



The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada

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**Description:** The General Executive appointed a study commission to prepare a discussion paper with respect to contemporary apostles and prophets. At the General Executive meeting, November 2002, the paper was unanimously accepted as the official position of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.

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## **Contemporary Apostles and The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada**

In response to the current discussion and debate within The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, with respect to contemporary apostles and prophets, the General Executive appointed a Study Commission to do further biblical research, examine the various theological positions, and present a discussion paper to the General Executive during its November 2002 meetings.

After reading numerous related books and articles, reviewing papers written by individual members, considering submissions received from interested credential holders, and meeting on three occasions to discuss the relevant material, the Study Commission offered the paper entitled *Contemporary Apostles and The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada* to the General Executive. This paper was reviewed, amended and adopted by the General Executive.

### **PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS**

1. Because of the magnitude and diversity of material available relating to both apostles and prophets, the Study Commission chose to limit this paper to only the subject of apostles and recommended the General Executive appoint another Study Commission to address the subjects of prophets and prophecy.
2. The Study Commission clearly affirms that The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada continues to believe that every spiritual gift delineated in the New Testament, including but not limited to those mentioned in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4, are the historical and contemporary heritage of the church. Rejecting "cessationism", we therefore recognize and encourage the operation of the manifold gifts given to Christ's Church, including an apostolic ministry gift. At the same time, the Study Commission does acknowledge that a variety of interpretations and definitions in reference to apostolic

ministry have contributed to the current debate in the Fellowship. This paper, therefore, seeks to answer the question, “How do we biblically define the apostolic ministry gift, and, once defined, apply it in our contemporary context?”

## **INTRODUCTION**

English versions of the New Testament contain many significant words which are transliterations of the Greek word rather than translations. Some of these are verbs, including, for example, the terms to baptize (*baptizo*) and to prophesy (*propheteuo*). Most of the untranslated words, however, are either names, such as Jesus (*Iesous*) or Peter (*Petros*), or nouns, such as Baptist (*baptizon*) or Christ (*Christos*). In addition, the term apostle is also an untranslated word with apostle (*apostolos*) being the noun form of the verb to send (*apostello*). Apostle (80x) and its verbal equivalents are common in the New Testament and, therefore, of necessity this brief study will limit itself to biblical references which significantly relate to the historical and contemporary understanding of the ministry of apostles.

## **APOSTLES IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES**

In contrast to its comparative frequency in the New Testament and later Christian literature, the verb *apostello* is comparatively rare in secular Greek. Fundamentally, it means: 1) *to send off or away from* and 2) *to dispatch*, on some mission or service, frequently of messengers or forces (Liddell and Scott [LS], p. 219). The noun *apostolos* is more narrowly military in meaning than is the verb and, depending on context, means variously 1) *messenger, ambassador, envoy*, 2) *commander of a naval force*, 3) *naval squadron or expedition*, or 4) *the order for dispatch of a vessel* (LS 220). It is understood that any one of the preceding definitions for the noun *apostolos* carries the authority to fulfill the specific task for which they have been sent.

But in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, namely, the Septuagint (LXX), which not only predates New Testament times by more than a century but which also infuses these secular terms with sacred meanings, *apostolos* refers to a *messenger from God* (LXX 1 Kings 14:6).

A study of the New Testament reveals the following five distinct classifications of apostles:

### **1. JESUS**

The Hebrews, to whom the letter by that name is addressed, are exhorted: “...fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess” (Hebrews 3:1). Although Jesus is identified as an apostle once, He is conscious, from the beginning to the end of His earthy ministry that He has been sent by God. For example, at the beginning of His ministry He explains His baptismal reception of the Holy Spirit, quoting Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent (apostello) me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners...

Luke 4:18 (quoting Isaiah 61:1)

Closing the book from which He had just read, He claimed: “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). In this way, Jesus begins His public ministry conscious that He is the Anointed Sent One - the anointed apostle in function, if not in name.

Jesus not only begins His ministry conscious of the fact that God has anointed and sent Him, but He carries out His ministry to the end with this same consciousness. In the Gospels, John repeatedly reports this awareness of Jesus - that He was the Sent One: "As the living Father sent me..."; "He sent me"; "... I have not come on my own, but He sent me" (John 6:57; 7:29; 8:42). Finally, in His high priestly prayer just before His crucifixion, Jesus repeatedly acknowledges that He has been sent: "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3; compare also John 17:8,18,21,23,25). Clearly, from first to last, Jesus is conscious that God has sent (*apostello*) Him into the world "...to save the world through him" (John 3:17).

## 2. THE TWELVE

Having been sent by God, Jesus Himself, the divine apostle (Hebrews 3:1), becomes the apostle-maker. As Mark reports: "And He (Jesus) appointed twelve – designating them apostles - that they might be with Him and that He might send (*apostello*) them out to preach" (Mark 3:14). John also reports Jesus affirms this "sent/sender" relationship: "As you sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18); and again, "As the father has sent (*apostello*) Me, I am sending (here, the Greek word is *pempo*, rather than *apostello*, which also is used numerous times and translated as *send*) you" (John 20:21). Once the disciples had been with him to witness his ministry, and to learn how to minister, Jesus, in time, "...summoned the Twelve and began to send (*apostello*) them out in pairs" (Mark 6:7). When the Twelve return from their mission Mark, for the first time in his narrative, identifies them as apostles (Mark 6:30; compare Luke 6:13). Most of the references to apostles in the literature of the New Testament as well as in the literature of early Christianity are about the Twelve as apostles — that is, about these appointed and sent out messengers of Jesus.

These Twelve are the counterpart to Jacob's twelve sons, whose descendants multiply across the generations to become the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus Judas' defection and subsequent suicide destroys the symmetry between the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. For this reason it was necessary that a replacement for Judas be found to fill, "this ministry and apostleship" (Acts 1:25 KJV). In the phrase, "ministry and apostleship" the word "ministry" (*diakonias*) is a translation whereas the word "apostleship" (*apostoles*) is untranslated. If both words had been left untranslated, the text would read "deaconship and apostleship" (*diakonias kai apostoles*). Later, the Twelve will insist that as apostles they will devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word (*tei diakonias tou logou*, Acts 6:4). Thus, in the same way that the Seven served (*diakonein*) tables (Acts 6:2) the Twelve served (*diakonias*) the Word (Acts 6:4).

In addition to this "service" of the Word, after the resurrection Jesus commissioned the twelve apostles:

*"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation"* (Mark 16:15)

*"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... teaching them..."*  
(Matthew 28:19, 20)

*"You are witnesses of these things"* (Luke 24:48)

The key words in this post-Easter commissioning of the apostles are the words "go" and "witness". The command to "go" reminds the Twelve that they must fulfill the significance of their name. As apostles (i.e. sent ones), they are indeed to go. Further, as they go they are to witness. Acts 1:8 reinforces Luke 24:48: "... you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Thus, subsequent to the outpouring

of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, "... with many other words he (Peter) warned them" (the Temple crowd) (Acts 2:40). This witness is a partnership with the Holy Spirit. On another occasion Peter affirms: "We (the twelve apostles) are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him" (Acts 5:32). On an earlier occasion, following the so-called Little Pentecost, when once again the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the disciples (Acts 4:31), "With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33). The apostles' role as witnesses explains the criterion for the selection of Matthias as the replacement apostle. Judas' replacement had to have been a disciple from the time of John the Baptist's ministry through to being a witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:22). Thus, the symbolism of the Twelve, and their role as first-hand witnesses, means that there could only be twelve apostles. This explains the surprising fact that even though Luke devotes over half this narrative to reporting about Paul, his sometime companion (Acts 13-28), he only refers to Paul as an apostle in reference to his missionary activities (Acts 14:4,14). The choice of Matthias to replace Judas (Acts 1:26) means that Paul could never be numbered among the Twelve, and Paul's post-resurrection conversion means that he could never be witness of Jesus' public ministry through to the resurrection. These circumstances, in Luke's narrative, disqualified Paul (and, literally, everyone else) from ever being identified as an apostle in the order of the Twelve.

As apostles (the messengers who have been called, appointed, empowered and sent out by Jesus), the twelve disciples have a many dimensional mission. Jesus is the prototype of this multiplex apostolic mission. For example, early in his ministry Jesus has 1) preached about repentance, 2) cast out demons, and 3) healed the sick (Mark 1:13, 21-35). Similarly, Jesus sends out the twelve apostles: 1) to cast out demons, 2) to preach repentance, and 3) to heal the sick (Mark 3:15; 6:13, 14). These ministries not only testify to the Lordship of Jesus in the Kingdom of God, and not only demonstrate the continuation of the ministry of Jesus through human agencies, but assist in defining the essential nature of the Kingdom. The call to repentance and offer of forgiveness enable complete reconciliation between God and man. Deliverance and miracles of healing reveal the definitive victory of God over spiritual powers of darkness and His generous provision to every dimension of man's fallen condition. Again and again the writer of Acts reports the occasions (Acts 2:42; 4:2; 5:25, 42) when the Twelve passed on the teaching the Lord sent them to deliver. The validity of the teachings was demonstrated by the "many wonders and miraculous signs [which] were done by the apostles" (Acts 2:43).

Though the twelve apostles have a variety of roles — proclaiming the message of repentance and forgiveness, casting out demons and healing the sick and, primarily, witnessing — there are also roles and functions which they are forbidden, or which they repudiate. These actions also serve to clarify the nature of the Kingdom. For example, in the context late in His ministry when James and John ask to be assigned positions of "glory" (Mark 10:35-45), Jesus exposed their attitude to be like that of the rulers of Gentiles who, "... lord (*katakurieousin*) it over them; and their high officials exercise authority (*katexousiazousin*) over them" (Mark 10:42). Forbidding the apostles the roles of lordship and authority, Jesus emphatically asserts, "Not so with you" (Mark 10:43). Rather than seeking glory, rule, lordship, and authority, the apostles are to conduct themselves as servants (*diakonos*) and slaves (*doulos*) (Mark 10:43, 44). Only in this way will the apostles be Christ-like for he, himself, "...did not come to be served (*diakonethenai*) but to serve (*diakonesai*)" (Mark 10:45). Later the apostles will repudiate the role of financial oversight of the church (Acts 6:1-6). During the administrative crisis concerning the daily distribution of food to the widows the Twelve affirmed, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of

the Word of God in order to wait (*diakonein*) on tables” (Acts 6:2). Rather, they insisted, “We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry (*diakoniai*) of the word” (Acts 6:4). Thus, either by prohibition or by repudiation, apostles do not govern in the model of the Gentiles; rather they serve, and in particular serve the ministry of the Word.

In summary, there are at least five factors that describe the apostolic role of the Twelve: they 1) have a special calling (Mark 1:16-20; 3:13-19; 6:30); 2) are eyewitnesses to Jesus’ ministry from his baptism to his resurrection (Acts 1:21-22); 3) have several divine commissionings (Mark 3:15; Acts 1:8), 4) experienced resurrection appearances (Luke 24); and 5) evidence their call and commissioning by performing signs and wonders (Acts 2:43).

### 3. PAUL, THE APOSTLE

Paul commonly, though not invariably, identified himself in his letters as an apostle. For example, in his letters he identifies himself variously: “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle”; “Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus”; “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus”; and, “Paul, an apostle - not sent from men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ,” (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1). Assuming that Paul wrote his letters in the order: Galatians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, the reason for this is clear. From the start of his ministry, and dogging him for many years, opponents and subversives not only denied and/or rejected his apostleship but also the gospel that he preached. This hostile, bitter, and even demeaning opposition forced Paul to insist upon and defend his apostleship.

Paul defends his apostleship in a variety of ways. When writing to the Galatians, he insists that his apostleship did not have a human origin (“not from man, nor by man”), but, rather, that it had a divine origin (“by Jesus Christ and God the Father”) (Galatians 1:1). When he wrote to the Corinthians he acknowledges that to some others, “I may not be an apostle” (1 Corinthians 9:2). But the Corinthians cannot view him in this way, “for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 9:2). Insisting that he is an apostle Paul asks rhetorically, “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (1 Corinthians 9:1; compare Acts 9:1-9). In writing that he has seen the Lord Paul is referring to a resurrection appearance (1 Corinthians 15:1-11), not to one or more of his many visions of Jesus (e.g. Acts 18:9). In writing to these same Corinthians, on another occasion, Paul bluntly identifies his opponents in this church as, “false apostles, deceitful workers” (2 Corinthians 11:13). He concludes his defense by boasting: “The things that mark an apostle (i.e. Paul, himself) - signs and wonders and miracles - were done among you with great perseverance,” (2 Corinthians 12:12). Thus, though he considers himself to be, “the least of the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:9), Paul nevertheless, insists that he is a true apostle, with the rights of an apostle (1 Corinthians 9:1-5), because, like the Twelve, he has seen Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:8), and also, like the Twelve, he has performed signs and wonders (compare Acts 2:43; 5:12).

Paul not only regularly defended himself as an apostle in his letters and, when necessary, defended the legitimacy of his apostleship, but he also insisted repeatedly on at least five facts about his apostleship. First, he insisted that his apostleship was divine in origin. He was *called* to be an apostle (Romans 1:1, 1 Corinthians 1:1). His apostleship was by the will of God (1 Corinthians 1:1, 2 Corinthians 1:1, and Ephesians 1:1) and by the commandment of God (1 Timothy 1:1). Second, his apostleship was uniquely to the Gentiles, that is, to the uncircumcised (Romans 11:13, Galatians 2:7). Third, he is both the recipient himself of divine revelation and also the agent of divine revelation (Romans 16:25, 26, 1 Corinthians 9:10, Ephesians 3:5 and Titus 1:1-3). Fourth, he has given evidence of the marks of an apostle through signs, wonders and miracles (2 Corinthians 12:12). Fifth, he is, not

insignificantly, the last (*eschatos*) of the divinely called and commissioned apostles who had seen the resurrected Christ (1 Corinthians 15:8; see also 9:1).

In summary, the apostle Paul fulfills the same conditions for apostleship as the Twelve. Like the Twelve:

- 1) he had a special calling (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1),
- 2) although he was not taught by Christ during the period from John the Baptist to the ascension, he claims that he received directly from Jesus, by revelation, the same truth as the Twelve (Gal 1:12; 2:6),
- 3) he had a divine commissioning (Acts 9:15; Galatians 2:7-8),
- 4) he experienced a resurrection appearance (Acts 9:3-9; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:1-11),
- 5) evidenced his call and commissioning by performing signs and wonders (2 Corinthians 13:12).

#### 4. OTHER APOSTLES

In Acts and the Epistles there are a small but significant number of references to apostles, who are not numbered among the Twelve and Paul. For example, when Luke reports about the first missionary journey of Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:1-14:28), he twice identifies them as apostles (Acts 14:4, 14). This identification is appropriate for they are sent away (*apelusan*) by the church of Antioch (Acts 13:3) and, indeed, sent out (*ekpemptheutes*) by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:4). The context of this first missionary journey makes it clear how Luke uses the term apostle when not referring to the Twelve.

In addition to the two missionary apostles, Barnabas and Paul, other apostles are identified in the New Testament. In his letter to the Christians of Rome Paul sends greetings to among others a certain Andronicus and Junias. These are, apparently, a husband and wife, whom Paul identifies as, "...my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was" (Romans 16:7). Further, in his first letter to the church of the Thessalonians, Paul includes both Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:1; compare Acts 15:40; 16:1-5) as apostles with himself who brought the gospel to them (1 Thessalonians 2:6). But there are other Christian messengers (*apostoloi*) who, in contrast to Andronicus and Junia, Silvanus and Timothy, are apostles in the sense that they are sent to minister to practical needs. These include the anonymous messengers/delegates of the Macedonian churches (2 Corinthians 11:9; compare Acts 20:4), and, later, Epaphroditus, the messenger which the church at Philippi sent to Paul when he was imprisoned in Rome (Philippians 2:25). These verses underscore the wide definition in the usage of apostle.

Except for the numerous references to the twelve apostles and to Paul, the writers of the New Testament rarely identify anyone else as an apostle. Only Barnabas, Andronicus and Junias, Silvanus and Timothy are named as apostles. There is no evidence about the nature of the apostleship of Andronicus and Junias. Barnabas, Silvanus and Timothy, sometime companions of Paul on his missionary journeys, are apostles only in the sense of missionaries. Indeed, the word missionary comes into the English language as the untranslated Latin equivalent of the Greek word apostle.

The identification of these companions of Paul as apostles is very limited: Barnabas (2x), Silvanus (1x) and Timothy (1x). Without exception, in every other case where they are named they are identified by some other epithet or title. For example, Luke identifies Barnabas as a prophet and teacher (Acts 13:1). He identifies Silvanus/Silas as a prophet and Peter identifies him as a faithful brother (Acts 15:32; 1 Peter 5:12). Paul identifies Timothy

variously as his fellow-worker, his beloved and faithful child and as his brother (Romans 16:21; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Corinthians 1:1). More significantly, in contexts where Paul identifies himself to be an apostle he never identifies his companions, such as Timothy, to be an apostle (2 Corinthians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:1,2; 2 Timothy 1:1,2).

## 5. EVERY DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

Not only were the Twelve commissioned (Luke 9:1), but the Seventy-two were also sent (*apostellen*) to advance the kingdom of God (Luke 10:3, 8). Just as the New Testament affirms the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9), and the prophetic ministry of all believers (Acts 2:17-18), it also affirms the apostolic function of all believers in that every believer is sent with the gospel to the whole world. A new believer becomes a part of the apostolic mission of Christ upon rebirth and is *sent* just as He was sent. In His prayer, Jesus refers to the sending process which relates to Him, to His disciples, and to all future believers (John 17:18-20). Every believer is commissioned to “go into all the world” (Matt 28:19) and offered the provision of Spirit empowerment to be a witness to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The Scriptures, therefore, envision a dimension of apostleship that includes all followers of Jesus.

### EPHESIANS 2:20; 3:5 and 4:11

These passages are repeatedly referenced in current literature that relates to contemporary apostles. In fact Ephesians 4:11 is also employed as the foundation of an ecclesiological system, commonly referred to as “five-fold”, in which five ministries are listed as gifts of Christ to the Church. While some diversity of opinion exists among those who embrace “five-fold”, this interpretation has been used to promote various applications within the contemporary church ranging from a paradigm for ministry to alternative authority structures in the church or denomination.

The ministries mentioned in these passages must be considered in their immediate context as well as the context of the entire epistle. Paul’s overall strategy in Ephesians is to address three inter-related concerns: reconcile Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:13-14) into a ‘new humanity’, namely the church (Ephesians 2:15), through Christ’s redemption; highlight the incomparability of the power of Christ with the ‘powers’ (spiritual and earthly) and His victory over them (Ephesians 3:10); and insist on maintaining the ‘unity of the Spirit’ by the way members of the new humanity live out the life of Christ in their corporate relationships and their participation in the mission of the church. Paul desires members of the church, each being graced/gifted, to be developed into a powerful united force, but not according to the structures modeled by the Gentiles. (Ephesians 4: 17 ff.; compare Mark 10: 42-45).

A closer examination of the three references in Ephesians to apostles indicates how each relates to the three primary objectives of the epistle.

**Ephesians 2:20.** Expanding on the ‘new humanity’ metaphor previously employed, Paul, in Ephesians 2:19 describes the church as a ‘new household/sanctuary’, constructed from salvaged and restored Jews and Gentiles alike, with Christ Jesus Himself as chief cornerstone. Repeatedly affirming the significant place every believer shares in this new construct (Ephesians 2:19, 21, 22), Paul focuses on the foundational role of the apostles and prophets who were the first to proclaim and establish the truth of Jesus Christ as cornerstone. To the Corinthian church Paul acknowledges that as a result of divinely given grace he “laid a foundation as an expert builder”, but the foundation is not himself, but the truth of Jesus, “For

no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).

**Ephesians 3:5.** According to Paul, this new revelation of the church, composed of Jew and Gentile, openly and clearly verifies, before "rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms," the successful fulfillment of the eternal purpose of God accomplished in Jesus Christ our Lord. (Ephesians 3:10). Again, the apostles and prophets were the initial recipients of the revelation of the "mystery of Christ," previously concealed but now revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. The mystery is that now "through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 3:6.)

**Ephesians 4:11.** The primary objective of Paul in Ephesians 4 is to now address one specific practical dimension of the church as a spiritual community, that being its unity. Urging believers to live lives worthy of their calling, he appeals for "every effort" (Ephesians 4:3) to be made to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (also Ephesians 4:13). However, as is typically Pauline, he is careful to also recognize that individual members of the "new humanity" are endowed with diverse gifts (Ephesians 4:7-13 compare Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14). These gifts are to be expressed through a life marked by humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance and love (Ephesians 4:2) that seeks to contribute to the strength and vitality of the whole (Ephesians 4:12, 16). In Ephesians 4: 11-12 specifically, the ministers given by Christ to His church, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (or pastor-teacher), are examples of ministries that in a variety of ways equip all members to fulfill their spirit empowered service.

In mentioning these gifts of the risen Christ to the church, Paul neither diminishes nor elevates them above other New Testament gifts or gift lists. Not only are various Greek words used for gifts (*dorea, doma, charismata, pneumatikos*), it has not been determined that any one gift word has greater significance than another. All gifts find their source in the grace (*charis*) of God. Gifts are mentioned throughout the New Testament in various "ad hoc" combinations to affirm two primary truths: 1) to emphasize the importance of every member ministry in the Body of Christ, and 2) to describe the diversity that exists within the Body of Christ. Consequently, in Ephesians 4:11, Paul is not presenting an exclusive list of ministries, nor an administrative/authority structure for the present or future church, but rather is affirming the fundamental value and importance of the grace given to "each one" (Ephesians 4:7) for the sake of the "whole body" (Ephesians 4:16) as "each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16).

Other scriptural references speak more directly, and with greater clarity, to the issue of organizational structure in the church. Passages in 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, Philemon 1:1 are examples of Paul dealing directly with church leaders as well as their qualifications. Of interest, Paul writing to Timothy who was ministering *in Ephesus*, outlined the qualifications and roles of bishops (*episcopoi*) and deacons (*diakono*). On the occasion of Paul's personal involvement with the leadership of the Ephesian church, they are referred to as elders (*presbuteroi*, Acts 20:17). Paul notes that the Spirit has made them overseers (*episcopoi*) and uses the verb form of shepherd/pastor (*poimainein*) to assign them the care of the flock.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this paper has been to study the definition and role of apostles within the New Testament ministry context and present findings both consistent with Scripture and relevant for

this strategic time in the growth of the Church. With these considerations in mind, the following conclusions are offered:

1. Given that the scripture affirms the apostolic function of all believers, every credentialed minister, congregational member and adherent in The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada is again invited to understand they too are “sent”: sent to a lost world, having the opportunity and responsibility to extend the kingdom by proclaiming the good news of Jesus. This apostleship is simply the genuine and complete expression of Jesus Christ, the ultimate apostle, through the life and ministry of the believer. All must personally determine to whom they are sent, seeking the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit to fulfill their apostolic function. However, while there can be a general application associated with varying divine gifts (i.e. giving, faith, prophecy, serving, apostleship) involving all believers, there are also personal expressions of these gifts in the lives of specific individuals.
2. The biblical basis for all genuine Christian ministry, including leadership, flows from a Christ-like, servant attitude and nature, marked by obedience, grace and humility. Christ is not only the example we follow (1 Peter 2:21) but the actual source of any life expressed through our ministry. The goal, therefore, is symmetry between His character that is formed within us and His purposes that are fulfilled through us.
3. While the New Testament specifically delineates various individuals and groups in the first century as apostle(s) (i.e. Jesus, the Twelve, Paul, others), there is significant variation among them in terms of purpose and function. The only thing that all have in common is found in the transliteration of the verb *apostello* - they are all *sent*. To be sent implies apostles are always directly connected with a sender. They are never self-appointed and are only authorized to perform the tasks mandated by their sender.
4. There are dimensions of New Testament apostolic ministry that, because of prescribed biblical qualifications, are not to be replicated in the Church today.

The apostolic role of Jesus is an exclusive and eternal apostolic office and ministry, continued solely by Christ as the Head of the Church.

In appointing the Twelve as apostles, Jesus prepared them for the tasks they would be called to fulfill following the ascension and outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. They then have a foundational role in His kingdom which can never be replicated. There was no attempt to continue the Twelve beyond filling the vacancy created by the death of Judas. When James was martyred there was no effort to have him replaced. The last time the original apostles are referred to as the Twelve is Acts 6:2. In addition, there could only be twelve composing that group because this number paralleled the twelve sons of Jacob/the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Revelation 21:12-14).

Likewise, Paul fulfilled a unique apostolic role that concluded with his ministry (1 Cor 15:8).

5. There are New Testament apostolic ministries that apply to the church today (i.e. the “apostles of the church”, the “other” apostles). Although these individuals did not have the same role as the Twelve or Paul, they were involved in the advancement of the church and were among its outstanding leaders. Their role relates to function and not to office. The function is that of messenger, delegate and/or missionary with numerous individuals fulfilling this role both in New Testament times and down through the ages.

In recognizing this, we must also note that applying the word apostle for these individuals has led to confusion, even division, at times in church history, with the various connotations attributed to the office. For that reason alone, any reference to individuals involved in apostolic, “ground breaking” ministry (i.e. church planters and/or cross cultural missionaries) must be made with great care and clear definition.

*An excerpt from an article written by R.E. McAlister, published by the PAOC c. 1949 and entitled Apostles – True or False? states, “Now the question arises today, ‘Is it right for a man to take to himself the name of apostle?’ The answer would be ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’ If he means that he is simply a missionary of the Cross, penetrating the dark places, and establishing the work of God, then technically speaking it might be permissible for people to refer to him as an apostle. No person today could be an apostle in the class with Jesus Christ. No person today could be an apostle in the class with the twelve apostles of the Lamb. No person today could be an apostle in the class with the apostle Paul. But thousands today could be and are in the...class with Barnabus...”*

Historically, apostles have been persons of recognized spiritual stature, stalwart character, and great effectiveness in the work of the church. Paul’s warnings about “those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about,” and his assertions “such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ,” and his further association of them with “Satan [who] himself masquerades as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:12-14) are all sobering reminders that unfettered human pride in seeking church leadership can blind one to the manipulations of the flesh and the delusions of the devil.

Persons, who attach the title of apostle to themselves in order to assert dominance and control, leave themselves unaccountable to the members in their care or the spiritual eldership of their own fellowship and usurp an authority not granted by scripture.

It is understood that apostles would, just as Paul, Barnabas, and others, enter new regions, establish new ministries and plant new churches. The primary meaning of *apostelein* applies to the work and ministry of these apostles: they are divinely sent, divinely empowered, accountable to Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:21) to carry out a significant aspect of the church’s mission. As founding “parents”, carrying the primary burden for the new ministry, they also carry primary responsibility to develop, build, care for and provide oversight to the new ministry/congregation. It would be expected that such apostles would function as a special type of missionary, acting as representatives of Christ, exercising a ministry of empowered proclamation, and authenticated by signs following. Contemporary apostles, of course, will not have seen or been commissioned by the risen Lord in the manner of the “apostles of Jesus Christ,” nor will they be adding their teachings to the Canon of Scripture.

As Pentecostals, we fervently desire a generation of men and women who will function apostolically to take the gospel with signs following at home and abroad to people who have not yet heard or understood that “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

6. Contemporary attempts to understand a New Testament apostolic role and function are based primarily on historical passages of Scripture that, while describing New Testament practice, do not prescribe a singular ecclesiology for the future church. The New Testament

was not written with the intent of developing the role of apostles and how they relate to the mission of the church.

7. Finally, as with every New Testament ministry gift, those listed in Ephesians 4:11-12 are both the historical and contemporary heritage of the church. Some apostolic and prophetic functions flowing from persons directly commissioned by the risen Lord and acting in revelatory capacities clearly belong to the foundational era of the church. At the same time, some of the functions having to do with the revitalization, expansion, and nurture of the church ought to be present in every generation. We encourage all believers, led and filled by the Spirit, to allow themselves to be fully utilized as servants of the Lord, since all gifts are needed to “edify” and complete the body as well as to mobilize the body to reach the world. The purpose, then, of all ministry gifts will be realized.

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