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Apostleship and Apostolic Succession

What is the ground of apostleship in the New Testament? Are the qualifications of an apostle the same in every case? And—a question strictly preliminary to these two—who, in fact, were regarded as apostles in the New Testament church?

Rengstorf (*apostolos* in TWNT vol. I, pa. 432) concludes that the two grounds of apostleship are an encounter with the Risen Christ together with a personal commission from him.

G. W. H. Lampe, in his valuable monograph, "Some Aspects of the New Testament Ministry" (S.P.C.K. 1949), endorses the view of Karl Holl "that all those who are called 'apostles' in the New Testament, other than the deputies of churches, were especially commissioned by Christ after the Resurrection" (p. 13).

In one of the most recent discussions of the matter, J. Norval Geldenhuys ("Supreme Authority," Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1953) reaches the same conclusion as the foregoing.

These three writers differ, however, in their views as to who were, in fact, *apostoloi* in the N.T. Rengstorf thinks that the number of apostles, even apart from the Twelve, may have been considerable. He would include Barnabas, James, Junias and Andronicus (but not Apollos or Timothy) among their number. Lampe does not speculate on the number of apostles outside the Twelve. He thinks that "on the whole, the use of *apostolos* to denote any travelling missionary, without further qualifications, would seem to be a post-canonical development." Geldenhuys will have only the Twelve and Paul as apostles. Barnabas he can only regard as an apostle in the sense of a deputy of a church (a view which Lampe thinks "conceivable"), and Andronicus and Junias likewise, though he doubts whether this is the right interpretation of Romans 16:7.

This disagreement as to who *are* regarded as *apostoloi* in the N.T. is surprising, and there seem to be grounds for examining the question again, especially as there are some passages in the N.T. which are consistently overlooked by most investigators.

WHO WERE THE APOSTLES?

There is no question that the Twelve were called *apostoloi*, as was also Paul. The ground of the apostleship of the Twelve was (a) their having been with Jesus from the baptism of John to the Ascension, (b) their being witnesses of the Resurrection, and (c) their being personally commissioned by the Risen Christ. It should be noted, however, that whereas eleven of them were commissioned by Christ either during his earthly life or during the forty days of his resurrection appearances, one of them, Matthias, was chosen for his apostleship *after* the ascension and not at a personal encounter with the Lord (Acts 1:24-26). The ground of Paul's apostleship was different. He lacked the first qualification of the Twelve, and he was not, like Matthias, "numbered with" the other apostles at the instigation of Peter or any one else. He owed his apostleship to the direct commissioning of the Risen Christ who appeared to him, "as to one born out of due time," for that purpose.

But from here our troubles begin. Let us analyse our problem:

1. Were any other men besides the Twelve and Paul called, or regarded as, *apostoloi*?
2. If so, can it be demonstrated that they, like the Twelve (or at least the Eleven) and Paul, were personally commissioned by the Risen Christ?
3. If this cannot be demonstrated, what other ground is there for their apostleship?

We can dismiss at once the men called *apostoloi* of churches, such as are mentioned in 2 Cor. 8:23 and Phil. 2:25 for example. These men are purely deputies of churches, are clearly described as such, and their job, which is not a permanent one, is to act in some particular matter on behalf of the church which authorises them.

But there are other cases for consideration. First is Barnabas, whose case is a test case. He and Paul are unequivocally called *apostoloi* together by Luke in Acts 14:4 and 14. Geldenhuys argues that he is an *apostolos* of the church at Antioch, but apart from the exigencies of Geldenhuys' preconceived theory of apostleship there is no reason for thinking this. Luke himself tells us that Barnabas

and Paul were appointed to their work by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2). They were not acting on behalf of the church of Antioch. Moreover, Paul himself by implication calls Barnabas an *apostolos* in I Cor. 9 when he says "Have we no right to lead about a wife . . . even as the rest of the apostles . . . ? Or only I and Barnabas, have we not a right to forbear working?" Likewise in Gal. 2:9 he speaks of Barnabas, as Lightfoot puts it, "as associated with himself in the apostleship of the Gentiles."

So Barnabas is an *apostolos*. On what grounds? It has been suggested that, like Paul, he must have seen the Lord and been commissioned by him. But this is a gratuitous assumption. Not only is there no hint of any such thing, but our introduction to Barnabas in Acts 4:36—as a Cypriote Levite who was one of the "multitude of them that believed," who was surnamed by the apostles and who laid the price of land he had sold at the apostles' feet—strongly suggests that he was a new convert. At all events he is clearly distinguished from "the apostles" at that time.

Are there any other grounds on which Barnabas' apostleship might be based? We think that the following facts are relevant:—

1. He received authorisation for his missionary labours from the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2).
2. He was engaged in missionary work of an identical character with that of Paul whom we know on other grounds to have been an *apostolos* for precisely that purpose. Indeed he was senior partner to Paul in that work.
3. He continued his missionary work, with no apparent change in its character, even after his separation from Paul.

Thus it is at least open to us to consider the hypothesis that the fact of having the Holy Spirit's guidance, together with the fact of carrying out that guidance in actual missionary preaching, were sufficient grounds for regarding a man as an *apostolos*. We have seen that Lampe holds that "on the whole, the use of *apostolos* to denote any travelling missionary, without further qualifications, would seem to be a post-canonical development" (op. cit. p.13f). But the case of Barnabas would suggest that *apostolos* was already used in the N.T. of missionaries other than the Twelve and Paul.

Let us test this hypothesis in the rest of the N.T.

OTHER APOSTLES.

One of Paul's earliest epistles is the first to the Thessalonians. He begins: "Paul, Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians" and at once begins to talk about the original visit which the three of them made to Philippi when the gospel was first preached and the church founded. He speaks in detail of their behaviour and methods of working. In the course of this he says: "nor did we seek glory from men, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ." The context—the recital of events in which Silvanus and Timothy in fact took part—precludes the possibility that Paul is here merely employing a conventional epistolary plural. Other plurals in this passage are true plurals (e.g., v. 9) and when Paul does want to emphasise his personal sentiments he is quite capable of doing so (e.g., v. 18). We are left with the strong presumption that Paul is here content to regard, and to let the Thessalonians regard, Silvanus and Timothy as "apostles of Christ" along with himself.

Another point is relevant here. Why is it that, both here and I Cor. 9, Paul considers "apostles of Christ" to have certain rights in the matter of support from those to whom they minister? Paul himself answers this question. The Lord himself, he says, had commanded that "they who proclaim the gospel should get their living from the gospel" (I Cor. 9:14). This suggests that Paul's criterion of apostleship in these passages is *simply* the activity of preaching the gospel as missionaries. This would qualify Silas and Timothy for such a title, and enable also a wider interpretation to be given to "the other apostles" in I Cor. 11 and 12.

In saying that Paul's criterion of apostleship in these passages is *simply* the activity of preaching, we must add that this carries the proviso that it must be the genuine gospel that is preached. Here the instructive passage, which goes far to substantiate the hypothesis about the ground of apostleship which we have advanced, is 2 Cor. 11 and 12.

Twice in these chapters Paul speaks of the "chiefest" or "superlative" apostles. To whom is he referring? Not to the Twelve (11:13). Some other group of men whom the Corinthians knew were described as *apostoloi*, and whatever epithets Paul might use to describe them, the term *apostoloi* is still there. What we have to ask is, why were

they called *apostoloi*, and on what grounds does Paul condemn them and finally call them *pseudapostoloi*? We may assume at once that they were called *apostoloi* simply because they were missionary preachers; it is incredible that Paul would have called them false apostles if they had been personally commissioned by Christ. At the same time, Paul does not condemn them on the ground that they had *not* been so commissioned, as we might expect him to have done if that were his criterion of apostleship. Rather does he condemn them because they preached another *euaggelion*. Paul argues from the genuineness of the *euaggelion* to the validity of the apostleship and not vice-versa. The whole incident supplies proof that at that time *apostolos* meant missionary preacher. Paul's only proviso was that the mark of the genuineness of such *apostoloi* was in their message.

The same situation is reflected in Rev. 2:2 where the place is Ephesus. This verse refers to those who "call themselves apostles and are not" but are found to be false. This is not simply that they claimed to have been commissioned by Christ, but had not. Rather their claim to apostleship is refuted on the ground that they are "evil men" whose lives do not square with the genuine gospel. But their very existence, as at Corinth, implies that there may well have been a number of genuine *apostoloi* engaged in missionary labours in both Europe and Asia at this time.

We may mention here that the reference in 2 Peter 2:3 to "your apostles" is, in our judgment, to be interpreted as meaning "those who brought the gospel to you." In this it differs significantly from the parallel passage in Jude where the phrase is "the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" and probably means the Twelve.

APOLLOS, ANDRONICUS AND JUNIAS.

Three other men who were not, like Barnabas, Silvanus and Timothy, directly associated with Paul in his missionary labours, and yet who are probably classed as apostles in the N.T., should be considered.

In 1 Cor. 4 Paul begins: "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," and he explains in verse 6: "I have applied all this to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brethren," and, continuing in the same strain and context, exclaims "For I think that God has exhibited us apostles last . . ." Since the whole passage shows that Paul acknowledged Apollos to be engaged in the same vital ministry as

himself (both are "servants through whom you believed") can we resist the conclusion that Paul includes Apollos in the designation "us apostles"? Prof. F. W. Grosheide, in his recent commentary on 1 Corinthians, concurs that *apostoloi* here is to be "taken in its broader sense of all preachers of the gospel."

The commonest interpretation of Romans 16:7 is that Andronicus and Junias are to be regarded as notable representatives of the class of people known as *apostoloi*. (The other possible interpretation, that these two were regarded as notable by the Twelve, is hard to justify on grounds of relevance here.) As to the grounds of their apostleship, we can only speculate that, since they were Jews who were "in Christ" before Paul, they were among the members of the Jerusalem church who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen and who "went about preaching the word." Perhaps they brought the gospel to Rome. As itinerant missionaries, they, and others like them, were *apostoloi*. (Incidentally, if Junias is a woman, apostleship must be reckoned among the ministries which it is open to women to perform, at least with their husbands, unlike the ministry of *episcopos* or of teaching in the congregation.)

Our conclusions thus far may be summarised thus:

1. Besides the apostleship of the Twelve, and the apostleship of Paul, we have, in the central stream of N.T. life and teaching, another form of apostleship which does not derive from witness to the life and teaching of Christ nor from witness to his resurrection, nor from personal commissioning by the Risen Christ.

2. This apostleship is grounded in the preaching of the genuine gospel, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit whether in association with Paul or independently of Paul's mission.

3. The number of *apostoloi* apart from the Twelve and Paul in the N.T. was quite large, and included Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Apollos, Andronicus and Junias.

PAUL'S COLLEAGUES IN APOSTLESHIP.

Before proceeding further we must deal with an objection which is sure to be raised by some, namely, that Paul's self-designation in his epistles ("Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ and Sosthenes our brother") argues in favour of his having held an exclusive view of apostleship, i.e., that whereas he himself was an apostle, Sosthenes (or Timothy) was not.

Now nobody will deny that Paul knew himself to have a peculiar claim to apostleship by reason of his encounter with the Risen Christ "as one born out of due time," and to have a peculiar status and responsibility in the gentile mission. It is no surprise therefore that he should make a distinction between himself and others when stating his own credentials. Yet it does not follow from this that he would necessarily deny the designation of *apostolos* to others. Paul's unique claim is not to apostleship simply, but to the special status of his apostleship. Moreover, Paul's self-designation is not so rigid as is sometimes supposed. Twice to the Thessalonians he writes, "Paul, Silvanus and Timothy," without distinction. To the Philippians, "Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ." To Philemon, "Paul a prisoner of Jesus Christ and Timothy our brother." He conjoins no name with his own in Romans, Galatians, Ephesians Timothy I and II and Titus. Our question is raised by three letters only. In I Corinthians he writes, "Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, and Sosthenes the brother," and in II Corinthians and Colossians, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy the brother." This formula certainly provides a distinction between Paul and Sosthenes or Timothy, a distinction which enables Paul to assert his own right to apostleship independently of any other man. But it does not exclude the other men from apostleship as such. One may even argue that it confirms the apostleship of the others after its kind. For what, after all, is meant by the term which is the accompanying designation in each case, "the brother"? The definite article, which is absent from *apostolos*, must mean something; the phrase does not mean simply "one of the brethren," i.e., a member of the Christian society. The definite article could signify, as Robertson and Plummer assert it does, that Sosthenes (Timothy) is well known to some at Corinth (Colossae). On the other hand, we suggest it signifies that Sosthenes (Timothy) is *Paul's* brother, i.e., in this context, his fellow or colleague in apostleship. (*Adelphos* in the sense of colleague is possible in 1 Cor. 16:12, 2 Cor. 2:13, 8:18, 12:18; Eph. 6:21, Phil. 2:25, Col. 4:7, 1 Thess. 3:2, 1 Peter 5:12, etc.)

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

We are now in a position to put a question which is of great relevance to-day: Have the functions of the N.T. apostles passed to others? Is there such a thing as apostolic succession?

So that we do not argue about words, it should be said at once that what Anglo-Catholics mean by Apostolic Succession is not apostolic succession at all, for it is not concerned with succession in the ministry of apostleship, but with succession in the ministry of *episcopate*, or oversight in the congregation. The ministry of apostleship is the ministry of going into all the world and preaching the gospel. It is concerned with the expansion of the church. Apostolic succession should mean the succession of those who fulfil the ministry of apostleship. Whether or not it is part of the ministry of apostleship to ordain elders in the churches which are brought into being by the apostle's preaching is another question. We may think it likely. But here we are discussing succession in apostleship itself.

What we should not overlook is that there is already an apostolic succession in the N.T. There are the original Twelve apostles, there is James the Lord's brother who is an apostle (Gal. 1:19), there are Andronicus and Junias and Barnabas, there is Paul, there is Apollos, there are Silas and Timothy, colleagues of Paul, and there is a large band of other apostles going everywhere preaching the word. These men did not receive manumission of apostleship from one another. The *peculiar* function of the Twelve, their witness to the life, teaching and resurrection of Jesus Christ, was in the nature of things non-transferable. Whether or not the Twelve appointed others to take their place in their strictly apostolic function of preaching the gospel in all the world, we simply do not know. Certainly we know that some men called *apostoloi* were not appointed by them, and we have no right to assume that others were.

When Paul is discussing apostleship as the first of the ministries God has given to the church, there is no reason to think that he is thinking of the Twelve only and himself as fulfilling this ministry. It is much more likely that he is thinking of those people whose function in the church, in any church, is indispensable for its foundation. In Ephesians in particular he is thinking of those men through whose foundation labours the gentiles were being brought into the household of God. Here we must note that certain churches even in N.T. times were founded by men other than the Twelve or Paul, some of whom at least we have no reason to suppose were set apart for the work by any previous apostle. Was not the church at Antioch founded by "apostles and prophets" other than the Twelve? Were not the churches of Cyprus built on the foundation of unnamed missionaries from Jerusalem and Barnabas?

Were not the churches of Colossae and Laodicea founded by Epaphras and others?

Romans 10:14 is of importance for Paul's conception of apostleship and the real reason for its priority among the ministries of the gospel. Paul here uses the verb *apostellein*, but we may reasonably surmise that he has the noun in mind. The *apostolos* is here viewed from the point of view, not of his prerogative or status or privilege, but from the point of view of his place in the economy of salvation and of the world mission. Neither his call nor his commission is stressed. A vast gentile world needs the salvation which comes by hearing the word of Christ. This can only come by belief. How can belief come unless there are preachers? This can only come about in turn,—here Paul reaches the climax of his argument—if there are *apostoloi*. What *apostoloi* has Paul in mind? All who preach or will preach the glorious gospel of the blessed God to those who have not heard it. He simply quotes the Isaianic prophecy, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good things." He might well have added, "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of the preachers."

We cannot believe that the ministry of apostleship was something which belonged only to the first generation of the church and is no longer exercised to-day, for churches are still brought into being through the preaching of the Word of God by the lips of messengers. Nor are we permitted either by the evidence of the New Testament or of actual experience down the centuries, to hold that the ministry of apostleship is exercised only by men who have received their commission to preach from someone who can trace directly back to the first apostles the manumission of his authority.

If any man to-day wishes to know if he is in the apostolic succession, he must ask himself the following questions: Am I performing the ministry of apostleship, i.e., am I preaching the gospel to those who have not heard it? Have I been authorised by the Holy Spirit for this ministry? Is the gospel I preach the genuine gospel which the first apostles preached?

If any church or congregation to-day would regard itself as apostolic, it must likewise ask itself whether it cherishes the apostolic gospel and doctrine, defending it from falsehood and corruption, whether it is active in praying the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest, and whether from its own number men

are being separated for the missionary work to which the Holy Ghost is calling them.

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The Measures of Man's Mind

It is my privilege this evening, and a happy one it is, to deliver the inaugural lecture of the present Session of the Theological Hall, and it gives me particular pleasure because the three full-time teachers at Emmanuel are now my colleagues at the University, as they have been appointed to the staff of the School of Divinity, which was established by the Senate last year, and are members also of the Board of Studies in Divinity which controls the new post-graduate course for the B.D. degree and the Diploma for students who are not graduates.

Can we set limits to the mind of man? In other words: What are the measures of man's mind? . . . Morality and religion demand a relation between man and God which no merely finite being could possess. Man is truly "made in the image of God"; his mind then, human understanding, must be in some degree analogous to the mind of God, for man *does* have glimpses of the Ultimate and the Infinite.

Your mind is your most intimate and personal possession—it is in fact your real "self." Somehow within the mind of man arise and develop those intellectual, artistic, moral and religious dispositions which are the hallmark of personality, and which form a scale of values by means of which we judge what is true and beautiful and good and abiding. The build-up of the human mind is such as enables us to trace its growth from infancy to maturity, from impulses to ideals. Deep within it we find the soul, the spiritual and immortal part of man, the source and origin of all that later becomes intellect, disposition, and character. The soul is the constant inner activity of which one is directly conscious; it determines the course of one's inner life.

First then: What part is played by mind in the struggle for civilisation? This is one of three questions which I shall try to answer.

The struggle to be civilised has been to so great an extent a struggle to control the material forces of nature,