

# KATNET April 2015

## Talk 3

Are there Apostles Today?

# New Charismatic Churches

Many new charismatic churches believe that the Lord is today restoring the ministries of **apostles** and **prophets**.

Key texts: **And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers** (Eph. 4: 11).

**God appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, helpful acts,**

# Possible Approaches

1. Study these contemporary ministries.
2. Ask how they understand them (teaching)
3. Examine what they are achieving (fruit)
4. Study the New Testament usage of the term           apostle
5. Examine church history for apostolic ministries

# Contemporary Ministries

Terminology: Many leaders who believe in restoration of apostles are hesitant to call themselves apostles.

They often speak of apostolic ministry and of apostolic teams.

In modern form, a ministry made possible by globalization and modern means of communication.

- In general, the new charismatic churches understand by apostolic ministry a ministry of mission, evangelism and **church planting**, and subsequent overall coordination. This ministry involves teaching, pastoring – above all **pastoring of pastors** – strategizing, discerning the major prophetic words.
- Not defined by territory.

# BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

Probably clearest from the New Testament is

**the unique role of the Twelve.**

Luke 6: he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles (= ones who are sent)

Acts 1: 21 – 22: one who was with Jesus from baptism of John until the ascension;

# FOUNDATIONS IN ISRAEL

- The unique role of the Twelve is linked to the Church being founded within Israel
- Rev. 21: 12, 14:  
12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles of the Lamb  
Permanent role: Matt. 19: 28; Luke 22: 30  
Roman liturgy Preface of the Apostles cited  
in

- God appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. (1 Cor. 12: 28)
- Built on the foundation of apostles and prophets (Eph. 2: 20)



# Others called Apostles

- he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve (1 Cor. 15: 5)
- “Afterward he was seen by James, then by all the apostles.” (1 Cor. 15: 7)
- Paul: least of the apostles, as one untimely born (1 Cor. 15: 8 - 9)

Some disputed Paul as apostles (1 Cor. 9: 1 – 2)

- As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers they are apostles (*apostoloi*) of the churches (2 Cor. 8: 23) – seems to refer to Timothy, Erastus (Acts 19: 22) and others such as in list Acts 20: 4)
- Rom. 16: 7 Andronicus and Junia – outstanding among the apostles

# APOSTLES & NT SCRIPTURES

In the early Church, the authority of the recognized apostles was such that any writings from them were recognized as Scripture (the Twelve, James, Paul).

Some Evangelical scholars have used this as an argument against any post-NT apostles. For them the closing of the Scriptural canon is the end of apostles.

# EARLY CHURCH

The bishops are understood to be successors of the apostles – not in their foundational role that is not passed on but in their leadership shepherding role.

The Church is affirmed in the Creeds as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic (the four marks of the Church)

# Catholic Teaching on Church as Apostolic

- Founded on the apostles
- Apostolic succession of bishops
- Upheld infallibly in the truth (CCC 869)
- Church governed through Peter and the other apostles present in their successors, the Pope and the college of bishops (CCC 869)

# CHURCH HISTORY

- St Patrick called Apostle of Ireland
- St Boniface called Apostle of Germany
- SS Cyril and Methodius called Apostles of the Slavic Peoples

# ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

Catholics have emphasized succession of office

Franciscans & others in 12th century called simplicity of life in itinerant ministry apostolic

Classical Protestants have emphasized continuity in the Gospel and its preaching

Pentecostals emphasize apostolic power of the Holy Spirit

**A full ecumenical understanding of Apostles will unite all these elements**

# Conclusion of McNair Scott

1. Recognition of uniqueness of founding Apostles of the Church.
2. Recognizing apostolic ministries with small a is compatible with New Testament teaching

*Apostles Today. Making Sense of Contemporary Charismatic Apostolates: A historical and theological appraisal (Eugene,*



# ISRAEL

Several Messianic Jewish teachers expect a restoration of Jewish apostles in Israel before the coming of the Lord. (Berger brothers)

This is partly guided by the idea that the pattern of the end-times repeats the pattern of the beginnings, but inversely.

# MINISTRIES MORE IMPORTANT THAN TITLES

The spiritual significance of the new charismatic churches believing in the restoration of apostles and prophets does not stand or fall with one's exegesis of Eph. 4: 11.

When we look at the ministries of men like Terry Virgo (founder of New Frontiers), Ulf Ekman (founder of Word of Life) until his resignation, John Arnott (Partners in Harvest) we can recognize the work of the Holy Spirit – in many ways their ministries have been episcopal with new dimensions.

- Other Churches can learn from them, whatever they think about apostles today
- reaping what the Holy Spirit has sown in the others – *Evangelii Gaudium*, 246)

Question: what can we reap from the leadership of new charismatic churches?

# Catholic Apostles Today?

Probably the closest Catholic equivalent to the new church apostolic leaders are the founders and leaders of new ecclesial movements and new communities:

Andrea Riccardi, leader of Sant' Egidio

Fr Laurent Fabre, the founder of Chemin Neuf