

Restoration

Is this still on God's programme?



Reflections on fifty years of Christian
“Restorationist” thinking and initiatives
(with special attention to some
contemporary trends in the light of
New Testament teaching and precedent)

DAVID LILLIE

(Foreword by David Noakes)

Restoration . . .
Is this still on God's
Programme?

by
DAVID LILLIE

Originally printed by:

Phillips & Co. (The Kyrtonia ExPress)

115 –116 High Street, CREDITON, Devon, EX17 3LG

This version prepared by: David Taylor, Wilanson, Lapford,
CREDITON, Devon, EX17 6LY

www.justonecandle.uk

Contents

FOREWORD	5
PREFACE	7
1: A VISION OF RESTORATION	9
2: RENEWAL AND THE EMERGENCE OF “RESTORATIONISM”	19
3: SOME EARLIER APOSTOLIC PIONEERS	27
4: JESUS AND THE TWELVE APOSTLES	37
5: PAUL: THE MISSIONARY STATESMAN	49
6: PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS	57
7: APOSTLES TODAY?	73
8: IS RESTORATION STILL ON GOD’S PROGRAMME? ...	83
9: CHRISTIANS IN FRIENDLY DISCUSSION	89
APPENDIX 1	105
APPENDIX 2	115
APPENDIX 3	116

FOREWORD

by David Noakes.

This book has been written by a man with a vision which has so gripped and inspired his spirit over many years that he cannot be content until he sees it fulfilled.

Rather than become involved in anything other than its outworking, he has preferred to stand aside, holding fast to that which God has given to him. No amount of disappointment has caused him to waver from the vision and sense of purpose given him by the Holy Spirit and shared with his friend, the late Arthur Wallis, at the very outset of what subsequently became known as the Charismatic Renewal Movement.

I believe that that Movement is in danger of producing an "Ishmael" whereas David Lillie's vision has always been for an "Isaac". Both Ishmael and Isaac resulted from God's declaration to Abraham of what He intended to do through him as the instrument of His choosing. Ishmael was the result of Abraham's attempt to fulfil the purposes of God through human wisdom and action. Isaac, however, was the result of God's own unique way of fulfilling His promise, a work done in a way which His Spirit alone could accomplish; all that was asked of Abraham was faith and patience to await God's chosen time to act.

The principle embodied in the account of how first Abraham produced Ishmael and then God brought forth Isaac remains true today. God asks us to cooperate with Him in the outworking of His purposes through our exercise of faith, patience and humble obedience, refusing to fall into the trap of supplementing God's work by our own human efforts. The alternative course is that of human endeavour prompted by a degree of awareness of what it is that God purposes to do, but with insufficient knowledge of His chosen method, and too much haste to await His revelation. The first way of responding brings blessing and life. The second has within it from the beginning the seeds of its own demise because that which is born of human striving and wisdom is of no value in accomplishing of the purposes of God.

To seek to organise God's work for Him leads eventually to failure, disillusionment and confusion, and sometimes even to deception and error.

David Lillie has always believed that God's intention in the fresh visitation of the Holy Spirit was to bring about a return by the true Body of Christ, to functioning in the way which is revealed in the pages of the New Testament. He has envisaged the re-appearance of a true Ecclesia, a body of called-out people who will corporately manifest the character of Jesus Christ in such a way that God is truly glorified; a body of people separated as was the early Church, neither relying upon the world nor compromising with its ways.

With sadness, David has seen the emergence of questionable structures and teachings within what has come to be called Restorationism. Knowing that the fivefold gifted ministry appointments of Ephesians 4:11 are as vital and necessary for the Church today as at any time in her history, he has been particularly concerned about what has happened to the role of the apostle. He has watched it being changed from that which is revealed in the pages of Scripture into an office which the New Testament nowhere envisages, that of a supervisor exercising control and direction over a "network" of congregations who are seen in a special relationship with him.

Where such a situation exists the leaders of those local congregations come to rely, not only upon the direct activity of the Holy Spirit to oversee and guide their affairs, but also

upon men outside the local situation whose advice and instructions are seen as essential, respect of issues of major importance – in order for them to be able to know what they should do and how to do it. David Lillie sees this as an usurpation of the recognition of the headship of the Lord Jesus within the local expression of His Body, which he believes imposes a restriction upon the free functioning of His Spirit. The outcome, it is believed, can only be the development of yet another religious system of Man's making. Such a result is not an Isaac but an Ishmael.

In the terms which I have used, David Lillie has never been willing to settle for anything less than an Isaac.

In these chapters, he examines the biblical role of the apostle, together with some of its various expressions in Church history, and at attempts which have been made to express its application for today.

I warmly commend this book to its readers, praying that the Holy Spirit will speak through its pages in a powerful way. The hour is late and the need for the Church to return to true New Testament life and structure is great before there come upon us the storms which will sweep away all that is not firmly established in the ways of God.

David Noakes

PREFACE

“Something happened” in the nineteen-sixties which has come to be recognized widely as having been a significant “move of God”.

In my earlier chapters I have suggested that what emerged into the wider sphere of christian fellowship at that time can be traced – in part at least – to the spiritual promptings and prayers of a few men and women whose hearts had been envisioned in earlier days. Indeed I can vouch that, as far back as the early nineteen-forties, the restoration of New Testament church life was a concern which began to be impressed with increasing insistence upon the heart and mind of at least one insignificant member of Christ’s Body!

That is why, in the late ’sixties and early ’seventies, we followed with great interest the formation of “New Testament” fellowships across Britain and beyond. It all looked like the beginning of the fulfilment of “our vision”, and it was exciting! Nor did we question the new emphasis on the importance of “authority” in the Church – including that of apostleship. We were only too aware of the need of strong leadership in the area of our own ministry.

But, in teaching which then began to emerge within what came to be known as “the Restoration stream”, there was a perception of the scope of apostolic authority which some of us felt obliged to question. How did this new emphasis tie up with our earlier vision?

It was this question which prompted me personally to get down to a study of New Testament apostleship. Chapters four, five and six are a condensation of the fruits of that study. Pursuing the same theme, I also felt drawn to look for clues into the history of the “Apostolic Church” denomination which emerged in the early part of this century, and of the “Catholic Apostolic Church” which developed out of Edward Irvine’s ministry just a century before. That provided material for another chapter.

At that point I found myself experimenting on a chapter relating to those more recent developments with which, in the early days, I had been closely involved. If this will help to command a wider interest in these chapters I cannot complain about that!

In concluding this Preface, I want to express my love and appreciation for the many men and women of God who enriched my life in those formative years. But especially I mention two: Arthur Wallis and Cecil Cousen. It was, I am sure, in the divine plan that I was to meet both these men at just the right time.

When I first met Arthur, ten years my junior, he at once impressed me by his disciplined, dedicated life, his grasp of the Word of God, and his communication skills. Cecil, born a few months after me, sharpened my appetite for a deeper personal experience of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We were proud to introduce Cecil into our circle of fellowship here in the South West of England. Indeed, under the Lord, it was Cecil, more than anyone else, who brought into our conventions the spiritual dynamism which was to attract people from many miles around. Our visitors book at home records some twenty of his visits, involving on each occasion a round trip of over 500 miles.

Although, in the course of time, both these brothers were to reach out to different areas of ministry, the fellowship in pioneering ministry shared with them in those far off days remains a treasured memory.

Both have now departed to be with the Lord they loved and served. I record my gratitude for their fellowship, and it is to their memory that I dedicate these chapters.

David Lillie, Exton, Devon. July 1994.

1: A VISION OF RESTORATION

“REFORM” OR “REVIVAL”?

In my upbringing among “Brethren” we heard of Christians who were concerned about “Reform”, and others whose special preoccupation was with the need for “Revival”.

We honestly believed, however, that, as an identifiable testimony for Christ in the world, we were ourselves already a “reformed” movement. Were not our principles of gathering based solidly on the Word of God? What need therefore was there for further reform? And, as regards, “revival”; whilst this was, of course, a constantly recurring need in the lives of believers, it was not generally felt to be something to be worked up in special conventions and campaigns. Much more to the point was the continuing, faithful teaching of the Word. This had always been an important feature among Brethren. Indeed it was widely recognized that Brethren were in the forefront, both in their knowledge of the Bible, and in their concern to reach out to the world with the Gospel.

I have reason to be grateful for my upbringing. Yet when, in my early twenties, I became aware of a deep spiritual need, it was something for which the regular ministry in my particular circle of fellowship did not seem to cater.

I hasten to add that, in “Brethren” circles in those days, anything savouring of “Pentecostalism” (or “the Tongues Movement”, as it was commonly called) was quite beyond the pale! How my own fears and prejudices became embodied should be explained.

STILL LIVING IN BIBLE DAYS?

I was working in a bank in the City of London. On a lunch hour visit to Tower Hill, I heard a speaker named Mr Naumann who at once held my attention. He was not the usual kind of soapbox preacher, but a quiet, dignified man whose preaching was unusually free from histrionics. After hearing him once or twice, I took an opportunity to speak to him personally. He gave me some literature in which the gist of the message was that we are still living in “Bible days”. Reference was made to the gifts of the Holy Spirit which the Lord bestowed on His Church. It was claimed they were still available today if we would but receive them.

It got me thinking. And the more I thought about it, the more I was convinced that what I was reading was both biblical, and, in relation to my own spiritual need, relevant. I had been reading the Acts of the Apostles at the time, and Luke's record now began to have a contemporary ring for me.

Moving to the West Country soon after, I became involved with a Brethren assembly, and, more especially, with an inter-assembly young men's Bible class which was conducted by a leading elder. It was a warm fellowship within which I made some good friends.

There was one man who used regularly to attend the gatherings who seemed “different”. They called him Ren. I was told Ren was a “Pentecostal”. He interested me, and I invited him round to my flat. It was not long before we were discussing questions relating to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

But, in spite of my earlier contact with the man on Tower Hill, I was not at all keen to be faced squarely by this new acquaintance with the personal challenge: “Do you want to

be filled with the Holy Spirit, David?" However, the friendship continued, and, through it, I came to know two other men who were to influence me profoundly.

INFLUENCE OF WILLIE BURTON

The first was Willie Burton. Ren had gone to a Convention up country somewhere and had met this pioneer missionary from the Belgium Congo (now Zaire). Somehow he had managed to get talking with Mr Burton, and as a consequence persuaded him to pay us a visit in Devon.

Mr Burton was a great inspiration to me. Converted at the age of nineteen, though still continuing in his profession as an engineer, he had immediately dedicated his life and talents to the service of the Lord. Some years later, after he had experienced an infilling with the Holy Spirit, he was called to pioneer evangelism in the Belgian Congo. There, along with a colleague named Jim Salter, and others, he planted literally hundreds of churches. Their ministry, accompanied by "signs and wonders", was truly apostolic. Yet, in all his visits to our home in later years, I never recall hearing Mr Burton refer to his ministry in those terms.

Meanwhile, my contacts with "Pentecostals" began to give concern to the elders in my assembly. It was Mr Burton's visit that brought matters to a head. The day came when the elders told me that unless I gave up my "Pentecostal views" I must take no further part in the ministry of the assembly. I was relieved of my involvement in the Sunday School.

It did not take long for me to decide that it was time for me to look for fellowship elsewhere. I was pleased therefore to respond to the offer of fellowship made to me by the small group with which Ren was now meeting. They were hardly more than a dozen folk altogether. But I soon began to feel at home among them, and overcoming my fears and prejudices, I began to seek the Lord for that needed experience of the infilling with the Holy Spirit.

One February night, in the presence of several friends in "Sister Violet's" cottage, like John Wesley of old, "I felt my heart strangely warmed", and as we continued in worshipping the Lord, I was given a new tongue with which to praise Him. It was an "out of this world" experience, which, more than fifty years on, I recall with a sense of awe. The gift of glossalalia I received at that time is still my precious possession.

INFLUENCE OF GEORGE LANG

It was through Willie Burton that we came to hear about G.H.Lang, the other man who was to be such an influence in my life. Burton had given my friend a book by Lang entitled: "The Churches of God – a Treatise for the Times". When Ren passed the book over to me, I was greatly intrigued by it.

However, it was with reference to an entirely different issue that I was to make my first personal approach to George Lang. The year was 1937. The threat of war was looming up, and the issue of conscientious objection was much under discussion especially among us younger men. When I heard, therefore, that Mr Lang was coming to the home of a friend of his in a nearby town to give a talk on this subject. I made it my business to go to hear him. That was the beginning of a friendship with George Lang which was to last until his death twenty-one years later.

Over those years Mr Lang was to publish a number of valuable expository works, and three biographies, copies of all of which were sent to me by the author as they appeared.

There was a spiritual quality and depth to Lang's ministry which greatly blessed me. It was particularly Lang's personal commitment to biblical Christianity and ecclesiology which stimulated my desire to see the recovery of some semblance of authentic New Testament church life in my lifetime. I could not conceive that anything less than that could satisfy the heart of Him who is the Head of the Church.

SHARING THE WIDER VISION FOR THE CHURCH

Meanwhile, our little fellowship slowly grew. We evangelised, though not with conspicuous success. And I sensed that my colleague, though thoroughly committed to what he regarded as "New Testament order" had little vision for anything beyond the local scene. This caused me some concern. I longed to meet other men of my generation who might share the wider vision for the Church which had been opened up to me, largely through Burton and Lang.

For this I had to wait. My wife Kathleen and I moved into a neighbouring district, and although still in fellowship with the original group, new contacts opened up for us a wider sphere of fellowship and neighbourhood evangelism.

In 1952 I left the bank. Soon after, I met Arthur and Eileen Wallis, a young couple who had come to live in a village some ten miles from my home. My new job, which involved travelling, also enabled me to meet a number of other men and women in different parts of the country with whom, in varying degrees, I discovered an affinity of outlook. On a visit to Sussex I met Dennis and Beth Clark and Campbell and Sheilagh McAlpine. In north Devon, a friend introduced me to a Yorkshireman named Cecil Cousen who was visiting the area for ministry. At the Langs' home in Wimborne, I met a young Bible College student named Graham Perrins.

As soon as I met Arthur Wallis, I knew (and I think he knew) this was a meeting which had been ordered by the Lord. He was an intelligent and spiritually-minded young man, obviously dedicated to the Lord and his work. Not long before we met he had been to the Isle of Lewis in the Hebrides where he had witnessed the fruits of the revival which had then recently visited that island. It had made a profound impression on him. As a consequence the "revival" theme was to be at the heart of his ministry for many days to come.

Arthur and I were soon good friends, and I became a regular attender at the monthly "revival prayer meeting" he had started in his home. For me, however, these meetings were disappointingly "heavy". I shared my concern with Arthur, who also, I believe, became aware that something was missing.

CONVENTIONS & CONFERENCES IN THE 1950'S AND '60'S

Back home, we decided to invite some of our widening circle of friends to a Saturday Convention. Although we did not appoint speakers, we made sure that there would be present gifted brothers who would know that they had liberty to speak if and when they felt prompted to do so. At that and many subsequent gatherings, Cecil Cousen and Arthur often joined us, together with several other men, some of whom were later to become well known in "restoration" circles. The ministry was wide-ranging. There was generally, however, an underlying emphasis on the need and expectation of a recovery of New Testament Church life.

In 1957, that vision prompted me to suggest to Arthur that we plan a residential Conference for leaders to look into the Scriptures concerning the theme of the New

Testament Church. After prayer, we agreed to send out a “feeler letter” to a few friends. The response exceeded our expectations. A Conference was therefore arranged, and was held at Exmouth for three days in May 1958: its theme: “An Enquiry into the New Testament concerning the Church of Jesus Christ; its purity, power, pattern and programme, in the context of Today”.

It proved to be a valuable gathering of mostly younger men, several of whom later became involved in pioneering ministry in various parts of the country, and beyond. At further similar Conferences which followed in the years 1961, 1962, and 1965 we endeavoured to follow through from the foundational teaching of our first Conference in 1958.

Without enlarging on details of those Conferences, it is worth mentioning that for the 1961 gathering the theme was “The Divine Purpose in the Institution of the Church (an Enquiry)” and at the 1962 gathering, the theme was “The Present Ministry of the Holy Spirit”, a subject which was occupying the minds of many Christians at that time.

At the last gathering in the series (in April 1965), we considered the formidable theme of “The Apostolic Commission”. Willie Burton, happened to be in the country at that time, and was able to be with us. Perhaps it was not without significance that when we came together to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread at the closing session, it was that great missionary statesman who gave the devotional message.

MICHAEL HARPER AND THE LAUNCHING OF THE FOUNTAIN TRUST

At this point I will digress a little. In January 1963, when I was on my way to some friends in South London, I heard that a young Anglican curate named Michael Harper had planned to hold a small Conference in his flat in the West End of London on the following Saturday afternoon. The purpose was to hear and discuss a report by a highly regarded Anglican theologian named Canon Philip Hughes who had recently returned from California where he had met with some fellow Anglicans who claimed to have experienced “the baptism of the Holy Spirit”. I was able to get in touch with Michael on the telephone and he gave me a cordial invitation to come to the Conference. I duly arrived with my friend at Michael’s flat at the appointed hour.

Philip Hughes began with an exposition of passages in I Corinthians 12 & 14 where Paul is dealing with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Backed up by his report of what had happened in Dennis Bennett's parish in Van Nuys, California, he proceeded to argue the case for the present-day relevance of the charismatic gifts. In the discussion which followed, it was evident that for most of those present this was all very revolutionary! The question was asked as to how the exercise of such gifts would be possible within church services as now conducted? The speaker agreed that, for that to happen, there would have to be considerable changes from the then customary form of “our” services.

Following a tea-break, there was a further session for prayer and discussion and testimony. Prompted by his companion, the stranger from Devon found himself giving an account of how, more than twenty years before, in a cottage meeting, he too had had an experience similar to that of the Van Nuys Christians. There was no little interest! “Keep in touch”, Michael whispered eagerly to us, as my friend and I left later.

Michael Harper was soon to emerge as the leading figure in the British “Charismatic” scene. He launched “The Fountain Trust” as an organising tool for Conventions and other “charismatic” ministry. The Trust also provided a backing for the publishing of literature relating to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, one item of which was my small book entitled: “Tongues Under Fire”.

He also started "Renewal" magazine. In this periodical Michael's convictions as to the way the "renewal" should be channelled soon became evident. Since the Holy Spirit was touching the lives of so many Christians within "the historic churches", was it not clearly the mind of the Spirit that these "renewed" Christians should stay within their churches, and seek to promote renewal there?

With this emphasis Michael was ably supported by many clergy and others who had been blessed in the renewal. Outstanding among his supporters was David du Plessis, the very influential former Pentecostal pastor from South Africa (later, USA). Michael had persuaded Du Plessis to visit Britain and hold meetings in many of the areas where there was particular interest in the awakening. Much interest was aroused. Within a year or two "The Fountain Trust" became well established. It proved to be a valuable supportive ministry for many leaders and lay people within the denominations who were now rallying to the "charismatic" cause.

THE 1965 CONFERENCE ON "THE APOSTOLIC COMMISSION"

I return now to the 1965 Conference. It is interesting to note how two of the foremost chroniclers of "The Charismatic Movement" have assessed the significance of that, and the previous, Conferences.

Andrew Walker in his controversial, but penetrating commentary: "Restoring the Kingdom" [revised edition 1988) says: "In a sense this conference is in reality the beginning of the Restoration story proper..." (page 49). Peter Hocken, in "Streams of Renewal – the origin and Early Development of the Charismatic Movement in Great Britain", says concerning our small local group in Devon that it "has some claim to be a forerunner of the Charismatic Movement", and goes on to say "The Devon Conferences . . . have a particular significance in the history of the Charismatic Movement in Britain" (page 37).

Although I would question some of the theological assumptions of these two writers, I confess to being intrigued by their assessment of the historic significance of the events they researched. What is undoubtedly true is that those of us who had come together in the fifties to pray for the "restoration" of New Testament church life conceived that it would indeed have to be radical in terms of the recovery of biblical norms. We certainly looked for the recovery of the varied ministries which the Lord gave for the building of his Church – apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers, together with other "charismatic" gifts also mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 & 14. The fact that these researchers should attach historical importance to the deliberations of our small gatherings still, after all these years, intrigues me; yet, I feel obliged to admit: "they may be right".

LOOKING AT "THE LOCAL CHURCH"

Though apostolic ministry was not considered in depth at the 1965 and earlier Conferences, one particular aspect which was opened up was with reference to the administration of local churches. For my purpose, I cannot do better than quote verbatim from an address given by Arthur Wallis at the 1961 Conference.

Following comments on the reference in Ephesians chapter 4 to the local church "bonded and knit together" as a body, Arthur continued: "A body is an organic Whole, therefore it is complete in itself, in union with its head; so the local church is to be complete in itself in union with its heavenly Head. For Christ is not only head of the universal church, He is also head of the local church. In Him the local church is to be self-governing, self-supporting; self-edifying; and self-propagating. We should expect the Head to raise up from the midst of each local church all that it needs by way of ministry, and offices and

functions. The church is to stand on its own feet and manage its own affairs. It is not to be dependent on outside control, though warmly welcoming outside fellowship, and holding loving communion with other believers and other fellowships of believers.

“This governmental independence of each local church is clearly figured in Revelation 1: 12, 20. ‘I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands . . . and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.’ To a Jew, well versed in the Old Testament, the golden lampstands would remind him of that wonderful feature of tabernacle and temple, a lampstand with seven branches. As one beaten work of pure gold it was to represent Israel as a national unity, being the light of God among the nations. But here we do not have one lampstand with seven branches, but seven lampstands, each one separate and distinct, their only link – Him who walks in the midst of them.

“This principle is a divine safeguard. History reveals that wherever the churches have come under central authority, sooner or later power has got into the hands of the wrong people. Sooner or later there is rigid conformity which limits the activity of the Spirit, and there quickly follows a decline in spirituality and the speedy dissemination of error. When each church is self-governed, there is much greater likelihood of the elders standing at the door and keeping error at bay, as Paul exhorted the elders at Ephesus to do in his farewell address (Acts 20:28-31).” (Arthur then enlarged on the importance of “this principle” for churches in times of persecution; and concluded his comments as follows):

“Though I believe it is in the heart of Christ that churches of the type that we have been considering shall arise in these end times, this vital principle of the self-sufficiency and completeness under Christ of each local church could save us from the formation of another denomination, from which may the Lord deliver us! There should be opportunity for each local church to express itself in its own way, without any feeling that it must copy or be copied by other New Testament churches.”

(A further statement then followed under the heading of “The control of the Body”):

“A body displays orderliness and control. The control is by the head but it is effective through nerves and other organs. There are in the local church chosen and fitted leaders, by which the heavenly Head exercises His control over the local body. Rule in the church is not to be a dictatorship – a one man rule; nor a democracy – any man rule; it is to be an oligarchy – the rule of the few. New Testament churches were governed by a team, a select body of men called elders.... You never read of one elder governing a church in the New Testament, always ‘elders’ (Quoted from the published Report of the September 1961 Conference at Belstone, Devon).

Interestingly, at a Conference in Massey University in New Zealand in August 1964, shortly before Arthur returned for our April 1965 Conference, he again covered the same issues in an address entitled: “The Marks of a New Testament Church”. Speaking of the whole Body of Christ, and of those local churches which express that wholeness, Arthur said: “The only link between those churches is the fact that they belong to the one great organism – the Church universalI believe denominationalism and sectarianism is one of the main hindrances to the movement of the Holy Spirit today.” (Quoted from the published Report of the Massey Conference).

* * *

The convictions argued so clearly in the above quotations were an essential element in the vision of our Conferences. As previously noted we had much in common with our

friends within Fountain Trust/Renewal circles, and could enjoy fellowship with them in our common desire to see the emergence of a live testimony for Christ in our world. But at “church” level, it had by now become clear that there were irreconcilable differences between us.

“RENEWAL” OR “RESTORATION”?

We had arrived, in fact, at a situation similar to that of earlier days when, within the sphere of “Protestant” Christianity there had been the two parallel streams of “Revival” and “Reform”. This time, however, the choice between “Renewal” and “restoration” was much more radical. I write “restoration” with a small “r” because in 1965 it was still nothing more than a vision. This could be said to have been “reformist” in character, but in its understanding of biblical ecclesiology, unlike that of the historical Reformist movement, it was emphatically non-institutional. We had no plans to establish “a movement”, or “a network”. Our objective was simply to discover for ourselves the Biblical norm for church life, and to share our insights with any others who were open to that vision. By 1965, however, The Fountain Trust, as a voice for an updated “Spirit-filled” version of classic “Revivalism” had already become an established organisation, with its own magazine and office. Since 1965, however, there have been some significant developments in both the “renewal” and the “restoration” scene. I shall be considering some of these developments in my next chapter.

2: RENEWAL AND THE EMERGENCE OF “RESTORATIONISM”

“RENEWAL” – THE EMPHASIS AND THE EXPECTATION

Movements come and go. Some are short-lived, especially if the motivation behind them was merely reactionary – an anti-establishment protest without any constructive and viable programme. The movements initiated by such reformers as Luther and Calvin and Wesley, however, have left indelible marks on Church history. These were men, all of whom, like Martin Luther King (“I have a dream”), would have claimed that they had received a God-given vision.

If they were right, why did the movements they initiated fail to fulfil the vision of their founders? In spiritual terms, where is the Lutheran Church today? What would Wesley make of the denomination which emerged out of his remarkable ministry? There is no easy answer to these questions. But they carry a warning for us today which none of us can ignore with impunity.

For they remind us that in the same way that the earlier movements for “reform” and “revival” represented two sides of a concern for the cause of Christ's Church, so too did the two streams of “restoration” and “renewal” which emerged out of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the nineteen-fifties, and ‘sixties.

“Renewal” is “revival” with an emphasis on the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit. Renewalists have no quarrel with denominations as such; in fact, their fervent hope has been to see renewal spreading throughout the denominational churches. “Restorationists”, however, recognize the importance of identifying the “true” church as distinct from the “nominal” church. For them, “renewal” must address the whole question of the structure and ministries of local churches. Inevitably this is seen to invalidate the whole concept of diverse, and often competing, denominationalism.

In the nineteen-sixties among those who were involved in what was then beginning to be known as “the Renewal”, there was wide expectation that this was going to sweep through the churches like a mighty wind of “Pentecostal” blessing. How this would work out in terms of church structures, was not seen then to be an immediate issue. Surely the Lord who had poured out His Spirit could be trusted to look after that in his appointed time? Faithful “Keswick Convention” goers, and others, had been praying for revival; and here it was, actually knocking on their doors! Those who, for so long, had sung: “Revive thy Church, oh Lord, thy mighty arm lay bare!” could now, more appropriately, be singing: “God is moving, by His Spirit; moving through . all the earth!”

Which is not to suggest that activists like Michael Harper (within the “Renewal” stream) on the one hand, and, on the other hand, men like Arthur Wallis, who now began to become an increasingly influential figure in the cause of “restoration” (still at that stage, with a small “r”), were blind to the problems which would have to be faced. But were we not seeing the hand of God doing wonders among us? Who then dared question that the Holy Spirit who had already done so much in breaking down barriers of fear and prejudice was equal to the handling of the larger issue of corporate unity within the Body of Christ?

Yet little “niggles” (and sometimes bigger ones) did obtrude at times, even into gatherings where the presence of Christ had been very much in evidence. I remember my own feelings of concern when at a house party Holy Communion service the cleric in charge whispered “this is the body of Christ” as he served me with a small cube of bread. In spite of these differences, fellowship at the many “renewal” meetings, was genuine and cordial.

It did indeed seem that what united us was far more important than the things which threatened to divide.

But I suspect we all realized that the Holy Spirit had not been sent simply to enable us to have happy times together. Sooner or later, our differences would have to be opened up and examined. Whatever we understood by the term “Church”, it involved issues which could not be permanently shelved.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF “RESTORATION”

This was certainly the case for some of us who had come together to study our Bibles in the nineteen-fifties with reference to the “Church” theme. In our own experiences of “church” (without looking further afield), we had seen much that did not measure up to Biblical standards. But since most of us had no inescapable denominational or local church commitment, we were able to consider the practical implications of “restoration” with comparatively open minds. I say “comparatively”, because the demands of true discipleship are inescapable, regardless of one’s church affiliation.

The 1965 Conference at Herne Bay on the theme of “The Apostolic Commission” was for some of us a significant landmark in the firming up of our convictions (see chapter 1). We realized that the Holy Spirit had come, not only to revive the saved, but to awaken the lost. That meant evangelism; and “Church-planting evangelism”, at home as well as overseas, was central to our understanding of “the apostolic commission”.

But what kind of churches? Our reading of the Scriptures had impressed on us that, within the world context in this present age, the church of Christ is intended to function realistically as his “Body”. True local churches therefore must exist to experience and express the life of their Lord and Head; that, and nothing else. This, for us, was the only realistic inference from the teaching of the New Testament concerning Christ’s Church throughout the Christian age.

As regards the ministry of apostles, this was seen to be essentially a response to the Lord’s commission to reach out to the nations with the Gospel, and to “make disciples” for Christ. New converts were at once introduced into the realm of the (divinely) supernatural. From among them the Holy Spirit would choose and anoint those who would be equipped to serve in the varied ministries required for the upbuilding of the body in love. [Ephesians 4].

Inevitably this laid wide open the whole issue of fellowship (or partnership) in the outreaching ministry of the Gospel of Christ. Not all of our friends in Renewal circles appeared at first to be opposed to our vision. But their approach to the “church” issue, in the short term at least, was essentially pragmatic. If the Lord was pleased to pour His Spirit upon Anglican and Baptist and Catholic churches, was it not heartless and unrealistic to unsettle congregations within “the historic churches” with idealistic notions about “scriptural order”?

Michael Harper recognized that radical changes would be needed within the churches – especially within his own Church of England. This was made clear in the ministry which began to emerge through the Fountain Trust which Michael created in 1964 to advance the cause of renewal. But the renewal of Christians within the churches was seen as the first priority. Until that had been achieved, “divisive” questions of constitutional reform, would, it was believed, have to wait.

Thus there emerged two incompatible perceptions as to the mind of the Holy Spirit in relation to the renewal of Christ’s Church. This did not make for closer cooperation

between the two streams, and gradually, in partnership terms, there was a "gentlemanly" drawing apart. It was disappointing, but not (we hoped) necessarily the end of the road. In both streams there was strong belief in the power of the Holy Spirit. Could there not yet be a meeting of minds just as realistic as earlier there had been the meeting of hearts under that same Spirit's anointing'?

And so personal fellowship between renewalists and restorationists continued, and there was occasional sharing or exchange of "safe" ministry. Perhaps more impressively [from the point of view of those "Charismatics" who were not particularly interested in "church" issues), some of the key men who had been involved in our conferences chose to take a non-partisan position.

And God continued to bless in both streams. During the late sixties and right on through the seventies, whilst Fountain Trust conventions and house parties were drawing large crowds, the (so-called) "house church movement" was also rapidly expanding throughout the country.

Within the Fountain Trust's sphere of ministry, many churches were revitalised. But others solidly resisted this invasion of neo-Pentecostalism. In some congregations where a "Charismatic" group had emerged, there was tension ("a church within the Church"), and, all too often, outright division.

Although I never became involved with the Fountain Trust, I rejoice at the blessing which the Lord was pleased to pour out upon many through its ministry. It was therefore sad to read Michael Harper's published admission of deep disappointment (almost despair) in his "Ashe Lecture 1979", which appeared in booklet form under the title "Beauty or Ashes?" Here is a brief extract: "There was a time when I believed that the Holy Spirit was going to renew the historic Churches. I cannot [now] in honesty believe this is going to happen, at least for a very long time. In that sense the disease has a terminal look about it. Only the most radical surgery would succeed, and the Western Churches have neither the will nor the capacity of bringing this about or of surviving the operation . . ."

Yet, though the "Fountain Trust" was disbanded in 1980, "Renewal" magazine. (under another editor), still continues to bring the message of renewal to a wide and appreciative readership.

EMERGENCE OF "RESTORATIONISM"

But what came of the other ("restoration") vision in the post-1965 period? Some who may regard Andrew Walker's "Restoring the Kingdom" as the authentic history of a "movement" may assume that it had to lead inevitably into the formation of a new denomination, or rather, collection of denominations.

I do not personally accept that any such development had been inevitable. It is true that some of those involved in leadership in those later developments were men who had attended the 1958/65 conferences. What I would be bound to question, however, is any suggestion that what Andrew Walker identified as "Restorationism" truly represents the original vision which led to the convening of those conferences.

In passing, it should be recognized that the various "Restoration" groups to which Walker draws attention did not embrace all the new fellowships or churches formed in recent years, which have sought to operate along New Testament lines. In our day, as throughout the whole of the Christian age, there is a substantial and significant part of "church history" which is written in heaven alone. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that what Andrew Walker identifies as "Restorationism", does hold a significant place in recent church

history. In its separate – in some cases disparate – segments, therefore, its teachings and its achievements call for careful and impartial consideration.

But first, a brief resume of those events out of which “Restorationism” (as an identifiable “movement”) emerged.

We have noted that it was a period during which there was widespread renewal both within and outside the denominational churches. For the encouragement of “insiders” Fountain Trust ministry took a leading part. But there was also a considerable and growing number of “outsiders” who were reaching out, not only for personal spiritual help, but also for direction with regard to fellowship and church commitment.

This clearly presented both a challenge and an opportunity to men envisioned, either directly or indirectly, through the teaching of men like Arthur Wallis, who, it will be recalled, had spelt out, in no uncertain terms, a concept of church—planting ministry which he claimed to be biblical and consequently, “undenominational”.

The challenge was taken up by a number of gifted and dedicated younger men. Their input into many small (and larger) groups gave great encouragement, especially to those who led these groups. Many of these were dedicated Christians, who nevertheless lacked maturity and experience, and who would usually be busy family men in full-time secular employment.

But these “restorationist” evangelist-teachers were, I suspect, only too aware of their own personal need for guidance in situations which were almost as new to most of them as to those they sought to help. As a consequence, as Andrew Walker records, in 1971 several of these men came together to discuss eschatology; not, merely as an interesting academical topic, but with a direct bearing on the matter in hand; viz: the planting of new churches within the orbit of the “restoration” vision.

Further meetings called in 1972 were for a carefully selected “in” group of six trusted men, to whom later a seventh was added. Perhaps quite unintentionally, these seven had now formed themselves into an exclusive fraternity with (as Walker suggests) “a strong sense of mutual destiny”, towards which all of them were already exercising “apostolic and prophetic functions”. Most of these men came from “Brethren” backgrounds and had attended some of the 1958-65 Conferences.

I believe that it was out of the formation of that “covenanted fellowship” of seven (later fourteen) men, rather than in the Conferences of 1958-65 (as Walker suggests) that “Restorationism” first began to take shape, at least embryonically, as a “movement”.

No records were published of what was discussed during the three years covered by the meetings. What however became evident was that the deliberations of these men developed (in some of them, at least) a strong conviction that, as custodians of the restoration vision, they needed to know, and be recognized within, their different ministerial offices. Consequently, several of them were now duly recognized as apostles; others as prophets, and teachers.

Sadly, men of strong opinions that they inevitably were, disagreements began to arise among them, and in 1976, they split up into two separate groups.

That, however, was not the end of “Restorationism”. As they went their different ways, the two (later three or more) groups, carried the restoration vision with them into church-planting ministry, and in “giving input” into many already existing independent groups who welcomed their help.

NEW EMPHASIS ON “APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY”

Undoubtedly, the biggest boost to one section of the movement were the large, well-organised Bible Weeks, especially the ones held in 1975, and 1976. Ministry by the visiting American, Ern Baxter, was highly acclaimed. Baxter’s addresses on “The Structure of Authority” helped to prepare the ground for the more pointed emphasis on apostolic authority which began to be heard at about this time.

In 1975, “Restoration” magazine was launched, putting its Bradford-based “Harvestime” fellowship on the map as the foremost Restoration “structure of authority” to emerge in Great Britain at that time. Walker points out that in the earliest issues of “Restoration” the apostleship theme was not strongly in evidence. The magazine in fact acquired a wide readership, including many “renewed” Christians who could appreciate its “Spirit-filled” ministry without feeling threatened in terms of their church commitment. However, in later issues, the theme of “apostleship” became increasingly prominent, one issue being given over almost entirely to that theme.

Meanwhile, some of the men who had broken away from the then Bradford-based group, and others who had never become involved in it, were active in other areas, drawing enquirers together for teaching and discipling. There were differences in the style and emphases of these pioneers, but they all shared essentially the same “anti-denominational” stance, and, in most essentials, the same concept of “apostleship”.

So what did these concepts amount to? In a later chapter (7) I shall attempt to answer this question by examining some of the main articles on “apostleship” which appeared in various issues of “Restoration”, and were subsequently republished in 1988 in a book entitled “Apostles Today”.

But first I want to look at this development in the context of: (1) Some earlier experiments in “apostleship” in the recent past, and (2) New Testament precedents as exemplified in the ministry of Jesus and “The Twelve”, and of the apostle Paul.

3: SOME EARLIER APOSTOLIC PIONEERS

THE NEW "APOSTOLIC CHURCH "

I have in my possession a large volume entitled: THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH: ITS PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES. One might have expected that on opening this volume one would find an exposition of New Testament teaching concerning that Church which, according to the apostle Paul, was being "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the cornerstone". (Ephesians 2:20)

But in fact THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH to which this book refers is introduced in the Foreword as "a young growing and militant Church". That was in 1937; some nineteen hundred years after the New Testament Church was born at Pentecost.

This new "Apostolic Church" was in fact the then latest addition to Christendom's ever-expanding denominational network. Together with several other denominations, it had emerged out of the "Pentecostal Movement" as a disturbing and challenging element within the Protestant tradition.

The book, which came to be known internally as "The Constitution", runs into over four hundred pages, and is in three parts. Part One is concerned with "The Constitution for the British Isles". Part Two provides "Guiding Principles for the Apostolic Church". Part Three, which is entitled: "Overseas Constitution", is largely a repetition of Part One, with certain necessary adjustments and additions.

Throughout the book, there is special emphasis on the subject of apostolic oversight. In this connection, the then President, Daniel Powell Williams, states in the Foreword: "...as the name of the Church implies, and as the Written Word of God decrees ...the government (of the Church) is decisively vested in the Apostleship, in whose hands is the interpretation of all prophetic revelation". As this statement reveals, the ministry of the Prophet was also highly regarded. In fact, many of the book's pronouncements on doctrinal and procedural issues are supported by "Prophetic Ministry", the date and place where the prophecy was originally given being indicated after each quotation.

These prophecies are invariably delivered in the first person, as spoken directly by the Lord, and thus carry an air of authority to which church members would be expected to submit without question.

As one reads "the Constitution", one senses the confidence with which its compilers appropriated to their movement, as of right, biblical terms and concepts relating to "The Church", and "The Body of Christ". No hint is given as to if [or when) the original "Apostolic Church" ceased to function, or as to how the testimony of Christ had been maintained through the centuries prior to the emergence of this latter-day "Church". And apart from a brief reference to "the taking over of Outside Bodies" on the basis of submission to "the particular beliefs of the Apostolic Church", and to "Union with other religious Bodies" on [it need hardly be said) the same terms, there is virtually no recognition in the book of any Christian testimony outside that of the compilers' own "Apostolic" connection.

"The Constitution" reveals that already, at the time of its publication, an extensive administrative network had been developing. This henceforth was to operate under "apostolic" oversight based at three inter-related headquarters; viz: Penygroes (in South Wales), Bradford (Yorks), and Glasgow (Scotland). It is explained that "the growth of the work up to the end of the year 1933 demanded that some further settled arrangements should be reached for a more vital cooperation of the various units of the work at that

date." Consequently, at a meeting of the Council of Apostles ("representative of the whole Church") in January 1934, it was determined that "at the insistent call of the Divine Head . . . nothing but a complete unity, fiscally as well as spiritually, would suffice to equip us to answer His clarion call, 'Go Forward!' that was so urgently sounding in our ears."

"A FISCAL UNITY WORLDWIDE"

Hence, in February 1937, at an historical meeting of the General Council of the Apostolic Church, by the execution of a Deed, signed and sealed by President Daniel Williams (a former Congregational minister), "The Apostolic Church" became a "fiscal unity" worldwide. As to the Council's worldwide authority, "The Constitution" allows of no ambiguity; the Church in the British Isles was to be "recognised as the Mother Church in its relation to the Churches in other countries...[its] oversight being exercised by the General Council through the General Headquarters at Penygroes, Wales, which is consequently the General Headquarters of the whole Church."

PENYGROES CONFERENCE 1938

There was great expectation in the hearts of those neo-Apostolic pioneers in those days. I saw evidence of this when I went with some friends to their summer conference at Penygroes in 1938. The large Hall was crowded by delegates from near and far, and the atmosphere was electric. Never before had I heard more triumphant singing. To my unaccustomed ears, the Bible ministry and prophetic utterances seemed profound. As we left the gathering at the end of the day. I was asking myself: "Could this 'Apostolic Church' indeed be the answer to my own then developing vision of a restored New Testament Church?"

I am obliged to add that, in spite of the undoubted sincerity of these Christians, when, some time later, their "Constitution" came into my hands I found it hard to believe it was the work of intelligent men who knew their Bibles. Time and again they referred to their "Apostolic Church Denomination". Denomination, it most certainly was, but did it never occur to these devout men that even their self-chosen designation was a contradiction in terms?

And half a century on, it has to be said that there is little evidence that the expectations of those pioneering "apostles" have been realised. In fact, I have been told that a decline set in almost from the time that "The Constitution" was published. Except for some vigorous assemblies in Nigeria and New Zealand, "The Apostolic Church" is today a mere shadow of its former self. In the British Isles, its dwindling congregations would seem to be held together more by loyalty to a fading "vision" than by any expectation of a turn in the tide.

EDWARD IRVING AND "THE CATHOLIC APOSTOLICS"

As one examines "The Constitution" of these twentieth-century "Apostolics", one is reminded of the London-based "Catholic Apostolic Church" which had emerged out of the vision of that remarkable man Edward Irving almost exactly a hundred years before. True, Irving's Scottish Presbyterian background, and doctrinal position generally, were very different from that of the twentieth century pioneers. Yet at least one of the "Apostolics" leading ministers, E.J.Worsfold (of New Zealand) has recognized a kind of "apostolic succession" linking his denomination and Irving's. Worsfold has even gone so far as to refer to the earlier denomination as the Apostolics' "Mother Church".

Whatever one might think about Irving as a man and as a prophet, he was without question one of the most brilliant and gifted preachers of his day. As a young Church of Scotland minister who had been put in charge of the "Caledonian Church" in London in the eighteen-twenties, his eloquent and passionate preaching attracted large crowds including many prominent people. However, on account of his highly controversial teaching, especially with reference to the humanity of Christ, and (later) his acceptance of the concept of a "Restored Apostolic Church" endowed with "pentecostal" gifts, such as prophecy, "tongues" and healing, his Church of Scotland leaders excommunicated him.

This crisis signalled the formation of "The Apostles' Fellowship" in London.

At first, in regard to its theological basis, the Fellowship was fairly loosely knit, though strong in its emphasis on an "apostleship" committed to the task of world evangelism. On Irving's premature death soon after its inception, it was consolidated under its duly appointed "apostles" ("The Restored Twelve") and claimed "Church" status as "The Catholic Apostolic Church". However, as time passed, and early expectations did not materialise, and, one by one, the founding apostles died, and were not replaced, the faithful remnant lost much of the original vision. With the death (in 1901) of the last surviving elder, the Catholic Apostolic Church entered a self-imposed "time of silence" from which it has never emerged.

"The Catholic Apostolic Church" was a logical development out of Edward Irving's "vision". Yet, because of the magnitude of its claims and its commitment to an elaborate liturgical system, its rapid decline was surely inevitable. Indeed, it is hard to conceive that its founders could have received a mandate from heaven to launch a "Church" so patently unbiblical in character. As in the case of so many reformist movements, before and since, what may originally have been a true God—given vision was compressed within the mould of its interpreters' own "church" traditions. For in spite of all that was so startlingly "new" in his later ministry, Irving never managed to shake off the cloak of sacramentalism which had been an integral element in his own "high church" background. Even after his excommunication, "The "Catholic Apostolic Church" which then, in due course, emerged, was a predictable development out of centuries of "development" within the Catholic tradition.

* * *

APOSTLES AS AN ELECTED HIERARCHY

The disparity between "Catholic Apostolic" ritualism and the unadorned puritanism of the more recent "Apostolic" movement is obvious. It is all the more surprising that from within the later denomination, Dr Worsfold, whilst recognizing that "The Catholic Apostolic Church" had collapsed, asserts: "this should not blind us to what the Catholic Apostolic Church has bequeathed to the Apostolic Church concerning future apostolic and prophetic ministry".

This provides an interesting insight into the importance attached to the apostolic office by the pioneers behind both these "churches". Apostles are seen to be not only missionary pioneers who plant and establish new churches. More especially, they are an elected hierarchy to whom the local leaders within the clearly delineated denominational network submit, and by whom they are appointed, and by whom they can be removed or transferred. The apostle's role, in fact, is much the same as that of the bishop within the Catholic and Anglican traditions.

Evidently it was assumed that this was the scriptural order for the “restored” New Testament Church. Apart from the “foundation” reference in Ephesians 2:20, does not Paul, in his reference to the five ministries of “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers” indicate that these ministries are to continue “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...”? [Ephesians 4: 1 1-13]. What Bible-believing Christian, therefore, could deny that, in the restoration of New Testament church life, the recovery of these ministries, especially the two first-named, is of paramount importance? Without apostles and prophets would not churches lack their divinely appointed foundations and administrators?

IRVING’S “GREAT TESTIMONY”

Such were the questions which undoubtedly exercised the mind of Edward Irving, and led in due course to the publication of his “Great Testimony”. This was sent forth in the early eighteen-thirties to “The Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, and others in place of Chief Rule over the Church of Christ throughout the earth, and to the Emperors, Kings, Sovereigns, Princes and Chief Governors over the nations of the baptized.” This breathtaking document continues with the announcement: “God's purpose hath been to raise up Apostles and Prophets, laying again the ancient foundations; to rebuild thereon His spiritual temple; from thence to send His messengers; thither to invite, and there to bless his children . . . He hath . . . stirred up His strength; and in reviving His fivefold ministry of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers, He hath manifested again the eternal form of the going forth of the power of His Spirit for the revelation of Himself to man.”

Whatever else may have been missing in this extraordinary manifesto (which was actually sent to many of the rulers of Church and State addressed), there was no lack of confidence as to its outcome. The message was an announcement. The apostles and prophets had already been raised up. The ancient foundations had already been relaid. God was about to rebuild His spiritual temple. The revived fivefold ministry was already in operation. Through this London-based “Apostolic Fellowship” (shortly to claim full “church” status), “the nations of the baptized” were about to see “the going forth of the power of (God's) Spirit for the revelation of Himself to man”.

In the light of subsequent events (or non-events) we may be tempted to dismiss this incident as one of Church history’s little jokes. More to the point, perhaps, would be to reflect carefully upon the whole Irvingite scenario and to consider if it may not have some valuable lessons for us today.

Things obviously went badly wrong, first for Irving personally, and later, for the “Church” which emerged out of his vision and teaching. There were false prophesyings, disorderly tongues-speaking, and other questionable “spirit manifestations” in the public and private meetings. If these were not directly satanic, much of what happened was certainly not under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

When, in addition, there were Irving's questionable teachings, [did he ever understand the nature of the new birth?] it is not altogether surprising that there are those who would argue that, if the Irving story proves anything, it proves that any attempt to restore to the Church its original apostolic and prophetic ministries is doomed to failure.

Yet was Irving wholly misguided, even if, like many geniuses, he had an incredibly naive streak? In the light of events, his assumption that every “prophetic” utterance from the

lips of the recognized prophets within his circle must be received without question, is indeed sad. Yet the impression that comes over as one reads about Irving is of a deeply sincere man who at heart was truly dedicated to Christ. Sadly, his friend Thomas Carlyle's description of him as "the blinded eagle" was probably apt.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

So what can we learn from the failed experiment of Irvingite restorationism, and from that of the self-proclaimed "Apostolic Denomination" which, though still in existence, is also, today, a declining force?

Perhaps, first and foremost, they Warn us that when Christians move in the realm of the "charismatic" they come at once into conflict with the evil principalities and powers which operate in "heavenly places". Against such a foe we are powerless without the Holy Spirit. Mere mental acceptance of the "truth" about the Holy Spirit will not suffice, for "the spirit of holiness" will not dwell among a people who, however sound their theology, are living unholy lives. Satan is a deceiver, quick to exploit all areas of unreality and duplicity in those "who have a name that they are alive", but who are either already spiritually dead, or dying.

It is a significant fact that, for example, the spirit of division (which is at the root of sectarianism) is more in evidence among so-called "Spirit-filled" Christians than among those who make no such claims for themselves or their churches. If the terms "Pentecostal" or "Charismatic" have any validity as applied to any group of Christians, it ought to be because they are marked by "the spirit of holiness" in life and testimony. To claim to be "Spirit-filled" exposes the claimant at once to the fiercest onslaughts from Satan. It is because of our utter dependence on the Holy Spirit that in Satan's unrelenting war on the saints those who "earnestly desire spiritual gifts" (or who already claim to be "moving in the gifts") are a chief target of his attack. Especially is this true of leaders. This danger is not sufficiently recognized. Consequently, the casualty rate in those areas is alarmingly high. [Obviously this is one of the main reasons why we need to be clear about the nature of the ministries of the Church – including that of apostleship – and what are the qualifications necessary for those who are appointed to those ministries].

The vision of the founding fathers of these movements was for a recovery of New Testament Church life. But what was their understanding of the essential nature of that Church? Did they see it as the organic Body of Christ, or as a centrally organised network of Christian congregations? In Irving's circle, the "organic" (body of Christ) aspect seems to have been assumed to be an inevitable consequence of baptismal initiation. Within the more recent "Apostolic" movement, however, there was a more soundly "Biblical" concept of Christian initiation, those seeking baptism and church membership being expected to show evidence of having already committed their lives to Christ as Saviour.

Despite these differences, both movements attached great importance to Paul's aforementioned statement that the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." So what could be clearer than that suitable men must be found to fill those foundational offices?

Before they had assumed "church" status therefore, the Catholic Apostolics had acquired their "prophets", and when they became convinced that they must have apostles too, it was left to the prophets to indicate who, within the Fellowship, were to fill the apostolic office. Twelve men were called out in this way, twelve being the number of the original apostolic team appointed by the Lord.

For Irving personally, it was somewhat humiliating that, although he was surrounded by tongues-speakers, he had not himself received “tongues”, and his ministry was not therefore considered to be “inspirationally” prophetic. Hence, he was not considered qualified for either the apostolic or prophetic office. Consequently, in the newly constructed Newman Street Church, in which Irving preached after his excommunication from the Church of Scotland, he was provided with a seat at the bottom row of the six-levelled pulpit, at the feet of the church's appointed hierarchy. To his credit, “the blinded eagle” meekly accepted his lowly place, apparently without protest.

Unlike the Irvingites, the neo-Apostolics did not restrict themselves to a quota of twelve men to make up their apostolic team. In fact, in their 1935 “Constitution”, no less than thirty-five “apostles” are listed, together with their places of residence. Again unlike the Catholic Apostolics, they not only filled the vacant places of those who died, or retired, or resigned, but freely appointed others, “as the need arose”.

So though both movements attached great importance to the apostolic office, they clearly differed in their perception of the function of the apostle, the differences reflecting the religious backgrounds of their main architects. In Irving's sacramentalist background symbolism was an essential feature. The Lord had appointed twelve men to be his apostles, so that must be the number in this “Restored” Church; no more and no less. From what is known concerning that apostolic company their symbolic “presence” would seem to have been at least as important as the duties they performed.

As regards the background to the formation of the apostolic team in 1935, I have been favoured in having first-hand information from a former “Apostolic”. It appears that the main architect of “The Constitution” was Hugh Dawson (later to become President). Prior to his coming into the movement Dawson had been a prominent layman in the Methodist Church and a successful business man. It is not therefore merely coincidental that “The Constitution” reflects, in so many details, Methodist “methodology. In fact, the responsibilities attached to the “apostles” within the new denomination correspond closely to those of superintendent ministers within the Methodist Church. As in Methodism, the “Apostolic Church” is headed up by its “President”.

Under its revered first President, together with his team of good and trusted fellow-apostles, “The Constitution” stated: “that this Twentieth-century Holy Ghost Church has a special part to play in these Latter Days . . . a great future lays ahead of her . . . she is unique . . . the principles of the first-century Church finding expression in this twentieth-century Holy Ghost Church”.

In the ensuing years, however, this “twentieth-century Holy Ghost Church”, equipped with its apostles and prophets, has clearly not yet seen a fulfilment of its “vision”, and seems now unlikely ever to do so. In fact some of the less idealistic denominations which also emerged out of the Pentecostal revival at the turn of the century appear to have done rather better than the “Apostolics”.

Did the idealism of both the Catholic Apostolics of the eighteen-twenties and their more recent successors accelerate their decline?

To help us to arrive at the right answer we need to discover what light the New Testament sheds on the subject of apostolic ministry.

That enquiry will be the subject of the next three chapters.

4: JESUS AND THE TWELVE APOSTLES

When Jesus prayed to the Father: “as thou didst send me into the world, so have I sent them into the world”, the word used for “send” was “apostello”. It occurs eight times in his high priestly prayer (John 17), and in many other places – in the four Gospels and elsewhere – frequently in connection with the Lord's messianic mission.

In its noun form, essentially it means a “sent one” – or “messenger”. It is usually applied in the New Testament either to the twelve disciples whom Jesus chose “to be with him” for special service, or to Paul. It is also found in a few other places to relate to other men.

Since the New Testament does not provide any definition of the term, its precise meaning must be deduced from the contexts in which it appears. To be a “messenger” can be an honourable vocation. But the men originally designated by the Lord as his “apostles” were not ordinary “messengers”. They were twelve men called out from the wider circle of Jesus's disciples for a very special ministry.

There is no evidence that Jesus applied the title of “apostle” to himself. Nor that he was referred to as such by his disciples. There is, however, one place in the New Testament where the term is applied to him. Our study of New Testament apostleship must therefore begin with a consideration of the implications of this reference. In Hebrews, chapter 3, verse 1, we read:

Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession. He was faithful to him that appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in God's house.

SEVENFOLD TESTIMONIAL TO JESUS'S APOSTLESHIP

Hebrews begins with a statement that the God who spoke of old to “our fathers” (the Old Testament saints) “by the prophets”, has now spoken to us “in these last days” by (‘in’) “one who is a Son”. Of this one who is designated “the Son” the writer now says:

- (i) The Father had appointed him heir of all things.
- (ii) Through him the Father had created the “aion” (the worlds and the ages).
- (iii) He reflects the glory of the Father.
- (iv) He bears the very stamp of the Father's nature.
- (v) He upholds the universe by the word of his power.

This testimonial provides evidence of the Son's unique qualifications to undertake the messianic mission planned for him by the Father.

But the writer now adds two further details which point to the accomplishment of that mission: (

- vi) He made purification for sins, (and having done this)
- vii) He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS OVER ANGELS

To this seven-fold testimonial further confirmation is now added. The angels being the highest order of created beings known to the Jews, the writer now argues for the superiority of the Son over angels. Seven Old Testament passages are quoted in support of his claim, and he concludes by asking:

To what angel has (God) ever said: "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a footstool of my feet? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?"

Yes, indeed; but the messianic ministry of the Son, as the writer is now careful to explain, was of an entirely different order. Not only different from that of the prophets, but also of the angels.

THREE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES

Three important differences should be noted:

1. *Jesus was unique in his manhood.* Not only so in what he said and did, but primarily in what he was. And it was essentially in what he was that he ministered apostolically to the world into which the Father had sent him.

This comes through very powerfully in the opening chapter of John's Gospel. John speaks of "the Son" as "the Word" who was "with God", and adds, "and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us". Yet, in voluntarily becoming man, there was no diminution of his glory. John testifies: "We beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father". To this John adds the striking parenthesis: "and from his fullness have all we received, grace upon grace." The ministry of Jesus was essentially that of sharing his "fullness" with man. That is of the essence of all genuine "Christian" ministry.

2. *"He made purification for sins".* It is with this statement that the writer introduces the high priestly ministry of Jesus, later to be developed as the main theme of the epistle.

The high priestly office was foundational in the ordering of the worship of Jehovah by his Covenant people, the Jews. It had not been abandoned with the coming of the Son. In him it had taken on a new transcendent character. The sacrifices offered under the law had been "copies of the heavenly things", a mere "shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities." [Hebrews 9:23 to 10:1]. It is in this connection that the writer argues for the necessity of the incarnation:

He had to be made like his brethren in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself suffered being tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted. [2:1 7,18].

"Made like his brethren", "tempted as we are;" – yet Jesus was not marked by the imperfections evident in the priests who served under the Old Covenant. They were obliged, first of all, to offer sacrifices for their own sins, before they could offer for the sins of the people. Furthermore, they would eventually need to be replaced. And as to the sacrifices they offered, these, the reader is reminded, had to be repeated continually because the priests were incapable of providing a "once for all" cleansing for those who brought their sacrifices to them. [7:23-26; 10:1-3].

None of these limitations marked the high priestly ministry of Jesus. As to the duration of his office, "he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever" [7 :24]. As to his personal character, he was "holy, harmless, unstained, separated from sinners" [7:26]. And, as to the sacrifice he provided, it was unrepeatable, "for by a single offering

he has perfected for all times those who are sanctified" [7 :27 81 10:14]. This brings us to the third objective of Jesus's apostolic mission.

3. He offered himself as the sacrifice for sin.

He was "made flesh", not only so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, but so that he might "taste death for every one" [2:9]. The sinless priest offered himself as the unblemished sacrifice to God, providing what the priests of old could never provide – the perfect, once-for-all, sacrifice for sins. And this he made available to all who believe on him as their Saviour and Lord.

JESUS'S HIGH PRIESTLY MINISTRY – FOUNDATIONAL AND CONTINUOUS

In his apostolic mission to the world, his high priestly work was foundational. He had "tasted death" as the sacrificial lamb, but since death had no moral claim upon him, it could not hold him, and he arose and returned to the Father, having completed the work he had come to do.

Seated now "at the right hand of the Majesty on high" [1:3], his high priestly work continues unceasingly. Not that he has need to bring any further offerings to the Father for the sins of his people, but so that "by the power of an indestructible life" he might ever live in the Father's presence to make intercession for those who draw near to him [7:16,24-25].

Hence, the "holy brethren who share in a heavenly call" are exhorted to lay aside every weight, and the sin which clings so closely. They are to run with perseverance the race that is set before them, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of their faith [12:1,2].

Jesus is unique as the "pioneer" – the initiator, or chief leader – in the whole vast world redemption plan. A pioneer has followers. But Jesus looked for something more than followers. In identifying with "flesh and blood" he has opened up a way for those who believe on him to become "all of one" with him. "He is not ashamed to call them brethren" [2:11,12].

For the encouragement of all who seek to be true disciples of Jesus, however they may be called to serve, we know that when he came forth from the Father as the "sent one", his final destination was not the cross, but the throne of his glory.

It is Jesus, the suffering, yet triumphant Lord. who sets the standard for all Christian ministry, whether it be apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral or teaching; or any other ministry. Not only for first century disciples – but through to the end of the age.

* * *

CONTINUING ACTS AND TEACHING OF JESUS

Acts is a record of some of the continuing "acts" and teaching of Jesus through his commissioned servants. The events which climaxed the earlier narrative – his death, resurrection, and ascension – are now followed by the dramatic Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As in the Gospel records, "this same Jesus" [Acts 2:36], now glorified, is still at the centre of the narrative. The men whose ministry is recorded are significant only insofar as they are committed to him and his Word. It is by his indwelling Spirit that they are activated.

APPOINTMENT OF MATTHIAS

Almost the first thing they seem to have done after Jesus had ascended to the Father was to elect someone to replace the traitor Judas. It was done by the casting of lots. Matthias was duly enrolled to make up the complement of twelve.

We never hear anything more of Matthias. Nor, for that matter, of any of the other apostles apart from Peter, James and John. Luke simply tells us that they continued together as a team, based on Jerusalem. They even managed to remain in the city after the rest of the church there had been scattered by “the great persecution” [Acts 8:1]. Luke also recounts the early evangelistic ministry of Peter and John in Judea and Samaria, which was marked by “signs following” and much spiritual blessing. Probably some (possibly all) of the remaining ten apostles were also involved in these missions.

Evidently, however, it was not in Luke's purpose to enlarge on that phase of the early church's expansion. Instead, the focus of his narrative soon shifts away from Jerusalem and the Twelve to the developing work in Antioch (in Syria). Nevertheless, we do know that for a number of years the Twelve continued to be a respected “court of appeal” to the leaders of the new churches which came into existence as the fruit of the ministry of Paul and others, and the testimony of converts. In the prayer leading to the appointment of Matthias, there is a reference to “this ministry and apostleship” [Acts 1:25] which should be considered.

“THIS MINISTRY AND APOSTLESHIP”

1. *“This ministry”*. The term “ministry” is commonly used in church tradition to define the work of a class of people set apart for special duties. Customarily, they are given distinctive titles and attire. In Catholic tradition, the higher you go, the more prestigious your title: “reverend”, “reverend father”, “the very reverend”, “his eminence”, and, right at the top, “his holiness the Pope”. These are “the clergy”, as distinct from “the laity”.

At the lower end of the denominational spectrum, whilst the use of the more prestigious titles is uncommon, such titles as “the minister”, “the pastor”, and “reverend”, are still commonly in use. These men are said to have been “called into the ministry”.

Apart from the initial appointment of the twelve apostles, however, we have no record that Jesus introduced any orders of this kind. Indeed, shortly before his crucifixion, he made it clear to the men whose feet he had washed, and who were so deeply involved with him in the events of that Passion week, that “this ministry” meant servanthood in the truest sense of that word:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. and their great men exercise authority over them It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of man came not to be served [or to be ministered unto] but to serve [or, to minister], and to give his life as a ransom for many. [Matthew 20:25-28]

2. *“This apostleship”*. An apostle, as we have seen, is someone who is sent on a mission. Among the Greeks, the term “apostolos” had acquired a meaning akin to our term: “ambassador” – somebody who carries the credentials of his principal to act on his behalf, to uphold his good name, and to seek to establish good relations for him with people of other countries.

The Twelve's call to apostleship had been quite specific: Jesus “called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles”. [Luke 6:13]. Mark adds further details: “he appointed twelve to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons” [Mark 3:14].

APPOINTMENT OF THE TWELVE

The three features mentioned by Mark should be considered:

(a) *Jesus appointed Twelve.* Seventy disciples are mentioned [in Luke 10] as having been sent forth to preach the gospel on at least one occasion. Evidently, therefore, there must have been times when Jesus gathered that wider circle for instruction. Indeed, it is not always clear whether references to “the disciples” relate to the wider circle, or to the Twelve. As the narrative proceeds, however, it becomes clear that by “disciples” is usually meant the Twelve, and in particular Peter, James and John, who are specially involved with Jesus in his ministry.

(b) *They were chosen to be “with” Jesus.* That is to say, to be learning from him about every aspect of their calling as proclaimers of the Kingdom – a kind of extended family of apprentices. In their training, there would have been attention to character, on-the-job experience, and, of course, teaching about their Master's ultimate plans.

(c) *They were sent out to preach.* Being “with him” would also mean involvement in Jesus's preaching of the Kingdom. And from time to time, Jesus sent them out on preaching missions without him, but carrying with them his authority to preach the Kingdom and have power over demons, and to heal the sick [Luke 9:1,2].

REASON FOR APPOINTMENT OF MATTHIAS.

When we come to the first chapter of the Acts we find that as the time of Jesus's departure drew near, he envisioned them for an ever-expanding sphere of witness. As the Father had sent him, even so he was now sending them, to preach the Kingdom, heal the sick, and cast out demons, not only among their own people, but “unto all nations”. Apostleship pre-eminently was to mean the proclamation of the kingdom of God “with signs following”.

We shall return to this point later. But first, we should give some further consideration to the reason for Matthias's appointment.

Why, when Judas defected, was so much importance attached to his being replaced? Peter explains: *One of the men who have accompanied us during all the time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up ... must become with us a witness to his resurrection [Acts 1:21,22].*

Numerical symbolism sometimes gives rise to fanciful interpretations. In some contexts, however, its significance is self-evident. That is true with regard to the references in Revelation 21 to: “The twelve apostles of the Lamb”.

The age-long conflict of the Lamb with Satan being seen to be at an end. we are presented here with a picture of the New Jerusalem which emerges out of the Lamb's final triumph. Twelve here, as elsewhere, conveys the idea of completion, or fulfilment. It is obviously symbolical. In the New Jerusalem, not only do the twelve tribes of Israel have a place, but also the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Together – the twelve tribal heads and the twelve apostles – represent the people of both “nations” (Israel and the Church) with whom God has entered into covenant relationships.

WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION

Pentecost was a Feast of the Jews. At the celebration of the Feast in the year AD32 (or thereabouts), certain things happened which were without precedent in the annals of

Jewish history, causing much consternation among many of the people – including “strangers and sojourners” – who had gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast.

Luke tells us [Acts chapter 2] that it began with a sound from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind which descended on a company of over a hundred Jews who had assembled for several days for prayer. This was followed by the appearance of tongues of fire which fell upon these men and women, causing them to speak forth in a variety of languages. Many of the onlookers recognised the languages as their own.

Those involved were known to be the disciples of the prophet Jesus who had recently been executed on a charge of making a false claim to being the Jews’ Messiah. The stir over this had been prolonged by persistent rumours that Jesus had risen from the dead. So what in that connection was the significance of this strange phenomenon?

Wind and fire. These were elements whose symbolism would not have been lost on the devout Jews who observed these happenings. In Old Testament prophecies wind was the symbol of God's Spirit. Especially they would remember Ezekiel’s vision of the wind that blew upon the dry bones [Ezekiel 37], pointing to the reviving of their nation and its restoration to its own land. Fire was a symbol of divine judgment. [Deut:4:24]. Had the tongues of fire consumed the disciples of Jesus on whom they fell, the Jewish observers would readily have understood that this signified a visitation of divine judgment.

But the disciples were not consumed or harmed in any way. Instead, they were empowered “to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance”.

As the crowd which had gathered around their meeting-place listened, they heard these disciples praising God in their own language, and extolling him for his mighty works. “What does this mean?” many were asking. Others endeavoured to dismiss the whole affair as a drunken orgy.

Such was the setting in which Peter, “standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice” and addressed the enquirers. Difficult though Peter’s task was, it would have been impossible had not the multitude witnessed the mighty works of God which accompanied his address, and asked for an explanation.

With great authority Peter testified: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified”.

This was not a claim which the leaders of the Jews would have wanted to hear at that time. But the events of that day had been so ordered that the evidence could leave no honest mind with any alternative other than to believe.

Does not this throw light on the reason why the appointment of Matthias as a replacement for the apostate Judas had been seen as a matter of urgency? In Jewish law the evidence of two or three honourable witnesses was accepted as proof of the guilt or innocence of a man accused of a transgression. Here, however, were twelve such men – a complete team – standing to testify on unimpeachable evidence that Jesus had risen. And those among the onlookers who had known of Judas's defection would have observed that now no embarrassing gap had been left in the team on that account. [For a fuller treatment of this point, see Appendix 2]

PETER’S ADDRESS AT PENTECOST

In his address, Peter began by referring to the allegation of drunkenness. “These men,” he explained, “are not drunk, as you suppose”. On the contrary, what they had observed was a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy that in the last days God would pour out his Spirit upon

all flesh. Giving further details of the prophecy and its application to the present situation, Peter then focuses attention on Jesus. "Jesus of Nazareth", Peter declares, was "a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know . . . this Jesus, God raised up".

He then brings further evidence from Psalm 16. Asserting that in David's prophecy the statement: "thou shalt not abandon my soul to Hades, not let thy Holy One see corruption" pointed far beyond the psalmist's own experience to the resurrection of "the Christ", Peter testifies: "whom God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses." Luke's account underlines the essential Jewishness of the occasion. We need to keep this in mind as we trace the development of Peter's, and his fellow apostles', subsequent ministry.

We know they had been commissioned by the Lord to make disciples of all nations. We know too, that, prior to the events on the day of Pentecost, at the moment when Jesus yielded up his spirit on the cross, the curtain of the temple had been torn in two from top to bottom, signifying the removal of the privilege barrier between Jew and Gentile. We know that the disciples had been empowered by the Holy Spirit for their future task. Yet, here, at this Jewish festival, their immediate task was to witness as Jews to fellow-Jews concerning a Jew whom they declared God had raised up to be the promised Christ, or Messiah.

And, in spite of the Jews' rejection of their Messiah, it is evident that Pentecost was not the final show-down for Israel. In years to come, Peter (and also later, Paul) were to continue to recognize the Jews' prior claims upon Jesus as their Messiah. "Has God cast away his people?" Paul asks in his Roman epistle. "By no means!" he answers. "I am myself an Israelite, a descendent of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin . . ." And in the opening sentences of that epistle (which is addressed mainly to Gentile Christians) the apostle refers to Jesus Christ as God's Son "descended from David according to the flesh . . ." and goes on to refer to the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation "to the Jew first and also to the Gentile . . ."

It is interesting to note that at Pentecost, Peter and his colleagues evidently thought and acted and spoke as Jews without any sense of having compromised their divine commission to preach the Gospel "to the ends of the earth". Of two allusions to that wider commission in Peter's message [Acts 2], the first was with reference to Joel's prophecy. Peter speaks of the pouring out of God's Spirit in the last days "upon all flesh" with the corollary that "whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved". Then, in Peter's summing up he speaks of the promise of the Holy Spirit being extended, not only "to you [the Jews] and to your children", but also "to all that are afar off, every one whom the Lord our God calls unto him". The full significance of Peter's message must have been beyond the comprehension not only of his orthodox Jewish audience, but, to some degree, of his fellow apostles – even of Peter himself. Yet, as Peter exalted Jesus, and commended him as Lord and Saviour, many believed, and repented, and were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The ordering of the events of that day were taken out of the hands of the men who were visibly at the centre of it all. Their baptism of spirit and fire had initiated them into a new phase of ministry for which they had long been preparing, but of the scope of which they could as yet have had little real comprehension. And apart from Peter and James and John, Luke never again mentions any of these men by name.

Did they fail to fulfil the task laid on them by their Lord? Since we do not know, we have no right to draw such a conclusion.

Of one thing we can be sure. For the first major thrust of the Gospel into the world beyond Judea and the neighbouring provinces, Luke's story awaited the appearance on the scene of a new figure – and an unlikely one at that. He was a Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin; and his name was Saul.

5: PAUL: THE MISSIONARY STATESMAN

SAUL OF TARSUS – THE NEW CONVERT TO CHRIST

Luke mentions that at the time of the persecution of the Church which began with the stoning of Stephen, the men who stoned Stephen “laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul”. [Acts 7:58]

Saul, a devout Pharisee, who had been in the inner circle of the students of the great Jewish teacher Gamaliel, was an implacable enemy of Jesus of Nazareth. Luke introduces him [Acts 9] as he sets out on a crusade aimed at the elimination of this dangerous new sect – commonly known as “the people of the Way”. As Saul heads for Damascus, little does he guess that when he enters the city it would be as a “new man” confessing Jesus as Lord.

Saul's conversion is a major event in the early history of the Church. To trace how this comes about, however, we must first give attention to an earlier convert named Barnabas. Barnabas, “a Levite of Cyprus by race”, was to play an important role in the promotion of Saul's ministry.

APPOINTMENT TO ANTIOCH

When news reached the apostles at Jerusalem that in Antioch in Syria many were turning to the Lord, they decided to send Barnabas there to help them. Under Barnabas's leadership, the work in Antioch continued to expand.

During this period, the quite recently converted Saul of Tarsus, following a period of retreat in “Arabia”, had returned to his native city in Cilicia. (Presumably, it was during that retreat that he had received “the abundance of revelations” which were to prepare him for his future ministry). Barnabas evidently had some knowledge of Saul's circumstances at that time. With the work in Antioch making increasing demands on him, he went to Tarsus to find Saul. Barnabas having found Saul, the two men returned together to Antioch.

Luke then relates [Acts 12] further details of the persecution of the church in Jerusalem. This prompts Barnabas and Saul to visit Jerusalem bringing help from the more prosperous Christians in Antioch. Their renewed contact with the apostles there is part of the divinely planned preparation for their future ministry.

New developments are introduced in Acts 13. The chapter begins with the statement: “Now in the church in Antioch, there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul”. As the focus now shifts to Antioch, and more particularly to Barnabas and Saul, Jerusalem fades into the background in Luke's narrative. The Christians at Antioch now evidently constitute a local community under its own leaders. This community becomes the first-named local church which functions independently of the Jerusalem apostolate.

INTO EUROPE WITH BARNABAS

Barnabas and Saul are now set apart by the Holy Spirit for work requiring them to relinquish their local ministry. This is made known to the local leaders during a time when they are assembled for worship and fasting.

The precise nature, extent and location of that “work” seems not then to have been specified. The hands laid upon Barnabas and Saul were not those of the Lord (not, that is, in a physical sense), nor even those of the apostles at Jerusalem, but of their co-leaders in a young provincial Christian community. The gesture seems, in fact, to have signified no more than an expression of the local leaders’ confidence in, and fellowship with, two colleagues about to embark on a new ministry. It was a logical development of the partnership of two men who had already proved themselves effective as evangelists and shepherds.

Yet, it was in that undramatic way that the great missionary thrust into Europe was launched. As these two servants of the Lord moved out in response to the Holy Spirit’s call, they did not, as far as is known, carry any written testimonials. Nor did they have any premeditated plan of evangelism backed by sponsors at home base. Yet with the hand of the Lord upon them they breached the Judeo-Gentile frontiers with the Gospel, and were soon preaching Christ and planting churches in principal European cities.

Luke’s graphic account of Paul’s missionary journeys over the next ten years or so, at first in company with Barnabas, and later with Silas and others, is, by any standards, an outstanding success story in which Paul soon emerges as the leading figure. Churches were planted across a wide area of the Roman Empire within four of its major provinces. What satisfaction it must have been for Paul to be able to write from Corinth towards the end of his third journey: “I no longer have room for work in these regions”, and, some years later, from Rome, to Timothy [probably shortly before Paul’s martyrdom]: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”.

It would be interesting to know at what stage the “apostolic” stature of Barnabas and Paul came to be recognized by Luke and other contemporary Christians. But Luke is silent on that subject. Indeed, Luke’s only two references to Barnabas and Paul as apostles both come in his account of the first mission in Southern Galatia.

The first is in connection with a conflict which arose in Iconium over their preaching, in which “some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles”. The second follows soon after in connection with the mission in Lystra. [Acts 14:4,14]. Apart from that, Luke’s use of the term “apostle” is exclusively with reference to the Twelve, as for example when he mentions the appointment of Paul and Barnabas by the brethren at Antioch “to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders” concerning the circumcision issue. [This question is considered more fully in chapter 6].

Soon after the return of the delegation to Antioch, Paul sets out on his second missionary journey, accompanied, this time, by Silas. Early in the journey, Paul revisits the Galatian churches, and delivers to them “the decision which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem”. This provides further confirmation that up to that time Paul himself still recognized the primacy of the Twelve.

JERUSALEM HIERARCHY FADES FROM VIEW

But, from that point onwards, a new phase in Paul’s ministry is clearly under way. The narrative provides no evidence that Paul felt any further obligation to the Jerusalem hierarchy. They now fade from view, as Luke devotes his remaining chapters to the ministry of Paul and his colleagues, though without (it should be noted) any specific reference to Paul’s “apostleship”.

The reason for this omission must surely be that it was never in question that the role of the Jerusalem-based apostles was unique. They were “the twelve apostles of the Lamb”

who had been given a special commission at the beginning of the Christian age as witnesses of the resurrection of the Lord. As such, their number was significant. Doubtless, in common with all other Jews who had embraced "the Way" during that period, Paul recognized without question the symbolic significance of this apostolic team of twelve men. His awareness that he too had been called to a special ministry, did not come, however, as a consequence of any publicly declared appointment. It came by direct revelation from the Lord to him personally. Presumably it was also confirmed to his fellow-leaders in the Antioch church, and to at least one other man – the disciple Ananias to whose house Saul had been taken after he had been stricken with blindness on the road to Damascus. Beyond that, it was by the fruits of his ministry that his calling would be accredited, alike to believers and to unbelievers.

In the course of time, members of the original apostolic team would drop out through death. Apart, however, from the necessary replacement of Judas at the beginning, there is no evidence that it was thought necessary to find further replacements to ensure the continuity of the full complement of twelve. When John, the last survivor, had died towards the end of the first century AD, and consequently, the whole team had become part of history, the time had passed when the church still needed any such symbolic authentication of its divine origin and authority.

[For consideration of the question of whether Paul should be recognized as having replaced Judas in the foundational apostolic team – see Appendix 2]

WHAT IS AN APOSTLE?

This brings us to the heart of the issue we are considering. We know that the Twelve were apostles by the appointment of the Lord. We know that Barnabas and Paul were so described twice by Luke in his second "treatise". We know that several other men are named as apostles in Paul's epistles. And (most importantly in connection with our study), we know that Paul, in his epistles, claimed apostleship, and evidently attached considerable importance to that claim. So what is an apostle?

When we compare the ministry of Paul with that of the Twelve it is not easy to find a common denominator to enable us to arrive at a clear definition. In speaking of "the Twelve Apostles" we can rightly refer to their "apostolic office". Peter did so, at the time when a replacement of Judas's "office" was under consideration. Furthermore, as befitted such a team, it had its headquarters. It was Jerusalem-based, and even when all the rest of the church in Jerusalem was scattered in the great persecution the apostles managed to stay on in the city.

Paul's "calling" (in its outworking) was markedly different. If therefore we are to attach to it the designation of an "office", it has to be an office of a very different character. As we have noted, Paul's status (or rather, stature) as an outstanding minister in the Church of Christ did not emerge from any public appointment to apostleship. Rather, it was the case that his "apostleship" developed out of, and was authenticated by, his ministry.

To answer our question, therefore, we need to get back to the root meaning of the term "apostolos". An apostle is a "sent one". To the Twelve whom the Lord had ordained as his "apostles" the command, given was to "GO". That, too, was the command Saul (Paul) received, soon after his conversion, from the ascended Lord. And as Paul "went", proclaiming Christ as Lord, so from heaven the Lord confirmed the word with signs following; not only signs of healing and exorcism, but of the impartation of spiritual life and of wisdom and of character to those who received the word.

Paul's "calling" as an evangelist, church-planter, shepherd and teacher, had been self-authenticated within a comparatively short time after he had joined Barnabas in the leadership of the church at Antioch. All in all, it added up to a ministry of unquestionable authority. In course of time the custodian of that ministry was recognized as an "apostle", not in order to bolster up his authority but in recognition of the nature of the ministry he had received from the ascended Lord.

It should be understood that all who respond from the heart to the call of God in Christ, are "sent ones". They receive from the Lord the charisma requisite for the fulfilment of their call. Or, to use the analogy of the "body" which Paul delighted in, "all (the functioning members) are inspired by the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills" [1 Corinthians 12:11].

That is God's plan for his Church. Nobody was more aware of this than Paul himself. As he obeyed the call of God in his ministry, like every other "member" of the Body, he made mistakes. Yet he learned as he went. And in course of time, the full significance of his responsibilities would have become impressed on his spirit, and on those whom he served in Christ's name. God had so wrought in him, both initially in his period of preparation, and subsequently as he continued his walk with God, that he acquired capabilities given to few.

He speaks of his "care for all the churches". Yet that care was primarily intercessory, not custodial, and also, as opportunity served, it involved the giving of counsel and encouragement, and sometimes reproof. In his dealings with one church in particular, the one at Corinth, he had special reasons for the exercise of such a ministry.

Having been involved in the planting of that church and having continued with it for the first eighteen months of its existence, its subsequent difficulties deeply concerned him. Particularly, he was troubled about its susceptibility to the influence of men who claimed to be servants of Christ, but who he has to refer to as "false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ".

THE SCOPE OF PAUL'S MISSIONARY MINISTRY

Before giving further consideration to the implications of authority in Paul's ministry, however, we need to look at certain practical factors at which have an inevitable bearing on the subject. Firstly, what was the time—scale within which Paul's ministry was contained? In geographical terms, what was the scope of the operation? What was Paul's missionary strategy?

Time-scale. Though the precise dating of Paul's missionary journeys is not possible, Luke mentions certain people and events which have enabled historians to date the journeys with reasonable accuracy. For example, we are told that when Paul paid his first visit to Corinth, Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, and historic records confirm that Gallio's year of office there was around AD 51-52. From this, it has been possible to provide a fairly accurate time-scale within which to place the three missionary journeys. All in all the whole operation extended for a period of approximately ten to twelve years, probably from around AD 46 to AD 57/8.

Area covered. Over the three missionary journeys, Paul evangelised principal cities in four major Provinces of the Roman Empire. In his city to city itinerations alone, he must have covered upwards of ten thousand miles.

Missionary Strategy. Luke shows that on all three journeys the course of events, sooner or later, turned out differently from what Paul and his travelling companions could have anticipated at the start.

For instance, Paul's visit to Southern Galatia on his first journey seems to have been a consequence of a physical disability which either drove him to that district, or detained him there [see Galatians 4: 13] Yet, though unpremeditated, the stay in that Province resulted in the planting of churches in at least three principal cities.

The second journey three years later, seems to have been prompted by Paul's wish to revisit the brethren in those same cities, "and see how they do" [Acts 15:36]. This having been accomplished (without Barnabas, who declined to make the journey), Paul evidently entertained a wish to evangelise other neighbouring provinces; but he was forbidden at that time by the Holy Spirit to do so [Acts 16:7]. He was wide open therefore at this stage for further guidance. This was given him in a vision. And so Macedonia, a province almost a thousand miles from his home base, now becomes his next destination [Acts 16:9- 10].

The next assignment came, not as a result of a vision, but – initially, at least – as a consequence of a need of security from threats on his life made by hostile Jews in Thessalonica and Beroea. He sails to Athens. Failing to make much impression there, he moves on to Corinth (in the province of Achaia), one of the most strategically important cities in the Empire [Acts 17]. Paul and his colleagues remain in Corinth for eighteen months, planting a church there, and (it appears) reaching out in evangelism to the whole Province.

Paul has now passed the half-way mark in his recorded missionary career, during which time he has seen the planting of churches in four major provinces of the Roman Empire. After returning to Antioch on leaving Corinth, he quickly sets out on his third, and last missionary journey.

Again, and for the last time, he travels through Southern Galatia, "strengthening all the disciples" there. Continuing at first on the same route he had taken three years before, possibly for the first time since he and Barnabas had set out for Cyprus on Paul's first missionary journey, he now has a definite destination in view.

The visit to Ephesus is, in fact, in fulfilment of a strong conviction arising out of his brief call there on his way homewards from Corinth on his previous journey. He was, he believed, a debtor to that great city to proclaim the Gospel there. Evidently, with this in mind, and with the Holy Spirit's guidance and anointing, he enters Ephesus, and takes up residence there for an extended stay. During the time that Paul and his team evangelise in, and from, Ephesus, the whole province of Asia Minor hears the word of the Lord. The seven churches mentioned in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 may well have been planted during that time. In all probability, however, the extent of the work in the province was much greater than that. Luke – never given to over-statement – reports that during this period "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks". Deep penetration of this densely populated, pagan province had evidently been made with the Gospel of Christ as an outcome of this mission based on Ephesus. The remainder of Paul's third journey is devoted to revisiting the brethren in Macedonia and Achaia before he has one final meeting with the Ephesian elders.

It seems that that final stage in Paul's journey was premeditated. The Macedonian churches had been planted some four or five years before. Not having previously had any further opportunity to revisit them, he evidently felt he owed it to them to pay them a

further visit as he had paid the Galatian churches after they had been planted on his first journey.

Paul had spent eighteen months at Corinth on his first visit, and we know that there was a further visit sometime, probably during his long stay in Ephesus. The Corinthian epistles form an important part of our sources of information about Paul's ministry, especially with reference to his exercise of "apostolic authority". I shall be looking at this in some detail in my next chapter.

6: PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS

Luke's account of Paul's career as an evangelist and church-planter clearly presents Paul as the most influential standard-bearer for Christ in his day. Other men, besides those who worked in close association with Paul, were also successful evangelists. By the scope and depth of his ministry, however, Paul is in a class on his own. Next to the Lord, in the whole history of the church, no one person has had a more profound influence on Christian thought and life than this converted Pharisee, and former enemy of Christ.

Although not one of "The Twelve", his identification as "the Apostle Paul" has rarely been contested, other than by some of his disaffected contemporaries. Yet, as we have seen, Luke makes only two passing references to Paul's apostolic status. Both are found in the account of events which took place during his first missionary campaign in Southern Galatia in company with Barnabas [Acts 14:4,14]. It is to Paul's epistles we must turn for any other mention of his personal claim to apostleship.

THE ANTIOCHIAN DELEGATION

Looking into Luke's narrative, we find that in the first sixteen chapters, apart from the two references above mentioned, the term "apostle" appears 26 times; always in the plural, and always with reference to the Jerusalem apostles ("The Twelve"). Six are in chapter 15 in connection with the visit of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem shortly after they had returned from their campaign in Southern Galatia. They had felt obliged to make this long journey to confer with "the apostles and elders" over a serious problem which had arisen both in the church in Antioch and in the new churches recently planted in Southern Galatia.

The Antiochian delegation was kindly received by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. Careful consideration was given to the issues brought before them. The delegation then returned to Antioch with an escort of "leading men" and a letter addressed "to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia".

This is the last we hear from Luke about the Jerusalem apostles, except for one further (related) mention in the following chapter (16), in connection with Paul's further visit (this time with Silas) to the Southern Galatian churches. Luke simply informs us, "they delivered . . . for observance the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem". [In Acts 21, Luke records a meeting between Paul and James with "all the elders". But there is no reference to the "apostles", as such].

The Jerusalem letter having been delivered, the issue (for the time being at any rate) appears to have been closed. Taking leave of the Southern Galatian churches, Paul and Silas struck out in a new direction for further pioneering work with the gospel. From this time there is no evidence that Paul felt accountable for his ministry in any way to the Jerusalem hierarchy. "Officially", at any rate, that link was now severed. Under Christ, Paul becomes "his own man" in the furtherance of his ministry.

Of this, Luke seems to have become fully aware. We have noted his two brief references to Paul and Barnabas as "the apostles" at the beginning of Paul's missionary career (alongside Barnabas). This might have been seen as an appropriate recognition that their ministry truly measured up to the objectives of the apostolic commission given by the Lord to the Twelve. It may well have been in line with the thinking of the Jerusalem-trained Barnabas. Yet, from the time that Barnabas and Paul parted, it seems that Luke no longer considered that for his friend Paul, the "apostolic" handle, with its unique Jerusalem connection, was appropriate.

Whether this is a correct reading of Luke's mind or not, his prompting soon leads him to turn his readers' attention away from the Jerusalem hierarchy to the man with whom his own ministry had become so closely involved.

It might be contended that this simply reflects Luke's personal bias. Against that must be weighed the fact that there is little evidence to suggest that the main thrust and consolidation of the Christian testimony in Europe in those days was other than through the ministry of Paul and his co-workers.

Assuming, therefore, that Luke is correct in his recognition of the primacy of Paul in the ongoing cause of Christ at that time, we may well enquire what it was that transformed this unlikely character into the man he became?

There is much to be learned from a study of Paul and his career. It must, however, be recognized that within the whole sweep of events, and the interplay of divine and human life in which he was involved, Paul stands unique. This point is made lest it be assumed that, in what follows Paul is presented as being in some respects a prototype on which latter-day church leaders may legitimately seek to model their ministry.

THE MAKING OF AN APOSTLE

Paul claimed to have been "called by the will of God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ" [Rom. 1:1]. Like every other "called" servant of Christ however, Paul's career was shaped on the wheel of experience. He could have taken a wrong turning and ended up a dismal failure. He did make mistakes. His natural impulsiveness, for example, obtruded at times into his ministry. But, in spite of everything, along with his contemporary Peter, who slipped up badly on some occasions, Paul won through, in his post-conversion life, to triumph and to a martyr's crown.

Let us consider some of the main factors which contributed to the making of "Paul the apostle":

1. *"A chosen instrument"*.

At "Saul of Tarsus's" conversion, the Lord had on hand a trusted disciple to lift: the new convert on to his feet, get him filled with the Holy Spirit, baptized, and fed, and started (within days!) on his preaching career! To Ananias the Lord had revealed: "He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel". [Acts 9:1-5]. Years later, Paul, too, testified before king Agrippa to having received at that time what amounted to an appointment from the Lord to go to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me". [Acts 26:16-18].

2. *"Visions and revelations"*.

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul refers to "visions and revelations of the Lord". These were to play an important part in shaping his ministry. He speaks of being "caught up to the third heaven" (though he couldn't say whether it was "in the body or out of the body"), and of hearing things of which he was forbidden to speak. These experiences, he confesses, brought with them the temptation to pride: "and to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations," he says, "a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me".

3. *Paul's "thorn in the flesh"*.

Whatever Paul's thorn was, it made it necessary for this erstwhile proud Pharisee to draw continually on the grace of God. He had come to see that "for the sake of Christ" instead of being a handicap, it had turned out to be a help: "I will all the more gladly boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong," he declares. [2 Cor. 12:9,10].

4. Empowered by the Holy Spirit.

From the time that he was filled with the Holy Spirit by the laying on of Ananias's hands Paul knew that it was to be by the same Spirit that he was to be guided and empowered as he pursued his new vocation in the service of Christ. It was a remarkable transformation for a former leading Pharisee. Nobody was more aware of this than Paul himself.

In his written ministry he stresses the primacy of the Holy Spirit in the life and work of servants of Christ. Writing to the Corinthians, he says that when he first came to them it was "in weakness and in much fear and trembling". In proclaiming the gospel, he had not used "plausible words of man's wisdom". Rather, his message had been "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that [their] faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" [1 Cor. 2:3-5].

5. Signs and Wonders.

By way of confirmation of the preaching, the Holy Spirit was also often in evidence in accompanying "signs and wonders".

For our present purpose one of the most important references in this connection is in 2 Corinthians 12. Entreating the Corinthian saints to recognise his "apostolic" integrity and authority, Paul asserts: "the signs of a true apostle were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works". Paul is not here claiming that these are the indispensable evidences of apostolic ministry; rather, the authenticating sign was the evident anointing upon the preached Word. "Signs and wonders and mighty works" were given by the Holy Spirit as evidence of God's "Amen" to what was preached. As in the ministry of the Twelve, so in the making and authenticating of Paul's ministry, they were indeed a significant feature. But that is not to say that at all times and in every situation they are necessarily an essential feature of authentic Christian ministry; apostolic, or otherwise.

6. Paul's "hidden years" of ministry.

What can easily be overlooked is that about half of Paul's active years of ministry were already behind him when he joined Barnabas at Antioch. Most of what we can learn about those years is found in a short passage in his letter to the Galatians. Referring to his former life in Judaism, as a persecutor and would-be destroyer of the church of God, being "extremely zealous for the traditions of the fathers", Paul continues with this valuable autobiographical detail:

But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas [Peter], and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother... Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judea; they only heard it said, "He who once persecuted us is now

preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” And they glorified God because of me. [Galatians 1:15-24].

So Paul was far from a novice when he joined Barnabas, first at Antioch, and later when they went together on that missionary journey into Cyprus and Southern Galatia.

7. Paul’s relationship with the Jerusalem apostles and elders.

In his “Galatian” letter, Paul introduced himself as: “Paul an apostle – not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father...” It is evident, therefore, that by the time he wrote that letter, he was in no doubt as to his having received his “apostolic” calling directly from the Lord, without reference to any human appointment or endorsement.

This is a “special”, though not necessarily unique, feature of Paul’s apostleship. And it is significant that it is in this earliest of his known letters that he introduced this feature. Prior to that time the term “apostle” (as we have already noted) belonged exclusively to the Twelve. Paul himself would never have questioned that their “apostolic status” was unique. Nor – as is equally evident – did he at any time see himself as a potential member of their “team” *. His own “calling” also had been “special”. He owed nothing to the Twelve other than respect for their ministry. [* See appendix 2]

8. Paul’s Gospel.

In all essentials the gospel which Paul preached in many cities of the Gentiles was the same as that which Peter had preached at Pentecost twenty or so years before. Did they not both preach Jesus as the risen Lord and Saviour? Yet, from the time that Paul began to take the gospel to the Gentiles “differences” began to emerge.

This is not to suggest that the apostles at Jerusalem were fully behind the Judaisers who caused such damage among the Galatian churches so soon after they had been planted by Paul and Barnabas. The apostles themselves disclaimed this. It is a matter of conjecture, however, as to how genuinely they had opposed the influence of those Judaisers within their own Jerusalem-based network. And, without prompting, as to how heartily they would have endorsed Paul’s own verdict on these men as “troublers” and “perverters of the gospel of Christ”, deserving to be “accursed”. At best, they seem to have taken a neutral stance. And, as far as Paul’s ministry was concerned, their attitude seems to have been less than thoroughly supportive.

For Paul, this must have been a great disappointment. For the first thirty and more years of his life he had himself been up to his ears in “the Jew’s religion”. But the Good News that he had received by revelation from the risen and ascended Christ absolutely ruled out for Paul Judaistic ceremonialism as having any part in the message of the gospel whether addressed to Jew or Gentile. One good thing that comes out of “the Galatian issue” is that it gave Paul an even greater sense of urgency to proclaim the gospel he had received “by revelation of Jesus Christ”. Arising out of that, Christians have received immeasurable benefit through having access to the letter Paul was prompted to write to the Galatians on this issue.

9. Paul’s written ministry.

Indeed, in no area of Paul’s ministry is the universal aspect of his “apostolic” calling more in evidence than in his written expositions of “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” [1 Timothy 1:11].

In all we have 13 letters within the New Testament canon which are attributed to Paul. They are not masterpieces of literature. His sentences are often involved, and the meaning is sometimes hard to grasp. They reveal the humanity of the writer – his deep personal concern at times over the churches for which he had a father's care, and his great pleasure when the news is good! Yet, what believer who has meditated prayerfully over, for example, the Ephesian or the Roman epistle, has not felt the undeniable touch of divine inspiration on the writing? Though Higher Criticism has dealt ruthlessly with these ancient manuscripts, for many of us they are still recognized and revered as "Holy Scripture".

THE "STYLE" OF PAUL'S APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

The first essential of Paul's "apostolic" ministry was his calling and equipping to be an anointed preacher of the gospel of Christ. But, as we have seen, his apostolic calling involved more than the preaching of the gospel. He was to be a planter of local communities comprised mostly of those who had been converted to Christ through his ministry. For that task, as well as a special anointing, he needed training and experience. We can learn a great deal from his epistles about how he gained that experience. For our purpose, therefore, we should look at some of the details given in the Corinthian epistles which throw light on Paul's apostolic "style".

1st Corinthians, chapters 1 to 4.

Paul begins on a note of encouragement and praise. He gives thanks for the grace of God manifest among the Corinthian saints, and for their enrichment both in speech and knowledge. But a report has come to him of dissension among them. This relates particularly to the way their loyalties had become divided among those who had ministered to them – including himself, and Apollos and Cephas. (There was even an "I belong to Christ" party!).

Paul deplores this "party spirit". He argues that it denotes a degree of spiritual immaturity (and carnality) of which they ought by now to have been thoroughly ashamed. "When will you begin to grow up?" is his implied question. "I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, behaving like ordinary men? For when one says, 'I belong to Paul,' and another, 'I belong to Apollos', are you not merely men?" [3:1-4].

Addressing this situation he appeals to them to lay hold of that "wisdom of God" which has been hidden from the rulers of this age, but has now been revealed to "us" by the Spirit. Developing this theme, he asks: "What then is Apollos? What is Paul?" Does not the wisdom of God teach that he and Apollos are merely servants through whom they believed? "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So neither he who plants, nor he who waters, is anything; but only God who gives the growth." [3:5-7].

This was no mere pretence of humility. Paul recognized how important it was that his integrity as a disciple should be established beyond any shadow of doubt. "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God", he declares, as he introduces the first of his references (other than in the salutation) to his apostleship.

He reminds them that when he had first come among them it had been "in weakness and in much fear and trembling"; and his speech and his preaching had not been "in plausible words of man's wisdom..." But, as they could not have failed to recall, though his words

might have been halting, he had brought to them a message and a ministry in which, such as “the demonstration of the Spirit, and the power”, that their response of faith did not rest “in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” [2:1-5].

Paul’s reference here to “us apostles” [4:9] is evidently not with the object of asserting any claim to “official” authority. Rather, whilst he consistently asserts his stewardship of an anointed, God-given ministry, at the same time he seems determined to disclaim anything which might tend to highlight his personal dignity and natural charisma [1:24].

By accepted (human) standards, it is hard to conceive why a man anxious to retain credibility as a leader should have chosen to make such an approach to Christians so obviously needing correction. Yet, even when his personal integrity and public ministry are being ruthlessly questioned, he is content to rely for his defence on “the power and wisdom of God” evident in his ministry [1:24], together with the “signs and wonders” which accompanied it.

In nothing was the depth of his conversion experience more in evidence than in this new attitude to “power”. In his pre-conversion days, he had revelled in the “official” authority (exousia) bestowed on him by the hierarchy. It was in the exercise of such authority that he had set out “to bind all who called on the name of the Lord Jesus” [Acts 9:1-2,13-14; 26:10].

But that kind of authority no longer had any attraction for him. Personal relationships, and religious influence, had taken on an entirely different significance in the light of what the Holy Spirit had revealed to him concerning the purposes of God for his Church. “From now on,” he says, “we regard no one from a human point of view; even if we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer.” [2 Cor. 4:16]. He counted “official (‘exousia’) authority” as “loss” for Christ [Phil. 2:7,8], and gladly accepted the “yoke” which the Lord had laid upon him, together with the new kind of authority (“dunamis”) he needed to fulfil his commissioned task.

This introductory homily on “wisdom” together with Paul’s reference to “us apostles”, preface several chapters in which he deals with some of the serious issues in the church which had been brought to his notice. We shall have occasion to refer to those chapters later, but we move on now to chapter 9, where the “apostleship” theme is again taken up.

1st Corinthians, chapter 9.

The reintroduction of the “apostles” theme at this point follows as a natural consequence of a discussion (in chapter 8) of a social issue which had given rise to one of the “problems” Paul had been addressing. In Corinth, food “offered” to idols was often subsequently offered for sale in “the shambles”. Some of the new converts availed themselves, probably quite innocently, of these opportunities to get food at bargain prices. But the practice was not without its unhelpful consequences. Some “weaker” members of the church who had not yet been entirely liberated from their former pagan customs were still in serious danger of seeing some religious significance in this “consecrated” food. What should those who knew better do? They could (some evidently did) argue that “an idol is nothing”, and “there is no God but one”, and, consequently, claim their liberty to go ahead and eat the consecrated food. No! says Paul. If you, the “enlightened” brother, by your supposed “liberty” to act in this way, wound your weaker brother’s conscience and cause him to stumble, you are sinning against Christ. “Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother’s falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall” [8. 18].

This now prompts Paul to look at the whole “liberty” issue in its wider context. Over several chapters (9 to 14) other “church” issues are examined. We shall look at some of these later. What concerns us at this point, is how the “liberty” issue relates to Paul's’ apostolic “style”.

“Freedom!” was the slogan of these “liberated” Corinthian Christians. “Right!” says Paul, “Hold on to your freedom! Enjoy it!” “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.” [9:1,2].

That is how he introduces what he refers to as “my defence to those who would examine me” [verse 3]. And, in what follows, his handling of his “rights” as a preacher of the gospel is backed up by indisputable facts known to them concerning his personal lifestyle. These in no way provide evidence of self-aggrandisement or self-interest.

What, then, are his “rights”? He mentions three: (1) The right to food and drink. (2) The right to have a wife. And (3) The right as a servant of the gospel to be freed from other work.

But, equally, did he not have the right, if he so chose, to forego his rights? And, as regards having a wife, or receiving remuneration for his ministry, that (as they would have known) had been his choice.

Why had Paul made these seemingly “foolish” choices? Always, in answer to such questions (which he anticipates) it was because his eyes were on the ultimate goal which had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.

In passing, it should be noted that, in Paul's “salvation theology”, there is a recognition of “gain” and “loss” rarely preached today. It is one thing to be saved from eternal loss. It had, however, been revealed to Paul that there was a reward for faithful stewardship. “I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, that I may gain Christ”, he declares [Phil. 3:8]. Other disciples might legitimately claim their immediate temporal “rights”. For him, the gaining of that ultimate “prize” was the “one thing” which determined his present way of life.

2 Corinthians chapters 10 to 12.

In this “boasting” passage Paul defends himself against serious charges made against him by certain elements within the church at Corinth. In our Bibles it follows chapters which convey a sense of peace after storm. The question arises: Is this in fact how the correspondence Paul had with the Corinthian church was concluded?

In chapters 1 and 2 he had spoken of a “painful visit” which he had made to them (presumably after the first letter). There is also a reference to a “severe letter” which he subsequently regretted having sent. [2 Cor. 7:8]

What then is the explanation for this apparent reversion to the harsher tone of the first epistle? The view of many expositors is that these end chapters of 2nd Corinthians are part of that “severe letter” which, at some later date has been tacked on to the end of an encouraging earlier letter. On that supposition we could infer that that letter had been heeded, and that, in consequence, what we know as 2 Corinthians, chapters one to nine (together with the short postscript at the end of chapter 13), provides the real conclusion of Paul's correspondence with that church. That construction would certainly make sense of Paul's statement “our hope for you is unshaken” which occurs at the beginning of these chapters [1:7].

Nowhere in Paul's epistles does he lay bare his heart more completely than here [2 Cor. 10-12]. He gives quite a lot of autobiographical detail which could be useful to anyone who wants to construct a "life" of Paul. For our present purpose, however, it suffices to note: (1) the way Paul again chooses to vindicate his apostleship by pointing to the evidence of his "foolishness" (by men's standards) in his total disregard for personal recognition, comfort or security, "for the sake of Christ" [12:10]; and (2) his outspoken condemnation of "false apostles".

On (1), we have already commented sufficiently. However, some comments are called for with reference to the men Paul describes as "false apostles". If these men were "Christians" the evidence suggests that, like the Judaisers who dogged Paul's steps at different times throughout his ministry, they were former disciples who had apostatised. Paul calls them "deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ", and goes on to say: "and no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light". Yet Paul never categorically classifies them as heathen. All we do know is that they had not only been endeavouring to undermine Paul's teaching, but his character also.

That was the situation in which Paul felt obliged to endeavour to vindicate his own character and apostleship. "Fool" though he might be, he will let his record alone speak for him and his ministry. "For I was not at all inferior to these superlative apostles, even though I am nothing. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works". [12:11,12].

Was Paul's appeal to these Corinthians to repent heeded? If we may rightly assume that it is the earlier chapters of "2nd Corinthians" (1 to 9] which concludes the correspondence, it seems that they did. That would mean that this collection of letters would leave a satisfying record of "mission accomplished".

THE SCOPE AND LIMITS OF PAUL'S APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

As one reads Luke's account, together with Paul's epistles, one gets the impression that the heart of this man was almost torn apart by the conflicting demands of his call to reach out ever further with the gospel, while at the same time he carries the burden of "care for all the churches". "Necessity is laid upon me; woe to me if I preach not the gospel", he is saying to these Corinthian Christians [1 Cor. 9:16]. Yet when he hears of the low spiritual state of that particular church, he can hardly wait to pay them another visit in the hope that he can help in sorting out their problems. Such was the man whom we know as "Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ".

Reference is often made to Paul's "apostolic strategy". He certainly got things done. But was it all thought out beforehand? Did he work to a plan? Did he give his "understudies" and students teaching sessions on how to plant churches; how to spot "leadership material" among the converts; how to deal with this and that problem of insubordination, or worldliness?

I doubt it. In Luke's account there is little evidence of any consistent pre-planned policy. Yet, what modern church leader (be he called Cardinal, Bishop, or Apostle) would not give his right hand to achieve half that Paul achieved during the ten or so years of his recorded church-planting ministry?

This is not to imply that Paul had a butterfly mind and was constantly being blown off-course by every wind of circumstance. What is evident is that, both in the guidance he sought for his journeys and in the demanding work of drawing the new converts

together, the strategy he used was not his own, but the Holy Spirit's, and the details were not usually revealed to him much in advance of time.

It had to be that way because the conditions under which he worked demanded it. His converts were drawn from widely differing ethnic backgrounds: mainly Roman, Grecian and Jewish; and from all social levels. By what kind of preconceived human strategy could this former "Hebrew of the Hebrews", have known how to gain the confidence of these different nationals, and bring them together as "one body"? Had he spent a whole year in every place where he preached, in dependence upon the most sophisticated training techniques available, it would not have been long enough.

Paul tells us plainly what were the resources he used. We come back again to those first three chapters of first Corinthians, and its central theme of "the hidden wisdom of God" [2:7]. Endued with that wisdom by the Holy Spirit's anointing, Paul was able to look upon those unprepossessing converts who were drawn together by the gospel in Lystra, or Philippi, or Corinth, or one of the Asian cities evangelised during his mission from Ephesus, and see the "dust" out of which the Lord would create his "Body".

From the moment the Philippian jailor, or Lydia the prosperous business woman, or some former temple prostitute, or Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, showed evidence of saving faith in Christ, Paul saw in that person the potential to be a functioning member of Christ's body. Beneath the cultural trappings and the, as yet, unerased physical marks left by sin, he could discern the evidence of that "mystery" – the newly implanted deposit of divinity – "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" [Colossians 1:27].

Such "wisdom" provided the strategy needed to set in motion the whole process of "building up the body of Christ". [see Eph. 4:12, and note also verse 3]. With characteristic disdain for literary consistency, Paul switches from the "planting and watering" analogy, to that of the "skilled master builder who lays a foundation" [1 Cor:5-16].

Both analogies (the building and the planted seedling) had been used by Old Testament prophets with reference to God's covenant people Israel. They were equally applicable now to the new people of God.

THE TIME TO MOVE ON

As the initiator, Paul had planted the seeds of the gospel in these converts' lives, and had stayed on with them long enough to tend the first beginnings of growth. But there would come the point at which, by the Holy Spirit's direction, he would know that he could, and should, move on. This did not necessarily mean that he would never see them again, or be in touch with them by letter from time to time. But within the scope of his appointed ministry, a stage would be reached when, not only because of the demands of his ministry, but also, in their interests, he should leave them in the care of their duly appointed local leaders. Other itinerant prophets and teachers might visit them; or maybe, stay on after he had left. And if those other prophets and teachers had also partaken of the same "hidden wisdom" they would know, as he did, that the purpose of their ministry was to equip the saints "for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" [Eph.4:12]. It amounted to a divinely given perception of the spiritual potential in the Spirit-born convert. Paul never lost sight of this indispensable precondition of the Holy Spirit's anointing in his ministry.

Speaking of himself as a "skilled (or wise) master-builder", who laid foundations, he now uses the building analogy as he directs his exhortations to the workers themselves. "Let each man take care how he builds upon it" [v. 10]. Let every worker make sure that he

is building on the one and only acceptable foundation: Jesus Christ. [v.11]. Let him take care with what materials he builds – for “each man's work will be made manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. [vs.13-15].

This “aside” is typically Pauline. It comes immediately after Paul has addressed the “brethren” as “babes in Christ” who have only so far been capable of being fed with milk rather than solid food. “Babes” they might be (no doubt a generalisation to which there were exceptions), but they still had within them the potential for spiritual growth. And if “strong meat” might seem unpalatable for them at the time, in the long run it might do them more good than harm. Ranging widely from one issue to another, Paul provides this “gifted” church (for such he says they were – 1 Cor. 1:7) with a large helping of “strong meat”, because, in spite of everything, he knows that, within them, there is still “the root of the matter”.

“EVERY MEMBER” MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Indeed, their potential ruled out any introduction into the “body” of a clergy/laity dichotomy. Later (chapter 12) when he deals with the proper function of “spiritual gifts” (“charismata”), he envisages the whole (local) church as an every-member functioning body: “now you [every one of you, both individually and collectively] are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.” Some of the ministries are mentioned. Paul makes it clear that, in the wider context, “God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, and third teachers...”. But there is no hint here of a clerical, (as distinct from a non-clerical) class. Given that there are those who have a special ministry of leadership, the whole body is seen to have the potential of a fully-functioning membership with an emphasis on “spiritual” involvement (not simply in dusting the chairs, and arranging the flowers – important though such ministries may be).

We need to recognize these essential elements in the motivation behind Paul’s ministry. For those who have become accustomed to unbiblical conditions in church life this may no longer seem realistic. Yet, if we believe that the Church of Christ has a future, we must grasp the fact that, allowing for the inevitability of human frailty (with which we can so much more easily identify), the standard of “spiritual normality” for which Paul believed was both essentially practical and demonstrably “supernatural”.

That did not mean that miracles happened every time the church met. Or when the gospel was preached or testified to in personal contacts. Miracles are not the only – or indeed, the most authentic – “signs” of the Holy Spirit's activity. Of greater importance in Paul’s own ministry, was the evidence of those spiritual gifts and graces with which he could apply the “living” word in public ministry and private counselling, in the building of the body of Christ.

REACHING OUT TO JEW AND GENTILE ALIKE

Paul's burden was to reach out to Jew and Gentile alike with the gospel of Christ. The One who at one time had seemed to him to be the greatest threat to the advance of “the Kingdom of God” he now recognised to be the King in whom alone that Kingdom could be established among men on this earth. Far from being a refutation of what the true prophets of old had “heard” from God, this, he discovered was a glorious unfolding of “the

truth” for which the faithful had long waited. Once convinced, this devout Israelite (“a Hebrew of the Hebrews”) was utterly captivated. From now on, for him to live was Christ.

That was the distinguishing mark of Paul's apostleship. It inevitably put him at variance with his former Judaistic connection. In his ministry, he was even reluctantly obliged to disassociate himself from the Jerusalem brethren, because they were never quite free to cast off “the yoke of bondage” of the ceremonial – as distinct from the “moral” – law which had now been “fulfilled” in Christ. And, in a particularly confrontational way, his “gospel” inevitably challenged the culture of the varied ethnic groups – Roman, Grecian, and Judaic, to whom he had been commissioned to preach.

Not that he deliberately provoked hostility. The gospel he had brought to them was a gospel “of the grace of God” [Acts 20:24-27]. But it was a gospel which had to be established on the foundation of the righteousness of God. There could be no genuine acceptance of divine grace apart from a heart surrender to the Lordship of Christ. For pagans living in such a city as Corinth, that inevitably involved huge adjustments in lifestyle. Paul’s Corinthian epistles are largely taken up with dealing with some of the problems in that connection.

For anyone whose heart is set to follow the Lord, whatever his or her calling, the record of the life and ministry of Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, is both a challenge and an inspiration.

7: APOSTLES TODAY?

“APOSTLES TODAY”, edited by David Matthew, and published by Harvestime Services Ltd in August 1988, is a symposium of 17 articles. Most of these had previously appeared in issues of “Restoration” magazine. The symposium may therefore be assumed to present the contributors’ views at that time on the present-day role of the apostle. Several of the contributors are themselves recognized as apostles. The following is a summary of some main points in selected articles by two of the main contributors, together with my comments thereon.

NB. The capital letters in brackets following chapter headings (and elsewhere) are the initials of the contributors. Bracketed figures included in the text refer to the pages where quotes or references may be found.

CHAPTER 3: “THE APOSTLE IS NO OPTIONAL EXTRA.” (TV).

TV introduces his subject by saying: “the call to salvation and the call to ministry are both utterly by the grace of God”. Later, he adds, “the church is a growing grace-filled body, and apostles are a permanent part of that body's life” (p.37,38).

TV dismisses teaching which claims that apostles are no longer needed today. In support of his argument he refers to great teachers who in spite of their powerful ministry fail to produce churches, but instead, “have produced preaching centres with huge congregations which disintegrate when the gifted preacher is removed from the scene.”(p39). Not that TV despises great teachers. But, observing their failure to build “a mature expression of the body of Christ”, he points out that, for this purpose, “all the gifts of the ascended Christ – apostles included – are required”. TV claims that the “master-builder” quality of apostleship is rarely found in such teachers. Hence the need of the apostle whose special gift this is [1 Cor. 3:10].

Comment. Recognising the need for “elders”, TV assumes that local elders (even collectively as a team) will lack the discernment and maturity required to handle the dangers which threaten a church's health; eg: “wrong emphases, spiritual coldness . . . the creeping death of legalism . . . mystic gnosticism, etc.” What the elders as a team are assumed to be (permanently?) incapable of handling, the apostle can handle. Even for a properly (that is, “apostolically”) planted local church, with its apostolically-appointed elders, continuing apostolic oversight is seen as a must – “the apostle is no optional extra”.

Throughout his thesis TV assumes: (1) that even apostolically appointed, (and hence, presumably, competent) elders can never be expected to be adequately equipped to oversee the local church without ongoing apostolic supervision, and (2) the apostle's ability [and availability?] to provide the missing ingredient is never in question.

Looking back to the NT for support for his claims, TV says: “How the saints at Corinth, Galatia, and Colossae could thank God for Paul’s care of their churches!” If this statement implies that Paul maintained the continuing oversight of the churches mentioned (and presumably many others), this is not borne out by Luke's account in The Acts. In fact, over the 10/12 years of Paul’s recorded itinerant ministry, he only revisited the Galatian churches once on each of his second and third journeys, en route to new territories. And, as regards the church at Colossae, there is no evidence that he planted that church, or ever visited it even once!

* * *

TV says “the elders often feel trapped within the framework and would love an outside voice to proclaim with authority the way forward. Indeed it is often the elders who most feel their need for the apostolic ministry” [p41/42). Examples are given of “traditional meetings cracking up under pressure of new life” etc, and to the question “How are they to proceed?” TV gives the answer: “God’s way is to give apostles and prophets”.

Comment. The picture presented here is of a local congregation clearly lacking mature spiritual leadership. There are, of course, many such congregations. In such a situation, obviously the leaders need guidance, and should be looking for it.

But is it “apostolic ministry“ they really need? What are “shepherds and teachers” for? TV plays down the potential competence of local elders. Furthermore, TV’s scenario has the inbuilt handicap of the inevitably limited personal availability of the apostolic overseer. How much time and attention can TV himself give to the hundred-plus churches which (at this time of writing) are said to be “related” to him? The answer, of course, will be that TV has an apostolic team working under him. But are these men also equipped with the apostolic charisma deemed necessary for the purposes envisaged? How can the chief apostle be confident that the unique and essential ministry claimed to be entrusted to him will filter through to the “apostolically-planted” churches within his growing network? [I have been unable to find any information in the symposium as to how delegated “apostolic” authority of this kind is developed and organised]

Under the heading of “The pioneer”, TV now (p42) introduces: “Another aspect of the work of an apostle” e.g: “breaking new ground with the gospel”.

Comment. Evidently, the priority in TV’s concept of apostolic ministry differs from that of Paul, of whose ministry “breaking new ground” was the primary feature; not simply “another aspect” of it. Reference is made to “looking for virgin territory where new churches could be built”. In practice, however, it would appear that “virgin territory” does not here necessarily mean areas where there is not yet any live Christian testimony. More often, it means places where it is considered that no “apostolically”-planted church has yet emerged. One suspects that other “evangelical” or “charismatic” fellowships would tend to be disregarded unless they are willing to be absorbed into the apostolic network.

* * *

Another feature of apostolic ministry is said to be “bringing a sense of unity to the work of God at large” (p43). TV speaks of “having been greatly blessed in bringing churches together in England in a new way, and also in travelling in India, Nepal, Spain and South Africa, bringing spiritual and material help through our relationship with churches in England.” He adds the interesting comment that “it is clear from the New Testament that God never intended local churches to be isolated and shut in on themselves. Through their relationship with the broader thrust of the apostle they were caught up in an international fellowship and the spreading of the gospel worldwide. It is hard to remain inward-looking when there is world vision and the stimulus of news from other growing churches.”

Comment. TV rightly recognises the influence Paul had in developing the wider vision of the work of Christ. But, for Paul, that vision embraced not only those churches that came within the scope of his own ministry, but “all who in every place call upon the name of our

Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours” [1 Corinthians 1:2]. When, however, TV speaks of churches being “caught up in an international fellowship”, clearly what is envisaged is the growing network of fellowships which recognize his apostolic oversight. That is a much more restricted vision than what Paul envisaged as “the work of God at large”. TV’s network – “New Frontiers International” is not only “inclusive”; it is also (by definition) “exclusive”. Such networks do indeed promote interest in the advance of their own cause in this and other lands. What is questioned, however, is their concern about fostering cooperation with Christian ministries outside their own network, including those which operate nearby?

CHAPTER 4: “WISE MEN OF ACTION” (BJ).

BJ begins his chapter with a dramatic picture of “the early church” (p45). “Here are people, anointed by God, advancing the kingdom, breaking through all opposition and overcoming every setback. Their theme is constantly advance, advance, advance! . . . As a result of this driving momentum we see the rapid growth of the early church. Apostolic communities spring up wherever the gospel is preached, each a living example of the message they proclaim”.

With like enthusiasm BJ describes the characteristics of present-day apostolic ministry. He says: “In these times of restoration God is renewing our understanding of the apostolic and prophetic ministry gifts so that the house (of God) is built in the right order.” (p47).

Comment. BJ's vision for restoration may indeed be of God. But, in recognising the importance of apostolic and prophetic ministries, does he also recognise the limits of those ministries? NT churches are never described as “apostolic communities”. They are churches “of Christ” [Romans 16:16], since it is to him they belong, and it is from him, as his body, that they derive their life.

* * *

BJ sees the importance of local churches having sound foundations. In this connection he is in no doubt as to the essential role of the apostle. Unlike another contributor, however, he recognizes no distinction between the “pre-” and “post-Pentecostal” classes of apostles. In a later chapter (p109) he asserts (presumably on the basis of Eph.2:20): “The apostle and prophet are a church’s foundations . . . the apostle doesn’t come into a church situation, establish elders and work himself out of a job . . . How ridiculous it would be to build on the foundations and then pull them away from underneath the structure!”

Comment. BJ envisages a church-planting programme in which “the apostle and prophet” together (see p110) are jointly “the church’s foundations”, and, in addition, provide the church with ongoing supervision.

In the chapter from which the above reference is taken (chapter 12) BJ looks at the question: “Apostles and prophets – what’s the difference?” However, in the earlier chapter (4) prophets receive only a passing mention alongside apostles who are “the wise men of action”. A comparison of the two chapters (presumably originally written at different times) reveals that much of the charisma that is credited to the prophet (in chapter 12), was recognised earlier as an essential part of the apostle's equipment for his job. Thus, for example, (in chapter 4), BJ says: “As an architect with overall knowledge of the plans and purposes of God, the apostle always [!] sees the immediate in the light of the ultimate.” (p51). In chapter 12, however, we read: “The apostle is primarily an architect, concerned

with the overall design of the local church. The prophet, on the other hand, is first and foremost a seer, who sees beyond the present situation and brings the purposes of God into sharp focus. He has a revelation of the mind of God in relation to particular situations and the needs of the time.” (p106). .

Other references in BJ’s first chapter and elsewhere, and those of other contributors, point to the apostle as being the indispensable foundation and architect and ongoing supervisor of authentic NT churches all rolled into one! The prophet is given a mention from time to time; presumably because “in these times of restoration” (p47) the prophet must be found a place in “the functioning order for accomplishing the task”. But it is hard to discover what function is left for the prophet beyond what is already assumed by this contributor to come within the scope of the apostle’s ministry. BJ claims to have exercised a prophetic as well as an apostolic ministry (p 108). Does this make it difficult for him to know when he is operating within his prophetic, rather than within his apostolic, gift?

* * *

The comparison BJ makes between the prophet and the apostle proves to be particularly useful in revealing what he conceives to be the range of an apostle’s ministry. We learn here the scope of the apostle’s assumed authority, not only over local churches which are “related to” him, but over the prophet who works alongside him.

BJ says that compared with the apostle, “the prophet is more limited in terms of his wisdom and authority”. The church, he says, “can respond to the prophet’s inspiration for the immediate but they find security in an ongoing relationship with an apostle.” This obliges the apostle to be on the lookout to “see the outer limit of the prophet’s gift and ability and restrict the delegating of apostolic authority accordingly. To give blanket authority to a man, without considering his limitations, is a recipe for disaster.” (p111).

BJ here introduces as an example a situation in which he claims that apostolic authority is indispensable:

“It seems clear from Scripture, for instance, that the choosing and establishing of elders in local churches is a function of the apostles [see Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5]. You don’t find prophets making decisions without the authority and backing of an apostle – and you certainly don’t see local congregations taking this vital function into their own hands!”

Comment. The first of the above references relates to the pioneering ministry of Paul and Barnabas among the churches in Southern Galatia. Having evangelised and “made many disciples” in several cities in that Province, Luke tells us: “And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed” [verse 23]. The reference in Titus 1:5 is as follows: “This is why I (Paul) left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you”.

In both cases, the situation involved newly planted churches composed of mainly Gentile converts, most of whom were from pagan backgrounds. It was the exceptional character of Paul’s gift which made possible, in such a short time, such a remarkable spiritual development among these new converts to Christ. In periods of a few weeks during which Paul was involved in the process of “making disciples”, he was able to recognize among the converts those men to whom the ongoing responsibility of leadership could be entrusted. These, he “pointed out” as elders. [Greek: “cheirotoneo”–“the recognition of

those who had been manifesting themselves as gifted of God to discharge the functions of elders” – Vine’s “Expository Dictionary of NT Words”]

In the case of the mission in Crete (about which Luke tells us nothing), it seems Paul had been obliged to leave before such appointments could be made. But the groundwork had already been laid. It simply remained for Paul to leave it to his faithful co-worker Titus to “appoint” those men who had shown that they had the necessary qualifications. Here again, when one looks at the qualifications for eldership which Paul indicates in this short epistle, one gets some insight into the potential of the truly anointed pastoral ministry which Paul – and doubtless some of his colleagues – exercised at that time. And incidentally, there is no suggestion anywhere that Paul sent along a “pastor” to take charge of any of these churches (or any others which he planted).

What neither of these passages (or, indeed, any other references in the Acts or the Epistles) suggests is that the appointment of elders by Paul and Barnabas, and Titus, in the particular situations there envisaged, provides a binding precedent as to the mode for all future appointments of elders or other officers in local churches.

Are we obliged to assume that the men duly appointed to lead the churches planted by Paul and his co-workers remained so permanently immature that they would be unable, as the need arose, to recognise other suitable colleagues who should be invited to share with them the oversight of their churches?

SOME GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE SYMPOSIUM.

A perusal of these articles gives the reader a pretty clear impression of the drift of the thinking generally among these writers on the theme of leadership in the Church. The charisma and authority BJ claims for apostleship is consistent with what is implied elsewhere, although usually rather less pointedly, by other contributors.

It should be recognized that the characteristics and practices of “Restorationist” apostles vary. Not all of them, one suspects, would wish to be quoted as saying: “the true apostle is a catalyst for all the other ministry gifts, the hub of the wheel into which all the spokes fit” (p52). It is no secret that, in the hard school of experience, some have learned to modify the authoritarianism which sometimes marked their actions in earlier days.

But it is not the character and motives of these men which is the fundamental issue. One is not questioning that they are spiritually gifted and godly men. Our concern is as to whether the concept of “apostolic” ministry which has emerged among them accords with its New Testament counterpart? Or, for that matter, with any other spiritual ministry which can be said to be conducive to the building up of the Body of Christ?

Remembering that these men see their mission to be a recovery of New Testament church life, enquirers are surely entitled to ask upon what biblical precedents they rely in support of their particular style (or styles) of “apostleship”. A perusal of “Apostles Today” soon reveals that there is one “key” verse to which reference is constantly being made, either directly or indirectly. It is Ephesians 2:20, where the apostle Paul, in speaking of the Church (in its comprehensive character) says that it is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone”.

Reference is also frequently made to Ephesians 4: 12- 13, where apostles and prophets head the list of the fivefold ministry gifts of the risen Christ, and also to the longer list of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 where again apostles and prophets are mentioned first.

In the ecclesiology of the contributors to “Apostles Today”, the distinctive characteristic of apostolic ministry is that it is “foundational”. As to what precisely this means, is not explained, presumably because it is thought to be too obvious to need explanation. Nevertheless, in its practical outworking, the “principle” does need some clarification. Even more importantly, the relevance of the Ephesians 2:20 reference to present-day apostolic ministry needs to be examined with rather more care.

For what seems to have been unnoticed by all these writers is that, by inescapable implication, in the opening contribution to the symposium (chapter one), this “foundation” concept based on Ephesians 2:20 is shown to be fallacious.

In a carefully argued passage, AW there shows that there were two distinct categories of apostles in the New Testament. First, there were the Twelve who were appointed by the Lord “to be the foundation stones of the new society (Revelation 21:14)”. These were the pre-Pentecost apostles. Then there was the category referred to by Paul in Ephesians 4:1 1- 12 as the gifts of the ascended Lord – the post-Pentecost apostles.

What AW's exegesis clearly shows is that Paul's reference in Ephesians 2:20 is “historic” – and together with the Revelation 21:14 passage, relates to the pre-Pentecost appointment of the Twelve. Even within the immediate context of the Ephesians passage (chs 1-3) it is clear that this reference to the “the foundation of the apostles and prophets” relates to the universal Church which was laid once-for-all.

To refer therefore to “post-Pentecost apostles” as “foundational men” is very confusing. In fact, these writers are indeed themselves evidently confused when they enlarge on this “cardinal” but somewhat esoteric “foundation” teaching! For whilst, as we have seen, BJ boldly asserts that they (today's apostles) are themselves the foundations of the churches they plant (or adopt) – with all that that is claimed to signify – elsewhere it is recognized that it was not Peter who was himself the foundation, but the “truth” which he laid in the lives of his converts. Nobody would want to quarrel with that!

But which is it? The quotations from “Apostles Today” given earlier provide plenty of evidence as to what is claimed to be the scope of the apostle's ministry today. He is claimed to be the foundation, “the catalyst”, “the hub of the wheel”, the indispensable focal-point within . . . yes, within “a denominative” network which (not for the first time) has emerged to declare that denominationalism is unscriptural!

It is very evident that the “foundation” reference in Ephesians 2:20 is indispensable to the establishment of the ongoing authority claimed for this new breed of apostles. Without reliance upon Ephesians 2:20 Scripture provides neither teaching nor precedent to support the credibility of ongoing “apostolic oversight” of a network of churches.

Thankfully, none of these issues need arise if the wise men of action (and of prayer), which are so greatly needed today, keep within the guidelines of Ephesians 4. That's where the gifts of the ascended Lord: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers, are all to be found. All are needed today, and will be available for those who believe that there could yet be a season in which the Lord will be glorified in his Body on the earth.

What is not in question is that Apostolic ministry is foundation-laying. Also, in relation to specific assignments, it is “ongoing”. But only so long as it is deemed necessary. For “the wise master -builder”, there comes a time when he will recognize that the foundations are truly laid, and he (and his team) can move on to other work.

Towards the end of three years of intensive ministry in the province of Asia Paul wrote to the saints in Rome: “I have so often been hindered from coming to you. But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain...” [Romans 15:22-24].

This statement confirms what another contributor to this symposium says: “if apostles are anything they are pioneers. Paul was constantly straining at the leash to break new ground” (p23).

Interestingly, in recording the “acts” of Paul, whilst Luke carefully records details of his three missionary journeys, together with highlights of events arising out of his evangelistic ministry, he tells us very little about Paul's teaching. We have to turn to Paul's epistles for that.

Does this tell us something about what Paul himself saw to be the number one priority in his pursuance of his apostolic ministry?

8: IS RESTORATION STILL ON GOD'S PROGRAMME?

In Peter Hocken's "Streams of Renewal" there is an Appendix under the heading: "The Ecclesiology of the Plymouth Brethren as background to the stream of the Charismatic movement associated with D.G.Lillie and A.Wallis."

Reflecting on Peter Hocken's assessment, I realize that what Arthur's and my background did for us more than anything else was to give us a deep respect for the Bible and a genuine desire to discover what it had to say to us personally as committed servants of the Lord Jesus.

For this, I am indeed indebted to my Brethren upbringing. I am sure Arthur was also. But was Peter right in attributing our insights about the church to the influence of Brethren?

Neither of us was a committed "Brethren" adherent when we met in 1952. And this was largely due to the fact that, through Brethren influence, our eyes had been opened to Biblical truths which, paradoxically, were, for the most part, unacceptable (in those days) among them.

Indebted though we were to them for some measure of understanding of the nature of the Church of Christ, we were able to pursue our enquiries without having any commitment to the Brethren or to any other church tradition.

That, I believe, gave us an advantage over some who did have such a commitment. For us there was no feeling of obligation to promote an uneasy alliance between some traditional church system and what we believed we were discovering concerning New Testament Church life.

It is true that we believed, as did the Brethren, in the priesthood of all believers, and not in what Peter Hocken refers to as "a special ordained ministry and the one-man pastorate". But were these convictions "characteristically Brethren"? If so, where did they differ from what could reasonably be deduced from an impartial and objective analysis of New Testament ecclesiology? On these particular matters our study of God's Word convinced us that the Brethren had got it about right.

But there were other aspects of Brethren teaching with which we were not so happy. For example, as my account in chapter one suggests, the restoration of New Testament church life was not "characteristically" a Brethren concern, as Peter suggests.

We saw (as did the Brethren) that the Church ("ecclesia"] of Christ is the "called-out" community of those who have been brought into vital union with Christ. It is his living body. As such, wherever attempts are made to institutionalise it, its true characteristics are stunted. In terms of its nature and function, it is then on the way to losing its identity as the Body of Christ.

It followed, too, that the selective linking together of local churches was not compatible with the universal corporeality of the only Church known to Scripture – the Church Christ said he would build.

We saw, therefore, how important it is that local churches should be biblical in character. Brethren claimed to stand for "the priesthood of all believers". But in practice considerably more than half "the priesthood" – who were of the female sex – were sentenced to silence during the course of the meetings, other than to participate in the congregational singing

of the hymns. The elders claimed to have Scripture for this, of course. But so too, we believed, had we, in recognizing the sisters' liberty of utterance which their priestly responsibilities called for.

Then there was the equally controversial question of the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit. In spite of their devotion to the Bible, no Christian denomination was more adamant than the Brethren in their rejection of some of these gifts.

There is a history behind this which I cannot enter into now. Readers, however, may care to consider the fact that the founding fathers of "Brethren" were deliberating on church issues in the eighteen-thirties at around the same time that Edward Irving's Catholic Apostolic Church was at the height of its widely publicised "pentecostal" phase. That may provide a clue as to the origin of the Brethren's strong anti-pentecostal stand, which scarcely wavered for nearly 150 years. (NB: But in some of the more "open" assemblies this has changed considerably during the last few years, as also has their attitude to the ministry of women).

In the invitation to our first Conference in 1958, we had made no reference to the significance of gifts such as tongues and interpretation, and prophecy. Not surprisingly, therefore, among those who accepted the invitation there were a few who had had no previous experience of these gifts. Realizing this, our ad hoc leadership team were agreed that the exercise of such gifts at the Conference would not be encouraged. Following a particularly anointed message by Cecil Cousen, however, one brother broke the rules and gave forth an utterance in tongues. I knew perfectly well what was going on, not only because I was the chairman, but because I happened to be the offender!

That incident, however, did help to loosen up the atmosphere somewhat, though regrettably at the expense of producing at least one defector who subsequently wrote to tell us he wanted to have nothing more to do with our enquiries.

That was in May 1958. By 1961, however, the spiritual climate had become noticeably warmer, as was evident during the three days that some forty of us gathered for our second Conference in September of that year.

It was at the 1961 Conference that Arthur gave his talk on "The Divine Idea of the Local Church" from which I quoted at length in chapter one. In introducing this theme Arthur had said: "Paul . . . and his fellow-labourers founded nothing but local churches. Why? Because nothing but local churches could better serve the divine purpose in building the body of Christ". It was at local church level particularly that the Lord intended his people to experience the "wonderful sense of belonging". The local church was, in fact, to function as "a microcosm or miniature of the Church universal".

But what in practical, operational terms did this mean? Christians, after all, are still fallible mortals, with limited gifts and capabilities. Arthur's answer was summed up in one sentence: "Christ is not only head of the universal Church, He is also head of the local church". As members of Christ's body we are introduced into a governmental realm which is essentially supernatural; hence, it was not to be assumed that the governmental and operational methods considered essential for the proper control of secular enterprises are appropriate in the ordering of the House of God.

Arthur argued strongly for the autonomy of local churches, and for the government of each church to be in the hands of a plurality of leaders (elders) not just one man. "We

should expect the Head to raise up from the midst of each local church all that it needs by way of ministry, and offices, and functions. The church is to stand on its own feet and manage its own affairs. It is not to be dependent on outside control, though warmly welcoming outside fellowship, and holding loving communion with other believers and other fellowships of believers."

This was indeed "sound Brethren teaching", but, since it also "happened" to be "soundly Biblical" we saw no reason to reject it. Yet, from the vantage point of those whose thinking is conditioned by traditional practices as diverse as those of the Baptists and the Roman Catholics, it was indeed a breakaway from what Michael Harper called "the norms of orthodoxy". Our concern, however, was to discover, not the "norms of orthodoxy" (whatever they might be), but the Biblical norm, since it was our conviction that that must be the basis upon which a church must stand if it is to function as a local expression of Christ's body.

Happily, at the Conferences where these matters were openly discussed, I do not recall any dissenting voices as the issue of the local church and its ministries was opened up. Indeed, as we became increasingly aware of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we found it hard to conceive that "Spirit-led Christians" could ever again settle back into traditions where there would not be freedom for the varied ministries of the Body to function.

We had begun our enquiries against a spiritual background which had been generally bleak. The tide had now turned, and we believed we were being carried along on an incoming tide of spiritual renewal.

For us, this was seen to be an answer from heaven to our heart's cry for restoration. Christians were being renewed to equip them "for the work of the ministry for the building up of the body of Christ".

Among our friends in the denominations there were hopeful signs of agreement about this. Not only were they (and we) coming together more freely for times of worship and witness; but the clergy/laity divide often evaporated as prophets and evangelists and teachers, from all sides, were liberated into their varied ministries, with scant regard for traditional protocol! And if, in what we could only believe was to be an ongoing work of renewal, some of our friends still clung loyally to their denominational churches, all in good time, we trusted that they too would come to recognize that the "new wine" of the Holy Spirit could not be contained within the "old bottles" of traditional man-made religious structures.

But things didn't work out that way. As we have seen, within the Fountain Trust milieu, the conviction that it was the purpose of the Holy Spirit to "renew the historic churches" became an established principle. This, clearly, was totally incompatible with our "restoration vision", and led inevitably to the parting of the ways.

Sad though that was; within "restoration" circles also, as I have sought to show, there have been developments which are no less incompatible with that earlier vision.

* * *

On every hand today, one hears of Renewalists and Restorationists who have lost heart, of acrimonious divisions, and of a receding tide. Conventions and conferences are still held, and are often well attended. But where is the anointing of former days? I am often

told that it has departed. I am also told that many of the new congregations, so far from growing, are barely holding their own. Some are in decline.

So does that signify the end of the restoration vision? Is “restoration” no longer on God's programme?

Every time I ponder our Lord's own words concerning the Church which he said he would build, and turn again to Paul's epistles – especially Ephesians and the Corinthian collection – my hopes and expectations are encouraged.

There are those who cheerfully quote our Lord's declaration: “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”, as though that settles the matter.

I do not believe that such complacency – or the disillusionment referred to earlier – are called for at the present time. All the resources of divine grace which have ever been available to the people of God to enable them to live for His glory, to be guided into all the truth of His Word, to be endued to fulfil their part as functioning members of Christ's body, and to proclaim with conviction the Good News of salvation to the world, are still available for us today. But they have to be claimed.

The Lord is still looking for a people who will lay hold of their heritage and will hear and obey his word “in (this) day of his power”. Such a people will be concerned as to what the headship of Christ signifies, not only in the personal, but also in the collective life of his people.

Such a movement will often begin at the level of the twos or threes (or more) gathered in Christ's name. Under the Holy Spirit's anointing such a “quiet revolution” has the potential to lead to a widespread uncovering of what has been referred to as “the Lost Secret of the early Church”.

9: CHRISTIANS IN FRIENDLY DISCUSSION

CONVERSATION (1)

QUESTOR IS ON A VISIT TO MARCUS.

Questor. You speak about “a quiet revolution” for which you believe the Holy Spirit is preparing hearts at the present time. What exactly have you in mind?

Marcus. Throughout the centuries there has always been a significant minority of Christians who have been making attempts to break loose from traditional concepts of “church” in search of a more realistic experience of New Testament “koinonia”. At present, in our part of the world, I believe the search is again gathering momentum. But I don’t think it is likely to hit the headlines, at least in the early stages.

Q. I'm very interested! I'd like to hear where you reckon this search is likely to lead. But first; what have you in mind when you speak of ‘traditional concepts of “church”’?

M. They vary; don't they? But generally, the common denominator is that the Church is seen as an organised system, or collection of systems. I just can't see anything like that in the New Testament!

Q. Could you enlarge on that?

M. I'll try! Let's forget for a minute all we may have imbibed from our religious backgrounds: from our culture, from academic theology, and from everything which has been fed into our minds by almost every religious leader or Bible teacher, and by the secular media, about what is implied by the term “Church”. Ok? Now let's get back to the New Testament. Starting in Matthew's Gospel, we find there (chapter 16:18) Christ's own declaration of his intention to build HIS Church. Moving on to the Acts we see there how the process begins with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This leads on to the anointed ministries of men like Peter and John and later of Paul and his co-workers. Many people are converted to Christ. and drawn together in local communities throughout four of the major Provinces of the Roman Empire. Then on to the written ministry of Paul, and in Ephesians, you remember, he outlines what the Lord had revealed to him concerning the nature and function of his universal Church. Then in first Corinthians he gives some valuable information about how a local church should be functioning as an expression of that Church. Then on to the letters to the churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. What does all this tell us about the New Testament Church?

Q. What it tells me, among other things, is that not everything was sweetness and light in the Church in New Testament days! They quarrelled; they backslid; they had to deal with false brethren and false teaching, et cetera. In fact, didn't most of those churches to which letters were sent (in Revelation 2 & 3) fall pretty badly into apostasy, even during the lifetime of the apostle John?

M. That's right! But I don't think the New Testament is intended to provide us with a model of the Church. What we should look for there is revelatory teaching to enable us to identify the Church which Christ said he would build.

Q. Well, of course we need to recognize the distinction between the real and the false. There are sects which officially deny the fundamentals of the faith – even the deity of Christ. Obviously they're not part of the true Church.

M. But what about those denominations which do not make an official denial of those fundamentals? You'd say they are part of the true Church?

Q. Well, yes – wouldn't you?

M. No!

Q. Not even if the members are genuinely "born again" believers in Christ?

M. The true believers are; but not the organisation they belong to.

Q. But why do you have to make the distinction?

M. Because whether we're talking about the Roman Catholic Church which claims to embrace the majority of the world's professing Christians, or some tiny denomination with its network of, say, half a dozen congregations, or any of what are sometimes claimed to be "the historic churches (or denominations)" in between, we're talking about humanly-constructed organisations. Each of these has a self-chosen label, e.g: Baptist, Methodist, Elim, C of E, the purpose of which being to distinguish it from other organisations which were raised up by other Christians who didn't want to bear the same identification label. All these organisations have emerged since Pentecost, and however loosely they may operate, each is something other than a living component of a "body". Many – perhaps most of them – contain living members of Christ's Body. In themselves however, they are no more part of that Body, than the sheep-pen is part of the flock it encloses. To call them "churches" is to appropriate to them a term whose only application in Biblical ecclesiology is with reference to people: God's New Covenant people. It is vital that we hold on to the truth that it is God's Spirit-born people alone who collectively constitute the only "historic" Church which can truly claim Biblical accreditation.

Q. Well – yes! Ideally, I don't disagree. But does it really matter?

M. Yes! And I'll tell you why it does. To start with, this misappropriation of the term "church" denies to the vast majority of the Lord's people an awareness of their true identity. Most of them simply see themselves as "church-goers", rather than as functioning members of Christ's body. Then outwardly, it distorts the testimony for Christ before the world.

Q. Hmm. I must honestly admit I've not up to now attached that much importance to this "Church" issue. I'm not saying I'm all that impressed with all these different denominations. But there they are – rooted in history; and, being realistic I can't see how you can alter that. And look what happens when the church leaders get together to try to work out some plan for "Christian unity"! Maybe that's not exactly what you are after. But what's the alternative? Wouldn't it be better if the true Christians stuck with what they have, and tried to show to the world that, even though they do belong to different denominations, they are still all one in Christ?

M. That'd certainly be better than fighting one another! But, as you rightly guess, what I have in mind is something quite different from the kind of initiatives of, for example, the World Council of Churches which doesn't even attempt to address the fundamental issue of what the Church of Christ essentially is. The validity of all the denominations who can

subscribe to its very liberal doctrinal basis is accepted without question. So the most it can possibly achieve is to advance the cause – or postpone the demise – of institutional Christianity. In pursuing that cause, spiritual truth is inevitably compromised and marginalised.

Q. Church leaders doing deals – playing religious politics, you mean?

M. That, I'm afraid, is an inevitable consequence of sidestepping the basic issue. Don't let's forget, what we're talking about is the Church which is Christ's Body!

Q. How then would you say the NT identifies the true Church?

M. It uses three main analogies. First, there's the analogy of a "building" as implied in Christ's declaration: "I will build my church". This is taken up again by Paul in Ephesians 2, where Paul speaks of the Church which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone. I would think Paul introduces that analogy to illustrate the fact of the continuity of the testimony through from the Old Testament to the New. Under the Old Covenant, the temple was at the centre of the religious life of God's earthly people, symbolising the presence of Jehovah in their midst. We're told in the Hebrew epistle that that temple, "made with hands", was a shadow of better things to come.

Q. Wasn't that what Jesus was implying when he made that cryptic statement, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up?" In response to the Jews demand for an authenticating sign in support of his ministry?

M. A most interesting incident that! The Jews weren't to be blamed for failing to understand Jesus at the time. But John sums up the narrative by saying: "he spoke of the temple of his body".

Q. ...a sort of introduction to the "body" analogy used later by Paul?

M. Yes. In Ephesians, from chapter 2 on, it is "the body" which becomes the central, characteristic analogy by which the Church in this age is identified.

Q. Then there's the "bride" analogy which is introduced in chapter five?

M. That belongs to the ultimate purpose of the Lord for his Church, doesn't it? The "bride" has to make herself ready for her marriage to the King according to Revelation 19. However, in this present age, it is clearly the "body" analogy which is applied to Spirit-born saints.

Q. I'd have thought that's a truth which is accepted by every Bible-believing Christian!

M. "Accepted" doctrinally, maybe. But how widely is its vital practical significance recognized? Check any traditional "church" procedures against, for example Ephesians 4. Paul is appealing to the Christians to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit. In the context of this general exhortation he then introduces the body's leading ministries: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. But, as he then clearly shows, that's only where the ministry of the body starts. The purpose of these ministries is to get the body working. Every member of a living body is intended to be functional. That's how Paul says the body of Christ is to grow! And, of course, in 1st Corinthians 12 & 14, we have a detailed description of the internal workings of the Church, seen in its local setting.

Q. Well -yes! But are you seriously suggesting that we dare hope to get back to that standard of church life again?

M. If we really believe the Church of Christ has a future, in my opinion, we dare not hope for anything less! But obviously such completely revolutionary (though soundly Biblical!) conditions could not suddenly be introduced to congregations which have never known anything other than submission to a pre-arranged service in which the pulpit is the focal point from A to Z. It'd be like asking a man with an arthritic hip to drop his zimmer and join a party which is about to climb the Matterhorn!

Q. So how then do you see this “revolution” getting under way?

M. My prayer is that the Lord will enlighten many of his people, not, as to what they might be, but as to what they already are – members of his living, functioning Body. That's where I believe it's got to start. Then obviously we've got to get down to prayer – wherever possible, in, I suspect, small intimate groups of those who share the vision. From there onwards my guess is that the Lord's purposes would be worked out in a variety of ways. But, one thing is certain – from beginning to end, it will be in accord with what has already been revealed as to what Christ's Church essentially is; and how it is to be equipped to fulfil its God-given mission in the world at the end of this age.

Q. Thanks. I must say you've given me quite a bit of food for thought!

CONVERSATION (2)

QUESTOR, on a further visit to MARCUS, is joined by his friend

PROBUS.

The customary greetings are exchanged.

Questor. Probus is very interested in what I've told him about our recent chat.

Marcus. Pleased to meet you, Probus! What can we do for you?

Probus. From what Questor's been telling me, you and I are thinking along very similar lines. I'm particularly interested in your reference to the Ephesians four ministries. I understand that you accept that all these ministries are for today?

M. Yes; very much so. And you?

P. I ought to! I'm a member of Martin Castle's apostolic team! So you will understand why I'd be interested to hear how you think apostles and prophets should operate today within their ministries!

M. As I see it, since we don't have any precise definition of these ministries in the New Testament, all we have to go on are precedents, given mainly in the Acts, and passages here and there in the epistles. Considered with care I personally think this should be quite adequate. But, of course, there are always opportunists around who will read into the records what they want to find there!

P. . . . or to leave out things they don't particularly like!

M. You have some experience of that?

P. Yes, in my upbringing. How that all got changed is quite a story!

[NB: What follows, though fictional, is based on an incident in the personal experience of David Matthew, of “New Covenant Ministries”, to which he refers in his book “Church Adrift” (page 250)]

M. Sounds interesting! You’re going to tell me about it?

P. Perhaps I could. In our Brethren assembly some pretty hefty difficulties arose among the elders. It looked like the fellowship was about to split up. However, one of the leaders knew a brother who had been used elsewhere to help a church which had got into similar difficulties. He suggested they should consult this man, who was, in fact, Martin Castle. It was quite a miracle that the elders agreed to this, because no attempt was made to hide the fact that MC was a Pentecostal. Martin came along, and at once made a good impression. He listened patiently to the elders, and then, with remarkable perception and grace proceeded to sort out their problem!

M. And things went well from then on?

P. Very well indeed. In fact, the long and the short of it was that we asked Martin if he would become a sort of pastor to oversee our own local pastoral team.

M. And he agreed?

P. Yes. But, at that stage, I should add, none of us realized that Martin had, in effect, become our apostle. In fact, I well remember that when one brother made some facetious-sounding reference to him as “apostle Martin”, I was quite annoyed! In our tradition, you see, we believed that apostles and prophets, had no place in today’s Church.

M. And when, for you, did the light dawn, so to speak?

P. Through Martin’s teaching. Not that he pushed anything. And when we eventually grasped this, what a sense of security it gave us!

M. But what would you say was particularly “apostolic” about his ministry among you?

P. He became a father to us.

M. A father?

P. Yes – or, perhaps to be more precise, an adoptive father.

M. I don’t remember coming across adoptive fathers in the New Testament.

P. Are you questioning our recognition of Martin Castle’s apostolic calling?

M. For all I know, he may truly be an apostle. But I wouldn’t have thought that the helpful ministry he gave your fellowship was particularly apostolic. I would have thought it was pastoral – and none the less valuable for that!

P. Even though he continued on as our pastoral overseer?

M. I wonder whether that is where you missed the way? To have sought the counsel of a godly man may well have been a good move. But was it helpful to establish a continuing relationship of dependency on him?

P. We thought so! Because he had been so helpful to us, and, in the goodness of the Lord, he was available to help us further.

M. No reason at all not to have continued to keep in touch with him for further ministry. But why shut yourselves into his pastoral oversight? Did you not have direct access to the Chief Shepherd for the guidance you needed in your ongoing ministry as the shepherds of his flock?

P. Well, of course, we had that, too. But our experience had taught us that we also needed pastoral care. I should mention that Martin's own apostolic ministry had already been developing remarkably at that time. This was an added bonus, because it brought us in touch with several other fellowships which had already come under his oversight. Through our relationship with Martin we had now acquired a new sense of "belonging" to something bigger than just our little crowd. For us and, as we were now discovering, for many others, a new day had dawned! The vital, missing ministries of apostles and prophets were back where the Lord had intended them to be – in his Church! Friend; I believe we are now heading for the greatest move of God since Pentecost!

M. I believe you may well be right!

P. Delighted to hear you say that! In fact, when I heard about you from friend Questor, I thought: "Here's a man who shares our vision. I must meet him". That's why I'm here! So back to my question. How do you conceive apostles should be operating today within their ministries?

M. New Testament apostles were gifted for pioneering evangelistic church-planting ministry, weren't they?

P. That's right! But what do you make of that reference of Paul's in Ephesians 2 to the foundational ministry of apostles and prophets?

M. Surely that tells us that the Church of Christ universally is founded upon the ministry of Christ and those men whom he called to be the Church's founding fathers?

P. So you don't think that reference has any application to later apostles?

M. How can it? Foundations are laid once for all. Why should we want to lift that reference out of its historical setting and apply it to the ongoing ministry of apostles and prophets today? Paul claimed to be a foundation-*layer*; but he never claimed to be part of the foundation of the churches he planted, let alone of any that he didn't plant!

P. But you agree that he did lay foundations?

M. Of course. Every wise master-builder knows that's the first thing he's got to do. And in the ministry of church-planting a wise builder knows that whatever he seeks to build must be built upon that unshakable foundation of Christ himself. Paul was very firm on that point. But that did not oblige him to take on a permanent responsibility of supervision of the churches he planted – did it?

P. Maybe not; and of course, I agree that, in the historic sense, Christ is the one foundation. That's basic, biblical truth. But experience has shown us that the leaders of young churches need ongoing help from outside. They don't have to be told this – they seek it. Literally scores of such men have turned to Martin Castle for help. He is their

anchor-man; the catalyst through whom they are drawn together in a growing worldwide family of live churches which relate to him. Brother; apostolic input works! Come along to our family service one Sunday morning and see for yourself!

M. Thanks; I'll see if I can do that sometime . . .

CONVERSATION (3)

QUESTOR makes a further visit to MARCUS; this time on his own.

Questor. My friend Probus seems to think you were not entirely happy with his views on apostolic ministry?

Marcus. I'm sure there's a lot of good things happening in his church. But I'm not yet convinced that what he outlined to us is "the missing dimension" which he thinks has now been restored to the Church. It sounded to me more like traditional episcopacy under a new name.

Q. You don't really mean that!

M. I'm afraid that's exactly what I do mean! And I have good first-hand evidence from history in support of my opinion. Hans Kung, the Catholic historian and theologian, points out that leadership in the Church was originally of eldership teams at local church level. That, of course, is what we must deduce from the New Testament. Gradually, however, as the Christian message spread out from the towns into the country, the local "episcopi" (or elders) began to take the area around under their care, often covering a wide area. For the purposes of evangelism and shepherding the local leaders sent out presbyters ("presbuteroi"). In this way, in course of time, they built up a centralised system of mother and daughter churches: the metropolitan system. At base, the chief elder ("episcopos") now assumed the office of director and overseer of the whole area (or "diocesis"). Hence was born the traditional concept of "the bishop". And, of course, the development of the whole system did not end there – with the eventual establishment of the diocesan bishop it was only a matter of time before the whole network of dioceses was drawn together under one supreme leader – "His Holiness the Pope".

Q. And you're suggesting . . .

M. No! I'm not suggesting that we have a "Restorationist" pope, right now just waiting in the wings for his enthronement! But wouldn't you agree that the emerging pattern is uncommonly similar to what Hans Kung outlined?

Q. There are certainly some similarities . . .

M. . . . and as I'm sure you will know, the history of Christendom is littered with failed experiments of this kind.

Q. Religious empire-building, would you call it?

M. Yes; that sort of thing. I'm not saying that it may not often have been pursued with the best of motives. As I see it, however, what they have all had in common is a concept of leadership which undermines the significance of the Headship of Christ in relation to his Church. Leadership, as Kung points out, was originally at local level – not of one man –, but of a team under Christ. He was their Head, their Shepherd, their Security. It was

through him alone that they were made aware that they belonged to the worldwide family of (as Paul says) “all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”. And it was to him alone that they were answerable for the conduct of their ministry as his “under-shepherds”. Where that is not recognized, leaders have to reach out for the best methods of administration known to them; and in our part of the world it’s what we call bureaucracy. And, to be perfectly frank with you, I am of the opinion that to slap the “apostolic” label on to an administrative job which is unknown in the New Testament, will not, in the long term, serve the interests of the “household of faith”.

Q. Interesting! I’ll pass on what you say to friend Probus . . .

CONVERSATION (4)

PROBUS makes a further call on MARCUS.

Marcus. Nice to see you again!

Probus. I want to hear more about your vision for a recovery of New Testament Church life in these days. Questor tells me you have in mind something which you refer to as “the quiet revolution”.

M. I used that term because from our limited human vantage point, that’s how it might appear against the background of all the clamour of what is being advanced today in the name of Christianity by innumerable flag-flying organisations. By “revolution” I simply have in mind a turn-around from mere tradition in a quest for that truth which alone sets us free. I think it will be “quiet” initially because what is needed first of all is an internal work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of those who have ears to hear what the Spirit is wanting to say to us. That’s not to imply that it is to be an insignificant, hole-in-the-corner affair. In fact I believe it has a potential far greater than any centrally organised institution could possibly have. But here in the West we have centuries of religious tradition from which, first of all, many of us need to be liberated. This is generally so entrenched that many of us who think we are free, aren’t! We simply turn our backs on one partisan flag to set up another! As a consequence, we have scores of different denominations, most of which would claim to be of “liberated”, “charismatic”, or “restored”, Christians. So a lot of quiet thinking and praying and listening has got to be done by the Lord’s servants before they get down to the task that lies ahead.

P. I couldn’t agree more! That’s what those of us who relate to Martin Castle have been doing for years now; and not, I may say, without considerable fruit. But, of course, we’re always open to learn more.

M. Then I’m free to say a bit more about how I see that the New Testament teaching about the Body of Christ is intended to be worked out practically?

P. Yes, do; that’s what I want to hear from you.

M. Then, to start with, let me say that, since God’s plan for the Church is his, and not ours, it must be workable. But the Church is scattered across the whole world, so the question arises as to how it can function as a body? The answer, as I hope you agree, is that it has got to be worked out at local level.

P. That, of course, is our vision. But, what about leadership?

M. Spiritually enlightened leadership is, of course, absolutely essential. I believe that at the present time in this country alone there is a lot of valuable leadership gift around which is simply being wasted. Gifted men in church situations which they don't really believe in but haven't the courage to leave. Or swallowed up in congregations where the official leadership fails to recognize their potential. Or men and women who are virtually "unchurched" for various regrettable reasons.

P. You may be right! But in our circle, though we're always on the look-out for leadership material, it's not all that easy to find. We need lots of calibre men in our expanding work.

M. We're touching on an important issue here. In a properly functioning local church the spiritual instincts of members will normally encourage the development within each of them of their particular God-given charisma. As Paul evidently assumes in Ephesians, among them there will emerge "some shepherds and teachers" and presumably, other gifts.

P. Yet you don't see the necessity today for apostolic input to train such men and see that they are duly appointed?

M. Show me men who are moving in a pioneer church-planting ministry comparable to Paul's, and I for one would gladly recognize them as apostles, and respect their judgment as to who among their converts were gifted for leadership. But we'll be running into problems if we assume that that is the invariable pattern. We don't have Paul around now, and we're not in Crete now in AD 48! I can find no evidence in the NT that any indispensable mystique was attached to the pioneering ministry of an apostle any more than to that of a prophet or an evangelist or a teacher. Where such is presumed, and it is claimed that, for example, a local community of godly people have got to wait around for the arrival of an apostle in order to turn them into "a proper church" and to ordain their leaders, we're back into traditional sacramentalism. In my opinion there's not a shred of Biblical evidence to support the idea. Do you know any?

P. I'll think about it. What you are saying does raise in my mind the question as to how you would identify a true local church in these days?

M. As I see it, the essential ingredient would have to be the conscious commitment of at least a nucleus of people to the Lord and to each other on an ongoing basis. It could be quite a small company to start with. For example, it could emerge out of a neighbourhood group of a dozen or so godly folk, drawn together, we will say, by a spiritual couple.

P. You have in mind a typical house-church?

M. Personally, I'm not keen on that designation. "House-church" is the way people who think of "church" in terms of special kinds of buildings define a church which does not happen to meet in their approved kind of building. But I think that many – probably most – authentic NT churches of the future will meet in people's homes, or rented halls, if obtainable. I certainly don't think that leaders envisioned by the Holy Spirit would dream of calling on their following to raise huge sums of money in order to acquire redundant nonconformist chapels or disused warehouses and refurbish them to suit their requirements.

P. Not even if the church outgrows its front-room facilities?

M. It will almost certainly do that many times over if the Lord is honoured among them. But that's just the way I believe the "revolution" could explode into a mighty force for Christ.

P. A sort of underground movement of the Holy Spirit?

M. Well, yes; without any of the hype to which some fellowships now seem to have to resort in order to keep their show on the road.

P. I hear what you say. But to be truthful, I must admit I'd not be too keen to go back to one of those little home-based fellowships hidden away from the public gaze, singing heartily out of Golden Bells hymn book to the accompaniment of a wheezy old organ, and baptising the occasional convert in a bath upstairs...

M. If that was the only alternative to the kind of megachurch I had in mind just now, well – yes, I think I'd still prefer the front-room church, Golden Bells and all! But, happily, I believe live, New Testament churches come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Right now, in many less-favoured countries, the Christians would be thankful indeed for even a front room and a supply of Golden Bells hymn books – to say nothing of the wheezy old organ and a bath in which to baptize their numerous converts! Frankly, in our affluent society we take our privileges too much for granted. It is very short-sighted for leaders to expect their followers to scrape around for every penny on which they can lay their hands simply to sink it into bricks and mortar, and then to expect them to keep on contributing vast sums to keep the whole paraphernalia afloat. In my opinion, it is neither authentic New Testament Christianity nor good stewardship.

P. Well, thanks for the interesting talk. I'm wondering... could you put your ideas about the Church in writing for me sometime?

M. I'll see what I can do . . .

MARCUS WRITES TO PROBUS:

Dear PROBUS,

Here's the letter you asked for. By all means share it with your friends. Please understand, however, that it is not intended to be a comprehensive discourse on New Testament ecclesiology!

I must start by going again straight to that NT analogy of "the body of Christ". Reflecting again on what Paul has to say on this theme, it seems that for him the relationship between Christ and his Church is seen to be so intimate and so inter-dependent that he was not consciously using the term "the body" merely as an analogy. For example, when he writes to the Corinthians and says: "Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it", that's what he saw them to be – the Body of Christ in the midst of an idolatrous, demonised society.

All this, I know, would be regarded by many church-people as mere "religious talk". That's what we're up against – there's a vast disparity between the theology of "the body" and the recognition of its intended practical outworking, especially at local level.

This, I believe, is because, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:14, the gifts of the Spirit of God are incomprehensible to the natural mind. Without the Spirit, they become "mere theology".

Yet I would hope that all spiritually-minded Christians are aware of the uniting bond they share with all others who are "in Christ". In the wider context it is comparatively easy to glory in this truth. But at local level it is so much more difficult to be realistic about what

it really means to be a functioning part of Christ's body. There is often genuine cooperation across the denominational fences, and warm friendships between Christians regardless of their different church affiliations. That's good! But is that the way the Head intends his body to function? What sort of a testimony does it present to the world, not only as to one which is divided, but one which is all too often inward-looking, powerless, and having a hard struggle even to survive?

Something obviously has to be done to break out from the familiar pattern and see the emergence of something that really looks like what the Church of Christ was intended to be.

I'll say it again! Paul's teaching consistently presents the concept of live churches functioning as many-membered "bodies of Christ". Not mechanically, under skilled bureaucratic supervision; but dynamically, by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. We hear of churches which claim to be "moving in the gifts of the Holy Spirit". But in how many of such churches are the varied ministries encouraged to operate spontaneously when the Christians come together for worship, fellowship and witness? Are these churches growing – and, if they are, is it the vision of the leaders to anticipate the time when they can sub-divide to provide another cell or fledgling community in the next estate, or Tower Block, or village? Are neighbours becoming aware that in their midst there is a bunch of normal people who are kind and caring, whose integrity is a byword, whose home life is untainted by infidelity, whose children are disciplined and decent and somehow incredibly fulfilled without being allowed to be constantly exposed to the titillations of the media and petting parties?

If we are really concerned to break free from the "deadly inevitability" of "the cyclical pattern of history", this simply won't happen merely by distancing ourselves from what we may choose to identify as "the denominations". We've got to examine our own structures and trends, too! Pioneers have often set out with sound principles and good intentions and high hopes. Before long they are sure to encounter some crisis. It is then that the measure of their anointing and the depth of their commitment to a God—given vision is brought to the test. The Lord does give wisdom to those who walk with him and listen to his voice. But, to the "natural" mind, however intelligent and "experienced" it may be, the Lord's plans often appear "unrealistic". Widely approved, ready-to-hand expedients seem to make so much more sense than sticking to some obscure vision which offers no immediate short-term panacea. For example, it is on the basis of expediency that the problem of inadequate leadership is usually circumvented by the appointment of a salaried "pastor". And how are boring services to be brightened up? The solution usually adopted is to plan the whole programme to include lots of bright singing of the kind which young people especially are thought to enjoy. In an incredibly short time these expedients become an integral part of the established structure of "our church".

Probus, I fear that the cyclical pattern of history can creep up behind the most dedicated and gifted of God's servants if they yield to peer or people pressure, and lose their vision. They may still continue to preach "powerful" messages. But where is the fruit? Where is the former glory? One hears from many "charismatic" and "restoration" quarters that it has largely departed.

That's why I believe there is an urgent need for some of us to come aside to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying at the present time. It is a critical, but also, an opportune time. Tradition, and self-interest can distort our vision without our realising it. And even if we

have truly received a vision of the Lord's purpose for his Church, we may still have to wait diligently for its fulfilment in his "appointed time".

Why am I so confident that it is coming? One reason is that one knows of so many truly "concerned" Christians who are unsettled in terms of their church commitment. Godly Anglicans, for example, who are deeply distressed by what has been developing within their church, and are hovering on the brink, not knowing whether they should get out and, if so, where to go. And there are Roman Catholics, equally unhappy about their church, who are seeking spiritual ministry from outside their tradition. There are deep divisions within many of the denominational churches, not only over the charismatic gifts, but over other genuinely spiritual issues. And, as you will know, the charismatic and restoration streams are no longer moving on from strength to strength as seemed the case a few years ago.

Never was there a time when Christian institutions in our western world had less firm a hold on their members and less impact on society. Yet, never was there a time when there has been more light available from God's Word for those who seek it. As institutionalism is falling apart, the Holy Spirit has been opening up for enquiring minds this vital truth concerning the Body of Christ and its strategic role in the outworking of his kingdom plans. Many are now seeing that this is no mere substitute for failed institutionalism. It is an essential feature of the Lord's original, unchanging plan, because it is centred in him alone. Its application is both universal and local. It is uncomplicated. And it is dynamic.

I do hope we may be able to get together again sometime.

Yours in the One Hope.

Marcus, a brother in Christ.

APPENDIX 1: LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH –

SOME RELEVANT QUOTATIONS

From: *“The Church” by Hans Kung, Roman Catholic theologian (Search Press Ltd, 9th Edition 1 986):*

(1) “Since apostleship is a ministry on the basis of a particular commission, we may speak of an apostolic “office”, provided of course that it is not mistakenly seen as an hierarchic position of power, but radically, as a ministry, a service.”

(2) “Instead of being the leaders of an individual community, the *“episkopi”* became increasingly the leaders of dioceses. As the Christian message spread from the towns into the countryside (to the “pagani”) the “episcopoi” of the towns began to take the countryside round their towns under their care, often covering quite a wide area. In this way, with the help of presbyters who were increasingly sent out into the country districts, they gradually built up a centralized system of mother and daughter Churches: the metropolitan system. The chief pastor of the town became the director and overseer of a whole area, the old “episcopos” of a Church in a town became a “bishop” in a modern sense. His territory was at first called “paroikia” in the East; then “eparchia”; in the West the two words “parochia” (parish) and “diocesis” were often used synonymously. In theology as well as practice the role of bishop became more and more important. Contradicting biblical terminology, the bishop now becomes called “sacerdos”, “summus sacerdos”, “pontifex”, and parallels are drawn between him and Old Testament priests or high priests. The consecration of a bishop is interpreted theologically as his wedding to the particular Church. Influenced no doubt by non-Christian practice, it became customary to keep a list of the successive occupants of the office (lists of bishops). In this way the apostolic succession of the bishop was formalized by the establishing of a recorded line of succession, intended to prove that the purity of the apostolic teaching tradition has been handed on unaltered.

From the middle or end of the third century, inspired in part at least by Jewish and pagan precedents, the bishops began to wear a distinctive dress of office. At the same time, in the Christianized Byzantine empire, bishops were accorded secular titles, insignia and privileges which up to then had been reserved for the emperor or high officials: candles, incense, a throne, shoes, the maniple, the pallium, and so on. From here to the prince bishops of the Middle Ages was only a short step. . . . The patriarchal system, in which Rome was accorded the primacy, was also developed, and from about this time the whole structure became known as a ‘hierarchy’.” (page 412)

(3) “This, very briefly sketched, is an indication of the tremendously complex development of the original constitution of the Church. Two basic forms, the Pauline and the Palestinian, combined, and within a remarkably short space of time, within a generation after Paul, the latter form completely obscured the former . . . Nothing is to be gained from concealing the fact, which the brief sketch above makes amply clear, that a frightening gulf separates the Church of today from the original constitution of the Church.” (page 413)

* * *

A third century Bishop speaks (From two epistles of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, AD 248-258, quoted in Bettenson’s “Documents of the Christian Church”, pages 73/ 74):

“Our Lord, whose precepts and admonitions we are bound to observe, ordered the high office of bishop and the system of his Church when he speaks in the Gospel to Peter, ‘Thou art Peter, etc,’ (Matt.XVI. 18,19) . . . Thence age has followed age and bishop has followed bishop in succession, and the office of the episcopate and the system of the Church has been handed down . . . so that the Church is founded on the bishops and every act of the Church is directed by these same presiding officers . . .

. . . Hence you should know that the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop, and that if any one be not with the bishop he is not in the Church; and that they vainly beguile themselves who, not being at peace with the priests of God, approach by stealth and trust by underhand means to enter into communion with certain persons; whereas the Church is one and may not be rent or sundered, but should assuredly be bound together and united by the glue of the priests.

* * *

And while the Papal Princes were at the height of their powers, this was what was happening in the cantons of Southern Europe (From: “The Pilgrim Church” by E.H.Broadbent, 1931 edition, pages 97-100 [extracts]):

“The doctrines and practices of these brethren, known as Waldenses [12th century AD], and also by other names, were of such a character that it is evident they were not the fruits of an effort to reform the Roman and Greek churches and bring them back to more scriptural ways. Bearing no traces of the influence of these churches, they indicate, on the contrary, the continuance of an old tradition, handed down from quite another source – the teaching of Scripture and the practices of the primitive Church. Their existence proves that there had always been men of faith, men of spiritual power and understanding, who had maintained in the churches a tradition close to that of apostolic days, and far removed from that which the dominant Churches had developed.

Apart from the Holy Scriptures they had no special confession of faith or religion, nor any rules; and no authority of any man, however eminent, was allowed to set aside the authority of Scripture. Yet, throughout the centuries, they confessed the same truths and had the same practices. They valued Christ’s own words in the Gospels, as being the highest revelation, and if ever they were unable to reconcile any of His words with other portions of Scripture, while they accepted all, they acted on what seemed to them the plain meaning of the Gospels. Following Christ was their chief theme and aim, keeping His words, imitating His example. The Spirit of Christ, they said, is effective in any man in the measure in which he obeys the words of Christ and is His true follower . . .

In matters of church order they practised simplicity, and there was nothing among them corresponding to that which had grown up in the Church of Rome. Yet the elders accepted their responsibilities with the utmost seriousness. In matters of discipline, appointment of elders, and other acts, the whole church took part in conjunction with the elders . . .

Those whom they called “Apostles” played an important part in their testimony. While the elders remained in their homes and churches, the “Apostles” travelled continually, visiting the churches. A distinction was made between those called to be “Perfect”, and others of the followers of Christ, based on the fact that in the Gospels some were called to sell all that they had and follow Christ, while others of His disciples were equally called to serve Him in the surroundings in which He found them. The Waldensian Apostles had no property or goods or home or family; if they had these they left them. Their life was one

of self-denial, hardship and danger. . . They travelled in utmost simplicity, without money, without a second suit, their needs being supplied by the believers among whom they ministered the Word. They always went two and two, an elder and a younger man, of whom the latter waited on his older companion. Their visits were highly esteemed, and they were treated with every token of respect and affection. Owing to the dangers of the times they usually travelled as business men and often the younger men carried light wares, as knives, needles, etc., for sale. They never asked for anything; indeed, many undertook serious medical studies that they might be able to care for the bodies of those they met with. The name 'Friends of God' was often given to them. Great care was used in commending men to such service, since it was felt that one devoted man was worth more than a hundred whose call to this ministry was less evident."

* * *

From Roland Allen's classic: "Missionary Methods: Paul's or Ours?", Page 81, 1960 edition:

"It is manifest that Paul did not go about as a missionary preacher merely to convert individuals: he went to establish Churches from which the light might radiate throughout the whole country round. The secret of success in this work lies in beginning at the very beginning. It is the training of the converts which sets the type for the future. If the first converts are taught to depend upon the missionary, if all work, evangelistic, educational, social, is concentrated in his hands, the infant community learns to rest passively upon the man from whom they receive their first insight into the Gospel. Their faith having no sphere for its growth and development lies dormant. A tradition rapidly grows up that nothing can be done without the authority and guidance of the missionary [apostle?].....Thus the leader is confirmed in the habit of gathering all authority in his own hands, and of despising the powers of his people, until he makes their inactivity an excuse for denying their capacity. The fatal mistake has been made of teaching the converts to rely upon the wrong source of strength. Instead of seeking it in the working of the Holy Spirit in themselves, they seek it in the missionary. They put him in the place of Christ; they depend upon him.

In allowing them, or encouraging them, to do this, the missionary not only checks the spiritual growth of his converts; he actually robs them of the strength which they naturally possess and would naturally use."

And this, also from "Missionary Methods", as above, page 118:

"In our dealings with our native converts . . . we attempt to administer a code which is alien to the thought of the people with whom we have to deal, we appeal to precedents which are no precedents to them, and we quote decisions of which our hearers do not understand either the history or the reason. . . .This is unfortunate because it leaves the people unconvinced and uneducated, and teaches them the habit of unreasoning obedience. They learn to . . . delight in the exact fulfilment of precise and minute directions. By this method we make it difficult to stir the consciences of our converts . . . they cease to expect to understand the reason of things, or to exercise their intelligence . . . If a missionary explains to his converts that some act is not in harmony with the mind of Christ his words fall on deaf ears: if he tells them that it was forbidden in a Council of such and such a date, they obey him; but that is the way of death not of life; it is Judaism not Christianity; it is Papal not Pauline".

And some more quotes from Roland Allen's later work: "The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church", 1960 edition (extracts from chapter 7 titled "Missionary Organisation"):

"For Missionary work we have two organisations: one which is ancient and one which is modern: one simple, the other very cumbrous . . .

The Church was first established and organised with a world-wide mission for a world-wide work. It was a living organism composed of living souls deriving their life from Christ, who was its Head. It was an organism which grew by its own spontaneous activity, the expression of that life which it had in union with Christ, the Saviour. Its organization was the organization fitted for such an organism . . . Consequently there was no special organization for missions in the Early Church; the Church organization sufficed. It was simple and complete. There was abundant room in it for the expression of the spontaneous individual activity of its members; for every member was potentially a missionary; and the Church, as an organised body, expected that activity and knew how to act when its members did their duty . . .

Missionary organization in [present-day missionary societies] is necessarily elaborate. It involves the creation of offices and departments, with directors, clerks, accountants, divided and subdivided . . . Now elaborate organization exercises a strange fascination over the minds of men . . . It tends to become an end in itself. Men incline more and more to rely upon it; they learn to ascribe to it virtues which do not belong to it. There is a horrible tendency for an organization to grow in importance till it overshadows the end of its existence . . . Many men have established organizations in order to achieve by them a definite object, and have been caught in the toils of the organization which they have created. Business men, for instance, have created organizations that by them they might become rich, and then, having grown rich even in their own estimation, have gone on labouring simply to keep the organization in existence. The maintenance of the organization has become a greater incentive to work than the purpose for which it was first created . . .

There is a kind of work which depends for continuity upon the continuity of the organization which supports it; there is also a kind of work which does not. The man who first imported Australian rabbits in tins into England established an organization, and if the organizations which now carry on that work ceased, the continuity of supply of [tinned] Australian rabbits to England would cease also. The man who first imported [live] rabbits into Australia was not supported by any organization established to carry on the importation of rabbits. Yet there was no lack of continuity, (for) continuity depends upon the interior life of that which is propagated. It grows spontaneously by its own inward force, and the continuity exists in the unity of the life.

To insist, then, that our missionary [or apostolic?] organization is essential for the continuity of that work which we do in foreign lands [or at home?], and to ascribe the continuity of that work to the organization, is to ascribe to our work a particular character as being in itself lifeless. If the continuity of that work which we do depends upon the organization, it is manifest that the work which we do must be something other than the propagation of life . . .

. . . I could imagine that if I were a Moslem the reading of the reports of Christian Missionary Societies would afford me great satisfaction. I should compare the laborious efforts of the

Christians to propagate their religion with the silent spontaneous expansion of Islam. Let them pour out their money, I should say; let them establish all this extravagant machinery. They may make a few converts, but they will do us more good than harm. They know not the power of a true religion. Whilst they labour at these material things, we advance by our own inherent spiritual power. They organise and build, they toil and sweat to convert men by their material methods; Islam grows while we sit still. With all their gifts they purchase a few converts, and then they must begin all over again in the same costly way to make a few more. One convert to Islam is the sure firstfruit of a great harvest. Islam advances automatically. God works without our material aid. These men know nothing of spiritual forces, the forces which work automatically, the power which is of God."

[Note. The above quotations are from many which could have been introduced here from Roland Allen's classics on missionary work. Allen's books are probably difficult to obtain now; but, if obtainable, are worth reading, again and again. I say this in spite of (yet, in some ways also, because of) the fact that Allen was a missionary with the Church Missionary Society, and an orthodox High Anglican. This introduces into his theses some incredible anomalies. Yet this only brings out his genuine spiritual insights into sharper relief; and one shares his pain as he addresses situations within his church and society which, sadly, have altered little over the years in spite of his enlightened pleadings. Perhaps there are still those both within and outside of the institutional churches who can learn from the wisdom of this John the Baptist figure who died in Kenya in 1947.] .

* * *

And this . . . from "The New Reformation?" (S.C.M. paperback, 1965) by a 20th century Anglican Bishop, the late Doctor J.A.T. Robinson:

"Reformation presupposes that the Church can be re-formed and a positive answer given to the question, 'Can these bones live?' There is, however, much from within the organized Church, and still more for those observing it from without, to raise the question rather insistently: 'Can it possibly be the carrier of the new life for the new age?' Is the Church not an archaic and well-protected institution for the preservation of something that is irrelevant and incredible?' . . . May not the really significant movements of renewal take place outside it and despite it? There are more in our generation than in any previous Christian century who would be inclined to return a reluctant or not so reluctant, 'Yes' to that question . . . As one who knows within his bones that he could not put himself outside, I want to plead for those who feel that they must . . .

. . . The previous reformation resulted in a gigantic proliferation of structure. As the Body of Christ split up, the separate parts took on the character of the whole. A cluster of little catholicisms was born . . . We are so used to it we can readily be persuaded that it has always been so. In fact it is an abomination . . . It is surely now on its way out, though it will doubtless be centuries before it disappears. Everything is tending in that direction, and the prayers and actions of all Christians must be engaged in furthering the movements towards organic unity at every level . . . The real trouble is . . . that the Church . . . has become heavily institutionalised, with a crushing investment in maintenance. It has the characteristic of the dinosaur and the battleship. It is saddled with a plant and a programme beyond its means, so that it is absorbed in problems of supply and preoccupied with survival. The inertia of the machine is such that the financial allocations, the legalities, the channels of organization, the attitudes of mind, are all set in the direction of continuing and enhancing the status quo."

* * *

A rather different slant from: "A Witness and a Testimony" magazine:

"The history of Christianity from the latter days of the apostles is the history of prisons. Not literal, material prisons, though there have been not a few of these, but prisons which are the result of man's inveterate habit of taking hold and bringing into bondage. How many times has the Spirit broken loose and moved in a new and free way, only to have that way brought under the control of man and crystallised into another form, creed, organisation, denomination, sect, order or community? The invariable result has been that the free movement and life of the Spirit has been cramped, or even killed, by the prison of the framework into which it has been drawn or forced . . .

. . . Sooner or later, any real or seeming departure, or division from the recognised and traditional order . . . will be heresy, to be violently suspect, repressed and outcast. Too often what at its beginning was a spiritual energy, producing a living organism expressed in something that God really wanted and to which He gave birth, has become something which the next generation has to sustain and work hard to keep going. The thing has developed a self-interest and it will go hard with anything or anyone interfering with it or seeming so to do. The Spirit has become the prisoner of the institution or system, and the people become limited spiritually as a result."

[Quoted by Arthur Wallis in an address given at a Conference in New Zealand in August 1964. Arthur Wallis went on to say: "I believe we see this taking place before our very eyes, and all because we have forgotten, or we have never seen, that the New Testament gives you and me authority to belong to the body of Jesus Christ, and a local expression of it, and nothing else. Denominationalism becomes a fruitful field for the dissemination of ideas and practices which, if they cannot be called error, must be acknowledged to be unscriptural. If man can use organisation, and find it a useful channel, so can Satan. Whereas, an independent church standing on its own feet, has leaders responsible only to Christ, and they can stand on guard at the door of the church, as Paul exhorted the elders at Ephesus to do."]

* * *

From USA, two extracts from DeVern Fromke's "The Ultimate Intention", (1) Preface-page 8, (2) Chapter 24, pages 147/8. (N.B. This book is still obtainable from: "Sure Foundation", 2522 Colony Court, Indianapolis, IN 46280, USA).

"It will be helpful from the very beginning, if the reader is made conscious that the message of this book does not follow the traditional, the modern evangelical, or fundamental approach. I am calling for a God-centred approach. If we observe the pattern which God has followed since the Reformation, we can see that there has been a conscious recovery of Biblical and historic truths. Such restoration is imperative if the Church is to come to full maturity and bear fruit. Through Luther, God restored justification by faith; through Calvin, the importance of reasoning from God down to man; through Whitefield, Wesley and others, the emphasis of a holy, separated life; through Darby and others, glorious truths concerning the body of Christ and other Church truth. More recently, since 1900, the ministry of the Holy Spirit has been more generally recognized as an imperative need of the Church . . .

. . . I believe the hour has come when God is initiating another major recovery. This time it is not just 'a faith', but the restoration of something so imperative that it will give the ultimate perspective to all truth. Is it possible the Church is unable to fully appreciate or interpret the truth she has, simply because her perspective is wrong?

* * *

“God is now doing a very special thing in those of His people who are pressing on with Him with marked purposefulness. There is a sweeping battle raging for the throne of the world. A greater warfare has never been known. The enemy is marshalling all his power and all his puppets in vivid array. There is an urgent summons for the people of God to recognize the challenge. Who will take the government of the universe?

Unless men have spiritual discernment to see what is behind the present world situation, they will not rise to the challenge of the enemy. God's sons are being prepared and called to take the kingdom now in a spiritual way, in order that they may share the throne in the age to come.

There is a reason why the enemy is determined to keep truth concerning the body of Christ from the Lord's people. Any group which constitutes such an expression of truth will become the target for Satan's heaviest onslaughts from every side. We all know the value of a fearless individual's testimony to truth. How much greater, then, would be the concerted power of a corporate body, testifying to the world that God's children can fellowship in perfect harmony! When the Church is one, then shall the world believe. (John 17:21).

God's Word says: 'one shall chase a thousand, but two shall put ten thousand to flight'. There is strength in unity. Satan understands that he will be put to flight when the 'corporate' Son comes into full manifestation . . .

. . . Christ has [already] triumphed, but His people have not yet stood with Him in victory.

* * *

And to bring these counsels to a conclusion, this from the self-acclaimed "least of all the apostles":

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! AMEN.

As a prisoner of the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it . . .

It was he 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 the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 3:20-21, & 4:1-16).

APPENDIX 2: MATTHIAS OR PAUL?

In Acts 1, Luke gives an account of the appointment of Matthias to replace Judas in the apostolic team of Twelve.

There is a view that this appointment was not valid since it was made by the use of the Old Testament practice of the casting of lots, which is said to have been unsuitable within the New Testament context. The fact that nothing more is heard of Matthias is advanced as further evidence in support of this claim. It is asserted that the missing place in the apostolic team was eventually filled by Paul.

In my view, however, the case for the validity of Matthias's appointment is difficult to refute *for several reasons*:

1. The timing of the appointment.

It took place soon after the apostles had spent many days in a close session with the Lord prior to his ascension. The question of the replacement of Judas must surely have been raised during that time. If so, is it conceivable that the Lord would have left them in any doubt as to how the matter was to be handled, especially as it was evidently seen to be one of some urgency?

2. The witness of Luke.

In Luke's account (written many years later) he simply states: "And they cast lots . . . and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles". Also, in Luke's account of events at Pentecost he refers to the fact that "Peter stood up with the eleven". Would he have reported these two incidents in those terms had he understood that one of the men among "the eleven" ought not to have been there?

3. The unsuitability of Paul.

Paul's conversion did not take place until many years after Pentecost. Hence the theory that he should have replaced Judas would have invalidated any appointment prior to Pentecost. In that case, would not the Lord have made it clear to the apostles that at that time nothing should be done about replacing Judas?

Furthermore, Paul himself never claimed any right to be included in the Jerusalem-based apostolate. So far from doing so, the general drift of his references to the Twelve gives no support to that theory. Peter claimed that the eleven men who stood with him before the multitude at Pentecost were witnesses of Christ's resurrection. In the sense clearly implied by Peter, that could not have been claimed for, or by, Paul.

4. The argument from silence.

The fact that we never hear anything more about Matthias proves nothing. The same has to be said of eight out of the original team who were present at the time of his appointment.

Final comment. Whilst it is admitted that Matthias's appointment by the casting of lots is unique in the New Testament context, it is perhaps relevant to note that it took place before the Holy Spirit had been given at Pentecost.

Be that as it may, Scripture provides no evidence that Matthias's appointment was invalid or that Paul was to be the Lord's choice to make up the number of "the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Revelation 21:14).

APPENDIX 3: THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Since I finished writing these chapters it has occurred to me that some readers may be concerned that I have made no direct reference to the Second Coming of Christ.

I am aware that many Christians are convinced that Christ's coming is very near, and at the latest cannot be more than a few years away. To such, the concept of the restoration of New Testament Church life in these days may be regarded as nothing more than an unrealistic dream which at best can only prove misleading for Christians whose main concern should be to be personally in readiness for Christ when he comes.

I have studied the Scriptures with considerable care on this momentous subject, and have come to certain conclusions thereon, including a firm conviction as to a literal second coming of Christ. Honesty, however, compels me to say that I do not have that sense of the imminence of that coming which some of my friends have. At the same time, I cannot share the view of those who reject altogether any possibility of that event taking place in the foreseeable future.

In my youth, more than sixty years ago, the "any minute" teaching was much in evidence in some evangelical circles. I recall attending a series of messages on these lines (in an Anglican parish Church!) in which the speaker declared that, at latest, the Lord's coming could not be "delayed" beyond (I think) the year 1934! For some days after attending those meetings I lived in an uncomfortable dream.

The trouble with such teaching is that, if it proves wrong, it tends to make honest, sincere Christian people shrink away altogether from a consideration of Biblical eschatology. It can "shake the mind" in an unhealthy way, as Paul evidently realized when he wrote to the Thessalonian Christians after that teaching had been brought to them around AD 50! (2 Thessalonians chapter 2).

My concern therefore is that, whether the Lord comes in my lifetime, or not, in any case, I shall be "at the ready", if and when the call comes.

And for me, the prospect of his coming provides the great driving incentive to be involved in the recovery of a testimony on the earth which truly glorifies him – a Church which is watching and waiting in readiness as the Bride who makes herself ready to meet her Lord.

That, I believe was Paul's prayerful expectation when he wrote his letter to the Ephesians (see chapter 3:20,21).

A recovery of the "glory in the Church", for which Paul prayed, cannot delay the Lord's coming for that Church. It may well hasten that day!

RESTORATION – IS THIS STILL ON GOD’S PROGRAMME?

IT WAS IN THE NINETEEN-THIRTIES that **DAVID LILLIE** began to be faced with questions his Christian background was not helping him to answer.

He met a man who challenged him, not only with his Bible, but by his own obvious commitment to Christ. **DAVID** found himself trying to defend a theological position which now, in some respects, seemed to lack Scriptural backing.

He got down to prayer about it, and one night in a cottage meeting he had an encounter with God.

For David, that experience strengthened his vision for the recovery of authentic New Testament Church life.

In this book, the author recalls those early days of expectation, and what subsequently emerged out of “the vision”. He writes frankly about where he believes things have since gone adrift, looks at some earlier apostolic initiatives, examines Biblical precedents, and affirms the conviction he still holds in answer to the question: **IS RESTORATION STILL ON GOD’S PROGRAMME?**

Read the book and decide for yourself whether this message has credibility and substance, or is merely the wishful thinking of an old man . . .