

**"WHO ARE WE AND WHAT ARE WE TO DO?"**

The Hermeneutics of Identity/Action

as the Biblical Model for Church Planning ----- Elliott #1731

On the reverse (from my THE LOCAL CHURCH IN GOD'S MISSION, UCC/67), note that "Identity" and "Action" are polar on the helm, which I got from 1Cor.12.28's word for "pilotry," "management," transliterated into Eng. as "government." The point of this thinksheet is all in its longish title: The Bible is the world's best example of what we have come to call "the planning process" in the church (and with the world) for the church (and for the world). The hermeneutics of biblical interpretation and of our life and action is a continuity. Jas. A. Sanders (IDBSuppl., pp.402-7) calls it "canonical hermeneutics": "The believing communities engage in dialog with the Bible as canon, out of their own ever-changing contexts, asking two questions: 'Who are we and what are we to do?'...The Word is the point that is made in the conjunction of text and context, whether in antiquity or at any subsequent time." Read the Bible with honesty/humility/humor. The Bible provides not so much models for morality as mirrors for identity.

Lexically, we've moved from "images" (P.Minear's great IMAGES OF THE CHURCH IN THE NT) to "models" (A.Dulles' MODELS OF THE CHURCH and MODELS OF REVELATION) to "paradigms" to "sets." In their highly useful THE MANAGEMENT OF MINISTRY, Jones and Anderson (pp.110f) provide this taxonomy of church-models (i.e., ways the church has seen and sees itself vis-a-vis God/world):

Model	Bonds of Union	Who Are the Beneficiaries	Purpose of the Benefits	Dominant Form of Ministry	Stance Toward Revelation
Institutional	The visible tests of membership in the profession of doctrine; regular worship and obedience to ecclesiastical authority.	The visible, juridical membership, that is, those who belong.	Eternal life—"He cannot have God for his Father who does not have the Church for his Mother" (Cyprian).	The priestly "power of the keys" to confer what is needed for salvation.	Objective and complete. The church is the guardian and conservator of the truth, which it holds and transmits.
Mystical Communion	The gifts of the Holy Spirit in a transforming mystical communion.	The members (but can be an invisible membership); those animated by faith.	To lead people into communion with God.	To develop the church as a living form of community.	Subjective—emotional grace at work in the soul of every believer; the church as the gathering of fellow recipients.
Sacramental	The social visible signs of grace operative in believing Christians.	All those who are better able to live their faith due to contact with the believing, loving church.	To strengthen members' response to the grace of God.	Eucharistic celebration.	Two-levelled: (1) implicit (interior invisible); (2) explicit (exterior symbolic). Ongoing. Church as symbol.
Herald	Faith—as a response to proclamation of the Christ event.	Those who hear the Lord and respond in Faith.	To proclaim the message; to evangelize.	Proclamation.	Complete revelation as the word of God in Bible and sermon.
Servant	Mutual brotherhood in those who serve together.	All who need and receive help.	To be of help to all humanity; to keep alive the hopes of people for the Kingdom of God.	To point out the dangers of dehumanization and to inspire concrete actions to transform society.	Ongoing—viewed as analogous to an evolutionary force in creation; Christ an immediate leap forward.

OVER

**celebration**

How do we rejoice?

**clarifying  
our identity**

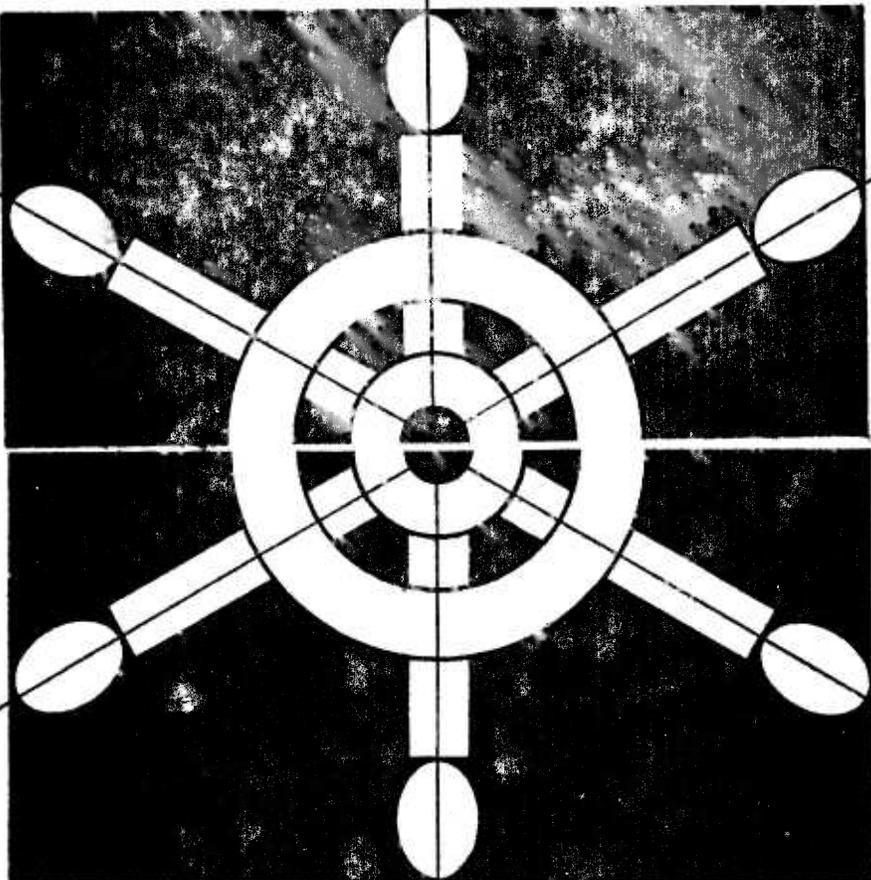
Who are we as a church?

**evaluation**

How are we doing?

**defining  
the world's  
situation**

Where are we?



**action**

What new behavior do we propose?

**self-study**

What are we doing?