

The Need for Apostles in the 21st Century Church

Bc. Radek Smetana

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 2
Defining the Term “Apostle”	Page 3
Evaluating the Different Roles of the Apostle	Page 8
Dealing with Practical Aspects of Apostleship in the Contemporary Context of the Church	Page 14
Conclusion	Page 19
Bibliography	Page 20

The Need for Apostles in the 21st Century Church

Introduction

The history of institutionalized Christianity is almost 2000 years old. By reviewing this history more closely, the conclusion can be made that the Christian Church as an institution has been subjected to constant change throughout the centuries. It even seems that there have been moments in the past when significant and epochal changes happened in a relatively short time – for example, the Reformation in the sixteenth century. P. Tickle suggests that such monumental changes happen about every five hundred years.¹

There is group of authors that believes that we are living in “another time of great shifting” when “God is realigning and restructuring the church.”² They claim that the most significant feature of this change is the restoration of the ministries of the apostle and prophet within the local church. Proponents of this view, including C. Peter Wagner as one of the main figures, call this shift “The New Apostolic Revolution” (NAR) and assert that this is “the greatest change in doing church since the Protestant Reformation.”³

This essay attempts to reflect on the main thoughts of the on-going debate about the ministry of the apostle. Arguments from both the proponents and opponents of the New Apostolic Revolution will be considered. The aim of this essay is twofold: 1.) to consider whether the restoration of this ministry should be expected in the 21st century Church and 2.) to consider whether there is

¹ P. Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), Kindle e-book, pp. 15-16. The reason of these changes is that “the empowered structures of institutionalized Christianity, whatever they may be at that time, become an intolerable carapace that must be shattered in order that renewal and new growth may occur.” According to Tickle the results of these shifts are as follows: a new, more vital form of Christianity emerges, an organized expression of Christianity which, up until then had been the dominant one, is reconstituted into a more pure and less ossified expression of its former self, and faith is spread dramatically into new geographical and demographical areas. *Included in word count??*

² J. Eckhardt, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power* (Lake Mary: Charisma House, 2010), Kindle e-book, p. 61.

³ C. P. Wagner, *Churchquake!* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1999), p. 5; the same statement he repeats in his other writings, see for example C. P. Wagner, *Apostles Today* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2006), p. 72. The claimed results of this “Revolution” are very similar to the description of the results P. Tickle claims for Great Emergence times.

presently a need for apostles and what their role within the contemporary context of the Church should be.

Defining the Term “Apostle”

Origin of the Word

The English term *apostle* comes from the Greek word *apostolos*. It is derived from the verb *apostelló* which means *I send*. Thus, the noun *apostolos* carries the meaning of “someone who is sent” or “messenger.”⁴

In classical Greek the term is used for naval expedition or eventually for the captain of the expedition. It could even indicate a bill of delivery or a passport document.⁵ The well known Czech biblical scholar D. Drapal suggests that this term was rather impersonal, generally denoting a thing. Only in a few cases is it used for a person. In this case there is a gap between the classical and biblical meaning of the word *apostolos*, and the classical Greek cannot help us much in defining the term.⁶

Some scholars suggest that the Hebrew word *shalúach* (later *shalíach*) provides much of the conceptual background for a better understanding of the term since Jesus probably spoke Hebrew or Aramaic rather than Greek.⁷ In Jewish tradition it often meant “a messenger authorized to bring a concrete message.” In later Jewish tradition, the term *shalíach* represents a concept of law.⁸

However according to Drapal some scholars point out that *shalíach* has been documented in rabbinic literature since around 150 A.D. and any connection with the meaning of *apostolos* cannot be claimed.⁹

⁴ A. Novotny, *Biblicky slovník* (Prague: Kalich, 1956), p. 34.

⁵ A. Novotny, *Biblicky slovník*, p. 34.

⁶ D. Drapal, *Apostolska služba*, (Prague: Nakladatelství KMS, 2004), p. 10.

⁷ R. Ulonska, *Urady v církvi* (Albrechtice: Křestanský život, 1994), p. 7. See also Assemblies of God Position paper ‘Apostles and Prophets’, p. 2, http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position_Papers/pp_downloads/pp_4195_apostles_prophets.pdf [accessed 28/11/2011]

⁸ Novotny, *Biblicky slovník*, p. 34.

⁹ Drapal, *Apostolska služba*, p. 11. He prefers to reflect the usage of the radix *š-l-ch* in the Old Testament. It is used for Moses (Exod. 3:10) and Isaiah (Isa. 6:8) and is translated in the

The New Testament Usage of the Word

It seems more beneficial to reflect on the usage of the term in the New Testament than to search for the original meaning of the word in Classical Greek. The verb *apostelló* occurs 131 times in the New Testament and the noun *apostolos* 79¹⁰ times, mostly in the Epistles.¹¹

Novotny clarifies that the word *apostolos* in the New Testament can be understood generally as a *messenger* (also delegate, representative, ambassador¹²) or more often as a technical term – someone who is sent to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹³ In this technical sense, the term was specifically adopted by Jesus in reference to certain leaders under the New Covenant. These were not *apostles* in the general sense of the word. They were apostles of Jesus Christ.¹⁴

The special usage of the term could be applied to three or, according to some scholars, four groups of people: uniquely to Jesus Christ (Heb 3:1) as the Supreme Apostle, to the Twelve appointed by Jesus also called Apostles of the Lamb (Mark 3:13-15; Rev. 21:14)¹⁵, to later apostles¹⁶ (Acts 14:14) and eventually to apostles of churches (missionaries).¹⁷

Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, with the verb *apostelló*. It could help lead to a better understanding of the term but not much because the noun *apostolos* is used in the Septuagint only once (I Kgs 14:6).

¹⁰ This number varies up to 83 occurrences in the writings of different authors.

¹¹ Ulonska, *Duchovni dary*, p. 8. He explains that most of the occurrences of the noun are found in the epistles by stating that the act of sending, in the full sense of the word, had been initiated not before the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hamon deduces that the frequent occurrence of the term results from the fact that the title apostle had never before been taught, described, designated or demonstrated. Therefore it was necessary to mention and demonstrate this ministry more than the rest - see B. Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, 3rd edn, 1999), Kindle e-book, p. 24.

¹² D. Petts, *Body Builders* (Mattersey: Mattersey Hall, 2002), p. 22.

¹³ Novotny, *Biblicky slovník*, p. 34.

¹⁴ C.P. Wagner, *Apostles Today* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2006), p. 61.

¹⁵ For some theologians only the Twelve are truly valid apostles.

¹⁶ These three categories taken are from Petts, *Body Builders*, pp. 23 – 29.

¹⁷ Ulonska, *Duchovni dary*, p. 14. Also a different concept of the last two categories could be found. Mohabir, for example, claims that there is a group of apostles that function after the ascension of Jesus. He would place Paul in this category. Then there is a group called *other apostles* including Barnabas, Timothy and others – see Mohabir, *Ježíšovy ruce*, p. 105. Vinson Synan includes the group called “false apostles” see V. Synan, ‘Apostolic Practice’ in E. R. Lee (ed.), *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in 21st Century* (Springfield: AGTS, 2005), p. 15.

The uniqueness and unrepeatability of the first two groups are generally accepted, even by those advocating the restoration of the apostolic office.¹⁸ W. Menzies refers to these two groups when he speaks about the earliest “college of apostles”.¹⁹ According to Menzies this group is uniquely placed in the first century because of their exceptional role “to set the boundary of the canon of Scripture, the objective authority by which the Church in all ages is to evaluate all belief, experience and practice”.²⁰

For later apostles Menzies uses the term “general” apostles, and he pictures them as those who fill a role not unlike that of modern-day missionaries.²¹ For Menzies they are all Christian leaders, regardless of title or function. They had been commissioned for special assignments, involved in the proclamation of the gospel and expected to be empowered with charismatic ministry, including signs and wonders.²²

Definition of the Term “Apostle”

Wagner points out that in all recent literature about the gift and office of the apostle, only a few finely tuned definitions of the word have been offered.²³ This difficulty in defining the term might be connected with the observation of Drapal who asserts that there is no comprehensive definition of the term *apostle* in the Bible. G. Fee, a prominent Pentecostal theologian, also perceives that this

¹⁸ J. D. Hernado, ‘Imitatio Christi and the Character of Apostolic Ministry’ in E. R. Lee (ed.), *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in 21st Century* (Springfield: AGTS, 2005), p. 71.

¹⁹ W. W. Menzies ‘Apostolic in Doctrine’ in E. R. Lee (ed.), *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in 21st Century*, (Springfield: AGTS, 2005), p. 35 . By this term he means Jesus Christ as the principal apostle, the inner circle of the original Twelve, including Matthias who replaced Judas, the apostle Paul and those whose teaching was recognized in the first century church as the ultimate authority for all things pertaining to faith and life – Mark, Luke, the writer of Hebrews (if this was not Paul) and James and Jude, the half brothers of the Lord.

²⁰ Menzies, ‘Apostolic in Doctrine’, p. 38.

²¹ Menzies, ‘Apostolic in Doctrine’, p. 39.

²² The Epistles of I Corinthians and Ephesians speak about the ministry of the apostle together with other ministries, such as prophet, teacher, evangelist and pastor. They will be treated separately in following chapter.

²³ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, p. 27; He admits his own omission of such a definition in his first four books written on the theme, and he attributes this to the fact that he felt that any definition would need future revision. In his fifth book, he finally proposes his own definition.

term is considerably flexible and refers both to function and position, at least in Paul's writings and in some semi-official sense.²⁴

Drapal agrees with B. Hamon that for the understanding of the concept of apostleship, it is profitable to see how apostles used to function within the context of the New Testament.²⁵ He also generally agrees with the list of six main functions of first century apostles introduced by Hamon which includes: taking the gospel to unreached areas, planting churches, appointing and training the initial leaders of a church, dealing with specific problems, false doctrines or sins, promoting unity in the Body of Christ and ministering in supernatural power.²⁶ A similar list can be found in the book by D. Petts.²⁷

Wagner expands this list to include twelve characteristics, but in fact many of them overlap with those already previously stated. He adds suffering physical persecution (which is a more passive role) and attracting financial resources.²⁸ D. Cannistraci summarizes the work of the apostle with three key words: planting, watering and increasing.²⁹

An attempt to define the term *apostle* would not be complete with just a definition of what the apostle does. An important component of the definition is also the apostle's character, who he is.

D. Hernando points out that above all functional descriptions and definitions, the apostle Paul regarded the most distinguishing mark of a New Testament apostle to be *Imitatio Christi*, i.e., the imitation of Christ.³⁰ According to Hernando this is a fundamental part of Paul's understanding of what it means to be an apostle of Christ, and it is also an indispensable part of the defending of the legitimacy of his apostleship.

²⁴ G. D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1999), p. 191.

²⁵ Drapal, *Apostolska sluzba*, p. 19.

²⁶ Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God*, p. 2.

²⁷ Petts, *Body Builders*, p. 38.

²⁸ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, p. 30 – 34. It is interesting to note that Wagner also includes the definition of the term "apostle" in the chapter called "What Apostles Do".

²⁹ D. Cannistraci, *Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement: A Biblical Look at Apostleship and How God is Using It to Bless His Church Today* (Ventura: Regal Boos, 1998), p. 103.

³⁰ Hernando, 'Imitatio Christi and the Character of Apostolic Ministry', p. 71.

Similarly Wagner states that apostleship is a matter of character above any other single quality.³¹ Eckhardt points out that adequate character is often overlooked as a true sign of apostolic ministry.³²

Keeping in mind all that has been said, the author of this essay is aware that the absence of any clear biblical definition of apostleship along with the absence of any requirements for appointing future apostles results in a diversity of definitions for the term *apostle*. Different authors have different views based on their understanding of the characteristics or functions attributed to apostolic ministry. However this author would agree with Wagner who considers Cannistraci's definition of *apostle* as one of the best:

An apostle is one who is called and sent by Christ to have the spiritual authority, character, gifts and abilities to successfully reach and establish people in Kingdom truth and order, especially through founding and overseeing local churches.³³

³¹ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, p. 37.

³² Eckhardt, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power*, p. 149.

³³ Cannistraci, *Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement*, p. 23.

Evaluating the Different Roles of the Apostle

According to advocates of NAR, there are three passages in the Epistles which serve as the primary proof text for recognizing the gift and office of the apostle.³⁴ These passages also illustrate the diverse roles of the apostle. The listed passages, including the suggested roles of the apostle, will be reflected upon in this section.

The “Proton” Role of Apostles (I Cor. 12:28)

First Corinthians 12:28 introduce apostles together with the ministries of prophets and teachers. Apostles are referred to as the “proton” (first) on the list here. The question could be raised as to why apostles are referred to first, prophets second and teachers third. Does this enumeration reflect degrees of importance of these ministries? If yes, could this be a significant argument in favour of contemporary apostleship?

For advocates of NAR, the term “proton” is very important in their understanding apostolic ministry. They emphasize the meaning of the word which is “first in time, order or rank.” The conclusion they make is that apostolic anointing should be the primary, foundational anointing of the church.³⁵ They also observe that one of the meanings of the term is “prototype” which could be understood as “pattern or paradigm.” Thus, apostles are able to build up fully functional “prototype churches” where strong apostolic leadership is exercised and strong prophetic, teaching, pastoral and evangelist gifts are not missing.³⁶ According to these authors, this claim could be supported also by the verse in Eph. 2:20 where apostles and prophets are considered as the foundation of the church.

³⁴ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, p. 10.

³⁵ Eckhardt, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power*, p. 63; see also Wagner, *Apostles Today*, pp. 12 – 13.

³⁶ Eckhardt, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power*, p. 68.

Wagner affirms that “a church without apostles will not function as well as a church with apostles”.³⁷ For Wagner this is an important argument for why apostolic ministry should always be present in the church.

Fee seems to observe this passage in a more complex way. He reflects on the context of the passage and points out three categories found there: personal ministries, charismata and deeds of service. His conclusion regarding the first category is that these three items are not to be thought of as “offices” held by certain “persons” in the local church, but rather they refer to “ministries” as they find expression in various persons.³⁸ He considers the first group as a whole and admits that this group is listed first because of “the precedence”³⁹ over the other groups listed in the passage in the founding and building up of the local assembly.

Horton suggests that enumeration here may be chronological with respect to the history of the Early Church. He refers to apostles as those who were the primary witnesses to the life, death, resurrection and teachings of Jesus and to prophets and teachers as those who were given by the resurrected Jesus to establish and mature believers.⁴⁰

Different functions of New Testament apostles were introduced in a previous chapter when defining the term *apostle*. It should be acknowledged that several of these functions could be considered as fundamental for the life of the Church and it could suggest the “proton” role of apostle. This might surely include the pioneering role together with church planting. The role of appointing leaders or correcting false doctrine could also be mentioned, but it would require a more detailed discussion about the authority of the apostle.

³⁷ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, p. 12. The context of the passage suggests that he means church in general.

³⁸ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, p. 190.

³⁹ Or “usefulness in building up the church”, see Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, p. 190, the note 398.

⁴⁰ S. M. Horton, *I and II Corinthians. A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield: Logion Press, 2007), p. 120. Drapal appreciates the attitude of B. Scheidler who asserts that the “proton” position of apostles in the church is over accentuated today and should be understood in connection with I Cor. 4:13 where apostles are pictured as last - see Drapal, *Apostolska sluzba*, p. 44

Nevertheless, it seems that I Cor. 12:28 can serve only as an adjunctive rather than a principal argument for the claim that “there is no substitute for the ministry of the apostle. We need apostles in every generation”.⁴¹ As it has been shown, there are several approaches to understanding the passage, including the enumeration “first,” “second,” “third.” The chronological approach cannot be overlooked.⁴²

The Foundational Role of the Apostle (Eph. 2:20)

This is probably the most known verse regarding the apostolic and prophetic foundation of the church. Drapal mentions that originally he was convinced that his book about the ministry of the apostle would be developed around this passage. His pre-understanding of the verse was similar to that of the proponents of NAR.⁴³ One of them, D. Cartledge, formulates his understanding in the following way:

The apostle sees and knows the visions and revelations of God for his sphere of ministry more than others. The visionary capacity of the apostle, and the ability to discern the direction and agenda of the Lord for his church, is a key ingredient of both its health and growth... This is one reason why Paul declares that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.⁴⁴

However, after exploring the context of the passage, Drapal came to the conclusion that there is little to extract from this verse regarding the theme of contemporary apostolic ministry. His observation is that the primary theme of the passage is the Church (particularly portrayed as a building) and not an explanation of apostolic and prophetic ministries. After reflecting on the

⁴¹ Eckhardt, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power*, p. 7.

⁴² Moreover, there are different opinions about whether the apostle Paul is speaking to the local body of believers or whether he is speaking in terms of the Church generally - see for example *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 191 – 192 or Horton, *I and II Corinthians*, pp. 121 – 122.

⁴³ Drapal, *Apostolska sluzba*, p. 88.

⁴⁴ D. Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution* (Lane Cove: McPherson's Printing Group, 2nd edn, 2000), p. 69; he places the apostolic ministry primary in the local church.

understanding of the passage throughout church history, Drapal tends to think that the expression “apostles and prophets” is equal to the expression “Scripture.” The meaning then would be that the Church in general has to be built on Scripture.⁴⁵

Fee compares this passage with Eph. 3:1-7 and 4:11-16 and concludes that “apostles and prophets are, as in I Cor. 12 – 14, ministries necessary for the founding of the church as well as for its subsequent growth into a healthy and mature community of faith.”⁴⁶ His position seems to support the perspective of contemporary apostolic ministry.

According to Petts, apostles laid down a foundation for the universal church by receiving the completed revelation of the word of God. This is an unrepeatable role. However, Petts then reflects on I Cor. 3:10, where the apostle Paul is speaking about having laid down the foundation of the Corinthian church and concludes that in this sense the foundational role can be attributed to contemporary apostles.⁴⁷

This position seems to be well balanced. Even if it could be admitted that the meaning of Eph. 2:20 is not completely clear and could be explained as Drapal does, other passages in the New Testament suggest that the role of the apostle is foundational in building local churches. It is likely therefore that the same foundational role should be expected in the contemporary process of planting and building churches.

The Equipping Role of the Apostle (Eph. 4:11-12)

This is another important passage in which apostles are mentioned not only together with prophets (or teachers) but also with evangelists and pastors.⁴⁸ The title five-fold ministry is often used when this passage is explained, although

⁴⁵ Drapal, *Apostolska sluzba*, p. 89. Nevertheless Drapal admits that he is open to future corrections on this particular conclusion.

⁴⁶ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, p. 688.

⁴⁷ Petts, *Body Builders*, pp. 33 – 34.

⁴⁸ Menzies calls this passage “the centrepiece of the discussion of the issue of restorationism” (the restoration of spiritual gifts and the fivefold ministries of the contemporary church) – see Menzies, ‘Apostolic in Doctrine’ p. 33

some authors prefer to see pastor and teacher together as one gift.⁴⁹ Wagner does not use the term “ministry” because it is not used in verse 11. He calls them equipping (or governmental) offices.⁵⁰

The main argument taken from this passage by advocates of NAR is that these ministries (or offices⁵¹) are intended for the equipping of the saints “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”⁵² We have not yet arrived to this point, so the only reasonable conclusion is that we are still in need of all five offices.⁵³ Hamon adds that we cannot reach the fullness of Christ if the fivefold ministry, including the apostolic one, is not re-established.⁵⁴

Drapal supports Wagner’s claim by pointing out that Jesus called the Twelve during his lifetime, while the fivefold ministry was established in the church after Jesus ascended to heaven (Eph. 4:8). Thus there is a clear line between the unrepeatable and temporary role of the Twelve and the continued role of the ministries mentioned in Ephesians.⁵⁵

An interesting approach to Eph. 4:11 can be found in the official Position Papers of the Assemblies of God USA. Dealing with this verse, the paper states that apostles are named first among the ministry gifts of Ephesians 4:11 because they are foundational (a connection is made to Eph. 2:20) not necessarily because they are continuous leaders in the church.⁵⁶ In this official document the title apostle (or prophet) is not recognized for the contemporary church. This position is supported by the consideration that there is no provision for the

⁴⁹ Ulonska, *Urady v cirkvi*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, p. 11.

⁵¹ Fee prefers to speak of functions, not offices – see Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, p. 707.

⁵² Eph. 4:13.

⁵³ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, p. 13.

⁵⁴ Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God*, p. 119.

⁵⁵ Drapal, *Apostolska sluzba*, p. 80.

⁵⁶ Assemblies of God Position paper “*Apostles and Prophets*”, p. 5.

appointment of apostles or prophets in the pastoral letters⁵⁷ or in the book of Acts.⁵⁸

Cartledge calls it a quasi-cessationist position. He believes the reason why this position is held in some denominations can be attributed to the fact that the ministry of the apostle (or prophet) does not fit comfortably into the democratic system used in those churches.⁵⁹

The author of this essay also tends to believe that Eph. 4 implies the perpetual equipping role of all the gifts mentioned there. He would agree with Wagner's argument that Jesus gave all those five⁶⁰ gifts to the church after he ascended into heaven. Thus, the role of all is to equip the church. The suggested division between apostles and prophets and the rest of the group seems to be rather artificial.

⁵⁷ I and II Timothy and Titus

⁵⁸ Assemblies of God Position paper "*Apostles and Prophets*", p. 11. However, in the same paper, apostolic functions are recognized "within the context of breaking new ground in unevangelized areas or among unreached people."

⁵⁹ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, p. 136. Wagner compares this position with "having your cake and eating it too" - see Wagner, *Apostles Today*, p. 64.

⁶⁰ The author of this essay holds the position that five gifts are mentioned here.

Dealing with Practical Aspects of Apostleship in the Contemporary Context of the Church

After discussing the definition of the term *apostle* and reflecting on its different roles, it could be affirmed that apostolic ministry should have a place in the contemporary church. The question might be raised as to how this ministry should function in today's church. This question goes far beyond the scope of this essay; however, some reflections will be presented in this section.

The Foundational Role of Apostles in the Contemporary Context

One main point of criticism made by NAR proponents is the historical shift that took place when⁶¹ the foundational role of apostles (and prophets) was substituted with the role of pastors (bishops) or teachers.⁶² According to these proponents, the pastoral thinking perspective is opposite to that of the apostle's. Whereas pastors think about the safety and protection of the flock, apostles think about expansion and progression. This is not a problem until the pastoral anointing becomes the dominant anointing of the local church.⁶³ Stagnation then comes to the church.

Passages in I Cor. 2:18 ("proton" role) or Eph. 2:20 (foundational role) are used to support the claim that apostles are more than bishops (pastors)⁶⁴ because they have a unique anointing to advance the church and a special ability to activate gifts through the impartation of prophetic gifts.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Actually already in the second century.

⁶² Wagner, *Apostles Today*, p. 12. According to Wagner teachers have always been with us in the church, pastors only after the Protestant Reformation and evangelists since the 1800's (from the days of Charles Finney) – see p. 21.

⁶³ Eckhardt, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power*, p. 67.

⁶⁴ This is an explicit formulation of Eckhardt – see Eckhardt, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power*, p. 26.

⁶⁵ Eckhardt, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power*, p. 26; Moreover, apostles are not fearful and intimidated by another anointing, but pastors sometimes are because of their role to maintain order and safety within the local church. Thus, they are more reluctant to release people with apostolic and prophetic gifting – see Eckhardt, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power*, 86.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, the importance of the two verses regarding the “proton” or “foundational” role of apostles cannot be overstated. However, it can be admitted that the role of apostles is in some sense unique. Menzies pictures “general” apostles⁶⁶ as those who are commissioned for a special assignment, primarily in pioneer settings, and he identifies them as modern-day missionaries.⁶⁷ This can mean a new geographical territory but also a new group of people.⁶⁸ Hernando reminds readers that “Paul did not want to build on another man’s foundation by preaching in territory already evangelized.”⁶⁹

W. Kay observes the example of Paul and Barnabas and states that wherever they went, the result was the founding of new congregations which is not always true in the case of contemporary missionaries.⁷⁰ NAR proponents would also agree that although the apostle has a “pioneering” anointing, his ministry cannot be completely identified with the modern missionary.

The crucial role of apostle in establishing new churches could hardly be denied. Thus, apostles can advance the growth of the body of Christ, and it is always good when this kind of anointing or thinking is present either in a local church or in the church generally.⁷¹

Nevertheless, the criticism regarding the overemphasized role of a pastor in a local church, including the claim that every local church should be led by an apostle,⁷² needs to be subjected to closer observation. The Position Papers of the Assemblies of God USA points out that Paul in his writing to Timothy

⁶⁶ See the section *The New Testament Usage of the Word*, p. 8.

⁶⁷ Menzies, ‘Apostolic in Doctrine’, p. 39.

⁶⁸ Peter was an apostle to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles.

⁶⁹ J. D. Hernando, ‘Paul and the Scope of Apostolic Authority’ in E. R. Lee (ed.), *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in 21st Century* (Springfield: AGTS, 2005), p. 104.

⁷⁰ W. Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), p. 271. A modern day missionary can participate in many other activities (such as schoolteacher or Bible translator) which do not have much to do with the apostolic pioneering anointing.

⁷¹ Eckhardt seems to be right when he says that in Acts churches were planted by apostles and apostolic teams, not by pastors – see Eckhardt, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power*, p. 60.

⁷² Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, p. 213: “There are wide varieties of apostles, and not all of them will necessarily be the primary leader of a local church. However, an apostle should lead every significant church.”

entrusted the oversight of the local church in Ephesus to elders and deacons. Also his last words to the Ephesian church were directed to the elders (episkopos) of the church, not to apostles, and he entrusted to them the responsibility of bishop and pastor.⁷³ Gee points out that there is no evidence that Paul thought of a local church as having some among it called “apostle” who would be responsible for its affairs.⁷⁴ The more balanced view would be that the apostle was more an itinerary ministry,⁷⁵ and he exercised authority over the churches he founded. Once local elders were appointed, they handled the day-to-day affairs, but with respect to the apostle – the founder.⁷⁶ = bishop?

Proponents of the NAR might be too strict when defining a pastor’s gifting. They themselves speak about “apostolic believers” who – even they are not apostles – share many of the attributes of the apostolic anointing.⁷⁷ Similarly although the general characteristics of pastors expressed by NAR proponents might be accurate, it could also be admitted that a pastor can operate another gifting or anointing including pioneering (at least to some degree) which would help him to advance the Kingdom of God, for example through church planting.

Eckhardt also suggests that the concept of only one pastor of a church should be challenged.⁷⁸ Similarly Petts emphasizes that the value of team leadership is becoming more and more appreciated.⁷⁹ Thus, diversity in gifting and anointing would influence the life of the local congregation. If this would be considered, the criticism regarding the exaggerated role of the pastor in

⁷³ Assemblies of God Position paper “*Apostles and Prophets*”, p. 5 – 6; The same paper reminds readers of the absence of apostles on Paul’s last visit to Jerusalem and considers this also as evidence of not replacing apostles in the Church after the dispersing of the Twelve – see pp. 6-7 Keep these comments IN the text not a footnote and within word count limits.

⁷⁴ Gee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, p. 192.

⁷⁵ See argumentation of D. Gee for itinerary character of apostolic ministry in Gee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, p. 708.

⁷⁶ Petts, *Body Builders*, p. 79. However, the apostle might interfere in cases of heresy, immorality or division – see Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, p. 274.

⁷⁷ Eckhardt defines them as “apostolic company of believers who all have a sense of being sent.” Their characteristics are very close to the characteristics of apostle, and it seems to the author of this essay that in many cases the boundaries between apostolic people and apostles are erased. See Eckhardt, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power*, pp. 28-56.

⁷⁸ Eckhardt, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power*, p. 63.

⁷⁹ Petts, *Body Builders*, p. 77; This model of leadership is, according to Petts, close to the New Testament model.

a contemporary church would be alleviated. In light of this, the call of NAR proponents that every church be led by an apostle and the call for restructuring the contemporary church seems to be rather extreme.

Apostles and Contemporary Ecclesiastical Structures

Hernando observes that it is one thing to recognize apostolic ministry, but another thing to institutionally recognize an apostle or his office.⁸⁰ The core question is how apostles should relate to the institutional church. Being aware of this, Wagner asserts that the recognition of the gift and office of the apostle is the most radical change introduced by NAR and will result in a transformation from – as he calls it – old denominational wineskins to the new apostolic ones.⁸¹ Kay also asserts that traditional religious structures are hardly compatible with the structures formed by apostolic networks.⁸²

A significant characteristic of this transformation process is, as S. J. Clifton observes, “an almost complete transition away from democratic and congregational structures at both the local and denominational level.”⁸³ Cartledge calls democratic procedures within contemporary denominational structures “man-made bureaucracy” and believes that within this democratic context genuine apostolic ministry can hardly be raised.⁸⁴

The core issue is the authority of the apostle. Wagner points out that the number one change brought about by NAR is the amount of spiritual authority delegated by the Holy Spirit to individuals.⁸⁵ This authority is not exercised through the democratic government within denominations but through the sphere of influence of each apostle. Wagner dedicates a whole chapter of his book to the

⁸⁰ J. D. Hernando, ‘Paul and the Scope of Apostolic authority’ in E. R. Lee (ed.), *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in 21st Century*, (Springfield: AGTS, 2005), p. 94.

⁸¹ Wagner, *Apostles today*, p. 9 – 10. The words of P. Tickle concerning the reconstitution of the organized expression of Christianity into a less ossified expression of its former self during times of great historical shifts could be remembered here - see Introduction of this essay, p. 5.

⁸² Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain*, p. 263.

⁸³ S. J. Clifton, *An Analysis of the Developing Ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia* (Victoria: Australian Catholic University, 2005), Ph. D. Thesis, p. 240.

⁸⁴ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, p. 210.

⁸⁵ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, p. 73.

explication of how these spheres of influence function using the examples of the apostles Peter, James and John, but primarily the apostle Paul.⁸⁶

Hernando is not sure if the parallels with the “unique” category of New Testament apostles can be drawn. He asks whether the apostolic authority of this “unique” category can ever be replicated today and concludes that it cannot. Moreover, he accuses NAR advocates of drawing superficial parallels to the apostle Paul, ignoring the purpose behind God’s validation of Paul’s apostleship and his personal imitation of Christ.⁸⁷

Clifton points out that it is not possible to define single New Testament ecclesiology, and this ecclesiological diversity stands against any attempt to restore ancient church culture or structure. This does not mean that Scripture is not important for ecclesiology, but rather that the contextualization of biblical themes is needed, including reflection on the historical development of the church within different cultural and social contexts.⁸⁸

The same author might be right in his criticism of Cartledge, one of the main protagonists of the transformation process of the Australian Assemblies of God into some kind of apostolic network. In Clifton’s observation this transformation consisted largely in local pastors becoming the unquestionable authority in local churches. And so called “national apostles” (in fact mega-church pastors) gained unquestionable power in the AG fellowship. Clifton does not go as far as Clark who calls this new “apostolic” structural model Episcopalian; however, he sees this process as the fulfilment of Dorian’s words that revolutions usually “bring little more than a shift of power and privilege and a changing of guard”.⁸⁹ In light of this statement, Wagner’s revolution would bring power and privilege to one individual – the apostle.

⁸⁶ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, pp. 72–84.

⁸⁷ Hernando, ‘Paul and the Scope of Apostolic authority’, 107.

⁸⁸ Clifton, *An Analysis of the Developing Ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia*, p. 271.

⁸⁹ Clifton, *An Analysis of the Developing Ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia*, p. 240.

Conclusion

The New Apostolic Revolution is presented as the greatest change in doing church since the Reformation.⁹⁰ The restoration of the ministry and office of the apostle⁹¹ is called for, along with significant changes in the contemporary ecclesiastical structure. Should this voice be taken seriously? Does the church need apostles today, and if so, how should they function in a contemporary context?

As was shown in the first chapter of this essay, it is not easy to define the term apostle because the Bible does not provide any definition. Nevertheless, evaluating the main characteristics of New Testament apostleship, especially the ministry characteristics of the “later” group, can help formulate a general definition of the term. In light of this, it can be suggested that such a ministry was needed not only for the early church but is also needed for the church today.

The evaluation of three key biblical passages in the Epistles regarding apostolic ministry could support this conclusion. As stated in the second chapter, not all biblical scholars approach these verses in the same way. However, the testimony of all three passages together seems to support the claim that apostles should have a place in the contemporary church because of their foundational and equipping roles. In light of this, it can be stated that the author of this essay considers the arguments of the NAR proponents valid.⁹²

Points of disagreement are expressed in the third chapter in which some practical aspects of contemporary apostleship are reflected upon. The critiques of the NAR proponents regarding the overemphasized role of pastors in the contemporary church are considered too strict, even though the important role of apostles in church planting is admitted. The call for the restructuring of contemporary ecclesiastical structures is viewed with suspicion. According to the author of the essay, this could lead to the aspiration of some to shift power and privilege into their own hands.

⁹⁰ Wagner, *Churchquake!* p. 5; see also Wagner, *Apostles Today*, p. 72.

⁹¹ Including the ministry of prophet; this ministry has not been treated in this essay.

⁹² But he would agree with their explanation of the “proton” role of the apostle only to some degree. In the text please!

Bibliography

Assemblies of God Statement of Fundamental Truths,

http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Statement_of_Fundamental_Truths/sft_short.cfm

[accessed 10/01/2012]

Cannistraci, D., *Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement: A Biblical Look at Apostleship and How God is Using It to Bless His Church Today* (Ventura: Regal Boos, 1998)

Castleberry, J. L., 'Book Review: Cartledge, D. The Apostolic Revolution: The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets in the Assemblies of God in Australia', *Encounter: Journal for Pentecostal Ministry* II.I (2005), http://www.agts.edu/encounter/book_reviews/2005_winter/review_cartledge.htm

[accessed 10/01/2012]

Cartledge, D., *Apostolic Revolution: The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets in the Assemblies of God in Australia* (Lane Cove: McPherson's Printing Group, 2nd edn, 2000)

Clifton, S. J., *An Analysis of the Developing Ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia* (Victoria: Australian Catholic University, 2005), Ph. D. Thesis

Drapal, D., *Apostolska sluzba* (Prague: Nakladatelstvi KMS, 2004)

Eckhardt, J., *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power* (Lake Mary: Charisma House, 2010), Kindle e-book

Hamon, B., *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, 3rd edn, 1999), Kindle e-book

Horton, S. M., *I and II Corinthians. A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield: Logion Press, 2007)

Fee, G. D., *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1999)

Kay, W., *Apostolic Networks in Britain* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007)

Lee, E. R. (ed.), *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in 21st Century* (Springfield: AGTS, 2005)

Mohabir, P., *Jezisovy ruce*, (Prague: Nakladatelstvi KMS, 2009)

Novotny, A., *Biblicky slovník* (Prague: Kalich, 1956)

Petts, D., *Body Builders* (Mattersey: Mattersey Hall, 2002)

Tickle, P., *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), Kindle e-book

Ulonska, R., *Urady v cirkvi* (Albrechtice: Krestansky zivot, 1994)

Wagner, C. P., *Churchquake!* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1999).

Wagner, C. P., *Apostles Today* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2006)

Wagner, C. P., *New Apostolic Churches* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1998)