I. Christian Leadership & Worship


1. Offices of oversight - 2 tier: Bishops/Presbyters(elders), deacons

2. Ministry roles - apostles, prophets, pastor/teacher, evangelists (see I Cor. 12:28ff, Rom 12:5-8, Eph. 2:20, Eph. 4:11-13)

3. Places of meeting - homes, synagogues, still went to Temple at Jerusalem until its destruction (70 AD).

4. Leadership structure - congregational/democratic

5. Operation of all spiritual gifts encouraged - especially prophecy

6. Classes - all classes of people in church, patricians, plebians, craftsmen, masters & slaves; however, preponderance seemed to be lower classes (Gonzalez, 91-92). (Note: Aland, History of Christianity, v. 1, ca. 150 CE, 57ff influx of upperclass Christians e.g. Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Dionysius, Paul of Samosata directed their writings to elite).

7. Focus of worship: Celebration of resurrection of Jesus (Gonzalez, 93). Primary meeting day - Sunday, 1st day of week.

8. Primary worship liturgy: Communion as part of a larger agape meal (1 Cor. 11:20-34; Gonzalez, 94)

9. Early Communion service - commented scripture reading, prayers, hymns, extended prayer over elements, only baptized allowed to attend (Gonzalez, 94)
B. After 1st century, factors that began to change nature of church:

1. Destruction of Temple (70 AD) and Bar Kochba revolt (135 AD) broke final link to Jews

2. Increased conversion of Gentiles changed makeup of church. First converts primarily Jewish; after 100 AD majority converted Gentiles.

3. Identity crisis:
   a) Eschatological focus prior to 100 AD (*Didache*, 158-9)
   b) After 100 AD church takes on more formalism

4. Around 220 AD, greater increase of upper class converted to Christianity.

5. Architectural evidence – *domus ecclesiae* of Dura Europos, bishop’s throne

C. Baptism

1. Acts 8:26-39 - For N.T. church confession of faith only criteria for for baptism, no delay required.

2. Baptism administered by various disciples in N.T. period.

3. Later was done by deacons/deaconesses under direction of bishop

4. Note doctrinal emphasis of baptism as suggested in Justin Martyr’s First Apology (section 61, pages 66-67) - Emphasis is on being washed/cleansed from sin. (Concept of substitutionary atonement, identifying with Christ’s death, not really an emphasis until the Middle Ages).

5. By 3rd century, baptism allowed only after 3 year period as catechumen (see Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus and Apostolic Constitutions)
D. The Threat of Heresy and its Effect on Leadership

1. Apostolic succession - tradition of leadership linked to Peter (viewed as 1st pope).

2. Increase in authority of bishops

3. 3 tier leadership - bishop, elder, deacons

4. Ministry offices - reader, widow, virgin, porters, singer.

E. Three documents that demonstrate progression of leadership/liturgy:

1. Didache - written approx. 60-100 AD
   a) Baptism - name of Father, Son & Holy Spirit; running water, or cold water, or warm, or if none of these, sprinkle water on head 3 times, fast if possible. Doesn’t indicate who performs baptism (Didache, 153 [7])
   b) Eucharist - cup & broken bread only for baptized, doesn’t indicate who can serve it (e.g. bishop, Didache 154-5).
   c) Prophets and apostles still considered valued gifts - Didache 155-8); focus still on parousia (Christ’s return)
2. *Apostolic Tradition* - written approximately 215 A.D.

a) Professions prohibited to Christians (*Apostolic Tradition*, 24-28) - note cultural influences e.g. woman & her slave. Slaves had to have master’s permission to accept Christ (Part II, xiv).

b) Baptism - 3 years of instruction before baptism, kept separate from believers, women veiled, teacher of catechumen could be ordained or layman, exorcism by bishop, washing on Thursday before, fast on Friday & Saturday, all night vigil, baptism Easter morning.

c) Eucharist - Bishop breaks the bread assisted by elders & deacons. Eucharist is part of larger Agape meal and comes first (*Apostolic Tradition* 46, 48)

3. Constitutions of the Holy Apostles - written approximately 310 A.D. (*Around time of Constantine’s Christianization of the empire*)

a) Bishop equated to God on earth, nothing done without bishop’s permission

b) Specific order of building - long with head at east, bishop’s throne, reader’s throne, specific dress for deacons,

c) Specific order of service - read from Tanakh (parsha), sing 2 hymns, Acts, Epistles, Gospels, prayer.

d) People required to sit in specific places, women and youth had to sit in separate sections, married women sat apart from widows and virgins.