

Editorial: The Apostolic in Pentecostal Ministry

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We in the Pentecostal and charismatic traditions are rightly concerned about the apostolic nature of ministry.

Unfortunately the adjective, “apostolic,” having been painted crudely on so many storefronts and run-down gathering places, may now seem quaint, naïve, even irrelevant—the nomenclature of a few uneducated faithful far from the centers of influence and bypassed by a more sophisticated Christianity.

However, we recoil from the term at our own peril. Apostolic power and ministry are deeply embedded in the Christian tradition. Jesus himself is the Chief Apostle (Heb. 3:1) and he commissioned twelve disciples as apostles (Mk. 3:14). Finally, he breathed on them to receive the Holy Spirit and sent them out to make disciples of all the world (Jn. 20:21-22; Mt. 28:16-20). These twelve apostles and a handful of others so designated were at the center (Acts 8:14) and, not uncommonly, the cutting edges (Acts 10:24-47; 13:3) of the powerful first-century advance of the gospel. They were said to have turned the world “upside down” (Acts 17:6; KJV, NRSV). Apostolic power was understood to be the power of the Triune God manifested through the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in first-generation apostles and their ministry colleagues who faithfully bore witness to Jesus Christ.

The apostle best known to us is Paul who came to apostleship “late in the game” after an unanticipated rendezvous with the risen Christ on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1-6). Not one of the original Twelve, Paul wrote that it was only after the risen Christ had appeared to Peter, the Twelve, 500 and more Christian brothers at one time and, finally, to all the apostles, did he call him. “[L]ast of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born (Greek, *ektroma* “untimely birth”)¹ (1 Cor. 15:8, NIV).²

Having persecuted the Church before his conversion, Paul was unworthy, in his thinking, to be an apostle. He was neither self-appointed nor chosen by other church leaders. “But by the grace of God I am what I am,” he wrote, “and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than any of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me (1 Cor. 15:10). These words locate Paul’s apostleship squarely in the personal revelation and empowering grace of Jesus Christ—a reminder that to Paul “grace” was not just kindly benevolence but mighty divine power. “But... God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me that I might preach him among the Gentiles” (Gal. 1:15,16).

From Paul’s description of himself to be the “last” of the apostles to whom Jesus

The Way I See It

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Encounter: Journal for Pentecostal Ministry is embarking on a new journey with the launch of the “Encounter Pentecostal Ministry Series.” *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in the 21st Century*, which collects the papers and responses from Assemblies of God Theological Seminary’s “Symposium of Apostolic Ministry in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Tradition” held in September 2004, is the first of the new monograph series. This column, and several other articles in this issue of *Encounter*, is in that volume. The book is recommended to all who have a serious interest in the apostolic nature of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The reemergence of the theme of apostolic ministry is certainly not new to Pentecostal discussions. Nor is it limited to Pentecostal theological reflection. Mainline Pentecostals and Catholics alike are reengaging the language of apostolicity as a way of dealing with the united experience of the church’s marginalization from the center of influence in North American life.

This loss of influence has led to the common experience of liminality for the Christian church in North America. Liminality is the conscious awareness that, as a group, one’s status, role and identity in culture have changed so radically the group has become invisible to the larger society. No Christian

tradition is exempt from the experience of liminality. The question is whether we will emerge from critical reflection on our current status with a refined understanding of the church and its mission that can serve effectively in local contexts and real time.

The experience of liminality affecting so much of Christianity in North America requires us to revisit biblical texts to see our current dilemma most clearly. In this context, apostolicity has emerged as a theme that attracts many leaders. “No nonsense,” “focused,” “energetic,” “divinely called and empowered,” “engaged with culture” and “sacrificial” are currently used descriptors of apostles and their ministry. Pentecostals have always recognized and revered the “pioneer” image and are seeing a renewal of interest in this expression of ministry leadership.

He Gave Apostles records a series of lectures on apostolic ministry given by three mature Pentecostal scholars at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in the fall of 2004. They have refined these lectures, and several complementary essays have been added. These supporting essays offer insight on apostolic ministry from biblical texts, organizational studies and a description of current ministries that are effectively carrying out the apostolic initiative. The appendices provide current statements

the General Council of the Assemblies of God (USA) is using to guide its membership.

This volume is not meant to be a final stop for biblical reflection on apostolic ministry. It is intended, rather, to be a resource for pastoral leaders who desire a thorough investigation of a topic whose complexity is deeper than one might anticipate and requires more than simplistic pronouncements.

I commend to you a rigorous pathway of thoroughly researched materials on this crucial subject. May you be strengthened in your calling as a Pentecostal leader “to study to shew yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” (2 Tim. 2:15). And may your thorough study again invite the ancient affirmation of Zechariah to well up in your being: “Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord” (Zechariah 4:6).

Apostolic Practice

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Nothing has stirred more interest in Pentecostal-charismatic circles in recent years than the restoration of the “fivefold ministries” Paul mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-13: “It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (NIV).

Although most Pentecostals refer to these as “fivefold,” others see them as “fourfold,” combining the ministries of pastor and teacher into one. These “ascension gifts,” as they are called in traditional churches, were given to the Church after Jesus ascended to the Father to extend, guide and mature the Church.

We can assume that, at the time Paul wrote, the New Testament church had a clear understanding of what these offices required, how they operated and who filled them. However, with the passing of time, the role and operation of these ministries in the everyday life of the church became less clear.

Thus, for centuries, the offices of pastor and teacher have been familiar ministries in all churches. However, only since the middle of the nineteenth century, with

the success of Charles Finney and other “professional” evangelists of that day, has the office of evangelist gained a popular understanding and acceptance.

The offices of apostle and prophet have been more elusive for modern Christians. Many have accepted a belief developed throughout the centuries that the age of the apostles and prophets ended around 96 AD, about the time John, the last apostle, died. Another belief, first stated by St. Augustine (and later retracted), has been widely accepted along with this. It holds that, with the completion of the canon of Scripture, the Lord withdrew miraculous gifts of the Spirit such as tongues, prophecy and healing.

Over time, as the bishops consolidated their power in the church, the office of apostle was almost forgotten. By the second century, apostles and prophets were seen as nothing more than traveling medicine men with little or no influence or authority. In the *Didache* (11:3) the following rules were laid down for itinerant “apostles and prophets”: “Now, as regards apostles and prophets, act strictly according to the precept of the Gospel. Upon his arrival every apostle must be welcomed as the Lord; but he must not stay except one day. In case of necessity, however, he may stay the next day also; but if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. At his departure the apostle must receive nothing except food

to last till the next night's lodging; but if he asks for money, he is a false prophet."

In spite of cessationist views and the low esteem showed to those who claimed to be apostles, the idea of a continuing apostleship continued to surface sporadically throughout church history. For example, Mani of Persia (216-274), founder of the Manichee sect in the third century, called himself the "Apostle of Light"—the last apostle of Jesus Christ, he said, who would ever appear. Like Mani, whose dualistic religion the church rejected as heretical, most people in church history who have claimed to be new apostles have been branded as heretics and excommunicated from the church. (Mohammed also claimed to be the last apostle and prophet for all time.) Other so-called end-time apostles, such as Joseph Smith, have appeared over the centuries and have been rejected. Nevertheless, the question of whether there are contemporary apostles has refused to die. In fact, the modern debate is as lively as ever.

Since 1901, despite long-standing cessation theories, Pentecostals and charismatics have loudly proclaimed that the *charismata*, or gifts of the Spirit, are a present-day reality in the church. Millions of modern-day Christians speak in tongues, prophesy, cast out demons and pray for the sick with an expectation of divine healing. These gifts of the Spirit are regarded as part of the modern Christian experience in a large percentage of the churches of Christendom.

The question many sincere Christians are now asking is this: If the *charismata* have been restored, why have not the prophets and apostles—those offices that the Lord himself set in the church—been

restored also? As with the gifts of the Spirit, the dispensational limit on the exercise of these offices seems to be more man-made than biblical.

Prophecy has been an integral feature of most Pentecostal and charismatic movements through the years. Until recently, however, there has been an extreme reluctance to recognize the office of prophet, although some were ordained to the prophetic office in the Latter Rain movement of the late 1940s and '50s. In the words of the Anglican charismatic leader Colin Urquhart, "There have been many prophecies but few prophets." In the past two decades, however, particularly among independent Pentecostals and charismatics, men such as Bill Hamon, Rick Joyner, Mike Bickle and Paul Cain have led a sweeping prophetic movement.

So, what about the office of apostle? When considering the fivefold ministries, the average believer can understand that pastors care for their flock, evangelists preach to the unconverted, teachers instruct their students and prophets prophesy the Word of God. But what do apostles do to show they are apostles? If there are apostles today, who are they?

What the Bible Says

The biblical definition of the Greek word *apostolos* is "one sent forth," encompassing such ideas as messenger, ambassador and missionary. Perhaps the clearest definition would be "one sent on a special mission." In the New Testament, the "special mission" was to preach the good news of the gospel. An apostle was sent forth by the Lord Jesus Christ as an ambassador of the good

news, one carrying the all-important message of salvation.

In the New Testament, a variety of ministers bore the title of apostle:

1. The Unique Apostle—Jesus. Hebrews 3:1 speaks of Jesus as “the apostle and high priest of our profession.” He, indeed, was one sent on a special mission to save the world. Of course, there will be no other apostle like the Son of God. He is unique and stands alone!
2. The twelve apostles. The Bible seems to place “the Twelve” in a unique category as well. This special group of messengers is without parallel in church history; their unique ministry will never be repeated. Some call these the “apostles of Christ” or the “apostles of the Lamb” because they saw Jesus with their own eyes and were witnesses of His resurrection (Acts 1:21,22). To these twelve men, Jesus promised a special place in the Kingdom: “You who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28).
3. Eight other apostles. Some of these are called the “apostles of the Churches” (2 Cor. 8:23). After Judas betrayed Jesus and hanged himself, Matthias was chosen to take his place. Later, Paul, who saw the Lord “as one born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8), was also called an apostle. These two men were not the end of the list. Paul called James, the brother of Jesus, an “apostle” (Gal. 1:19). Others were Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Apollos (1 Cor. 4:6-9), Andronicus and Junia (Rom. 16:7)

and Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25). Some early church fathers even called Mary Magdalene “the first apostle” because she was the first to see the risen Lord. Ann Graham Block and other scholars claim that Junia was almost certainly a woman because of the feminine form of the name.

Thus, the identification of at least eight other leaders who were “apostles” clearly puts in question the argument that the apostolic office was limited to the original Twelve (although their unique place in the biblical record is undisputed). Implicitly or explicitly, the Bible gives no fewer than twenty people the apostolic title.

4. The “false” apostles. In addition to the twenty people with recognized apostolic ministries, the Scriptures define a category of “false apostles,” whose positions were not appointed by God but usurped by carnal men for their own glory. Paul called these men “deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13-15). He likened them to Satan, who “transformed himself into an angel of light” in order to deceive the elect.

To distinguish between the genuine apostles and the false, the Bible suggests the following criteria:

- True apostles saw Jesus in the flesh and witnessed the Resurrection (see 1 Cor. 9:1).
- True apostles are accompanied by “signs, wonders and miracles” (2 Cor. 12:12).
- True apostles equip the saints for the work of the ministry, bring unity to the body, speak the truth in love and

join and knit the whole body together (see Eph. 4:7-16). They are the authoritative teachers of the truths in the Gospels.

- True apostles are ecumenical, with a universal interest in and authority in the whole body of Christ (see Gal. 2:8).
- True apostles are chosen by God, not necessarily elected (see Eph. 1:1).

Several Church Traditions

Throughout Christian history, there have been differing views concerning the apostolic office. The Roman Catholic view, developed in subapostolic times, is that Christ commissioned the original Twelve as a unique, unrepeatable body led by Peter and Paul. The “Petrine theory” holds that Simon Peter was given a place of primacy among the Twelve; his successors have been the popes. All other bishops are “successors to the apostles” and exercise a magisterial, pastoral and teaching authority that has been handed down from generation to generation.

Thus, in Catholic theology, all ecclesiastical power is derived from prior generations through apostolic succession. There are no “apostles” as such in succeeding generations, though all authority in the Church stems from apostolic succession. With the exception of the claim to papal authority, this also represents the general belief of the Orthodox churches.

Nevertheless, this view has not kept the Catholic Church from recognizing apostolic-like ministries over the centuries. For instance, missionaries who were the first to bring the gospel to a new people group have been called “apostles” to that group. Thus, St.

Augustine of Canterbury is called the “apostle to England,” and St. Patrick is called the “apostle to Ireland.” This tradition is as old as Paul, who called himself “an apostle to the Gentiles.” Over the centuries, there have been thousands of these “apostles to (whatever locale).” Even today, some conduct apostolic ministry among remote tribes and peoples.

The Protestant Reformers rejected the Catholic view of apostolic succession and busied themselves with the new movement they founded. Most believed that the office of apostle had ended with the Early Church, with no “successors” as in the Catholic tradition. Some Reformers, such as John Calvin, thought that apostles might reappear under certain circumstances. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin wrote the Lord “now and again revives them [apostles, prophets and evangelists] as the need of the times demands.” These offices, however, have no place in “duly constituted churches,” he added. In a similar vein, Luther believed “the apostolic message rather than the office” would remain in the church.

A little-known instance of Protestants sending out “apostles” as missionaries occurred among the Baptists in Colonial America. For a time, Baptists in New England ordained “apostles” as missionaries to such southern colonies as Virginia, Carolina and Georgia. After some time, however, the term “apostle” was dropped for the more traditional term “missionary.”

In general, Protestants have been prone to refer to founders of movements and doctrinal systems as “apostles of” certain movements or theological views. Thus, Luther is often called the “apostle of the

Reformation,” or the “apostle of justification by faith.” Similarly, Calvin has been called the “apostle of reformed Christianity,” while Wesley is known as the “apostle of Methodism.” Every denomination seems to have an “apostle” who served as the founder of the ecclesial body, usually based on a new and unique teaching from Scripture.

In the nineteenth century, a restorationist movement began in Britain with the avowed purpose of restoring all aspects of New Testament Christianity to the modern church. Lewis Way, John Nelson Darby, Edward Irving and others pioneered a restoration of the *charismata* (such as *glossolalia* and prophecy). The movement culminated in the creation of the Catholic Apostolic Church in 1832. In addition to the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit, the church attempted to restore the fivefold ministries, including the office of apostle.

In due time, the church ordained twelve “apostles” who were to be the end-times equivalent of the Twelve chosen by Christ. According to their prophecies, this group would be the last apostles to exist before the rapture of the church. Eventually, however, these apostles died. When the last one died in 1901, the British church collapsed and practically disappeared. Only in Germany were new apostles ordained to succeed those who had passed away. This church took the name “New Apostolic Church” and is today the third largest body of Christians in Germany (after the Catholic and Lutheran churches).

Another sad case of a modern “apostle” who went over the hill was Alexander Dowie, who claimed the titles of “apostle” and “Elijah the restorer” just before sinking into dementia.

The earliest name chosen by the Pentecostal movement in America was “Apostolic Faith,” a designation given by Charles Parham to his church in Topeka, Kansas. It was here, in 1901, that modern Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in other tongues, began. Parham’s student, William J. Seymour, chose the same name for his Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles in 1906.

In this context, “Apostolic Faith” did not signal a move to restore the office of apostle to the church. Parham, in fact, was extremely critical of any kind of church government, especially a highly centralized system with apostolic authority. Yet, there are those who refer to him as the “apostle of Pentecost

In the years that followed the glory days at Azusa Street, Pentecostal missionaries traveled around the world preaching the “latter rain” message of a mighty “Holy Ghost outpouring” that would occur before the second coming of Christ. A new generation of Pentecostal “apostles” appeared. They included G.B. Cashwell, the “apostle to the south”; T.B. Barratt, the “apostle to Europe”; W.C. Hoover, the “apostle to Chile”; Ivan Voronaev, the “apostle to the Slavs” and Luigi Francescon, the “apostle to Italy.”

Other early Pentecostal groups claimed to restore the office of apostle to the church. These included “apostolic churches” in Wales, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States, in which “apostles” were duly elected and ordained along with any other office in the church. Some of these continue to this day, with colleges of apostles (usually twelve) that govern their denominations. The “New Order of the

Latter Rain” movement of the late 1940s also popularized the restoration of the “fivefold ministries” in preparation for the revelation of the “manifested sons company.” These perfected ones, it was claimed, would rule and reign at the end of the Church Age. Prominent among this elite group would be prophets and apostles. Overall, however, Pentecostals have been far more interested in restoring the charismata than in restoring any type of ecclesiastical offices to the church. In the words of David du Plessis, “Pentecostals are more interested in apostolic success rather than in apostolic succession.”

Independent Charismatic Views

Many independent charismatics have developed a thirst for the restoration of apostolic authority in the body of Christ. They have produced mountains of tapes and books that assert the fivefold ministries must be restored in power to the modern church. Indeed, many contemporary leaders freely claim to be “apostles.” Some even have the title printed on their stationery and business cards.

In general, charismatics have defined apostolic ministry as applying to any one who has a trans-local ministry, usually leaving the pastorate to itinerate in a teaching or church-planting ministry.

The New Apostolic Reformation. In the last decade, Peter Wagner has led the “new apostolic reformation movement,” which he claims is now sweeping the world as the new way leaders are “doing church.” This movement came out of the “National Symposium on the Post-Denominational Church,” a conference Wagner led at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1996. After years of

studying church growth in the “postmodern age,” Wagner concluded that the day of the historic denomination was rapidly coming to a close while a new generation of “post-denominational churches was dawning. Before the conference could convene, however, many critics of the idea, including Jack Hayford, forced Wagner to choose a new name. He finally settled on the term “New Apostolic Churches” to describe what he called a “New Testament model of leadership,” or “new wineskins for a new Church Age.”

These new churches, which many think are really “pre-denominational movements,” would have the following “new” features:

- A new name (“New Apostolic Reformation”)
- New authority structures (the leaders are called “apostles”)
- New leadership training (no seminaries but volunteers, homegrown staff, local Bible colleges)
- New ministry focus (“vision driven” [toward the future] rather than “heritage driven” [toward the past])
- New worship styles (keyboards, ministry teams, lifted hands, loud praise, overhead projectors)
- New prayer forms (concert prayer, singing in the Spirit)
- New financing (“finances are abundant, giving is expected, beneficial, cheerful”)
- New outreach (church planting, compassion for the poor)
- New power orientation (openness to the Holy Spirit and gifts of the Spirit: healing, demonic deliverance and prophecy)

In his book, *The New Apostolic Churches*, Wagner listed eighteen pastors (or “apostles”) who represented the new movement. Of these, only Bill Hybels, Michael Fletcher and David Kim do not appear to have Pentecostal or charismatic backgrounds. Most, such as Billy Joe Daugherty, Roberts Liardon and William Kumuyi, are openly Pentecostal or charismatic. Others have been part of the Pentecostal/charismatic renewal for years. Clearly most of the “New Apostolic Churches” have their roots in classical Pentecostalism. Their distinctive features were pioneered by Pentecostals who were successful pastors long before the apostolic movement began.

In 1999, Wagner attempted to organize the movement into an umbrella grouping under the name “International Coalition of Apostles,” with Wagner listed as the “Presiding Apostle.” New “apostles” could join and pay \$69 a month as membership dues. Wagner listed the many types of “apostles” who could be members. They included:

“Vertical apostles,” which included “ecclesiastical, functional, apostolic team members and congregational apostles”

“Horizontal apostles,” which included: “convening, ambassadorial, mobilizing and territorial apostles”

“Marketplace apostles,” (undefined)

“Calling apostles,” which are those who call Christians together in unity

By 2004, in his book, *Aftershock! How the Second Apostolic Age is Changing the Church*, Wagner made grandiose claims about this new movement,

claiming that the charismatic movement was “a vision unfulfilled” and that the new “apostolic renewal” movement had taken its place as the wave of the future.

Since almost all of them operate in the gifts of the Spirit, it seems that most of these networks were planted and inspired by the Pentecostal-charismatic movement in the first place. David Barrett previously listed most of them as “denominational Pentecostals” until his *New World Christian Encyclopedia* (2000) began to designate them as “neo-charismatic.” Rather than being part of a “New Apostolic Reformation,” most of them are actually part of the “Pentecostal/charismatic reformation.” It seems that Wagner has tried to impose a new title for movements that were already dynamic churches originally inspired by the Pentecostals and to create an artificial apostolic structure with himself as “presiding apostle.” Although they claim to be only “apostolic networks,” they are rapidly organizing and developing structures under their claim of apostolic authority. They are in reality new denominations.

Because of my studies of church history, I view this movement with the following reservations:

1. It fails to appreciate and recognize the missionary accomplishments of the Pentecostal “denominations” such as the Assemblies of God. It also fails to distinguish between the dynamic and growing Pentecostal denominations and the mainline Protestant denominations, many of which are slowly dwindling away.
2. Many of these post-denominational networks are simply incipient denominations themselves.

3. Having an unaccountable “apostle” intervening between a church’s constituted authorities and a minister can cause conflicts of authority that could lead to confusion similar to the shepherding-discipleship controversy of the 1980s.
4. This could become an elitist movement that places all power in the hands of self-appointed “apostles” at the expense of accountability to the church as a whole.
5. The ultimate end could be the removal of all lay influence in the governance of the churches and the end of all democratic or congregational government in favor of a hierarchical system that rules from the top.
6. The appointing of “territorial apostles” who are unknown to most of the Christian community in a particular area can be dangerous and divisive.
7. In church history, most apostolic movements, such as the Irvingite movement of the 1830s and the various twentieth-century Pentecostal groups that ordained “apostles,” have been notable for their lack of growth and missionary success.
8. When individuals have claimed the title of “apostle” or “Elijah” it sometimes has resulted from an exaggerated ego or, in several cases, actual dementia.
9. There have been recent reports of American or British apostolic groups offering indigenous third-world

Pentecostal and charismatic churches large sums of money to come under their “apostolic covering.”

In spite of these concerns, the apostolic movement might inspire some persons to exercise the function of apostle in bringing the gospel to unreached peoples. Although I respect Peter Wagner for his tremendous contributions to the growth of evangelicalism, and even to the Pentecostal movement, I am disappointed that he has attempted to place himself at the head (“presiding apostle”) of an organization designed for all those who claim to have apostolic ministries.

As interest in the apostolic emphasis has spread, more books and articles analyzing the movement have appeared in major Christian journals. *Ministries Today* magazine devoted an entire issue to the topic in November 2004. Although generally favorable, these articles raised some serious concerns about the movement. Dr. Doug Beacham, an official of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, addressed Wagner’s apparent disdain for denominations in an article named “The Leadershift.” Although he sees a bright future for some denominations, he contends, “Twentieth-century charismatic/Pentecostal wineskins must be adapted to hold twenty-first century wine.”

In the same issue, David Moore, an adjunct professor at Regent University, states positively, “We need present-day apostles, and the New Apostolic Reformation is a genuine expression of God’s renewing work in His church.” He warns the new apostolic movement, however, of the excesses of the discipleship-shepherding movement that

divided the charismatic movement in the 1970s. As a former devotee of the shepherding movement, Moore experienced many of the problems that caused massive confusion at that time. He sees “great danger in ‘triumphalism’ — viewing one’s movement as the ‘cutting edge’ of what God is doing today. This mind-set,” he explains, “especially if coupled with success, tends to devalue those who don’t see it their way, or worse, write off critics as old-fashioned defenders of ‘tradition’ unwilling to embrace God’s new move.”

Yes—and No

This brings us back to the original question: Are there genuine apostles in the earth today? The answer would seem to be yes—and no. No, there are no living persons like the original Twelve who witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ. These “apostles of Christ” were and will remain unique in salvation history. And, yes, there are apostles abroad today who are carrying out the same mission as the apostles in the New Testament. Who are they? The nearest parallel to the New Testament and

historic use of the term “apostle” are those missionaries—often unnamed—who are bringing the message of the gospel to unreached peoples and tribes. They are busy translating the Scriptures and planting churches where none existed. They have little time to consider their apostolic office.

It is axiomatic to say that anyone who claims to be an apostle probably is not one. An apostle is not self-appointed or elected by any ecclesiastical body but is chosen by the Lord himself. As Lewi Pethrus, founder of the famous Filadelfia Church in Stockholm, Sweden, has said anyone who claims apostleship is suspect. The one most likely to be an apostle is he who, like John the Baptist, claims only to be “a voice crying in the wilderness.”

Who are the apostles today? Perhaps we are asking the wrong question. Where do we find apostolic ministry and apostolic results? The modern church needs these far more than it needs names to carry as a title or warm bodies to fill an office.

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Apostolic in Doctrine

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Introduction

Truth does not change, but the questions earnest Christians ask do change through the years. Periodically, accepted traditional understandings are called into question and require a fresh assessment. Essentially this is what transpired at the beginning of the twentieth century with the arrival of the Pentecostal awakening. The early Pentecostals challenged the commonly accepted “cessationist” theology that dominated evangelical Christianity. They resisted the attempt of fundamentalist Protestantism to confine the supernatural work of God to the Apostolic Age. They insisted that, in an important sense, the work of the Holy Spirit described in the Book of Acts was intended to be the model by which the vitality of the church should be measured in today’s world.

The early Pentecostals’ strong stance has led to the recognition by much of the contemporary church world, howbeit reluctantly, that the church must make a greater place for the supernatural dimension of Christianity, including charismatic gifts and ministries.¹ The rapidly changing demographics of the church disclose that charismatically oriented Christian groups are among the fastest-growing segments of the church today. As a result, older, traditional churches must acknowledge that the

churches of the future will be inclined to be apostolic in character.²

The first battle seems to be largely over. Much of the church has capitulated to the principle of the importance of charismatic ministry. Perhaps pragmatic considerations have forced the traditional church world into making grudging allowance for such practices and ministry. However, the very success of the Pentecostal-charismatic movement has occasioned fresh questions that require thoughtful reflection.

At the beginning of the modern Pentecostal revival, the term “apostolic” was frequently employed, both in the titles of emerging denominations and in the titles of periodicals. This term was intended to support the concept that the Holy Spirit was being poured out on modern-day people, empowering them in much the same fashion as the writers of the New Testament described in the life of the Early Church. The term “apostolic” was an announcement that, indeed, the age of miracles was not past. All believers were candidates for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Gifts of the Spirit were to be expected among all of God’s people. The early shape of the debate was “either-or.” You accepted the principle of the availability of New Testament experiences of the Spirit or you did not. The questions centered on

personal spiritual experience. The structure of the church was not in serious debate, as long as the existing structures made an adequate place for manifestations of the Spirit and the recognition of gifted ministries. Existing church structures were readily borrowed, usually from the Methodist or Baptist traditions.

The current debate has now moved toward a reexamination of church structures as the context in which apostolic ministry is to be developed. In the last decade, Pentecostals and charismatics have been confronted with issues that did not require examination in the earlier years of the revival. However, traditional Pentecostals are now contemplating the emergence of a “restorationist” movement that claims to revive the offices of apostle and prophet. Earlier Pentecostals had largely dismissed this concept, preferring to describe gifted ministries as “functions” rather than conferring titles, or “offices” on significant leaders. The “New Order of the Latter Rain” of the 1940s, which essentially called into being such offices, was summarily dealt with by Pentecostal bodies, such as the Assemblies of God,³ and this movement quickly disappeared from the radar screen. Today, the issue is no longer limited to the eddies and backwaters, but is now making a strong appearance within the ranks of Pentecostals. For example, the Australian Assemblies of God, as a national movement, has restructured itself in a dramatically new way, assigning to the denominational leadership the kind of authority and responsibility associated with the first-century apostles.⁴ How are we to address this issue from a biblical perspective?

I propose that we consider first the context in which apostolic ministry took place. This calls for an examination of church structure as presented in the New Testament writings. Subsequently, I propose that we examine the biblical principles related specifically to the role of the apostle. Not all relevant issues can be addressed in a single paper.

Therefore, I am narrowing my focus to a study of apostles and their place in the Early Church. From this inquiry, I trust that some useful guidelines for contemporary ministry may be elicited.

The Context of Apostolic Ministry: Early Church Structure

The Church was instituted by Christ (Mt.16:18). Many consider the birth of the Church to be dated from the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the waiting disciples gathered in the Jerusalem Upper Room (Acts 2). At once, the original gathering of Christian believers began to take on a distinctive character. It became a visible, tangible expression of God’s presence in the world, centering in the risen Christ. Some of the characteristics of the Jerusalem church, based primarily on an examination of Acts 2:42-47, may be summarized:

Teaching based on the apostolic norm. The Jerusalem church measured its life, belief and practice by the teaching of the original apostles (Acts 2:42).

The manifest presence of God. The Jerusalem church was deeply conscious of God’s supernatural presence among them (see Acts 2:43: “they were filled with awe”). In the earlier years of the modern Pentecostal revival, the term often employed to capture this sense of God’s mighty presence was “reality.” A

sense of wonderment, of the *mysterium tremendum*, has been a hallmark of the earliest apostolic community and of Pentecostal fellowships in recent history. Believers came to Pentecostal gatherings because they expected that God would intervene in fresh ways. Minimal programming was needed.

Supernatural miracles. “Signs and wonders” were done through the ministry of the apostles (Acts 2:43). At the outset, the flow of supernatural interventions that marked the life of the Jerusalem church was mediated through the ministry of the recognized leaders, the original apostles. It should be noted, however, that later in the Book of Acts, supernatural events transpired through others besides the apostles. Note the story of Stephen, a lay person in the Jerusalem church, chosen to fill a role reminiscent of the deacons Paul identified in 1 Timothy 3:8-10. Stephen, clearly not an apostle, nonetheless is described as being used by God to perform signs and wonders (Acts 6:8). Ultimately, of course, Paul declared that the full range of charismatic ministries is available to all in the congregation, without regard to office or position (1 Cor. 12:7-11). The only qualifier is that it is the sovereign Lord who distributes manifestations as he chooses!

Fellowship and compassion. The believers gathered regularly and, evidently, frequently. It appears they readily adopted the structure and some of the functions of the synagogue. An eldership emerged. Leadership from within the congregation was identified and recognized. Paul acknowledges this clearly in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Both the term “elder” (*presbuteros*) and “overseer” (*episkopos*), which by the second century had evolved into separate

levels of ecclesiastical authority, were interchangeable as late as the decade of the 60s, when Acts likely was written (see Acts 20:17, 28). Titus 1:5-7 uses these terms interchangeably, as well.⁵ This suggests that God employed a variety of instruments for spiritual leadership, clearly far beyond a limited apostolic circle. A key word for the early Jerusalem church is “community.”

Emerging Patterns of Church Structure

Two passages in Acts offer helpful insights into the changing form of the earliest Palestinian church communities. In Acts 13:1-3, it is apparent that the leadership of the Antioch church was comprised of two types of ministry; what one might call the “didactic” and the “charismatic.” The terms “prophets and teachers” (*proph_tai kai didaskaloi*) distinguish between the objective and the subjective, between the ministry of explaining the received teaching of the church body, which requires study and preparation, and the spontaneous exercise of the “unstudied,” of “immediacy,” of charismatic gifts.⁶ It appears, then, that in the decade of the 40s, an attempt was made, at least in Antioch, to maintain a balance between formal structure and spontaneous charismatic ministry. It is noteworthy that this brief glimpse into church life at Antioch provides us with a profile of the functions of that church body as well. This profile seems to capture the purposes for which the local church existed.

Acts 13:1 supplies an important suggestion for the reason these folks gathered to have “church.” The object of the ministry of the prophets and teachers clearly was intended to edify the

gathered believers. It was a *ministry to the body*. The function of prophets and teachers is to edify the body of believers.

Acts 13:2 pictures the Antioch believers worshipping together. The Antioch church was not only about edification of believers, it was about *ministry to the Lord*. It was about deepening the relationship between believers and their risen Lord. The Antioch church was more than a school.

Acts 13:3 carries the purpose of the gathered body one step further. Into this Spirit-energized atmosphere, God gave directions for service, for their place in a larger setting than their own fellowship. This was to be *ministry to the world*. The Antioch church, agreeing that the prophetic utterance given in their midst was valid, commissioned Barnabas and Saul to be their ambassadors to the world beyond. It is important to recognize that from the beginning the Apostolic Church was a missionary community. Note that when the church had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and “sent them off” (*apelusan*). In effect, Barnabas and Saul were commissioned to be the “apostles,” the “sent ones” from the church at Antioch. We will return to this point later.

Another passage in Acts that helps us to capture the self-understanding of the Early Church regarding its form is the story of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). The Antioch missionaries, Paul (as he is now called) and Barnabas, had been appointed, along with other believers, to go to Jerusalem to see the “apostles and elders” (*apostolous kai presbuterous*). Throughout the narrative that follows, it is evident that the leadership of the council was comprised of both apostles

and elders. It is important to notice that the moderator of the meeting appears to be James, not Peter. Further, when the council had acted, it was the apostles and elders, *with the whole church*, who decided how to communicate the results of the council (Acts 15:22). It seems clear that the acknowledged leaders of the Jerusalem church did not act apart from the consensus of the local body. This speaks to the principle of *accountability*.

Paul’s pastoral epistles offer further insights into the structure of first-century churches. If one compares the list of qualifications for elders in Titus 1:5-9 with the list Paul provides in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, the observer will note that the list in Titus is briefer and more general. One is tempted to conjecture that the reason for this is that Titus’s assignment to “straighten out what was left unfinished” (Titus 1:5) addressed a difficult pioneer situation on Crete. Titus, the missionary Paul assigned to complete the establishment of the church there, was given explicit instructions to first “appoint elders in every town.” Evidently, in the earliest stages of planting a new church, it was necessary for an outsider—one with apostolic credentials, a missionary—to assume direction.

The situation in Ephesus was quite different. Paul, writing to his younger colleague Timothy, admonished him in his role as Paul’s representative to the church at Ephesus. The church at Ephesus was not new. It evidently had fallen into disorder and required outside missionary direction to recover its spiritual center. One of the assignments given to Timothy was to teach the people how to select proper leadership. In 1 Timothy 3:1, the wording indicates

that the people were involved in some way in the selection of their leaders: “If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.” It is not likely that Timothy made such appointments. The people, probably with Timothy’s approval, were authorized to select leaders from among themselves. Further, the list of qualifications for elders Paul supplied Timothy is more detailed and demanding than the list found in Titus.

Some assumptions may be made from this data. First, overt outside control is required in a pioneer church-planting setting. In such cases, the missionary selects the local leadership, seeking the best people he can identify, even if they do not have all the desirable qualifications that may come later. In a more developed church, such as that in Ephesus, the church seems to be given more input into selecting their leadership. The more elaborate listing of qualifications suggests that, at some point, a church can expect higher standards for leadership. What can one say to this? It appears that there is a marked latitude admissible in local church management processes. However, the direction of local church governance appears to move from an episcopal form toward a congregational form, as the church develops.

It is important to note that all the local churches, whether pioneering ventures or more established centers, functioned under apostolic authority. We will examine what this means in due course.

Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians provides another important dimension of spiritual leadership. His teaching on the local church gathered for worship (1 Cor. 11-14) emphasizes the importance

of each individual member. In a Pentecostal church, *all* are invited to participate! To each the sovereign Spirit may distribute manifestations of various kinds for the edification of the Body. The *laity* are an important part of the ministry equation. God may call upon any receptive instrument for edifying the body on a given occasion. Although there is a ranking of ministries, including apostles and prophets at the top of the list (1 Cor. 12:27-31), the ministry of prophecy does not appear to be limited to a recognized class of people called prophets. Paul exhorts, “Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said” (1 Cor. 14:29) and then, “You can all prophesy in turn...” (1 Cor. 14:31). It looks very much like the people of God are invited to judge the worth of such prophetic utterances.

I would suggest that this “judging” was predicated on two criteria. First, any prophetic utterance was expected to conform to the revealed apostolic message. Note Paul’s strong challenge to the Galatian Christians on this very point (Gal. 1: 6-9). Second, since the “spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets,” one could disrupt a meeting with a poorly timed utterance or an utterance that might appear to the rest to be contrary in tone or content to the “flow” of the meeting. (Early Pentecostals frequently spoke of the “tenor” of a meeting to capture this.)

Ephesians 4:11 is the centerpiece of discussion for the issue of “restorationism.” The “fivefold ministry” is found here. Christ gave gifts to the Church: some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. These are leadership gifts—people called by the

Lord to serve the body of Christ in particular ways. The two verses that follow are important for putting these leadership gifts into proper perspective. Ephesians 4:12 tells us that these giftings of leadership have a specific purpose: “to equip” (*pros ton katartismon*) the people of God for “works of service” (*eis ergon diakonias*). The role of such leadership is best seen as empowering the people of God to do ministry. Leadership has a supportive, not a coercive or controlling, role. It is clear that the objective of effective ministry in the church is for the building up of the body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:13 provides indices by which one can measure whether edification is transpiring. The first category identified is in the *cognitive* domain: aiding believers to come to unity in “the faith,” that objective body of Christian teaching presented by the apostles. The way this is expressed indicates that this is a journey, not necessarily a destination. The church is at its best when it works hard at developing theology from the deposit of apostolic truth, recognizing that we, indeed, see through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13:12).

The second category is *experiential*. Believers are to grow “in the knowledge of the Son of God.” The biblical concept of *gn_osis* is far more profound than the mere assembling of items of information. It is “knowing by experience.” Paul speaks to this pointedly in his prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23. In that famous prayer list, first on his agenda is that the Ephesian believers might experience “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” A profound and growing spiritual relationship with the

Lord is a central objective of New Testament teaching.

The third category Paul alludes to in Ephesians 4:13 is the *behavioral*. He cites the cultivation of an appropriate pattern of living as an important objective of ministry in the church: “That we ...become mature (*eis andra teleion*), attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” The root word for maturity is *telos*, meaning “end,” or “destiny.” The New Testament concept of sanctification lies right here. Paul calls the church to engage in a kind of ministry that will enable people to become what they are declared to be, to grow into Christlikeness. Sanctification is a *process*, not necessarily a *crisis*. It is a direction as much as an *achievement*.⁷ Leadership is effective when the body of believers it serves is marked by people who are moving toward their destined quality of being, their *telos*.

To summarize Paul’s teaching from Ephesians 4, we may say that Christ has given gifts of leadership to the Church. The purpose of that leadership is to equip God’s people for ministry. The objectives of that ministry are that the people of God may grow in their understanding of God’s revelation, in a deeper experience with the living Lord, and in a quality of behavior that authentically reflects the inner Christian experience. It is important to note that this passage is a searching insight into the development of the *interior* life of the believer. To this must be appended the insights about the functions of the Apostolic Church from such passages as Acts 13:1-3, in which the objective of ministry moves beyond the cultivation of the *interior* life of the believer to the calling to penetrate the larger world with Christian witness. Melvin Hodges,

building on insights popularized by Roland Allen, had it right when he recognized that the biblical model for a New Testament kind of church certainly included the capacity to grow, to expand its numbers and to be “self-perpetuating.”⁸

We may summarize some fundamental principles for church structure that emerge from considering various New Testament passages:

The Principle of Apostolicity. The teaching of church leaders is tightly connected to the teaching of those commissioned by the Lord himself. All ministry is thus to be measured.

The Principle of Adaptability. Considering the emergence of unforeseen circumstances, such as one finds the Jerusalem church facing in Acts 6, considerable latitude is allowable in developing church structures. This frees the church to adopt culturally relevant church structure patterns, as long as such patterns do not inhibit the work of God.

The Principle of Accountability. Throughout the description of the various churches provided in the New Testament, there appears to be a commitment to the responsibility for self-government within local churches, with minimal direction from outside, except for the input from the apostles. With the passing of the original apostles, their teaching continues in the canon of the New Testament. It is to this that all churches and all church leadership are to be accountable. It appears that the people of God have an important role in determining how this accountability shall take place, chiefly through their

own selection of elders and deacons from their midst.⁹

The Principle of Accessibility. Apart from the leadership of the authorized apostles, there appears to be minimal suggestion of any hierarchy beyond the local churches. Certainly, in metropolitan centers, where there were likely several house churches, the churches in that community were on occasion referred to as forming a single “church.” For example, Paul wrote to the collective fellowships in the city of Thessalonica as if they formed one single entity: “the church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thess. 1:1). There is little evidence of any kind of hierarchy in such settings.

Let us now consider precisely what the New Testament writers had in mind for the role of apostles, the first of Christ’s gifts to the Church.

Kinds of Apostles in the New Testament

The Unique Apostleship. A clear distinction must be made between the earliest “college of apostles” and all other Christian leaders, regardless of title or function. Ephesians 2:20 reports that the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.” One must begin by recognizing that Jesus is the principal apostle (Heb. 3:1), that is, he is the “Sent One” who divested himself of his rightful glory to minister salvation to this world. All apostolic ministry flows out of this primary understanding.

The Inner Circle. Jesus selected the original twelve apostles (Mt. 10:1,2; Mk. 6:30). To the initial cluster of disciples,

the original Twelve, Jesus also assigned the term “apostles” (Lk. 6:13). “The Twelve” is a term found twenty-one times in the four Gospels, indicating that this original group was widely recognized as the core of Jesus’ following. In Acts 1, the 120 disciples, including the eleven original disciples minus Judas, gathered in the Upper Room. They selected Matthias to replace Judas (Acts 1:26), feeling compelled to fill the vacancy occasioned by Judas’ fall. In this story, we learn what qualifications were understood to be necessary for this special group of apostles.

First, all in this group were specially called by the Lord. The Acts passage supplies further credentials.

Second, a candidate had to have been with the original called-out group throughout the time of the public ministry of Jesus (Acts 1:21).

Third, such a person must have been an eyewitness to the risen Lord following His resurrection (v.22). These special persons had lived with Jesus. They were authentic eyewitnesses to his life and teaching. Hence, the Early Church looked to them for a standard by which to guide and govern the emerging churches.

Paul is a special case. He recognized himself to be, and his colleagues acknowledged him to be, a genuine apostle. How are we to understand Paul as one of this very special company? This is an important issue, for Paul wrote more of the New Testament than any of the original Twelve. First, note that Paul began most of his epistles with a firm assertion that he wrote, not on his own merits but—being called by God—with

the apostolic authority received directly from God. This self-understanding is stated in its clearest form in Galatians 1. Paul said, “I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11,12). In the passage that follows, Paul set out his case very clearly. The other apostles, located in Jerusalem, recognized him as being on a plane of equal authority with them (Gal. 2:6-10). Paul understood himself to have seen Jesus, a basic qualification for being included in the apostolic list (1 Cor. 9:1). To Paul, the Damascus Road experience was intensely real; it was not just a vision. In 1 Corinthians 15:8, Paul spoke of himself, with respect to his relationship with Jesus, “as one untimely born.”¹⁰

From the data, we might then conclude that Paul, although not one of the earliest group of disciples Jesus called to himself during his public ministry, nonetheless was widely recognized as having special credentials that entitled him to speak authoritatively, along with the original Twelve.

The Extended Apostolic College. To this core of twelve (or thirteen) apostles, we must recognize that the college of apostles includes some others as well. All of the ancient documents circulating among the churches in the fourth century were scrutinized by both the Latin Church at the Council of Carthage and by the Greek Church through the decision of Athanasius in Alexandria. Independently, both wings of the Ancient Church agreed on the twenty-seven books in our present New Testament as the authentic writings of

the first-century apostles. In each case, the first criterion to which these documents were subjected was “apostolicity.” Was the document in question written by a first-century apostle, or *one closely associated with him*?

This “college of apostles” goes beyond the Twelve. It clearly includes Paul, but also includes Mark, the associate of Peter, and Luke, a close associate of Paul. To this list, we must add the writer of Hebrews who, if not Paul, clearly was one of his companions. Two in this college of apostles that were qualified because of their intimate association with Jesus are James and Jude, the half brothers of our Lord.¹¹ The teaching of these selected few was recognized in the first-century church as the ultimate authority for all things pertaining to faith and life. The Greek and Latin Churches of the fourth century validated this understanding as the canon of the New Testament came to be universally accepted.

J. Rodman Williams distinguishes between two kinds of apostles, “The Twelve plus Paul” and “Others Called Apostles.”¹² He designates the Twelve plus Paul as having “apostleship,” citing a term employed in both Acts 1:24,25 and Galatians 2:8 to identify those given special authority (*eis apostol_n*). Paul uses this term in 1 Corinthians 9:2, identifying himself as one given the ministry of apostleship (*mou tes apostol_s*). By this, Williams wishes to set apart that group of eyewitnesses who were authorized to speak authoritatively about the life and teachings of Jesus. For Williams, this is limited to the Twelve and Paul.

Perhaps, without doing injustice to the intent of Williams, we should broaden the designation to include those associates of Paul and the Twelve who were recognized as authoritative by the Early Church. Thus, the writings of Mark, Luke, James, Jude and perhaps one or two others may be added to Williams’ more narrow classification.

Whether one follows the narrower limit set out by Williams or includes the other recognized writing apostles, this designation is critically important. This sets the boundary of the canon of Scripture, the objective authority by which the Church in all ages is to evaluate all belief, experience and practice. These were uniquely placed in the first century and stand absolutely apart from all others.

It is clear that the writers of the New Testament had no intention of passing on this special apostleship to others who might follow. This unique gifting was not to be a matter of “apostolic succession,” nor was it ever intended to be restored in a later age. The revelation given to the first-century apostleship stands by itself. If this is not safeguarded, all manner of mischief inevitably follows.

This is precisely where charismatic movements through the course of history have foundered. Consider, for example, the Irvingite movement of nineteenth-century England, and their misguided attempt at restoring the offices of authoritative apostles. When the last of these apostles died about the beginning of the twentieth century, this movement virtually ceased to exist.

Apostles: Special Assignment Callings.
It is important to note that the term

“apostle” is employed in the New Testament in ways beyond the narrower circle of “apostleship.” Acts 14:14 speaks of “the apostles Barnabas and Paul.” In this case, Barnabas appears to be listed as an apostle in the sense that he has been sent out as a missionary from the church at Antioch. In Galatians 1:18,19, Paul listed James, the brother of the Lord, as one of the apostles. In Acts 15, James is not identified as an apostle. A curious note found in Romans 16 cites Andronicus and Junias—one of whom may have been a woman—as outstanding apostles. In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul seems to include Silas and Timothy along with himself as apostles (1 Thess. 1:1). In 2 Corinthians 8:18,22, unidentified representatives are sent as messengers. The term employed here is a cognate form of the verb “I send,” or *apostell_*. What are we to make of this? It can be seen that in a much broader sense, those sent, or commissioned, for any special church assignment could be said to be “apostles,” or “sent ones.” Paul speaks of Epaphroditus, the elder from the church at Philippi who had been sent to him in Rome, as an (*apostolos*), one sent on an assignment from a local church.

This general, non-technical, use of the term is important for two reasons: (1) It is an acknowledgement that the church must make a place for special gifts of leadership and ministry, or for those commissioned by the church for special assignments. (2) It is this more narrowly defined use of the term that has application for the church today. It is a serious mistake to blur the distinction between the authoritative apostleship and other “special assignment” apostles described in the New Testament.

Apostolic Ministry

In the broader sense identified above, the ministry of the first-century apostles may be summarized in the following ways:

The “general” apostles are pictured as being commissioned for special assignments, usually sent from a specific local church. Certainly, this was the case in the story of Epaphroditus, who was sent from the church at Philippi to minister to Paul on their behalf while Paul was in custody in Rome (Phil. 2:25-30).

The assignments to which these special envoys are dispatched appear to be primarily in pioneer settings (note the mission of Titus on Crete, for example.)

The apostles were involved in proclamation and witness, sometimes even being included in the writing of what were recognized later to be canonical documents. In a general sense, we can picture these individuals as filling a role not unlike that of modern-day missionaries.

In the process of ministry, such frontiersmen were expected to be empowered with charismatic ministries, exhibiting “signs and wonders” that were important instruments for verification of the gospel message (see Heb. 2:3,4). Notice that the miraculous was intended to be supportive of the proclaimed message, not an end in itself. Paul reported to the Thessalonians that he came to them with a proclamation (“with words”), but he came with more than mere words. He came to them “in power” (*en dunamei*) (1 Thess.1:5).

Clearly, Paul was led by the Holy Spirit. This theme is developed throughout the Book of Acts. Paul's ministry was Spirit-enabled and, further, it was guided by the Holy Spirit. He ministered "by the Spirit" (*en pneumati hagi_*) (1 Thess. 1:5). He moved about "in the Spirit." From time to time, this included special revelations from God to the apostles. It is interesting to note that Paul received the warnings given by Agabus and others as being valid prophetic utterances, but he did not base his decision about the impending journey to Jerusalem on such utterances (see Acts 20:22-24). He accepted the dire warnings as useful for preparing him for coming hardship. Acts 16:10 is a useful clue as to how Paul made major decisions. Evidently, he stepped out "in faith," doing what was logical and rational, using his best judgment, depending on *confirmation* of such decisions by the Holy Spirit. Rarely did Paul receive such remarkable revelations as the "Macedonian call."

Some, if not all of the "general apostles," served under the direct supervision and oversight of the Unique Apostles. Luke, Silas, Timothy and Titus were associates of Paul; Mark was Peter's intimate colleague. We could say, by extension, that insofar as missionaries and other church leaders in our day are governed by the teaching of the Unique Apostles (that is to say, the canonical Scriptures), they too fall within this pattern.

This brief summary could be developed in more detail but, for our purposes, it will suffice to identify the broad parameters forming the shape of apostolic ministry. Let us now turn our attention to the question of "restorationism."

The Restoration of Apostles Examined

Within the last two decades, a teaching has gained a significant hearing that calls for serious evaluation. It circulates about the theme of the restoration of the "Fivefold Offices" of New Testament ministry. First in that list is the office of apostle. The clear implication is that if the church of today is to fulfill the New Testament pattern and mandate, the offices cited in Ephesians 4:11 must be restored. Let us examine some of the issues raised by key exponents of restorationist theology.

Peter Wagner's Theology

Peter Wagner, one of the major spokesmen for this movement, sees present-day apostles having "unusual authority." Wagner says: "Until recently the central focus of authority in our churches existed in groups, not in individuals. Trust has been placed in sessions, consistories, nominating committees, deacon boards, trustees, congregations, presbyteries, associations, general councils, cabinets, conventions, synods and the like. Rarely has trust for ultimate decision making been given to individuals such as pastors or apostles. This, however, is changing decisively in the New Apostolic Reformation."¹³

Wagner identifies several characteristics of apostles, basing his claims on a biblical assessment of the Unique Apostles we have identified above. The items he lists deserve serious consideration for present-day leaders, but I question his assumption that the apostolic authority of the Unique Apostles extends to leaders beyond the first century in the way Wagner urges. Wagner says, "Paul's authority as an

apostle came from the same sources that provide today's apostles with their extraordinary authority."¹⁴ He lists the following:

1. Apostles have a spiritual gift (*charisma*). He cites the catalog of giftings found in 1 Corinthians 12, referring especially to v. 28. "Are all apostles?" Certainly not, Wagner affirms, but by implication, some in the church are apostles!¹⁵ My question is, to what kind of apostles was Paul referring? Was he speaking of the Unique Apostolate, or of specially gifted and called ambassadors sent out as missionaries on frontier assignments, the general apostles?

2. Apostles have an assignment, or call. Citing 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, Wagner recognizes that those endowed with charismatic leadership do not all have the same ministry or sphere of activity.¹⁶ I have no quarrel with Wagner on this point, except to question whether Paul was speaking here of general apostles, the missionaries of the Early Church, rather than the Unique Apostles who have special credentials.

3. Apostles have extraordinary character. Wagner appeals here for holding leadership in the church to a high standard.¹⁷ Who would question the desire to have church leaders whose lives are above reproach? Nevertheless, Wagner does not support this high-minded desire for apostolic credentials with Scriptures that specifically single out apostles. This clearly is a matter of general concern for church leadership in any capacity.

4. Apostles have followers. Wagner's point here is quite pragmatic: leaders have followers. You can recognize

apostles by the fact that they have a following.¹⁸ This statement, of course, applies quite broadly to all leadership, even beyond the church world. I think what Wagner is reaching for is that current-day apostles are recognized by others as having this gifting.

5. Apostles have vision. Wagner sees true apostles as leaders who have the ability to cast vision for others. He sees modern-day apostles receiving "special revelations" from God, either through direct communication from God or through prophets in the church.¹⁹ Pentecostals and charismatics of today certainly should be open to receiving prophetic insights, either directly or through others in the church who may have a "word from the Lord." However, it is not at all clear from the New Testament that this is to be limited to "apostles." Perhaps what Wagner is wishing to communicate is that true apostles regularly exhibit such special insights from God.

6. Apostles have determined spheres.²⁰ To this I heartily ascribe. However, the calling of apostles ("sent ones") to differing fields and kinds of leadership service fit nicely into the picture provided in the New Testament of general apostles, or missionaries.²¹

The fundamental question I have for Wagner centers in his apparent blurring of the boundaries between the carefully limited authority of the Unique Apostles and all other apostles, "sent ones" or frontier missionaries. Because of this, it appears that Wagner has opened the door to serious abuses of power and authority.

The Theology of David Cartledge

David Cartledge, esteemed colleague from Australia, has called for an “Apostolic Revolution.” Crucial to his methodology is his call for a “Pentecostal hermeneutic.” Cartledge brushes aside not only liberal methods of biblical interpretation, but castigates modern Pentecostals for submitting to the “rationalism” inherent in orthodox evangelical hermeneutics. He casts aspersion on the idea of limiting our hearing from God to the words of the Bible. Cartledge says, “A third and quite confusing hermeneutical method is that employed by many evangelicals. They insist that God only speaks to people through the Bible. At face value, this appears to be highly commendable. However, further examination reveals that this is closer to rationalism than faith. It is actually a defence (sic) mechanism that enables them to deny anything supernatural.”²²

Cartledge fails to distinguish the unique apostolic authority of the Bible from all other admissible revelations, such as prophetic utterances, that are available to the church. By dismissing evangelical commitment to the authority of the written Word of God, Cartledge opens the door to a disturbing level of subjectivism. In addition, flowing out of this understanding of “continuing revelation,” he hands contemporary church leaders, to whom he assigns the office of apostle, a kind of authority that rises above human criticism. Cartledge places these modern-day apostles within local churches.²³ One is inclined to suspect that any successful pastor of a large, thriving church may be included within an identifiable circle of fellow apostles, leaders whose judgments are to be followed uncritically by their

respective congregations. After all, who is going to dispute with an apostle? One wonders to whom these leaders are accountable. What checks are there for the possibility of abuse of such great power? For a thoughtful look at this issue, I suggest James Cobble’s book, *The Church and the Powers: A Theology of Church Structure*.²⁴

Cartledge points out that, in deference to the democratically oriented citizenry of his nation, the apostles in the Australian Assemblies of God are not given the title of apostle. Cartledge makes clear that the function, not the title, of apostle is critical.²⁵

A central thesis of Cartledge, based on the recent history of the Assemblies of God in Australia, is that their fresh look at the biblical model of church leadership has released the churches to fresh vision, vitality and growth. Their story is certainly dramatic and invites examination for possible lessons that may be learned. However, a preliminary opinion of the author is that creating a situation in which individual church leaders are supplied with virtually unlimited power opens the door to serious abuse. Moreover, there remains the critical issue of just how biblical is this new “restoration” model, after all.

Conclusion

It appears that the question of whether New Testament-like apostles should be restored to the modern church must begin with the issue of religious authority. Clearly, the Early Church operated under the Christ-given authority of the Unique Apostles. A case can be made for a distinction between the Unique Apostles and the ministry of others in the New Testament era—those

who were called “apostles” in a more general sense—as emissaries of local churches. Although such “sent ones” carried considerable authority, it is quite clear that such authority did not reach the level of the Unique Apostles. Consequently, it is questionable if giving the title of “apostle” to any present-day individuals is in order. The reason for this caution is clear. To many, the title “apostle” bears the connotation of authority on a level with the Scriptures.

It is helpful to learn that the Australian Assemblies of God has not felt it necessary to title their significant charismatic leaders “apostles.” They have sought to make central the concept of apostolic functions, rather than supplying titles that may occasion unexpected consequences.

In all this discussion, there clearly are lessons to be learned. A case may be made that in the New Testament, those sent out from the various churches on

special pioneer assignments were expected to go in the power of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic ministry was considered crucial for the development and expansion of the Early Church. There is no indication that this urgency has changed. Certainly, the church of the twenty-first century needs leaders, called by God, to minister in apostolic power! The Pentecostal and charismatic churches of our day need the anointing of the Holy Spirit and need to recognize and make room for those whom God has set apart for special apostolic service. This has been true from the beginning of the modern Pentecostal movement and continues to be true in our time, as well. God continues to call people to pioneer service in many fields. He is equipping humble vessels with supernatural abilities and authority, with no need for any special kind of title. It is the function, not the name that is crucial. May we become more available to the empowering Spirit for the task at hand!

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The Dilemma Over the Apostolic Nature of Mission in Modern Missions¹

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When the fathers of the ancient church expanded the Nicene Creed to read that they believed in “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church,” they could not have imagined the controversies that would swirl around those four attributes for centuries to come.² When applied to the church’s mission in the world, “apostolic” has been used to refer to the faith and actions of the apostles, patterns of ecclesiastical authority, the church’s missionary task and the means of fulfilling that task, with the latter including the displays of divine power that accompanied the expansion of the church in the Book of Acts and the establishment of “New Testament” (i.e., self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting) churches. This essay briefly examines the dilemma that arose following the Protestant Reformation about the meaning of the church being apostolic in mission, as well as the solutions offered by selected nineteenth-century radical evangelicals and twentieth-century Pentecostals.

The “Apostolic” Church

As Catholic missions flourished in the Reformation and post-Reformation eras, only Catholic missionaries seriously entertained the possibility of paranormal phenomena occurring. To Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), the “glory of miracles” served two purposes:

“First they are necessary for new faith or for extraordinary missionary persuasion. Secondly they are efficacious and sufficient because . . . they cannot be among the adversaries of the true church and [show] that the true church is among us.”³ In an age of Catholic and Protestant polemics, Bellarmine and other Catholic leaders saw such happenings as upholding the integrity of the Catholic faith and demonstrating its apostolic character.

The battle resurfaced in the nineteenth century in a dispute over miracles attributed to the Jesuit José de Anchieta (1534-1597), a pioneer missionary to Brazil. When Protestant writers referred to the “pretended miracles” of Anchieta,⁴ the British Catholic mission historian Thomas Marshall, shot back, “Who dreams of an Anglican miracle, or a Wesleyan prophet, or a Presbyterian saint?” Contrasting the apostolic endeavors of Catholic missionaries with those of Protestants in India and Burma, he queried, “Who can imagine [Thomas] Middleton [the first Anglican bishop of Calcutta] bidding a stream spring forth in the plains of Bengal? . . . or [the Baptist Adoniram] Judson transfigured? Or [Bishop Reginald] Heber raising the dead?”⁵

Appealing to scripture, Marshall pointedly asked what Jesus meant when

he said to his disciples—“the first missionaries”—that “Ye shall do greater things than these!” (John 14:12). “When did He who gave that promise recall it, or when did He first begin to send forth apostles without the gifts of apostles?” Addressing the heart of the issue, he demanded: “And what new God is this, who has neither the will nor the power to interfere in human affairs, and who is hopelessly fettered by the ‘laws of nature’ as a plant or an insect?” Could it be that “Protestants [have] agreed to accept the definition of the Creator...current among the Hottentots, who considered Him ‘an excellent man, who dwells far beyond the moon, and does no harm to anyone?’”⁶

Of course, in the nineteenth century when Marshall wrote his history, few could imagine a Catholic missionary performing a miracle either. A later Catholic historian, Joseph Schmidlin, observed that while “striking answers to prayer and evidence of grace” could be found in post-Enlightenment Catholic missions, “they show no clearly demonstrable miracles in the strict sense, at least not of the same number and importance as formerly.”⁷ Miracles retained a place in Catholic mission spirituality, but other concerns came to the fore.⁸

The theological combat that commenced in the sixteenth century between Protestants and Catholics had naturally crossed over into the realm of missions. Bellarmine and Marshall understood the continuance of miracles as a mark of the integrity of the Catholic Church. In contrast, Martin Luther and John Calvin had dismissed the possibility of miracles happening after the New Testament period and, by so doing, shaped Protestant views on the miraculous

dimension of the faith for centuries to come.⁹ Seventeenth-century Lutheran and Reformed scholastic theologians perpetuated this outlook. For example, the Basel Reformed theologian Johannes Wollebius found no contemporary need for miracles since they had been “given for the confirmation of the gospel, and they have passed away now that the gospel has been spread and preached among the nations.”¹⁰ Miracles and missions, so characteristic of first-century Christianity, had lost their relevance.¹¹ This explains why William Carey, writing at the close of the eighteenth century, contested the prevailing view “that because the apostles were extraordinary officers and have no proper successors, and because many things which were right for them to do would be unwarrantable for us, therefore [the Great Commission] may not be immediately binding on us...though it was so upon them.”¹²

Consequently, since Protestant missionaries generally did not anticipate the occurrence of miracles (apart from “acts of special providence”), this facet of the Protestant legacy sometimes left them agonizing over why the “apostolic missions” of the Early Church succeeded better than their own endeavors and in a much shorter time.¹³ Could they truly be the successors of the “extraordinary” apostles? Had God left them bereft of the advantages of the early Christians?

Apostolic Credibility

No self-respecting minister or missionary in the nineteenth century would have admitted that his or her work was less than apostolic in nature, although some did not hesitate to point out the shortcomings in the methods of others. Presbyterian preacher Edward

Irving flabbergasted the delegates at the anniversary conference of the London Missionary Society in 1824 by stating that their missionaries would be more effective if they pursued the pattern of the “apostolical school” of depending on God’s provision for their financial needs instead of relying on human means (Mt. 10:9,10).¹⁴ The Congregationalist Rufus Anderson, secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, decried the growing practice of some church organizations that put their missionaries under the authority of “missionary bishops,” whom they considered to be “successors of the apostles.” Referring to 2 Corinthians 12:12, he noted that such officers could not be apostles “since they lack the ‘signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds,’ which St. Paul ...declares to be the needful ‘signs of an apostle.’”¹⁵ Rather, following the “apostolic example” meant “to plant and multiply self-reliant, efficient churches, composed wholly of native converts, each church complete in itself, with pastors of the same race with the people.”¹⁶

Advantages of Apostolic Missions

The discontinuity between first-century and nineteenth-century missions drew considerable attention in mission circles, prompting addresses at conferences, lectureships, articles and books. “In the great work which God has given us to do in this land, that of bringing it from the darkness of heathenism and estrangement from God to the enjoyment of the light which Christ alone can give,” wrote George Rouse, an English Baptist missionary serving in Calcutta, “we cannot help now and again casting our eyes back to the records of the early triumphs of the Gospel.” The result, however, generally prompted “a feeling

of sadness, almost, at times, of despondency, because our success seems so much less than that of the Apostles and their contemporaries.”¹⁷

Many discussed the advantages that early Christian missionaries possessed. The first, and perhaps the most obvious, was the power of working miracles. “If...we could convince [the Indians] that we come with weighty credentials, as shown by our power to work miracles,” said Rouse, “if they saw the lame walk, or the blind see, or the dumb speak, or the dead made alive...their interest would be excited, their attention aroused, and they would listen to the preacher as to one whose message was indeed from another world.”¹⁸ But he lamented, “We have no such power.”¹⁹

Second, early Christian evangelism benefited from factors already set in place to encourage acceptance of the gospel and expedite its expansion. Paul’s status as a rabbi opened doors for him to the synagogues in cities he visited. The Roman road system, protected by the *Pax Romana*, offered a safe means of travel. Furthermore, the prevalence of the Greek language in the empire proved to be a valuable asset.²⁰ Robert Stewart told his United Presbyterian (U.S.A.) colleagues at a conference in Sialkot, India (now in Pakistan), that early Christian missionaries worked under more favorable social conditions. In three lectures entitled “Apostolic and Indian Missions Compared,” he observed that apart from the Jews, “no impassable barrier between tribes and classes, as to association, marriage, eating, and drinking” existed. This gave preachers a boost in the spread of the gospel since “profession of faith in Christ did not then necessarily break the ties of marriage, or family, or

community...Persecution there might be...but not persecution and separation of the same character as that we have in India.”²¹

A third advantage centered on the superior preparation of the early disciples for ministry. Robert Mathew, a missionary to Muslims, contended that the bestowal of languages on the Day of Pentecost enabled the recipients “to communicate the truth to heathen foreigners in their own idiomatic speech, and with all the forcibleness of those to whom the speech was native.”²² Even more importantly, the “apostles enjoyed a special degree and kind of illumination with regard to the questions involved in the founding of the church which has not been granted since their day,” according to Chalmers Martin, a former missionary to Thailand, in lectures presented at Princeton Theological Seminary on the theme “Apostolic and Modern Missions.”²³ Comparing the inspiring accounts of the apostles and their co-workers to the Christians in their own contexts, missionaries generally believed that the early believers stood far in advance of the indigenous workers under their tutelage, who were still too ill-prepared to take the reins of ecclesiastical leadership.²⁴

Advantages of Modern Missions

Despite the perceived advantages of early Christian missionaries, their successors in the nineteenth century frequently exhibited considerable enthusiasm about the apostolic integrity of their own labors assisted by the benefits of modern civilization. Hence, Frederick Trestrail, secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, fluttering above the constraints of logic, confidently told the delegates attending

the 1860 Liverpool Missionary Conference: “Divest the Apostles of miraculous power, and the gift of inspiration...and you have the *modern missionary*, a true successor of the Apostles.”²⁵

In his *New Acts of the Apostles*, Arthur T. Pierson, a well-known promoter of missions and editor of *The Missionary Review of the World*, triumphantly declared, “Recent history argues with the resistless logic of events that Pentecostal wonders may be repeated.” In fact, “this modern missionary century has been made both lustrous and illustrious by outpourings of the Spirit, in some respects surpassing any recorded in Apostolic days.”²⁶ Along with others, Pierson reinterpreted the nature of miracles by proposing that the “signs of an earlier age may have given place to the signs of a later age.” Though no less effective than those of the first century, miracles in his day had “passed from a lower to a higher sphere; from the world of nature to the world of spirit.”²⁷ He documented such providential happenings in a four-volume series labeled *The Miracles of Missions* (1891-1901).

Pierson and many others, such as the Methodist medical missionary Walter Lambuth, applauded the rise of medical missions as a modern application of the “gift of healing” in the ministry of the church. “The special provision of miraculous power for the apostolic age has been succeeded by skilled achievement scarcely less wonderful,” Lambuth told the student volunteers at the third international convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions in 1898. “The highest achievements of modern surgery, which are scarcely less miraculous than the

works of healing of the apostolic age, may be justly claimed for Christ and the extension of His kingdom, for they are the products of Christianity—never being found among heathen nations.”²⁸

No one could deny that modern missions also prospered from improved means of transportation, the protection of colonial administrators, the work of Bible translators and the establishment of educational and charitable institutions around the world. Even the worldwide postal system was celebrated: “We have the mighty power of the press and a complete postal system, instead of Paul’s sole resort to manuscript letters sent by personal friends,” wrote the jubilant Frank Ellinwood, corresponding secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions (USA).²⁹

Finally, some found comfort in the “decline” of the non-Christian religions, notably Hinduism, Islam and Animism. In *The Living Christ and Dying Heathenism*, Johannes Warneck, a Rhenish missionary serving in Indonesia, reported that “thousands, nay millions of heathen in the most diverse stages of civilization have renounced idolatry and entered into fellowship with the living God.”³⁰ On the Indian subcontinent, George Rouse claimed that the combined influence of “European morality, civilization, [and] education is enormous” and had begun to cause the power of Hinduism to wane.³¹ Such grandiose and wishful assessments may have brought comfort to missionaries and the faithful at the home base who supported missions with their finances, but the emerging industry of mission statistics produced a different picture: After more than a century of endeavor, Protestant missions could report only

3,613,391 communicants and adherents in the census of 1900.³²

Radical Evangelicals with Supernatural Strategies

Though triumphal assessments readily appear in the missionary literature, one can also find despairing comments about the general failure of the modern enterprise.³³ This helps to explain the growing interest in the “outpouring of the Holy Spirit” for spiritual empowerment that can be found across the Protestant missionary spectrum, among postmillennialists, amillennialists and the rising cadre of premillennialists. Thus, in his keynote address to the General Missionary Conference at Allahabad, India in 1872, Presbyterian missionary John Morrison queried, “Are we not all agreed on it already? Do we not all feel its importance? Are we not all engaged already in prayer for this as the blessing which is recognized as the essential pre-requisite to success in our great work?”³⁴ Sixteen years following the Allahabad gathering, missionary John Hewlett, serving with the London Missionary Society in Benares, closed his remarks to the London Missionary Conference with this challenge: “May the Christian Church be stirred up fervently to pray that the native workers so trained may receive a Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost, in order to reproduce within them the apostolic character, to make them successful in bringing many of their countrymen from the power of Satan to the kingdom of God’s dear Son.”³⁵

Ironically, the worldviews of indigenous Christians—closer in important respects to that of the biblical period than the Western worldview of the missionaries—prompted them to pray

like their biblical counterparts. At the London conference, Friends missionary Henry Clark related that during the French attack on Madagascar in 1885, he discovered that the “preachers [had] turned to the Old Testament history—the attacks made by the Babylonians and Assyrians on the Jewish nation—and they seemed to believe that God would interfere for them as He did for the Jews of old.”³⁶ Not surprisingly, when reports of revivals told of indigenous Christians experiencing the outpouring of the Spirit, missionaries struggled to accept the legitimacy of the accompanying phenomena (for example, visions, dreams, healings, persons falling to the ground presumably by the power of God).³⁷

Amid swirling controversy, North American and European radical evangelicals anticipated that the “signs and wonders,” which had accompanied gospel proclamation after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (the “former rain”), would now be restored in the final end-times outpouring (the “latter rain”), just prior to the close of human history.³⁸ Partially influencing the course of later premillennial mission strategists, Anthony Norris Groves, the patron saint of Christian Brethren missions, echoed Irving’s call for a return to the apostolic methods of the New Testament.³⁹ The appeal to passages like Matt. 10:9,10 (“Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep” [NIV]) contributed to the rise of “faith missions.”⁴⁰ Such “radical strategies” in the conduct of missions relied on some kind of supernatural component to make

them work, with the “faith principle” fundamental to them all.

They also exhibited little hesitation in criticizing the seemingly pedestrian and unproductive practices of the larger mission enterprise. With the premillennial clock of Christ’s imminent coming ticking ever more loudly, along with mounting concern over the disappointing number of converts and the many regions of the world still without a gospel witness, they focused their attention on a divine infusion of supernatural power to bring closure to the Great Commission. When the Maine Baptist pastor, Frank Sandford, returned from a world tour of the missions in 1891, he perceived the “utter hopelessness of ever evangelizing this world by any methods of Christian work then in existence.” As a result, “I determined to turn to apostolic methods.”⁴¹

For some, like A. B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and A. J. Gordon, president of the Boston Missionary Training School, this included prayer for the sick on the mission field. It was hoped that when non-Christians saw demonstrations of God’s power, they would convert to the faith. “There is no hint...in the New Testament, that the age of miracles is past,” wrote Simpson, “that is one of the axioms of modern theology, but it has no countenance from the Scriptures.”⁴² In agreement with Simpson, Gordon said that the “church in every direction needs to be re-shaped to the apostolic model and re-invested with her apostolic powers.”⁴³

By the 1880s and ‘90s, some missionaries, desperate to learn the vernacular languages and convinced that

the Holy Spirit might bestow unlearned languages for the gospel to be speedily proclaimed around the world, began to pray for the restoration of the gift of tongues (Mark 16:17).⁴⁴ Before the turn of the twentieth century, the leaders of one Bible institute in America even encouraged their students to seek for the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the gift of tongues so they effectively could engage in world evangelization, yet having “sought in vain, month after month,” the student body did not receive the gift.⁴⁵

Others looked to divine interference in the cosmic realm to overthrow Satan’s control of the world (1 John 5:19) and thereby expedite evangelism in the mission lands. In a widely read tract entitled *Intercessory Foreign Missionaries*, Alfred Street, a Presbyterian missionary to Hainan, China, urged Christians to intercede in prayer for missionaries, reminding them that “an intercessory Foreign Missionary” labors in the “realm of ‘the heavenlies’ instead of among visible men.” The “spiritual hosts of wickedness” are formed into “various grades of rulers organized into invisible kingdoms of darkness,” such as those mentioned in Daniel 10: the “Prince of Greece” and the “Prince of Persia.” Accordingly, Street argued, “We can reach a Chinaman by speaking face to face with him, but we can strike the spiritual Prince of China only by way of the place ‘above, where Christ is’ ever living to make intercession.”⁴⁶ Taking this concept to sea, Sandford purchased two ships (the “Kingdom Fleet”) to sail with his followers—all clad in white attire as “ambassadors for Christ”—along the coasts of the continents. As they navigated past

country after country, they prayed that the satanic “covering” would be removed so that others successfully could evangelize therein.⁴⁷

“Apostolic” ventures such as these, however, could not escape the severe scrutiny of critics both from within and outside the missionary community, and even between radical evangelicals themselves. In defending traditional mission methods, Robert Needham Cust, an Anglican linguist and mission strategist, sniffed at “untrained, and partially educated, enthusiasts, full of wild schemes...upsetting all existing practices.” He diagnosed the culprits as “hare-brained excited young men and women, full of so-called zeal, empty of all experience, ready to adopt the last new hallucination, such as Faith-healing [and the] Pentecostal gift of vernacular languages.”⁴⁸ Obviously, it would be better if such misguided zealots would realize that “God’s wheels grind slowly: even in the Evangelization of the World it is not the Method of God to give immediate results: let modern Missionaries take that fact to their comfort, and their guidance.”⁴⁹ But radical evangelicals had to hurry because the angel stood poised to blow the heavenly trumpet at the return of Christ.

The “Apostolic Faith” Restored

With this historical-apocalyptic vision of world evangelization, early Pentecostals called themselves the “Apostolic Faith movement.”⁵⁰ The sign of the end-times outpouring of the Spirit—Pentecostal baptism—brought with it empowerment to witness to the nations through the gift of new languages, pray for the sick, cast out demons and exercise the charismatic gifts in revitalizing the church (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

At this juncture in history, the new army of Pentecostal missionaries could not afford to imitate the methods of the mainline missionaries, or so many thought. J. Roswell Flower, the first missionary secretary of the Assemblies of God, drew attention to their unique vocation since the “Holy Spirit has called them to the field in vital relationship to the second coming of our Lord.” Consequently, “they cannot follow the methods laid down by those who have gone before them, neither can they bend their energies in building up charitable institutions, hospitals and schools as do the denominational societies.”⁵¹ Truly apostolic missionaries would pour their energies into preaching as the midnight hour of eschatology approached.

At the very time when Flower wrote these words, while sitting in his office in Springfield, Missouri—five hundred miles from the nearest ocean—Assemblies of God missionaries in the far-flung mission fields had begun to do exactly what he feared.⁵² Though motivated by an end-times urgency and anticipating miraculous displays of power to quickly bring their hearers to Christ, the realities of mission work brought a soberness to their outlook. Unexpected and time-consuming challenges and responsibilities confronted them and offset the romanticized glitter of supernatural happenings. Those who persevered followed the practices of other Protestant missionaries in how they pioneered churches, paid Christian helpers and directed charitable ministries. Perhaps in a moment of candor, Pentecostal missionaries might have agreed with Custer: “God’s wheels grind slowly.”

The testimony of Pentecostals to the power of the Holy Spirit, reflected in thousands of published accounts of God’s power to convert, heal and transform people, eventually prompted many branches of Christianity to review their understanding of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life and mission of the church.⁵³ The later charismatic renewal in the historic Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the interest in signs and wonders among conservative evangelicals, indicate that the Pentecostal movement has helped revive an important element in the apostolic dimension of mission that has endured.⁵⁴ Thus, Edward Le Joly, a Jesuit missiologist in India influenced by the renewal, noted that since the bulk of the populations in many countries have yet to hear the good news, “it is to be expected that God will back his messengers with signs and miracles that will give credence to their message.”⁵⁵

Notwithstanding, Pentecostals have not held a monopoly on apostolic ministry.⁵⁶ “To be apostolic is to be as committed as God’s Apostle Son to carrying out the mission of the Father,” wrote Lutheran missiologist Robert Scudieri. “The Son is sent as a missionary to the world, to bring the world back to God. The church that is apostolic will follow that same model.”⁵⁷ Despite an earlier exclusiveness toward other Christians, praise later surfaced in Pentecostal literature for missionaries who had not received the Pentecostal baptism and spoken in tongues. “We do not mean to say that others who believe in the new birth have wholly lost [the supernatural character of the Christian religion],” wrote Bennett Lawrence, who authored the first history of the Pentecostal movement, “but we desire a return to

New Testament power.”⁵⁸ Therefore, while Pentecostals and other Christians have agreed on the meaning and importance of proclaiming Christ’s redemptive work, their perception of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in relationship to that witness has differed. As the movement matured, Pentecostals paid tribute to predecessors who had faithfully borne witness to Christ in mission. “Like flashes of light in darkest days of Church history gleam the records of individuals who were obviously dedicated to God and filled with His Spirit,” according to one reflection on the history of missions. Heroes included Columba and Raymond Lull, and later luminaries such as Justinian von Welz, Christian Friedrich Schwartz, David Brainerd, William Carey, Henry Martyn, Adoniram Judson, J. Hudson Taylor, John R. Mott, A. J. Gordon, D. W. Stearns and Edward (“Praying”) Hyde.⁵⁹

With the Pentecostal-charismatic tradition entering the twenty-first century, the restorationist ethos, charismatic concept of leadership and rock-ribbed pragmatism that marked it in the past have continued to thrive within the ranks. This explains why complaints predictably arise within about the apparent “powerlessness” of the “traditional methods” being used and their lack of dramatic success. New strategies, at times scandalizing to the faithful and occasionally revisiting radical strategies from the past, have been proposed to bring about the rapid evangelization of the world.⁶⁰ Perhaps the ultimate attempt to resolve the dilemma has been recent claims to the restoration of the apostolic office itself.⁶¹ At the same time, Pentecostals and

charismatics steadily have become more holistic in their approaches to mission. Without discounting the importance of proclamation that the new strategies sometimes wish to prioritize above all other concerns, their mission activities reveal an increasingly balanced view of ministering to the spiritual and material needs of humankind.⁶²

In *The Progress of World-Wide Missions* (1924), Robert Hall Glover, the respected China missionary, contended that the New Testament remained “the best, the safest, [and] the most practical textbook on missionary principles and practices for all time.” Nevertheless, the methods employed by Jesus and his disciples still required “reasonable adaptation.”⁶³ Pentecostals and charismatics have cast such hesitations aside, though sometimes to their detriment. They feel called, not to adapt, but to follow the model. The overall results help explain the unprecedented expansion of Christianity in the twentieth century.

For this vibrant sector of Christianity, miracles and the charismatic gifts are indispensable to the carrying out of apostolic mission in today’s world. After all, Jesus had told his disciples, “All who have faith in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these” (John 14:12, TNIV). And yet, without the labors of earlier missionaries who struggled to understand the apostolic nature of their own mission endeavors, the achievements of Pentecostal and charismatic missionaries would have fallen far short of their hopes and dreams.

End Notes

1. This essay has been prepared in honor of the contributions of Drs. R. Paul and Wardine Wood, longtime missionaries and professors of mission, to the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Springfield, Missouri. It also appears in *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in the 21st Century*, the first release in a new monograph series, *Encounter: The Pentecostal Ministry Series*.
2. "The Constantinopolitan Creed" in *Creeds of the Churches*, 3rd ed., ed. John H. Leith (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 33.
3. Bellarmine quoted in Robert Bruce Mullin, *Miracles and the Modern Religious Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 12.
4. Daniel P. Kidder, a pioneer Methodist missionary in Brazil, and J. C. Fletcher wrote of Anchieta, "His self-denial as a missionary, his labor in acquiring and methodizing a barbarous language, and his services to the State, were sufficient to secure to him an honest fame and a precious memory; but in the latter part of the ensuing century he was made a candidate for saintship, and his real virtues were made to pass for little in comparison with the power by which it was pretended that he had wrought miracles"; see *Brazil and the Brazilians, Portrayed in Historical and Descriptive Sketches* (Philadelphia: Childs & Peterson, 1857), 115-116.
5. T. W. M. Marshall, *Christian Missions: Their Agents, and Their Results*, 4th ed. (New York: D. & J. Sadlier and Co., 1880), 2:145.
6. *Ibid.*, 2:143.
7. Joseph Schmidlin, *Catholic Mission Theory* (Techny, Ill.: Mission Press, S.V.D., 1931), 345.
8. In the face of Post-Enlightenment skepticism, the Catholic Church reaffirmed belief in miracles: The "Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith" (*Dei Filius*), approved by the First Vatican Council (1869-1870), states: "In order that the obedience of our faith might be in harmony with reason, God willed that to the interior help of the Holy Spirit there should be joined exterior proofs of His revelation, to wit, divine facts, and especially miracles and prophecies, which, as they manifestly display the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are most certain proofs of His divine revelation adapted to the intelligence of all men; see *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees* (Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books and Publishers, 1912), 224. Beginning in 1967, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal revived the tradition of miracles and the Charismatic gifts in Catholic evangelization; see Ralph Martin and Peter Williamson, eds., *John Paul II and the New Evangelization* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995).
9. Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of John: Chapters 14-16*, in *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Daniel E. Poellet, 55 vols. (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1958-1986), 24:79, 180-181; John Calvin, "Prefatory Address to King Francis," in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I: 14-18. See also Mullin, *Miracles*, 12-13; Jon Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Postbiblical Miracles* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 33-35.
10. Johannes Wollebius, *Compendium Theologiae Christianae in Reformed Dogmatics: Seventeenth-Century Reformed Theology Through the Writings of Wollebius, Voetius, and Turretin*, ed. John W. Beardslee III (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 141. Wollebius further states on the same page: "So the apostles promised neither more miracles nor more prophecies, but rather made boasting about prophecies and miracles a mark of the antichristian 'church' (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13). And Christ himself declares that he will not recognize such [as perform miracles and prophecy] (Mt. 7:22)."
11. *Ibid.*, 181, n.102. Beardslee observes: "The development of missionary concern is one of the great factors differentiating the orthodoxy of [Charles] Hodge's time from that of Wollebius, F. Turretin, and even Voetius, none of whom shows interest in it."
12. William Carey, *An Inquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* in Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham, Ala.: New Hope, 1991), E.5.
13. Mullin, *Miracles*, 14-15, 98-99.
14. Edward Irving, *Missionaries After the Apostolic School* (Tientsin: Tientsin Printing Co., 1887), 97-100.
15. Rufus Anderson, *Foreign Missions: Their Relations and Claims* (New York: Charles Scribner and Co., 1869), 115-116.
16. *Ibid.*, 117.
17. G. H. Rouse, "Apostolic and Indian Missions Compared," *Indian Evangelical Review* IX (July 1875): 1.
18. *Ibid.*, 2.

19. *Ibid.*, 3.
20. F. F. Ellinwood, *The "Great Conquest"; or, Miscellaneous Papers on Missions* (New York: William Rankin, 1876), 22.
21. Robert Stewart, *Apostolic and Indian Missions Compared* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1903), 27-28.
22. R. C. Mathew, "On Bazaar Preaching," *Report of the General Missionary Conference, Held at Allahabad, 1872-73*, ed. J. Barton, et al. (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1873), 41.
23. Chalmers Martin, *Apostolic and Modern Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898), 46.
24. The "Resolution on the Native Church," passed at the 1879 Missionary Conference of South India and Ceylon, states: "This Conference, while convinced of the great importance of promoting by every judicious means the self-support and self-government of the Native Church, desires to place on record its conviction that the Native Church is in no part of it as yet in a position to dispense with European guidance and support; and that any premature step in this direction would be highly injurious to its healthy development and ultimate stability"; *The Missionary Conference: South India and Ceylon, 1879* (Madras: Addison & Co., 1880), I:402. For a later discussion of "native agents," see John L. Nevius, "Historical Review of Missionary Methods—Past and Present—in China, and How Far Satisfactory," *Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China. Held at Shanghai, May 7-20, 1890* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1890), 171-176.
25. Frederick Trestrail, "On Native Churches," *Conference on Missions Held in 1860 at Liverpool* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1860), 279. Joseph Angus, principal of Regent's Park College in London, told the delegates attending the sixth general conference of the Evangelical Alliance, "The Christians of the nineteenth century are more able to preach the Gospel to the whole world than the Christians of the first century were to preach it to the world of their day"; "Duty of the Churches in Relation to Missions," in *History, Essays, Orations, and Other Documents of the Sixth General Conference of the Evangelical Alliance, Held in New York, October 2-12, 1873*, ed. Philip Schaff and S. Irenaeus Prime (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1874), 583-587.
26. Arthur T. Pierson, *The New Acts of the Apostles; or the Marvels of Modern Missions* (New York: Baker and Taylor Co., 1894), 16.
27. *Ibid.*, 298-299. See Pierson's *Modern Mission Century; Viewed as a Cycle of Divine Working* (New York: Baker and Taylor Co., 1901).
28. Walter R. Lambuth, M.D., "The Scriptural Claims and Spiritual Ends of Medical Missions," in *The Student Missionary Appeal: Addresses at the Third International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions Held at Cleveland, Ohio, February 23-27, 1898* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1898), 506; Pierson, *New Acts*, 382-385; also the papers presented on "Medical Missions" in *Report of the Centenary Conference on the Protestant Missions of the World, Held in Exeter Hall (June 9th-19th), London, 1888*, ed. James Johnston (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1888), II: 101-107.
29. Ellinwood, "Great Conquest," 23-24.
30. Warneck Joh, *The Living Christ and Dying Heathenism*, trans. Neil Buchanan (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1909), 17.
31. Rouse, "Apostolic and Indian Missions," 12.
32. Harlan P. Beach, *A Geography and Atlas of Protestant Missions* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1906), II: 19. On the embarrassment of the statistics, see William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 99-100.
33. T. J. Scott refutes such comments in "Is the Modern Missionary Enterprise a Failure?" *Indian Evangelical Review* II (October 1873): 137-151.
34. John Hunter Morrison, "On Prayer for the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit," *Report of the General Missionary Conference*, 2.
35. John Hewlett, "Training of Workers," *Report*, II: 376.
36. Henry E. Clark, response in "The Mission-Fields of the World," *Report*, I: 297. Clark then stated: "Did He not interfere? I believe He did. I believe in prayer, and I believe the Malagasy Church and nation were saved by prayer."
37. This is a point that I make in "Pentecostal Phenomena and Revivals in India: Implications for Indigenous Church Leadership," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 12 (July 1996): 112-115, 116-117.

38. Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 3.
39. See Anthony Norris Groves, *Christian Devotedness, or The Consideration of Our Saviour's Precept, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,"* 2d ed. (London: James Nisbet, 1829).
40. Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions: From Hudson Taylor to Present Day Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994), 11-31.
41. Frank W. Sandford, "An Introduction of the Editor to His Readers," *The Everlasting Gospel*, January 1, 1901, 2. His seven journals of traveling across America and overseas were published under the title *Around the World* (Great Falls, N.H.: F. L. Slapleigh, Book and Job Printer, 1890-1891). Sandford had a strong influence on early Pentecostal leader Charles F. Parham; see James R. Goff, Jr., *Fields White Unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 73-74.
42. A. B. Simpson, "The Supernatural Gifts and Ministries of the Church," *Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, January 19, 1898, 53.
43. A. J. Gordon, *The Ministry of Healing: Miracles of Cure in All Ages* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, n.d.), 2.
44. Edward A. Lawrence, *Modern Missions in the East: Their Methods, Successes, and Limitations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1895), 146.
45. Charles F. Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 2d ed. (Baxter Springs, Kan.: Apostolic Faith Bible College, 1910), 35. The unnamed school may have been Frank W. Sandford's Holy Ghost and Us Bible School at Shiloh, Maine.
46. Alfred E. Street, *Intercessory Foreign Missionaries* (Boston: American Advent Mission Society, n.d.), 4-6. It was also published by the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions and later by Moody Press.
47. Frank W. Sandford, *The Golden Light Upon the Two Americas* (Amherst, N.H.: Kingdom Press, 1974), 7-10, 21, 50-51.
48. Robert Needham Cust, *Essay on the Prevailing Methods of the Evangelization of the Non-Christian World* (London: Luzac & Co., 1894), 197.
49. *Ibid.*, 10.
50. The first history of the Pentecostal movement, written by B. F. Lawrence, was entitled *The Apostolic Faith Restored* (St. Louis: Gospel Publishing House, 1916). See also Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 18-20.
51. J. Roswell Flower, "The Pentecostal Commission," *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 12, 1920, 12. Interestingly, missionary Lillian Trasher, who had begun what would eventually become the world-famous Lillian Trasher Memorial Orphanage in Assiout, Egypt, had joined the Assemblies of God in 1919, just seven months before the publication of Flower's editorial. His statement may have been an attempt to limit any further development of charitable institutions. See Lillian Trasher, "Little Orphans Not Forgotten," *Weekly Evangel*, March 20, 1915, 4; "Assiout, Egypt," *Christian Evangel*, January 25, 1919, 10; also *Letters from Lillian* (Springfield, Mo.: Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions, 1983).
52. See Gary B. McGee, "Saving Souls or Saving Lives: The Tension Between Ministries of Word and Deed in Assemblies of God Missiology," *Paraclete* 28 (Fall 1994): 11-23.
53. See Kilian McDonnell, ed., *Presence, Power, Praise: Documents on the Charismatic Renewal*, 3 vols. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1980).
54. For a description of charismatic missions, see Edward K. Pousson, *Spreading the Flame: Charismatic Churches and Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).
55. Edward Le Joly, S.J., *Evangelisation: Theory and Practice* (Bombay: St Paul Publications, 1986), 234. See also the late Archbishop Gabriel Gonsuam Ganaka, "Evangelization in the Church of Jos, Nigeria," in *John Paul II and the New Evangelization*, 101-110.
56. Beginning in 1913, Pentecostals themselves divided over the meaning of "apostolic." "Jesus Name" or "Oneness" (non-Trinitarian) Pentecostals claimed to have restored the "full message" of the apostles. This entailed a modal monarchian view of the Godhead and water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38); see Frank J. Ewart, *The Phenomenon of Pentecost*, rev. ed. (Hazelwood, Mo.: Word Aflame Press, 1975), 110. As a result, Trinitarian Pentecostals generally avoided the use of apostolic in the names of their churches.

57. Robert J. Scudieri, *The Apostolic Church: One, Holy, Catholic and Missionary* (Chino, Cal.: Lutheran Society for Missiology, 1996), 79; see also R. Pierce Beaver, "The Apostolate of the Church," in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1961), 258-268.
58. Lawrence, *Apostolic Faith Restored*, 13.
59. Noel Perkin and John Garlock, *Our World Witness: A Survey of Assemblies of God Foreign Missions* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1963), 17-21; see also Horace McCracken, *History of Church of God Missions* (Cleveland Tenn.: Church of God Mission Board, 1943), 157-168. Cf., *Missionary Manual* (Springfield, Mo.: Foreign Missions Department of the Assemblies of God, 1931), 6-7.
60. On the restoration of speaking in tongues as unlearned languages for missionary preaching, see Richard M. Riss, *Latter Rain: The Latter Rain movement of 1948 and the Mid-Twentieth Century Evangelical Awakening* (Mississauga, Ont.: Honeycomb Visual Productions, 1987), 87-88, 131-139. In reference to his call for "strategic-level spiritual warfare" in 1996, C. Peter Wagner wrote: "I believe that God is now giving His missionary force the greatest power boost it has had since the time that William Carey went to India in 1793"; *Encountering the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1996), 46.
61. There have been precedents for the restoration of the apostolic office in the last two hundred years. For the current debate, see C. Peter Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets: The Foundation of the Church* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 2000); cf., Vinson Synan, "Who Are the Modern Apostles?" *Ministries Today*, March/April 1992, 42-47.
62. See Douglas Petersen, *Not By Might Nor By Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1996); Murray Dempster, "A Theology of the Kingdom—A Pentecostal Contribution," in *Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel*, ed. Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1999), 45-75; David Shibley, *A Force in the Earth: The Move of the Holy Spirit in World Evangelization* (Orlando: Creation House, 1997), 125-132.
63. Robert Hall Glover, *The Progress of World-Wide Missions*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939), 30, 32.

Models of Apostolic Ministry: A Practical Theology Approach

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What does apostolic ministry in the local church look like? Current discussion tends to focus on the title or designation of apostolic office, emphasizing the person who holds the office and suggesting that the office is the essential factor in determining Kingdom expansion. However, this emphasis subordinates the functional component of apostolic ministry found in Scripture and the practical evidence clearly exhibited in numerous churches across the nation. In a word, the function of apostolic ministry is “mission,” that is, cooperating with God as he works to redeem the world unto himself. This places evangelism and discipleship in the driver’s seat.

A secondary issue concerns methods of ministry or the ways people organize to fulfill the mission. Because ministry methods are contextually defined, each faith community will tend to determine leader and follower roles according to its cultural setting. This simply means that apostolic ministries will vary in their style of governance.

In summary, a practical theology of apostolic ministry incorporates vibrant evangelism that is expressed through well-equipped servants using culturally

sensitive methods. Across the United States, examples of this functional approach to apostolic ministry abound. The following pages present churches of various governing structures, none of which identifies a person in the office of apostle. They range in size from a few hundred persons to several thousands and represent the major geographic regions of the country.

The narratives come from phone interviews conducted with the senior leadership of these churches. While churches from a variety of denominations could serve as examples, the primary use of Assemblies of God churches has to do with the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary’s immediate connection to its denominational network.

**First Assembly of God, Ft. Myers,
Florida**

Dan Betzer, pastor

Website: www.thesilverdome.org

Mission is the lifeblood of the church. It forms the foundation for everything we do.—Dan Betzer

Several days a week, Dan Betzer broadcasts inspiring messages to the

greater Ft. Myers, Florida, area via radio and television. It is one of the many ministries First Assembly provides from its silver-domed nerve center.

To capitalize on the broadcasts' geographic reach, First Assembly has extended its physical presence into the region through a number of full-service ministry sites. Although each site has a host pastor, the leadership, membership and stewardship of these ministry sites are centralized under First Assembly. Betzer serves as the senior pastor for the entire constituency, preaching regularly at each ministry site. Through this method, the leadership of First Assembly has been intentional about ensuring that mission permeates every aspect of the church's ministry. While its media ministries extend into the whole region, First Assembly in Ft. Myers is reaching and discipling more people today through its satellite ministry approach.

Cedar Park Assembly of God, Bothell, Washington
Dr. Joe Fuiten, pastor
Website: www.cedarpark.org

We are here to minister to the needs of people from birth to the grave. — Joe Fuiten

Few people would think it unusual for Cedar Park Assembly of God to create a K-12 school to serve the community's education needs. However, many people might be surprised by the church's breadth of ministries that address life issues from dealing with infertility to choosing burial facilities.

With a strong commitment to the proclamation of the Word, community service and the leveraging of its resources, Cedar Park seeks to develop a

holistic approach to ministry. By incarnating Christ in the community, the church meets people at the natural and critical junctures of their lives. In the leveraging of its resources, Cedar Park takes a vision first approach. They structure the church's assets to acquire the property or resources for future ministry developments.

By being a birth-to-the-grave resource for faith-based services to its community, Cedar Park proclaims the gospel where its message is not normally heard.

James River Assembly of God, Ozark, Missouri
John Lindell, pastor
Website: www.jamesriver.org

James River is on a mission to reach the unchurched people of southwest Missouri. — John Lindell

Utilizing a model of ministry that focuses upward in worship, inward in commitment and outward in evangelism, James River Assembly of God reaches several thousand people each week. With a passion to extend its ministry boundaries in southwest Missouri, the church has committed itself to a strategic church-planting initiative that releases key resource persons, contributes substantial financial grants and provides parental guidance to the new church throughout the maturation process.

These congregations now minister to hundreds of people, demonstrating the success of these efforts. Though each church plant stands alone, all have elements of their mother's DNA: a strong commitment to weekly prayer, expository preaching, and evangelistic outreach.

By employing a biological model of church planting, James River Assembly of God fulfills its call to reach the unchurched people of southwest Missouri.

Sheffield Family Life Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Dr. George Westlake, Jr., pastor

Website:

www.sheffieldfamilylifecenter.org

We believe that everyone seeking to be active in a ministry role needs a vital biblical foundation.—George Westlake

A thriving urban megachurch, Sheffield Family Life Center exemplifies the characteristics so many multicultural churches pursue: inspirational worship, dynamic preaching, multicultural representation in leadership and the creative energy needed to tackle the tough issues urban populations face. Perhaps the thing that singles out Sheffield from many other churches of a similar demographic is the extent to which it allocates resources to equip people for ministry. Its church-based Bible institute functions at a college equivalent level, even offering the study of the biblical languages.

Pastor Westlake has a strong commitment to this Bible institute model, personally teaching several of the Bible and theology courses. The design not only equips people with the skills to be better teachers, preachers, counselors, and leaders, it enhances these skills within the context of the church's evangelistic outreach. Thorough preparation in the Word of God enables these leaders to be ready to give a biblical response to the issues they encounter in their urban community.

This biblical priority obviously works well, as Sheffield has trained several hundred people in its institute. Most are actively involved in fulfilling the church's mission to minister to the unreached populations in urban Kansas City and around the world.

Bethel Temple Assembly of God, Hampton, Virginia

Ron Johnson, pastor

Website: www.bethel-temple.org

If we are going to be a missional church, we must instill the church's vision and mission in every single person, beginning at the nursery school level.—Ron Johnson

When it comes to apostolic models of ministry, Bethel Temple Assembly typifies the traditional Pentecostal approach. A strong commitment to plant churches in a number of other states, as well as its own region, and around the world has resulted in the salvation of thousands of people.

Using the Ephesians 4:11,12 model of the fivefold ministries as their framework, Bethel Temple helps people understand their giftings, equips them for service and releases them into ministry. The church enacts this model through seven pillars on which every ministry of Bethel Temple rests: evangelism, worship, care, discipleship, life, expansion and prayer.

By investing leaders, members and funds, Bethel has demonstrated the principle of sowing and reaping: The more people and money the church gives away, the more people and money God returns. Consequently, the church has never experienced a drop in attendance or in giving.

River of Life Assembly of God, Cold Spring, Minnesota
Denny Curran, pastor
Website: www.riveroflifeag.org

While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them (Acts 13:2, NASB).

Imagine the events that led the elders of the Antioch church to commission Barnabas and Saul for their frontier mission. This grassroots apostolic initiative resulted in a great harvest of souls and the planting of several churches that continued the mission. In a similar fashion, several pastors from the Central Section of the Minnesota District Council of the Assemblies of God met together in the early 1990s to consider how they could advance the mission of God to the unreached peoples of their area. Sensing the need for new churches to accomplish this task, they looked among their number and chose Denny Curran to plant a new church. Thus, River of Life Assembly of God in Cold Spring, Minnesota, was born.

While there may be a variety of reasons for this grassroots movement’s success, three vital components of this initiative rise above the others: (1) a sensitivity to and dependence upon the leading of the Holy Spirit, (2) a mutual accountability to resource the church plant and (3) a commitment to create reproducing churches. This Spirit-driven, mutually accountable, grassroots church planting movement offers a viable model for continuing the apostolic mission to reach the unchurched peoples of our nation.

Evangel Church Assembly of God, Sun City, Arizona

Melvin Holmquist, planting pastor
Website: www.evangelchurchag.com

Looking at the developing communities around us, we saw a field white unto harvest and asked the Lord, “What can we do?” —Melvin Holmquist

Beyond the retirement community of Sun City, Arizona, Evangel Church saw the changing demographics in the developing area around them. Because of a Spirit-inspired vision to extend its ministry, the church had a passionate desire to reach these communities with the gospel. Recognizing the generational make-up of Evangel’s congregation, Pastor Melvin Holmquist knew that reaching these communities would require a different model of ministry. Through a series of divine appointments, God brought to the congregation Lee McFarland, a young man whose unique skills equipped him to reach the people in these developing communities. Within a few months, Radiant Church was born in Surprise, Arizona.

Evangel’s wholehearted commitment to communicating the gospel to a younger generation compelled them to give birth to a new church. It did not matter to them that this new church would look distinctly different. Through their prayer and support, they ensured that Radiant Church would be equipped to meet the needs of a new generation.

New Life Church, Springfield, Missouri
Cal Swenson, pastor
Website: www.new-lifechurch.org

We are reaching a generation of people who have never been a part of any church fellowship. —Cal Swenson

After picking up their free bagels and coffee at the café, visitors to New Life Church take their seats in a candle-lit auditorium where an emcee greets them with a, “Welcome to New Life!” Here they listen to a contemporary worship band that is supported by a state-of-the-art lights, sound and projection systems.

Using this casual, seeker-oriented style, New Life seeks to connect people to God. Its success is evident in the people who come to Christ. In recent years, at least one person has committed his or her life to Jesus every Sunday.

For New Life Church, a contemporary style is the way to fulfill their mission. Though their methods may differ from those of other churches, one thing is clear—people are indeed connecting to God.

**National Community Church,
Washington, DC**
Mark Batterson, pastor
Website: www.theaterchurch.com

Our commitment to marketplace ministry directs our energies toward reaching our culture not changing it.—Mark Batterson

Deciding on a marketplace ministry approach, National Community Church chooses to take its worship services to the places people naturally congregate—theaters that are highly visible and easily accessible. Their only acquired property will house a coffee shop through which they can learn the language of the community and build relationships with people.

Due to its marketplace approach, National Community Church has found it necessary to operate with a relationally

oriented style of leadership and a fluid organizational structure that makes it possible to capitalize on ministry opportunities as they arise. With a proven method for evangelism, National Community Church is poised to extend its marketplace ministry into other locations in the Metro D.C. area. As it does, the results will be transformed lives, and with transformed lives comes a transformed culture.

**Canyon View Christian Fellowship,
San Diego, California**
Mike Quinn, pastor
Website: www.cvcf.com

We are a church of small groups, not a church with small groups.—Pastor Mike Quinn

With a firm commitment to reorient its ministry around the small groups model, the leadership of Canyon View Christian Fellowship began reallocating its monetary and personnel resources. The result has been a substantial influx of new people and new believers into the church body. About fifty percent of the church’s new believers come to faith directly or indirectly through the small groups ministry. It is the main front door into the church and the means by which the back door remains closed.

Small groups are more than a single program of ministry in the church. They are the primary engine that drives the evangelistic mission. With mission as the guiding principle, Teresa Quinn, small groups pastor, invests significant time in training the group leaders to be the first point of contact in the church’s relational evangelism and pastoral care. The church has grown numerically as it reaches new people with the gospel. It has remained healthy as the church’s

members take responsibility to meet the ministry needs of the community.

North Coast Church, Vista, California
Larry Osborne, pastor
Website: www.northcoastchurch.com

We sensed a need to expand our ministry to reach more people. We decided that video offered us a solution.—Larry Osborne

The previous church examples have one thing in common—all are affiliated with the Assemblies of God. The final example of a missional church deviates from this affiliation. North Coast Church in Vista, California, is on the leading edge of the church-planting movement. To reach the various demographical groups of its community, the church has multiple worship sites. Each service has live music for its worship and a facilitator who emcees the service and introduces videotaped sermon. While some may question whether the video component is too impersonal, the feedback of those who visit indicates it does not create a barrier to a meaningful worship experience. The evidence of its effectiveness is in the results. North Coast Church is experiencing exponential growth.

Several hundred churches now use this model of ministry across America. Churches committed to apostolic ministry understand that media technology provides an invaluable tool for fulfilling their mission.

Conclusion

The examples above illustrate the function, not the office, of apostolic ministry. Demonstrating the priority of evangelism and discipleship as the

defining elements of this function, they provide evidence that more than one governing structure or ministry method may be used to fulfill the mission. Clearly, churches can embody apostolic ministry in a variety of ways.

Therefore, the practical challenge before churches today is to find creative ways to incarnate the gospel in their communities. Functioning in apostolic ministry is not the responsibility of only a few individuals. Rather, each congregation has a divine calling to participate with God in his mission to redeem the world. This is our primary task.

Introducing “Encounter: The Pentecostal Ministry Series”

Encounter: Journal for Pentecostal Ministry exists to serve the Church of Jesus Christ by bringing transforming theological and professional insight to bear on the practice of ministry in the Pentecostal tradition.

With that mind, the Encounter editorial team, in cooperation with the larger Assemblies of God Theological Seminary community, has purposed to launch a new monograph series titled “Encounter, the Pentecostal Ministry Series.”

The first monograph, *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in the 21st Century*, is now available to our readers and, indeed, all who are interested in the nature of apostolic ministry in the contemporary Church.

“A New Apostolic Reformation” calling for the restoration of the apostolic office is being widely heralded in many quarters of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement. This new interest in apostles and their leadership potential for today is being advanced by a growing body of popular-level writings from the leaders of the movement who are eager to “jump-start” a lethargic North American Church. A few academic theologians have also become proponents for the restoration of the apostolic office but, in the main, the issue has received short shrift in scholarly discussion. Given the rising crescendo of the debate, careful

biblical and theological analysis is imperative to protect the unity of the Church and the integrity of the ministry.

With a spirit of humility and service, we offer to the Church our first monograph, *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in the 21st Century*, the collected reflections of the AGTS Fall 2004 Symposium on Apostolic Ministry. Included are the lectures of three noted Pentecostal scholars, Gary B. McGee, William W. Menzies, and Vinson Synan who have been participants in and chroniclers of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement around the world. Also included are other papers on biblical, leadership, and practical ministry issues raised by panelists and participants in the symposium.

He Gave Apostles by no means claims to be the last word in this debate. We do believe, however, that it raises both relevant and urgent questions and brings the wealth and wisdom of Scripture to bear on the question of apostleship and the contemporary church.

He Gave Apostles may be ordered from *Encounter: Journal for Pentecostal Ministry*, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 1435 N. Glenstone Ave., Springfield, MO 65804 (Telephone (417) 268-1000. Costs: \$8.95 each; or 10-50 books at \$7.50 each or 50+ books at \$5 each.

Suggestions for Further Study

“The New Apostolic Revolution” and the Nature of the Apostolic Office

As an aid to developing your competence in interpreting the nature and role of the apostle from the Scriptures, the following suggestions for further study have been gleaned from AGTS faculty. This bibliography includes a wide range of materials from the popular to the scholarly and a similarly wide range of critical positions.

Books Representing the New Apostolic Movement

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appeared (1 Cor. 15:8), it is often argued that there are to be no others after him. There is, of course, ample evidence for the foundational role of apostles in the Church. “And in the church God has appointed first apostles” (1 Cor. 12:28). The risen Christ “gave some to be apostles” (Eph. 4:11). The Church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). However, there is no provision in the New Testament for the appointment of successors to the foundational apostles. There is only precedent and provision for the selection and naming of deacons and overseers/elders (Acts 14:23; 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).

Admittedly, there is a tension in Pentecostal thinking when, on the one hand, we insist on the contemporary exercise of all the New Testament gifts of the Spirit and, on the other, debate whether all the “fivefold” ministry gifts of Ephesians 4:11, specifically that of the apostle, are likewise operational in the Church. With regard to modern apostles, can Pentecostals logically be cessationists? That is the provocative question posed by the “New Apostolic Revolution.”

In his recent commentary on 2 Corinthians, Murray J. Harris masterfully summarizes two sets of apostolic criteria articulated by Paul in his struggle with pretenders at Corinth.³ The first set is that of Paul’s opponents whom he called “false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13). Their criteria for apostleship were: (1) ecstatic experiences as visions and revelations, (2) ability to raise financial support, (3) their pedigree and achievements in ministry, (4) their personal bearing and

powerful eloquence and (5) their accomplishments at Corinth.

The second set of criteria, indicative of true apostleship modeled by Paul, are: (1) declaration of an “unadulterated gospel,” (2) God-given evangelistic success demonstrated in transformed converts, (3) heroic endurance of sufferings for Christ, (4) divinely effected signs and wonders, (5) adherence to territorial assignments allocated by God and (6) humble service for the upbuilding of others.

As the contemporary church wrestles with apostleship, it is to be hoped that the marks of a true apostle are the criteria by which all such ministry is measured. Leaders of that caliber, named apostles or not, are the real bearers of apostolic ministry.

By organizing a symposium on apostolic ministry and releasing the papers (and some of the responses) in this issue of *Encounter*, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary is attempting constructively and irenically to facilitate a humble and reverent dialogue between fellow believers who are engaged in a sincere quest to find what God is saying to His Church today through Word and Spirit.

Additional papers may also be found in the first monograph of the “Encounter Pentecostal Ministry Series,” *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in the 21st Century*, which is being released simultaneously with this issue and is now available through *Encounter* (and Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 1435 N. Glenstone, Springfield, MO 65802, Phone 417-268-1000) at this website. We pray the

monograph will be a helpful contribution to the debate on apostolicity.

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1. *Ektroma*. In Danker, F. W. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
 2. All biblical quotations are from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise indicated.
 3. Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 119-20.

Book Review

C. Peter Wagner, *Changing Church: How God Is Leading His Church into the Future* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 2004). 196 pages.

Reviewed by Joseph L. Castleberry, Ed.D.

Academic dean associate and professor of Intercultural Studies,
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

The basic thesis of *Changing Church* is Wagner's ongoing project: his proclamation that the Church entered the "Second Apostolic Age" in 2001. This mystical—and rather self-serving declaration (linked to Wagner's organization, the International Coalition of Apostles, which he serves as presiding apostle)—has little to recommend it. Wagner offers no convincing argument that the existence of contemporary apostles makes this century more comparable to the Apostolic Age of the first century than any other time in Christian history. Instead, his recognition of many apostles throughout the history of the church suggests that, rather than being "restored," apostles have always been part of the church.

In place of a compelling argument for his thesis, Wagner offers a highly charged, divisive rhetoric. By railing that all denominations are under the influence of a demonic "corporate spirit of religion," he effectively demonizes all denominational leaders. Singled out for special criticism is the Assemblies of God (A/G), the only denomination to address his arguments. Wagner could engage the A/G in an irenic fashion, seeing the clear points of *agreement and convergence* between its carefully

reasoned biblical arguments and his belief in contemporary apostolic ministry. Instead, he takes the A/G's discomfort with (but not prohibition of) the assignment of the title "apostle" as proof that it is bound by the demonic corporate spirit of religion.

Wagner's primary rhetorical weapon in raising a polemic against his brethren is the concept of "new wine." He uses this device to warn people that they will never receive new wine unless they reject their old wineskins. (Enjoying both new and old wine does not seem to be an option for Wagner.) His rhetorical tool militates against finding common ground between himself and those who accept apostleship *and* denominational identity. Condemning those who remain faithful to their denominational heritage and declaring they will miss what God is doing in the world today, Wagner explicitly calls on them to leave their denominations to join or to form new apostolic networks. Thus, he presents the choice between new wine and old wine in a most distasteful cup.

Having set the book in a polemical tone, Wagner goes on to propose that nine major changes are occurring (by God's Will) in today's church. The first of these changes is a shift from

denominational government to apostolic government. While many churches are indeed adopting this trend, there can be argument about whether this change is due to a new season God is instituting in the church. Wagner makes a generally good case against the cessationist idea that God has stopped giving apostles to the church. (Again, on this point the A/G generally concurs, although discouraging the use of the title “apostle” and warning against the confusion between the authority of the twelve unique apostles of Christ and that of subsequent apostles.) Nevertheless, an insufficient discussion of the nature of spiritual authority mars his argument.

Another change Wagner suggests is a shift from “a church vision to a Kingdom vision.” In many ways, his discussion of the role of Christians in the workplace is on-target and helpful, but what he describes as a “paradigm shift” would be seen more accurately as a “pendulum swing.” Rather than the church moving away from a focus on local congregations to a focus on the “church” in the workplace, what is needed is a healthy balance and *integration* between the two. In the end, embracing the church in the workplace while denying the importance of involvement in local congregations is neither biblical nor healthy for the Kingdom. However exciting and valid the new Christian emphasis on workplace worship, service and fellowship may be, it is stunning that Wagner can discuss a shift away from focus on the local church without adding a single word of caution.

Another trend Wagner posits is a change from emphasis on “the expansion of the church to the transformation of society.” In describing this shift, he expresses no

concern that less emphasis is placed on the church’s expansion. Without a shred of biblical warrant, he explains that the church’s failure to transform society is due to our failure to set “workplace apostles in their proper place.” On the heels of this “revelation,” Wagner discusses an alleged change from a tolerance for the kingdom of Satan to an invasion of it. Here Wagner places his emphasis on “strategic-level spiritual warfare,” explaining that the persistence of evil in the world is due to the failure of denominational Christians (or “spiritual pacifists,” as he pejoratively labels them) to engage in struggles with the principalities and powers. He offers no coherent biblical basis for the idea.

Wagner’s argument improves to some degree as he discusses a trend “from heavy doctrinal load to a lighter doctrinal load.” It is true that such a trend is evident in the church, and though his embrace of Open Theology and his suggestion that the doctrine of the Trinity is not an essential Christian belief will dismay some readers, Wagner makes an effective case for greater tolerance of ambiguity in terms of doctrine.

Finally, Wagner appropriately recognizes the trend away “from Reformed Sanctification to Wesleyan Holiness.” This chapter is well done and it includes an important discussion of the apostles’ humility that helps to define his overall project: the facilitation of apostolic ministry in today’s church.

On balance, however, Wagner’s book is more of the same one-note samba to which we have become accustomed. It is an unnecessarily divisive advocacy of an extreme position on apostolic ministry. Nevertheless, Pentecostal and

charismatic Christians need to reach an understanding of apostolic ministry that will bring us together. Even Wagner would have to agree that such unity is the essential apostolic task and this reviewer, at the risk of being called a “spiritual pacifist,” invites him to return to irenic dialogue.

Book Review

Cartledge, David. *The Apostolic Revolution: The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets in the Assemblies of God in Australia.* (Chester Hill, Australia: Paraclete Institute, 2000). 445 pp.

Reviewed by Joseph L. Castleberry, Ed.D.

Academic dean and associate professor of Intercultural Studies,
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

As one of the most influential works on contemporary apostleship in Assemblies of God circles, this volume merits serious discussion. David Cartledge deserves much credit for drawing attention to a subject about which there has been a serious lack of Pentecostal scholarly attention. Nevertheless, the book suffers a number of scholarly deficiencies. (Cartledge is not an academic but an activist and—by his own recognition—a *revolutionary*.) However, pastors who have found inspiration and instruction on apostolic ministry from Cartledge's book could not care less whether it meets the highest stylistic standards of the academy. Rather than focusing on the scholarly quality of the book, this review will attempt to summarize it briefly and evaluate its main argument. It will stipulate from the outset that there are apostles and prophets in the contemporary church.

The Apostolic Revolution is composed of seven sections. The first is a mostly edifying defense of "the phenomenon of personal revelation." From both biblical grounds and the testimony of history, Cartledge establishes that Pentecostal churches have always believed in prophecy and in hearing the voice of

God. Apart from a few questionable interpretations of biblical proof texts and fairly shallow historiography (for example, in treating the Latter Rain controversy of the 1940s), this section is marred only by Cartledge's attacks on the Assemblies of God organization in the United States (A/G-USA).

According to him, "from the 1940s to the present time, the A/G in the USA has officially maintained an ultraconservative posture in respect of personal prophecy" (48).

In several places throughout the book, Cartledge tends to direct exaggerated and harsh criticism against the A/G in the United States, but there is much in the book that the Fellowship would do well to hear. Indeed, the evidence of the last few years is that its executive leaders have indeed listened. Cartledge also levels an attack on democratic church government in this section, stating, "There is no evidence for this type of government in the scripture" (76). A discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this review, but it is a matter that needs more consideration than what Cartledge offers.

Section 2 recounts the story of what Cartledge calls "the apostolic revolution

in the Assemblies of God (AOG-A) in Australia.” He tells how the AOG-A, after an “apostolic” beginning, spent “40 years in the wilderness” because of the development of division and denominationalism. This tendency toward centralized or executive control, rather than local church autonomy, was reversed by Andrew Evans’ election as superintendent in 1977. According to Cartledge, Evans’ leadership “was characterized by the recognition and release of many apostolic and prophetic ministries.” After this change in leadership, the church entered a new period of exponential growth. The story is inspiring, but this reviewer has spoken with other Australian witnesses who do not completely agree with Cartledge’s interpretation of their history. Professional historians will no doubt expect a more careful and less ideological telling of the story. Still, Cartledge tells his story well and, in doing so, makes a strong rhetorical case for the value of apostolic and prophetic ministries.

Section 3 treats the fivefold ministry gifts of Ephesians 4:11. Cartledge begins with a too-brief discussion of the need for a Pentecostal hermeneutic. For the purposes of this review, it is enough to agree with him that experience must play a role in interpreting the Scriptures while pointing out that he does not say enough about the limits that should be placed on the subjectivity of the Pentecostal interpreter. After a helpful discussion of the purpose of the fivefold ministry gifts—that is, the unity of the Church—Cartledge makes a less persuasive argument to distinguish among the different types of spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament.

In discussing the purpose of the fivefold or “ascension gift” ministries, Cartledge’s most important argument in this section is that “the freedom of the [apostle] . . . to produce the reality of divine direction is one of the only things that will preserve a church from descending into democracy instead of theocracy.” He interprets Ephesians 4:11 as follows: “Paul states that the apostle is to be the leader of the local church, assisted by the other ministries” (211). He goes on to explain that “apostles are not the product of seminaries, nor do they suddenly burst onto the international scene. They emerge only in the context of the local church . . .” (211). While this statement is certainly true and constitutes a helpful reaffirmation of the primacy of the local church, it also gives rise to the question of whether Cartledge is teaching that every local church must be governed by an apostle. He answers this question by stating, “There are a wide variety of apostles, and not all of them will necessarily be the primary leader of a local church. However, an apostle should lead every significant church” (213).

Taking this statement inversely, however, would give us the definition of an insignificant church, i.e., one not governed by an apostle. One wonders whether Jesus considers any of his churches to be insignificant. This may seem like a petty rejoinder, but its point is at the very heart of this issue. Cartledge will engender opposition from small- and medium-sized churches and their pastors (and denominational leaders) until he finds a more convincing way to value the role of apostles without implicitly denigrating the role of pastors.

Skipping section 4 for the moment, section 5 presents a wonderfully persuasive argument for the ministry of women at all levels of the Church, including the apostolate. While Cartledge does stress the value of husband and wife teams in ministry, he does not do so at the expense of women who are single or are married to men who perceive no ministerial calling. The argument represents a fairly comprehensive display of the best arguments available in today's scholarly literature, and would be improved only by more rigorous citation of the primary source arguments.

Section 6 treats the issue of "Prophets in the Modern Church." In general, the section offers helpful insight on the nature of the prophetic ministry in the Old and New Testaments. For Pentecostal and charismatic readers, the most controversial thing Cartledge has to say, is that "this office is located in the local Church, and is a Governmental gift. It is also 'set' in the local Assembly, and together with the apostle is the foundation of the local church" (363). Unfortunately, he does not fully explain this view of the contemporary ministry of prophets. He does, however, immediately make it clear that "this 'set' position is by the Lord rather than the appointment of man." Still, the adoption of this vocabulary will raise concerns among many A/G-USA readers, as that Fellowship has long opposed the notion of "set prophets."

Cartledge presents the heart of his argument in section 4. He begins with an effective argument against cessationism, especially the relative cessationism of Pentecostals who would argue that pastors, evangelists and teachers persist in the Church, but apostles and prophets

are no longer being given to the Church. He proceeds to discuss the unique nature of the original twelve apostles, noting that: (1) the Church was founded on them, (2) they were eyewitnesses of the Resurrection, (3) they were representatives of the Lord with a special commission, (4) their apostleship was validated by signs and (5) they had apostolic authority (243-4).

Cartledge recognizes that, as foundational apostles, the "Twelve Apostles of the Lamb" had "special honor and unique responsibility," but he also reminds the reader that "they were not the major writers of the New Testament scriptures" (245). He correctly points out that Luke, Paul, James, Mark, and others who were not among the original twelve apostles, wrote the majority of the New Testament. Cartledge goes on to discuss in greater detail the expansion of the apostolic ranks in the Early Church, noting that such luminaries as James (the Lord's brother), Apollos, Barnabas and others who were not among the Twelve were called apostles.

After a persuasive argument of the importance of apostles beyond the Twelve in the New Testament, he goes on to define the term "apostle." He notes that while the term "missionary" is a Latin form of the Greek word for "apostle," not all of those who are called missionaries are apostles in the fullest sense. He defines the apostle as "one chosen and commissioned by the Head of the Church, who is uniquely equipped with the authority and ability to establish churches, set them in order, and provide leadership and direction to the Christian community" (264). Having set this definition, Cartledge goes on to list the biblical signs of apostleship.

The next step in Cartledge's argument is less persuasive. Because Paul wrote the Book of Ephesians to a local church, he asserts, "It must be faced that Paul was referring to the appointment of apostles as the leaders of the local church, rather than merely exercising translocal authority. The idea prevalent in most evangelical and Pentecostal churches that 'pastors' are the usual ministry in charge of a local church would therefore seem to be under challenge" (267-268).

Such an assertion raises questions that need to be explored. For now, a couple of observations can be made. First, the reading of Ephesians 4:11 that Cartledge favors would seem to be forced. Second, while the role of apostles in the planting of churches seems clear, it is far from clear how the process of "apostolic succession" should be engaged after the church has reached maturity and the apostle has moved on or passed away. While arguments from silence should not be pressed, it is legitimate to consider why the New Testament makes no provision for such a process. If it is God's intention that churches are to remain under apostolic authority long after the death of the founding apostle, it would seem reasonable that the Scriptures would make provision for such governmental transition. A policy of apostolic succession was indeed attempted and it became the Roman Catholic Church. This historical reality (as well as the tendency of all Christian denominations to drift toward formality and central control) should be enough to caution us against easy assumptions about the proper form of church governance. For now, Cartledge has not made his case that pastors should not be the leaders of mature local churches.

The main functions of an apostle are discussed next in a more or less helpful way, followed by a treatment of the distinctions and degrees of apostles. In this otherwise helpful section Cartledge makes an assertion that needs considerable discussion. He states:

Vast numbers of Pentecostal churches have settled for low levels of leadership, or have consciously or unconsciously confined their ministers to functions that are incompatible with their real gifting. This is referred to throughout this book as the level of the lowest common denominator

. . . . It is frequent for all ministers in Pentecostal churches to be termed 'pastor.' Not only does this confuse the issue but the genuine ministry of the pastor tends to be distorted (276-277).

Here Cartledge argues that the church is being deprived of apostolic leadership because it reduces all ministers to the level of "pastor." He states, "In many cases apostolic or prophetic ministries may function as other ministries due to a misunderstanding, or lack of perception of their true ministry" (288).

The problem with such an argument is that Cartledge stated earlier in his argument that God gives the apostolic gift to the church. He adds:

It matters little whether the person with an apostolic gift is appointed to any specific area of leadership such as a denominational official. His or her gift will make way for the God-given call to be fulfilled. Even resistance or rejection by

officials will not impede a true apostle. The authority he has is not of man (276).

In view of this, it is unclear how not recognizing apostles as an office in the church impedes their function. It is also not clear that God would raise up more apostles as ministry gifts to the church if only we would call them by the right name and thus permit their ministry. Indeed, the New Testament uses such a wide variety of terms to describe ministers (elders, bishops, pastors) it appears it is not *what* we call them that matters, but *who* has called them.

A fundamental (and ironic) problem with Cartledge's whole conception of the apostle is his own cessationism. In suggesting that God has restored apostles and prophets to the Church, Cartledge (and other restorationists such as Peter Wagner) are tacitly agreeing that their function ceased. It is more biblical, and more historically accurate, to claim that Christ has never ceased to give apostles and prophets to his Church. While, relative to other times, the intensity of spiritual gifts has increased in the contemporary church, it is not true that they disappeared in earlier times. Cartledge's own list of apostles throughout the history of the Church is testimony to this fact (250). No true apostle in the entire history of the Church has had his gift stolen by the Church. It is a gift given to the Church freely by Christ himself.

The final section of Cartledge's book makes a clarification about apostolic ministry that goes a long way toward making his message more palatable among A/G-USA leaders, even while it undercuts his belief that the Church's refusal to recognize the apostolic office

as such deprives it of the apostolic ministry. He states forthrightly, "Almost all Australian apostolic ministries are quite emphatic that they will not use the title 'apostle'" (393). He argues that "the terms 'apostle' and 'prophet' were not titles in biblical times," but rather "simply designations of function." He then goes on to make a strong case against the use of the titles "pastor" and "reverend." On the issue of the use of titles, he is to be congratulated. It would appear to this reviewer that in real ministry situations, an ounce of spiritual anointing is worth a pound of title, and the former is far too often replaced by the latter.

To summarize, David Cartledge has done a valuable service to the worldwide Pentecostal church in *The Apostolic Revolution*. Because of the model of apostolic ministry it sets forth, the book has inspired many ministers to increase their church-planting ministry. The A/G-USA has taken the issue of apostolic ministry seriously and is in the process of responding to it formally and practically. Assemblies of God scholars around the world need to recognize humbly that they are late to work in addressing the issue of apostles and prophets with greater precision and detail.