

Three Types of Authority within the Leadership of the United Methodist Church

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The Episcopal Methodist Church and its structure of power

The Methodist Church was constituted as an independent organisation at the Christmas Conference in Baltimore in 1784. At this conference the movement, formerly understood as Methodism, were formed into a Church. Naturally the Methodists had a structure, a management and a plan of organisation before the Christmas Conference, but they were a movement within the Anglican Church and they recognised the authority of the Anglican Church's structure, clergy and episcopacy. The origin of the UMC was the Christmas Conference in Baltimore 1784.

Also the Doctrinal standard as an Episcopal Church origins from the Christmas Conference in 1784. The constitution of the Methodist Episcopacy and the Methodist Church took place at the same conference. Both the Church and the Episcopal Office rendered visible and manifested themselves through the ordination of Francis Asbury as Bishop. Thus it does not make any sense to ask when the Methodist Church instituted the Episcopacy. The truth is: No Episcopacy without the Church and no Church without Episcopacy.

Even if a clarity of the unity of the Methodist Church and the Episcopacy do exist, it is impossible to find the same clarity in the understanding of the Episcopacy.

The name of the Church strongly stresses the Episcopal view. Before 1784 the word *Methodist(s)* was applied to the people in the movement, and the conference was called "Conversations between the Preachers in connection with the Rev. Mr John Wesley". But from 1784 the name *The Methodist Episcopal Church* was used in ordinary language and as the formal name of the conferences.

Already during the Christmas Conference Dr Thomas Coke taught the attendants that the term The Methodist Episcopacy was indefinable because we have an Episcopacy but no Bishop. In the minutes from 1784 to 1787 Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury were addressed as Superintendents. In the minutes from 1788 their titles were changed to "Bishops" without indication of any reason. When John Wesley became acquainted with this he responded extremely sharp and warned in a letter: "For Christ's sake put a full end to this!" In the minutes from the following year there is no reference or comment on Wesley's letter, but the title "Bishop" is exchanged with the original "Superintendent". Hereafter persons who are exercising the

Episcopal Office are mentioned. Now the name of John Wesley has been added and so it remains during the rest of his lifetime without further protests from John Wesley.

It should be noted which words and which exchanges in the wordings the disciplinary questions contain:

In 1789, in the first minutes after Wesley's protest, the original question has been re-worded into two questions. It is asked who exercise the Episcopacy in Europe and in America and the names Wesley, Coke and Asbury are answered in said order. Then it is asked who is appointed by the General Conference to superintend Methodism in America and hereto only the names Coke and Asbury are answered. This split into two differently worded questions indicates on one hand that Coke's and Asbury's superintendence and leadership are comparable with the leadership John Wesley has exercised in Great Britain for years. This is where the acceptance of John Wesley's factual leadership of British Methodism, as an Episcopal ministry, comes in and thus it can be described as exercise of an Episcopal Office; an Office which obviously continued in America by the ministries of Coke and Asbury. On the other hand the independence of American Methodism is emphasised by election on the General Conference of personnel to superintend within a certain geographical area (Q: Who have been elected to superintend in America?). The General Conference's right to elect and empower persons to exercise an Episcopal Office stresses the authority hold by the Church, as an assembly, compared with the authority of individual leaders. The geographical bounds are also a reduction of the authority given to superintendents. Already in 1787 similar functional and limiting understandings of the Episcopacy were hinted at in the bracketed remark "when present in the States", which followed the name of Thomas Cokes in the answer to the question Who serves as superintendents. Naturally, this meant that the Methodists in America was to understand that Coke could only exercise leadership when he was present in the United States. And furthermore a non unimportant aspect in the answer was the consideration to British Methodists' fear that Coke, on his travels outside America, should use or arrogate power to ordain preachers or organise a church-formation in areas where the Anglican Church office was intact. On the contrary the absence of a working Church including ordained leaders to serve the people was of substantial importance for the decision to form the Episcopal Methodist Church in America.

This apparent uncertainty in the understanding of what an Episcopal Church structure contained and which status and authority a person in an Episcopal Office held, naturally originated from the contemporary Anglican meaning of the words "Bishop" and "Episcopal". The Episcopal Methodist Church has its source from the Anglican Church, which, according to Wesley, was the best constituted national Church in the World. But to the picture belongs the fact that Wesley and his closest successors took the initiative to form a church where the analogies to the Anglican structure and offices are clear, but where the content is so strongly reformed through its origin in the Early Church and the Biblical Scriptures, that the Church in reality is structured quite differently than the Anglican Church's single-stringed structure and distinct Episcopal hierarchy. And therein is the explanation why Wesley - on one hand gave the order to form the Episcopal Methodist Church in America, with a clear tripartite office: Deacon, Elder and Episcopal, and his elaborated Church handbook, *The Sunday Service 1784*, which included a full ordinal - and on the other hand protested strongly against any use of the title "Bishop" because it caused some false associations to the Anglican Bishops and a wrong understanding of the Episcopacy. The Methodist understanding of the Episcopacy can be characterised as moderate compared with the Anglican and the Roman Catholic model.

Various Models for authority in Church Structure and Leadership

In the Bible and in the Early Church (the first three centuries) there are three models of management and church structure, three lines of authority. In excess of the Episcopal model, where the leadership is collected in one character, there are the Presbyterian and the Congregational or democratic models. The growth of the Episcopal Methodist Church shows that all three principles of authority in leadership are suitable, although history shows that the tension between the three have not always been fruitful and positive. But it is of importance that within the Episcopal Methodist Church the Episcopacy is growing through dialogue and in balance with the two other principles of leadership and authority.

In John Wesley's leadership of the British Methodism and through his long and careful preparation of liberation of the American Methodism we clearly notice that all three principles of leadership are appropriate. On American soil it ought to be noticed that the foundation of the Episcopal Methodist Church took place simultaneously with the foundation of the United States of America, when the Constitution (1787) was formed, which have influenced both ways. From various parties have been argued that especially Reformed and Methodist theology and theory have exercised profound influence on the elaboration of the political system in USA. On the contrary the first implementation of the tripartite power, convincingly introduced by the French enlightenment philosophers, certainly has influenced the Episcopal Methodist Church's view on the ideal structure of leadership and power. Wherever Wesley and his close colleagues were very much acquainted with the Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational principles of leadership, the continuation of these principles have been influenced by the balance of power between the legislative, the executive and the judicial power, which was complied with by the political system in the USA. In that way the Episcopacy got an extra accentuation of executive power in dissociation from the Conference, where on the contrary the legislative element was consolidated.

The **Presbyterian** perspective that the authority of church leadership is in the hands of the ordained presbyters and especially when united in a collective, a presbyterium of at least three presbyters, was alive in British Methodism from a very early time. Since 1744 several preachers exposed pressure on John Wesley to make him exercise the authority to ordain; an authority many people were theologically convinced he held. Such an outstanding theologian and leader as John Fletcher had urged John Wesley to use his authority to ordain, as early as 10 years before this authority was exercised. However, the opinions among the leaders of the movement were sharply opposed. Especially, Charles Wesley opposed violently several times, and in many letters he warned John Wesley against the effect of the preachers' ambitions and the American Methodists want of independence. The disagreement between the two brothers as to this matter was clearly manifested when Coke was set apart (consecrated and inducted) in Bristol. John Wesley elaborated *The Sunday Service*, published the book and executed the induction of Coke in his new office in anticipation of the foundation of the Episcopal Methodist Church in America *without* inviting or informing his brother Charles. Charles would never support and still less assist in such an action, and afterwards in public he sharply took issue with John Wesley's action.

In the letter John Wesley in September 1784 gave Thomas Coke to the Americans he wrote that reading Lord Peter King's book convinced him that he as a presbyter in the Anglican Church held the authority to ordain. Also his reading of Bishop Samuel Stillingfleet had contributed to this conviction. The problem is that the words presbyteros and episkopos in the

Bible and in the Early Church were used almost synonymously. Two different orders or offices is not the point but the distinction of two branches of the ministry. A presbyter and a bishop hold the same office and hold the same authority. A presbyter, who services as a bishop, is still a presbyter and officiate as such, but is in addition obliged to supervise other congregations. Generally, the authority to ordain is exercised by a bishop according to the Church order for management. The validity of the ordination however, is not qualified by the performance of a bishop. The Episcopal authority is not to be passed on from bishop to bishop, as the Episcopacy is not different from but a part of the sole office in which the ministry as presbyter is included. In the significant Bishopric in Alexandria in the ages of the Early Church for example, the regular practice was that the group of presbyters elected and inducted the bishop. It was not the retiring bishop who passed his authority on to the new bishop. Every time the process will be in progress within the group of presbyters, who have the full power to elect, ordain and induce. A community of presbyters, a so called presbytery, have the deciding vote. When the presbytery had set apart one to be leader of the group of presbyters of the same standing, it was the duty of the bishop set apart to exercise authority to ordain. Still it was the presbytery who held the power to elect and examine persons for deacons, presbyters and bishops. (In a pure Episcopal church structure the Episcopacy is a separate class with supreme authority to appoint the inferior clergy.) With reference to this theology John Wesley writes about himself that he holds precisely the same power to ordain and to pass on the power to ordain, as the Archbishop of Canterbury holds. Thus the conclusive argument for Wesley is not whether he holds the authority, but whenever it is right and necessary to exercise this authority. The right moment will occur, if the Anglican bishops do not exercise their duties according to Wesley's view or are prohibited from exercising their authority. And this was exactly the situation in the independent America. Earlier Wesley applied the Bishops in London and Canterbury to ordain the Methodist preachers both in England and in the American colonies, but without any result. In 1784 he considered the Bishops to have missed their chance and that they would do more harm than good. Therefore he stated that the Methodists cannot take their stand on any liable, existing Episcopacy. In this situation John Wesley assembled a small presbytery of three presbyters in a private home in Bristol. At first two lay people were ordained to presbyters and entered into the presbytery, secondly the presbytery consecrated and inducted Dr. Thomas Coke as superintendent for the Methodists in America, with the exact instruction to ordain Francis Asbury as presbyter and to induct him as superintendent and form an independent church in America. For Wesley it was the presbytery, at least three presbyters jointly, who held the authority. And as long as British Methodism was a part of the Anglican Church it were the Anglican Bishops who quite orderly held the office to supervise and the duty to ordain. But if the bishops are prohibited from or, for various reasons, abstain from exercising their duty a presbytery has the full power to exercise the Episcopal office. Thus John Wesley did not plead for the Episcopal authority, in an high church understanding, even if he describes the supervision and leadership he exercises on Methodist societies as a scriptural episkopos, but he asserted that he already held the full power and was entitled to exercise his power if necessary. And for America the necessity arose in 1784. The next ordinations Wesley exercised were to induct presbyters at first in Scotland and Ireland and at last also in England. John Wesley ordained 25 presbyters before he died in 1791.

In America the Presbyterian model won support especially in the areas where the Calvinistic influence was important. (The conception of presbyterian is often understood as being identical with calvinistic because the Calvinistic Churches have a presbyterian church structure). Both before and after the foundation of the Church in 1784 several ordinations were exercised in areas where groups of preachers, not all presbyters, formed a presbytery and exercised

ordinations. The ordinations exercised by Thomas Coke at the Christmas Conference in 1784 were to be compared with Wesley's ordination of Thomas Coke and the other two presbyters in Bristol. Coke did not exercise any ordination alone, but the present presbyters participated. And as the preachers were ordained to presbyters they participated in the following ordinations. Thus Coke did not with a claim of Episcopal succession pass on the Episcopal authority alone, but as a leader he assembled and conducted the present presbyters in the induction of Francis Asbury. To stress this understanding, please note, that the minutes from the conference says that if the persons, who hold the Episcopal Office, should disappear or die, it is unnecessary to find a Bishop who again can institute the Episcopacy in the Church. Eo ipso the Church does exist, the constitution of the Church includes the Episcopacy and by virtue of the presbytery, the Church can elect and induct persons to the Episcopal Office. And in the same way every candidate to every ordained office can be elected by the presbytery after which the Bishop can exercise the ordination.

The **congregational or democratic** perspective of authority is characteristic of a principle of leadership where the decision-making process moves from the bottom to the top. With a starting point in the ordinary ministry (1st Peter 2:9) a larger or minor group of associates and followers were invited to participate in the decision-making processes. Thus Church power does not decent from the high office to the low. The hierarchy or power is turned upside down and moves from the bottom to the top.

Beyond dispute John Wesley was the leader of British Methodism. He listened to other peoples pieces of good advise and arguments but he alone made the decisions. Early in the history of the movement Wesley assembled his preachers to a conference where preaching, dogma and strategy were debated. In conformity with the brotherhood in the Holy Club Wesley developed an intensive group dynamics with the freedom to introduce and test various views. But Wesley was not a democrat and the decisions were his alone.

Wesley himself was surprised that he lived for such a long time. Therefore we find that he several times considers and makes plan for the management of Methodism after his death. During a certain period he considers to find a person, who can continue the movement in accordance with his own open, but authoritarian principles of leadership. Both his younger brother Charles Wesley and the outstanding theologian John Fletcher occur as possible successors. But during the last teen years of John Wesley's lifetime it is, after all, the conference, thus a democratic body, that shall be the authoritative body in succession of Wesley. As mentioned, Wesley had assembled his preachers to consultative conferences since a few years after the outbreak of the revival. These conferences grew into large and widely constituted conferences, which Wesley assembled during his lifetime and which continued after his death. But approximately teen years before his death Wesley constituted and published a conference of 100 persons, The Deed of Declaration, which really was the authority who were to lead British Methodism after Wesley's death.

The decision to found an independent church in America was made by Wesley himself. And the initiative to the necessary ordinations in Bristol and the content in the authoritative letter to the Americans were all actions, solely made by Wesley himself. However, in America were the fulfilment of these commands against the democratic principle of leadership. Indeed Wesley was regarded as a scriptural Bishop and his order to Coke to ordain Asbury carried weight; but Asbury refused to receive the ordination, unless he was democratically elected to the office. Therefore the lay preachers were assembled in order to perform the election, and only one month after Coke's meeting with Asbury the ordinations and induction could be

executed. The final result was the same as what Wesley had ordered, but thus the conference, as the decision-making authority, was constituted. The Episcopal structure where one Bishop elects another was broken by the democratic principle. Even though the Christmas Conference in Baltimore in 1784 is not regarded a General Conference, the Christmas Conference in reality continued as the First General Conference in January 1785. Thus it was carried into effect that the General Conference shall follow the democratic rules and hold the supreme decision-making authority both in doctrinal and in church juridical issues.

However, the tension between the Episcopal Office and the General Conference increased within the Episcopal Methodist Church. The wing called the Republicans argue for more power to the General Conference. For instance it was stated that the broadness within the Church ought to be expressed in the structure of the conference, so lay representatives including women were assigned seat and vote in the conference. Thomas Coke as one of the superintendents supported these efforts. But in 1792, the year after John Wesley's death, the discussions degenerated into a confrontation, where the power of the superintendents and the authority of the General Conference were turned against each other. The Republicans tabled the proposal that the General Conference should hold the power to withdraw a superintendent's appointment of a preacher for a certain area, if the preacher found the conditions for this specific appointment wrong and asked for another nomination. The result was that the General Conference confirmed the superintendents' sole power to appoint. Thus the democratic General Conference limited its own power and stated the sole authority of the Episcopacy within its field of responsibility.

However, the confrontation is of interest because it led to a schism where one of the leading preachers, James O'Kelly together with other preachers constituted the opinion-forming group in an independent Methodist Church without Bishops, in which church the democratic principles of leadership were effected radically. The fraction stated that the Episcopal Methodist Church did not want to adjust itself to absolute democracy, which was a claim in the free American world, but in a disguised form had passed on the Anglican official hierarchy. They pleaded to be more in accordance with John Wesley's theology regarding the position of the superintendents than Francis Asbury, who liked to call himself Bishop and in practice had taken an Episcopal Office and status inappropriate for a protestant church. The exchange of the title superintendent to Bishop can be traced back to Asbury's revised Discipline from 1787. During a long period in the 19th century the title "General Superintendent" was used about Bishops, and "District Superintendent" about superintendents. Most of the fraction's accusations were taken up for renewed consideration many years later and carried through in the Episcopal Methodist Church, and the break was healed through union of churches.

Alterations in the Offices

Since the growth of Methodism both in Great Britain and America all offices have gone through heavy developments and alterations. Wesley looked upon himself as the person who had an activity, a movement. As Methodism grew, Wesley connected a few associates to himself, Assistants. Every Assistant had the responsibility for a district with many Societies (congregations). Usually the Assistant were ordained, who together with a number of associates or Assistant Preachers made up the team of Preachers, who constantly travelled around and preached the Gospel in the Societies (congregations). The Assistant and the Assistant Preachers were all Itinerant Preachers, and exactly this collective service of a district was of importance for Wesley because, as he claimed, he had never met a preacher who possessed all

the necessary qualities, but he had experienced that among a group, consisting of at least three preachers, all necessary qualities would generally be available for the district. Every Society (local congregation) was led by a Lay Preacher and an Exhorters or a Stewards, who had the responsibility of all practical matters. The lay preacher is the most comparable with a duly pastor of a local church. He was resident, and he and the exhorters and stewards were in contact with the members and secured continuity within the Society (congregation). The British system followed the first preachers in America. Thus Francis Asbury for example was appointed Assistant by Wesley many years before he was ordained. In America Methodism spread over enormous areas, and the various offices were influenced by the great distances and the consequently increased interval in the service. The local and resident lay preachers and leaders were of substantial importance for the continuous activity of the congregation and the function of the class system. Also in America were those non-ordained leaders what we today call pastoral leaders of the local church. In England the districts were so geografically small that the Itinerant Preachers in one day could walk from one place to another and return to the first place again. In America however, the districts were so large that there could be months between the visits of a Itinerant Preacher, and even longer time before the same Preacher arrived to the same place again. In addition to the induction of Coke and Asbury as superintendents, a number of lay preachers were ordained Deacons and Elders at the Christmas Conference in 1784. But the ordained office whether it was Superintendent, Elder or Deacon meant for years travel activity from one place to another and the service was very different from what we today call parish work. The Itinerant Preachers talked with all local leaders, lay preachers, exhorters, stewards, class leaders, Sunday school leaders, leaders of social activities in order to guide, encourage and supervise the work. Furthermore an non inessential part of the office as ordained Preacher or Bishop was to officiate in the congregations they visited. When the Church was founded in America, the country had for several years only been served by a few Anglican and even fewer European Preachers or had been totally without clerical service. Thus the growth of Methodism was coloured by a constant lack of ordained Preachers, who could meet the demand for ministrations, baptism, holy communion, funuals, weddings. It was a characteristic for the itinerant ordained Preachers and Bishops that they in addition to preaching the Gospel, supervision and encouraging the leaders were responsible for the ministration, baptism, holy communion e.g. Only many years later, when the Church not longer had to follow the flow of settlers westward and the number of ordained increased, Preachers as well as Bishops became residents. The ordained Elders undertook the tasks as duly pastor of a local church, and the districts became conferences and jurisdictions. The demand for administration grew, the economy made it possible to constitute institutions and large activity on district and conference level, and the office of supervision was added great administrative and organizational responsibility.

The Northern Europe Episcopacy

In contineltal Europe the Episcopal authority was not nearly as important for the establishment of the Methodist Church as it was in America. In the 19th century many Europeans emigrated to America. The hard conditions of life in fast growing populations and conflicts between various religious groups forced many people to leave their native country. From 1830 – 1880 most emigrants came from the North and West European countries, and from 1870 – 1920 people emigrated especially from the South and East European countries. In America the European immigrants became acquainted with Methodism, and some took spontaneously back to their native countries in Europe in order to impart the new faith. Lay and ordained Preachers did missionary work and founded congregations. Naturally, Episcopal supervision and

authority was exercised, but up to 1900 various American Bishops took turns in supervising the Northern Europe conferences. These Bishops did not talk the national language and were thus unable to preach the Gospel, officiate and participate in the missionary work as the Bishops did in America. The visiting Bishops linked up the Church and strengthened the small churches' feeling of self-worth. But it can hardly be argued that there existed any Episcopal presence or that the Episcopal Office played a central part. The General Conference decided in 1900 to place a missionary Bishop in Zürich with Europe as his field of responsibility. The first two Bishops in this field were the Americans: John H. Vincent (1900 – 1904) and William Burt (1904 – 1912). When John L. Nuelsen in 1912 was elected to hold the Episcopal Office in Zürich, Europe got the first European Bishop, who was born in Europe and spoke several European languages. The Church in Europe had matured to an extent where it could nurture its first leader to the Church's highest office. In 1920 Northern Europe was segregated into an independent Episcopal Office with the Dane Rev. Anton Bast as Bishop. Thus Northern Europe got a leader who could talk several local languages, which was of great importance at conferences and in the ministry, but leave this out of account as it only lasted a few years. Only from 1946 it can be argued that the Northern Europe conference had a Bishop, who was set apart (elected) among themselves and who did live among his countrymen and participated in the ministry of the Church in the local language, and furthermore held the Office as Bishop. It can be argued that the Episcopal Office has been exercised best through the Superintendents, who from the very beginning were elected among the national Ministers in the country, where they should serve. In the same way as the countries in Northern Europe got their national Superintendents, and regarded this to be locally influenced leadership, Russia got its own Superintendent in 1907. The German-American Dr. George A. Simons resided in St. Petersburg until 1920 and he soon managed to preach and officiate in Russian.

It is not out of question that Methodists in continental Europe have drawn their understanding of the Episcopacy from other churches with comparable conditions of leadership. Thus the Methodist Episcopacy in the Northern Europe and the Baltic Areas have been forced to sustain measurement by the standard of the Lutheran Episcopates, and furthermore the comparison with other free Churches' general secretaries and their productions of activities and programmes. In Russia the dominance of the Orthodox Church has been the background on which Methodism should make an image of its own.

The re-establishment of UMC in Eurasia became visible in 1992 through the placement of a Bishop in Moscow. Already a couple of years earlier the missionary work was started. A number of congregations worked on various locations in Russia. According to the history of Methodism, it was quite outstanding that the General Conference decided to call a Bishop to supervise this missionary work. When Europe was Christened missionary Bishops were recognized where Christianity forced and was challenged by paganism. The nomination of a UMC Bishop in the Moscow Area in 1992 was however an important signal to the global UMC and to the people of Russia. Within the UMC, missionary work was regarded top priority all at once, and immediately the new Bishop was its visible spokesman. In Russia the intention to be represented on the highest clerical level signalled seriousness towards the Orthodox Church's leadership. From the beginning UMC could meet the Russian national Church on the (same) Episcopal level. It was as well a point that the first UMC Bishop in Eurasia resided in the centre of power, Moscow, and was an international person and not Russian. "Eurasia" is, like the "Soviet Union" and the "SNG-countries" names for political units consisting of various nations with various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. During this phase of reorganization, which began when the Soviet Union broke down, it was

important that the UMC Episcopal Office did not personify any ethnical conflict. At the same time the position of Moscow in the new political system was important. Thus the Episcopal Office in the Moscow Area is not a national Russian Office but an international Office both within and outside the borders of the area.

The General Conference's nomination of a Bishop in Moscow also stresses the fact that the UMC Bishops state a global Episcopal function. Every UMC Bishop is elected to supervise within a certain area as well as to form the Council of Bishops, which hold the global Office. Thus the Bishops are General Superintendents, which means they shall supervise the whole Church globally. The General Conference's nomination of a Bishop to Moscow signals that the UMC recognizes its obligation to exercise the Episcopal supervision in Eurasia. Thus the collective Episcopal responsibility of the Church includes the missionary work already started.

The various principles of leadership, as the Episcopal leadership participate in unity with in America, does not exist to the same extent in continental European Methodism. Thus the development of the status and function of the Episcopal Office have not met a satisfactory interplay.

The **democratic** structure of authority and leadership has formally been represented in the Church through the system of conferences from the Pastoral Conference in the local congregation via the Annual Conference on the national level to the Central Conference of the Area. But compared with the top priority and the responsibility of leadership, which the democratic structure of leadership had in American Methodism, the pictures of the European structures are weak. When Methodism came to Europe the democratic joint responsibility had to be developed from the bottom, while the Episcopacy was adapted in the form and with the content the American Methodism had produced. In continental Europe Methodism was spread, especially to the low social sections of the populations and people from these communities did not have the best educational qualifications to construct and manage a church structure. And the long termed economic dependency of the American mother church did not create a broad freedom of action en route for complete independence and responsibility. During the last 50 years the West European UMC conferences, including their Boards and Councils, naturally have exercised a substantial function of leadership, but thus the democratic tradition of leadership and display of power can be characterized as extremely weak in this Church, who globally claims it wants to be in the head of democracy, training of people to individual opinion-shaping and competency for joint responsibility. In the light of history Europe has a short and not rather admirable democratic tradition. The development of the West European democracy is a little longer than the development of the East European democracy. In Northern Europe the nations' democratic traditions have been in progress since the 1850'ies. But in large parts of West Europe the democratic training of people was destroyed by successive totalitarian regimes. Methodism and a few other Protestant Churches have tried to be democratic refuges, where members were taught in taking responsibility and decision-making. But due to the nations' unfavourable conditions for democratic ideas, the Methodist congregations, as refuges for development of democracy, have only shown low results. Summing up, it can be argued that the general ministry (the ministry of all christians) has carried too small a lot of the responsibility of leadership and has been too weak an adversary for the Episcopal leadership. For UMC in Eurasia the situation is, as it was in Northern and Western Europe one or two generations ago. UMC is, in its total function, a school for development of democracy, and in this school it is important that the development starts from the present position of the members and congregations. The aim of a successful Episcopal

leadership and authority will always be to encourage and assist the democratic leadership and authority to be optimum assistants in the management of the Church.

Also the **Presbyterian principles of leadership**, which certainly not was unimportant when Methodism came into existence, have had a weak position compared to the position it could have had. Now and then Methodists negatively have called the Methodist Church for the clergies' church. And so it seems to be in some part of the Church structure, but according to the superior structure of leadership and the Episcopal leadership the Presbyterian principles of leadership are weak. After all, the Presbyters, whom we often call Elders or Ministers, are the most important group of leaders within the Church, and form, with a few exceptions, the total number of the Church's employees. A large majority of the Church's economy is used to support this group. And the largest part of the Church's collected activities are exercised through these employees. The reason why it can be argued that the group of Elders have been to weak in their leadership compared to what could be expected from a comparison with the growth of Methodism in England and America is due to various conditions. First the Elders' educational level. In Europe the Methodist Ministers often were people, who, without any noticeable education; developed their knowledge and faculties through the practical parish work. Often with admirable results, especially in anticipation of the fact that in many places, revival groups negatively considered education to inhibit a burning preaching. Later, more adjusted conditions and educational claims are introduced. All European Annual Conferences have experienced some outstanding and at times very dominating leader characters among the Elders, but generally the group of Elders have consisted a weak team of leadership, who only to a very small extent have been able to qualitative balance, inspire and challenge the Episcopal leadership. In the re-established UMC in Eurasia there were of course not the sufficiently potential leaders, who could realize the ideal authority of a Presbyterian team of leaders. It is a time consuming project for a church to develop and nurture presbyters. The UMC in Eurasia do already possess potential leaders, who are in the process of development. In the years to come the Church shall nurture leaders to a still larger extent.

The lack of understanding, harmony and positive tension between the three principles of Church leadership has weakened the total leadership of the church and often caused disappointments and frustrations. Somehow this has promoted an unwholesome hierarchic interpretation of the Methodist Church Structure as if one or the other of the three structure of authority has been forced to carry the burdens caused by the weak leadership of the two other groups.