (preferably more) of his fellow bishops.”¹² Yet authority did not derive from ordination; it was largely associated with interior qualities of aptitude, moral example, and the natural endowments (gifts of the Spirit) of the holder. Clergy who lapsed from these ideals could be summarily dismissed and the ordination invalidated.

Hippolytus (A.D. 215) gives us a detailed account of the ordination of clergy. “Let the bishop be ordained after he has been chosen by all the people.”¹³ While all give their assent, he is ordained by fellow bishops, with only one imposing his hand for the sake of all. In the prayer that follows, the bishop is authorized to forgive sins—the earliest association of absolution with the episcopacy. Presbyters, according to Hippolytus, are ordained by the bishop. But there is considerable evidence that presbyters also ordained bishops as well as fellow presbyters.¹⁴ The third-century Pseudo-Clementines refer to the enthronement of a bishop, who sits “in the chair of Christ,” the idea of a special chair being borrowed from the rabbinic tradition of the “chair of Moses.”¹⁵

⁹Clement of Rome, *To the Corinthians*, 42.

¹⁰Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.3.3; 4.26.2.

¹¹Tertullian, *Proscription against Heresies*, 32.

¹²Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 419. Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 2, speaks of more than one bishop in attendance and laying hands upon a new bishop, although only one bishop pronounces the consecratory prayer.

¹³Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 1.2.

¹⁴A. C. Piepkorn, “A Lutheran View of the Validity of Lutheran Orders,” in “Eucharist and Ministry,” vol. 4 of *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue*, 209-226. Piepkorn argues primarily on the basis of the synonymy of presbyters with bishops in the first five centuries.

¹⁵Edward J. Kilmartin, “Ministry and Ordination in Early Christianity,” *Ordination Rites*, ed. W. Vos and G. Wainwright (Rotterdam: Liturgical Ecumenical Center Trust, 1980) 60.

qualifications of a bishop. He should be no less than 50 years old, and a presbyter no less than 30, but exceptions can be made. A bishop's wife should be Christian and chaste, and his children must be God-fearing. If he is illiterate, he must at least be well-versed in the Word of God. The extensive material on the virtues requisite for ordination reinforce the observation made above that the ministerial authority derived primarily from personal qualities rather than formal rites, though the latter were necessary for one to be recognized as legitimately holding office.¹⁶ The principal effect of ordination in the third century appears to have been the induction of a candidate into the "order" of clergy and recognition by the church, but it is still too early to speak of a sacramental character of order.

By A.D. 250 we find every church being led by a bishop (monoepiscopate), assisted by presbyters and deacons. He is the administrative and spiritual supervisor of the congregation, his office evolving by force of circumstances to satisfy the need for organization, sign of unity, and a defense against heresy. The office derived from the presbyterate, but "the process by which a bishop came to be distinguished from his fellow presbyters and at last to occupy a place of authority over them can no longer be traced."¹⁷

Bishops continued to be selected by the people or at least in their presence. Cyprian (A.D. 250) several times refers to this practice. "The congregation has both the power to elect worthy priests and to refuse unworthy ones."¹⁸ In the same letter he says that bishops are elected "by a vote of the entire brotherhood and by the judgement of the bishops."¹⁹ He introduced two new ideas: the apostles were the first bishops, who were succeeded by other bishops having apostolic authority,²⁰ and the ultimate authority in the church was that of a council of bishops corresponding to the apostolic college.²¹ Ordination apparently conveyed something, else "how can a man give something which he does not possess?"²² But virtue remained primary. Origen called it "ridiculous" that any bishop bound in the chains of sin should claim the right to forgive simply because he is a bishop.²³ The term "priest" came to be applied universally to bishops and presbyters in the third century, a title derived exclusively from understanding the Eucharist as a sacrifice. Polycrates of Ephesus (c. 190) applied the title to the apostle John, and Tertullian first refers to the minister as *sacerdos*; in both cases the title was an outgrowth of Eucharistic developments.

The next stage in the development of the pastoral office was the emergence of a bishop as supervisor over several churches. This began in the cities, especially in

¹⁶*Didascalia Apostolorum* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1929) 4.1-6; 8.1-4; 9.1, 2, 5.

¹⁷L. E. Elliott-Binns, *The Beginnings of Western Christendom* (London: Lutterworth, 1948) 318. Jerome insisted that the episcopacy developed from the presbytery. Jerome, *Letters*, 146: "The apostle clearly teaches that presbyters are the same as bishops....Afterward one was chosen who was placed above the others as a remedy for schism. The presbyters always chose one of their number, placed him in the higher rank, and named him bishop."

¹⁸Cyprian, *Epistles*, 67.3.

¹⁹Cyprian, *Epistles*, 67.5.

²⁰Cyprian, *Epistles*, 3.3. "The Lord chose the apostles, that is, the bishops." Cf. Council of Carthage, A.D. 256: "We have succeeded to the apostles and govern the church with the same authority as they," in H. B. Swete, *On the Early History of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, 1873).

²¹Bernard Cooke, *Ministry*, 419.

²²Cyprian, *Epistles*, 69.11.

²³Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*; cited in John T. McNeill, *History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951) 132.

Rome. Fabian, bishop of Rome (A.D. 236-250) is credited with assigning deacons to the several regions of the city, and under Dionysius (c. 265) the city was organized into parishes, each under a presbyter. By the end of the century there were 40 parishes in Rome.²⁴ The bishop remained the chief pastor, the sign of unity; this was symbolized by sending a portion of the consecrated bread of the bishop's church to be mingled with the wine in each of the presbyteral churches at each Eucharist (*ferementum*). It is not known when the Eucharist came to be celebrated in its entirety by the presbyters/priests apart from the bishop, but it appears there was considerable presbyteral autonomy in this regard. Deacons were selected by the bishop as his assistants, directly responsible to him.

By the end of the persecutions the selection of bishops and priests still involved the laity, either by direct vote or acclamation. Bishops were consecrated at the hands of at least one fellow bishop (preferably three), and priests were likewise ordained by a bishop. By this time it was understood that ordination conferred either a charism of the Spirit—or the Spirit. The Spirit-filled community was the source of the cleric's authority rather than the rite of induction. In the entire ante-Nicene period no bishop/priest appealed to his ordination to claim a privileged position over the laity.²⁵ The laying on of hands was a visual sign of continuity with the apostolic tradition. It served to accent a succession in office rather than of consecration, done with reference to a definite community of Christians who participated in the selection.

The triumph of Christianity following the conversion of Constantine found the role of the church and clergy significantly altered from the third century, although in many ways the changes were simply a further development of what had already been taking place. The fourth century offers a wealth of material for reflection on the clerical office, of which only a few examples can be cited here.

Among the dramatic changes came immunity for the clergy from taxes, suggesting that Constantine believed they came primarily from the lower classes.²⁶ These exemptions led many city councillors (*curiales*) to apply for clergy status, which was refused by the emperor. Bishops' jurisdiction was given the same validity as that of civil magistrates; plaintiffs could substitute a bishop's tribunal for a secular, and slaves could be manumitted before clergy instead of a civil official. The clerical order was thereby recognized as a civil institution with a corresponding enhancement in status, which affected the type and number of candidates who presented themselves for ordination. In A.D. 314 the councils of Arles and Ancyra produced numerous canons regulating the clergy, but those of Nicea (A.D. 325) had greater impact. Nicea declared: novices to the faith may not be ordained (indicating that there were converts of convenience), a minimum of three bishops is required for ordination, candidates for the priesthood must first pass an examination, clergy lending money at interest are to be deposed, and no one is to be ordained who does not have a *titulus* (call). A new official is introduced, the metropolitan, whose approval was necessary for a valid ordination. K. J. Hefele comments, "[This] takes away from the people the right previously possessed of voting in the choice of

²⁴W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 401.

²⁵Hans von Campenhausen, "The Origins of the Idea of the Priesthood in the Early Church," in *Tradition and Life in the Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968) 222.

²⁶*Codex Theodosianus* 16.2.1-2 (A.D. 313 and 319), cited by Frend, *Rise of Christianity*, 487. In A.D. 346 clergy and their children were exempted from fiscal obligations with regard to the cities.

bishops and makes the election depend entirely on the decision of the bishops of the province.”²⁷ Despite this canon, the people retained some influence in selection of clergy well into the fifth and sixth centuries.

Chrysostom (d. 407) offers a sarcastic commentary on the selection of clergy in his time. He calls it a public spectacle, in which the candidates are assailed by as many accusations as there are people present. The presbyters agree neither among themselves nor with the bishop. No one is concerned about spiritual worth, but they give priority to the man’s wealth, family, and connections. Piety alone is no qualification, says Chrysostom, as a bishop should also be intelligent, but at such elections intelligence is seen as a hindrance. He suggests that age is no guarantor of wisdom, or youth of frivolity. He charges that some campaign for a candidate of proven immorality in the hope that election to office will reform him. All of this makes for instability in the church. “Christians damage Christ’s cause more than his enemies and foes.”²⁸ Chrysostom was probably indulging in hyperbole, but his account indicates the deleterious effect on the church when the ministry becomes a civil institution.

The late fourth century witnessed an acceleration of the concept that priests possessed special sacramental powers by virtue of ordination. Like Elijah, only the priest can call down the Holy Spirit. “What priests do on earth, God ratifies above. It is patently mad to despise this great office without which we cannot attain to salvation.”²⁹ Gregory of Nyssa compared ordination to baptism, and insisted that the priest “by an invisible power and gift is changed in his invisible soul to something better.”³⁰ Hans von Campenhausen insists there is a difference between East and West in such ministerial charism, because in the East the priestly efficacy assumes a worshipping community, but in the West it becomes the personal possession of the priest. The efficacy of ordination in both East and West was *ex opere operato*, that is, it was effective apart from the will or intentions of the candidate, as witness the phenomenon of enforced ordination.³¹

As the office of bishop became increasingly associated with civil duties and privilege, as well as with supervising clergy, an alienation developed between priests and bishops to which Jerome reacts. “The Apostle clearly teaches that presbyters are the same as bishops.” Who is the bishop to arrogantly exalt himself above “those at whose prayers the body and blood of Christ are confected?”³² But

²⁷In *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 14 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Second Series) 12. Hefele is actually citing Greek commentators. Hefele writes, “The Latin church acted otherwise. It is true that with it also the people have been removed from episcopal elections, but this did not happen until later, about the eleventh century; and it was not only the people who were removed but the bishops of the province as well, and the election was conducted entirely by the clergy of the cathedral church.”

²⁸Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 3.15.

²⁹Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*; quoted in Joseph Lienhard, *Ministry* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984) 78-79.

³⁰Cited by von Campenhausen, “Origins,” 228-229. Von Campenhausen claims this is the first instance of sacerdotal endowments imparted sacramentally.

³¹One Dracontius swore he would run away if ordained, but Athanasius persuaded him to return and perform his duties, even though onerous to him. Epiphanius ordained Jerome’s brother against his will after being roughed up and gagged. Gregory Nazianzen grieved over his ordination and referred to it as an act of tyranny. Sozomon reports that one Nilammon died rather than accept a bishopric. A monk, Ammon, after vainly cutting off his ear to forestall ordination, threatened to cut out his tongue as well to foil his nominators; and one Ephraim acted like a madman so his abductors would turn him loose.

³²Jerome, *Letters*, 146.1. "The presbyter is contained in the bishop. With the exception of ordinations, what does a bishop do that a presbyter does not do?" (146.2).

he was fighting a losing battle. By the fifth century the provincially organized episcopate was fully in place, speaking in their corporate capacity as organs of the Holy Spirit. They were at the pinnacle of the Roman *ordo*, serving both as civil and religious officials, salaried by the state.

For Augustine, ordination is closely parallel to baptism. When baptism was conferred in the name of the Trinity, even to uncomprehending infants, God's promise guaranteed that the Spirit was given. So also in ordination. It conferred a definite and irremovable imprint, a *dominis character indelibilis*, which empowered the recipient to perform priestly functions. This development was a result of the African church's struggle with Donatism, and it grew out of a pastoral concern to reassure the faithful that sacraments were valid even when administered by an unfaithful or reprobate priest. Augustine did not originate the idea that a special charism was given in ordination, but he gave it a theological rationale and a clear articulation.³³ Henceforth the pastoral office was validated by a concept of apostolic succession which was foreign to the ante-Nicene church and the Scriptures.

At the time of Augustine the lines of authority within the pastoral office were taking a fixed form, both in the East and West. The hierarchy of bishop, priest, and deacon was well established, with the minor orders still in a state of development. Bishops were increasingly becoming the supervisors of churches within a geographical area which followed Roman political boundaries. The jurisdiction of bishops in principal cities extended over larger territories (the province); these bishops assumed the title of metropolitan. The entire hierarchy was salaried by the Roman government, and gradually the involvement of the people in selecting clergy was limited to the *collaudatio* or applause following the ordination.

But these developments, patterned after the Roman model of organization, should not blind us to the fact that by A.D. 400 there were countless numbers of priests throughout Christendom who were serving their congregations with zeal and selfless dedication. For the most part they are unsung and unrecorded, but we catch a glimpse of their activity through the eulogy Gregory of Nazianzus offered to his father, a priest of humble origins who spent his ministry in an inconspicuous rural parish. He displayed humility and simplicity in his life, was void of malice and bore no grudges, was stem with sinners but reprovved with kindness. He cared diligently for the sick although he himself "was at no time free from the anguish of pain." The oration concludes with the admonition that these words are not intended for the wise and proud, but only for those who "know they are mortals, following a mortal to the grave."³⁴

³³Augustine, *Against the Grammarian Cresconius*, 2.13. "Neque enim episcopi propter nos sumus, sed propter eos, quibus verbum sacramentum dominicum ministravimus." Cf. von Campenhausen, "Origins," 224-225. With Augustine, those outside the Catholic church possessed valid but inefficacious sacraments; today it is said that those outside the Roman communion clearly have efficacious sacraments which are invalid. Augustine, *On Baptism*, 3.15: "The baptism which is consecrated by the words of Christ in the Gospels is holy, even when conferred by the polluted, however shameless and unclean they may be. This holiness itself is incapable of contamination, and the power of God supports his sacrament, whether for the salvation of those who use it aright, or the doom of those who employ it wrongly. The light of the sun, or of a lamp is not defiled by contact with the filth on which it shines; so how can Christ's baptism be defiled by wickedness of any man?"

³⁴Gregory of Nazianzus, *On the Death of His Father*, 38, 43.