

INTRODUCTION

The organization of the church in today's world, as my study "The Un-church" demonstrates, is considerably at variance with the organization intended by the apostles and communicated in the Scripture. Because of this, there are many problems in the church today that seem to admit of no orderly solution.

For example, since the churches believe in the headship of pastors, there is no way to deal with the many people who are called by God to organize new ministries but unable to start a "church" of their own. Most ministries, in fact, never get started because the churches, needing to maintain their financial stability, and therefore, their continuing membership, and therefore their traditions, are unable to underwrite the ministry financially, and there is no support available in Christianity for any ministry except that of pastor, and occasionally evangelist or teacher.

Also, there are a growing number of Christians (now nearly 70%) who have simply stopped going to church, since the church does not meet their needs of helping them hear the Holy Spirit and grow into what they hear. There is another group of church-hoppers, who needing growth, but offered only a chance to be "taught at", move between local churches, and cable networks, looking for more options.

None of this was supposed to have happened. The Catholic Church, having grabbed control of Christianity in the fourth century, believed that the "deposit of faith was closed with the death of the last apostle". That means, that there would never be another apostle, hence there would never be a further revelation of God. The church then raised up a group called the church fathers, who were their teachers. Since the rulership of the known world was the great miracle and gift that healed and helped the world, the next stage was that of governments, and so they instituted a system whereby bishops were said to be the "successors to the apostles", and priests their "assistants". Application of I Cor. 12:28, thus made the priests the administrators of the "governments" maintaining what was by this time thought to be the ancient tradition. This, coupled with the fact that in Latin and English, the word "pastor" suggests the "leader of a flock", although in the Greek and Hebrew of the Bible, the word means "feeder of a flock", led to the gradual replacement of the house church structure

of Israel and of the apostles with a series of institutions which mostly "re-enacted" the death of Christ in what had now become the "dramatic play" of communion, and offered a weekly sermon on doctrine. This play/mini-class structure accomplished little except to keep alive for generation after generation the fact that Jesus had died for us.

Of course, this did not meet the human needs of relationship with Jesus, affirmation in a ministry, and being an ongoing part of the plan of God. Parachurch ministries developed throughout history, and some were accepted and allowed by the Catholic Church, but the original Biblical paradigm was never restored.

It was instead the design of men, using logic to replace Scripture. At first, God used the Protestant reformers to change the most important factors. Luther and Calvin successfully reversed the doctrine that God could not start a new work, outside the Catholic Church. This was important; since the definition of "apostle" is "anyone who starts a work that God has told him to start". Later, Finney popularized the personal relationship with Jesus, and the message of the Baptism of the Spirit went through the world like lightning in the 1970's and 80's.

More and more, international movements are returning to the house church basis. In fact, most churches now have a system of home-groups operating. But all of these groups fall short of the Scriptural system, since they all place the house churches under a blanket headship of some kind, either of the parent church, or of the movement headquarters. This is why the problems remain in place.

The house churches of Israel and the New Testament times were independent. They had overseers, of course, but these people were ELECTED, not holding office because they had commissioned the house churches. There were no denominations, no headship systems.

The reason that the newly formed churches have been unable to go all the way with the return to the Scriptural prescription is simply because they don't know what it is. The Scriptural prescription for the house-church is fairly easy to find (and is documented in "The Un-Church"), but the two institutions that maintained the unity of the Body of Christ are assumed to be

natural to the Body and hence not specifically prescribed, but mentioned only in passing.

These two are the pilgrimage feasts and the ministry of the wandering apostle/prophet.

The “pilgrimage feasts” is the command from God that we are to assemble *en masse* three times a year. The times are Easter, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. This is detailed in my study on the Feast of Tabernacles.

Of course, we are not under the Law, and hence are free to change the times as we wish. But what has happened is that Christians NEVER meet *en masse*, putting aside all differences just to be together and celebrate Jesus. The lack of such meetings is being addressed by a variety of movements, such as regional conventions, March for Jesus, and conferences held by Christian bookstores, but these fall short of the vision of God for these gatherings. Again, the details are in my study on Tabernacles.

The purpose of this study is to familiarize readers with the ministry of the wandering apostle/prophet.

BASIC DEFINITIONS

Since Scripture does not lay out the specifics of this ministry, or prove that it was to continue for the life of the church, and since we cannot rely on other writings for certainty of God’s word, we must be quite careful in this study, to accept ONLY what Scripture can prove. There are two main early Christian writings that we will be using, but we must demonstrate from Scripture that they are only providing details of what God has already told us in the Bible. In this way, we will avoid the error of substituting man’s ideas, however logical and right sounding, for the plan of God.

The two early writings in question are the Didache and the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians.

“Didache” is the Greek title of the “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles”. A recently recovered text suggests that the Twelve Apostles gathered together on the Feast of Tabernacles one year after the Resurrection, and hammered out this document for church administration.

The Didache has been known from the most ancient times. Several church fathers quote the first five chapters, on the subjects of what it means to live in the Kingdom of God rather than in the

world. Scholars waited over a thousand years, hoping a complete document would turn up.

In the mid 1800’s, a Catholic monastery was doing some renovations, and opened a room that had been sealed since the late 900’s AD. A copy was found there. Immediately, the Catholic Church proclaimed it a correct copy, and that it was clearly the work of the apostles, and not something someone had made up on his own, in the name of the Twelve. The Catholic Encyclopedia makes this statement from the late 1800’s until about 1920.

Then they read it. According to the Didache, not only is the Catholic celebrating the mass in the wrong order, but there can be apostles today. Every Catholic Encyclopedia since about 1920 states that the document is a counterfeit. We will read the relevant chapters later, and the prescription for the wandering apostles will be seen to be Scriptural, and part of the solution to the current problems of the church.

The First Letter of Clement to the Corinthians is just that – a letter from him to them. A few people believe it is a forgery also, so we shall be careful in using it. The odd thing is that since Clement was a pope, his teaching is binding on Catholics, and they teach quite the opposite, since it suits their purposes.

An apostle is one who is “apo-stole” “away-sent”. He has been told by God what to do, and he goes and does it. We call them agents, troubleshooters, or entrepreneurs.

A prophet is one who “pro-phete” “before someone-declares”. We call them heralds, or announcers. They proclaim the intention of whoever has sent them.

The apostle starts a work; the prophet proclaims that a work is to be started. Both are sent by God. The difference is that the apostle works with his hands and his ingenuity to build the Kingdom, the prophet uses his voice and persuasive power to get others to work on the project. Since the Kingdom of God has in authority (I Cor. 12:28) those who build works, these two are somewhat interchangeable.

A “wandering apostle/prophet”, as we shall see, is one who has left his church because God is calling him to something different and more pressing than just the regular Sunday business. He/she is outside the structure of churches, or house churches, and, as such is part of all of them. This person may be a hired volunteer or paid by

a group if all are willing, or may continue as a traveler. The person knows everyone, communicates to each group what the others are doing, helps them all find their place in the Kingdom of God, and so leads the orderly development of the works in the Kingdom on a day-to-day basis.

THE CALL

From Clement: 1Clem 54:1-4: *Who therefore is noble among you? Who is compassionate? Who is fulfilled with love? Let him say; If by reason of me there be faction and strife and divisions, I retire, I depart, whither ye will, and I do that which is ordered by the people: only let the flock of Christ be at peace with its duly appointed presbyters. He that shall have done this, shall win for himself great renown in Christ, and every place will receive him: for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Thus have they done and will do, that live as citizens of that kingdom of God which bringeth no regrets.*

Note: You do not have to stay under headship you don't agree with. In fact, you should leave. NOT "submit". As long as you are acting with love, of course. And note the result – not condemnation, but "great renown". And "every place will receive him", and he quotes Ps. 24 to prove it. They are not "church hoppers"; they are "citizens of the Kingdom". And they will have no "regrets". Just suppose this is true. What a different picture from the 70% of Christians now belonging nowhere and having no purpose in the Kingdom, because God wants to move through them and their church can't understand!

So where's the Scripture? Again, we cannot PROVE this must be done this way from Scripture, but we can show that it was done this way.

Barnabas is not an apostle in Acts 4:36 or in 9:27. But he is by Acts 14:14. In Acts 15:9, he left Paul's little group, rather than cause dissention. Scripture certainly shows that a man can become an apostle without being one of the Twelve, and that he can go out on his own when God leads him to a new revelation incompatible with his past companions.

THE MINISTRY

Now we can read the Didache, ch. 11:3 - all ch.13: *But concerning the apostles and prophets, according to the decree of the Gospel, thus do. Let every apostle that cometh to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain except one day; but if there be need, also the next; but if he remain three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goeth away, let him take nothing but bread until he lodgeth; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet. And every prophet that speaketh in the Spirit ye shall neither try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. But not every one that speaketh in the Spirit is a prophet; but only if he hold the ways of the Lord. Therefore from their ways shall the false prophet and the prophet be known. And every prophet who ordereth a meal in the Spirit eateth not from it, except indeed he be a false prophet; and every prophet who teacheth the truth, if he do not what he teacheth, is a false prophet. And every prophet, proved true, working unto the mystery of the Church in the world, yet not teaching others to do what he himself doeth, shall not be judged among you, for with God he hath his judgment; for so did also the ancient prophets. But whoever saith in the Spirit, Give me money, or something else, ye shall not listen to him; but if he saith to you to give for others' sake who are in need, let no one judge him. But let every one that cometh in the name of the Lord be received, and afterward ye shall prove and know him; for ye shall have understanding right and left. If he who cometh is a wayfarer, assist him as far as ye are able; but he shall not remain with you, except for two or three days, if need be. But if he willeth to abide with you, being an artisan, let him work and eat; but if he hath no trade, according to your understanding see to it that, as a Christian, he shall not live with you idle. But if he willeth not to do, he is a Christ-monger. Watch that ye keep aloof from such. But every true prophet that willeth to abide among you is worthy of his support. So also a true teacher is himself worthy, as the workman, of his support. Every first-fruit, therefore, of the products of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, thou shalt take and give to the prophets, for they are your high priests. But if ye have not a prophet, give it to the poor. If thou makest a batch of dough, take the first-fruit and give according to the commandment. So also when thou openest a jar of wine or of oil, take the first-fruit and give it to the prophets;*

and of money (silver) and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruit, as it may seem good to thee, and give according to the commandment.

The text itself applies “the decree of the gospel”, meaning of course Matt. 10, Luke 9, and Mark 6. The key words in these passages are “sent” and “receive”. In each case, sent is “apostello”: so to be sent is to be an apostle in the Greek. In each case receive is “dechomai”. It is these words that prove the continuity of this passage from Scripture, and its application to the ministry of wandering apostle.

In Matt. 10:5, Jesus sends forth, i.e. “apostles” the Twelve. It is for this reason that some churches argue that the Twelve are THE apostles. But in Luke 10:1, He sends out 72 more specially chosen disciples. So Scripture makes it clear that there is no limit on who may be “apostled”.

Nor are they assigned a special ministry, other than that of preaching, teaching, or in some way establishing a new manifestation of Christ.

If we follow the reception of these apostles, we discover, that, in fact, Scripture calls the act of receiving an apostle (Paul) that of receiving an angel. Gal. 4:4: *And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.* “Angel”, in both Hebrew and Greek, of course, refers to the ministry of messenger, as well as to the heavenly being designed for this purpose. And the idea that the wandering apostle is Jesus himself, who is an angel (messenger) of God, is a simple continuation of Jesus’ original statement in Matt. 10:40: *He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.* If one accepts that “apostle/prophet” equals “angel” in Christ, then Heb. 13:2 proves that the command of hospitality remained in place well into the late first century at least partly because of these messengers of God, who were obviously still in need of hospitality, because they were still out wandering. Again, in Matt. 10:41, Jesus echoes the call to receive prophets commissioned by His ministry, as the people did often in ancient times: *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward.* But if we read the rest of the verse, and the next, we discover why the Didache continues the subject for two more chapters: *and he that*

receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

Lots of people were wandering. In fact, the only requirement to wander seems to be an echo of Clement’s problem of becoming at odds with the peace of the community. Just the lines directly above what we have been reading - Matt. 10:35-39 *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.* It is precisely those who the interior presence of Christ sets at odds with his spiritual family (as Barnabas and Paul), who Clement sends out to the world. All must become free agents, with their own cross to bear, losing their own life for His. And many of them, though not all, become apostles.

Recall again I Cor. 12:28, where the order of church establishment is given: first apostles, then prophets, then teachers, and then the works of power come forth.

How do you know which ones are apostles? It doesn’t matter. We show hospitality to all. Someone may be a messenger of God (angel) without even knowing it himself (unawares). So then how do you know whom to let in to the formation of your community? That’s what the next verses are about:

1. But he shall not remain except one day; but if there be need, also the next; but if he remain three days, he is a false prophet.
2. And when the apostle goeth away, let him take nothing but bread until he lodgeth; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet.
3. But only if he hold the ways of the Lord.
4. And every prophet who ordereth a meal in the Spirit eateth not from it
5. every prophet who teacheth the truth, if he do not what he teacheth, is a false prophet.

This is to be expected as our next group of verses. The apostle, who has been sent by God to found a work, will express it correctly, and in a Godly fashion. So you can tell when he starts talking and doing things. (Each of these criteria can be backed by Scripture; as will be obvious to most readers. It is not our purpose to demonstrate that the Didche itself is Scriptural – only to determine the fact of ministry of the wandering prophet.) The second stage, that of prophet is now fulfilled, and we now see whom it is safe to let in.

Now, we enter the third stage, and the prophet may begin teaching, or not, in accordance with his anointing: *and every prophet who teacheth the truth, if he do not what he teacheth, is a false prophet. And every prophet, proved true, working unto the mystery of the Church in the world, yet not teaching others to do what he himself doeth, shall not be judged among you, for with God he hath his judgment; for so did also the ancient prophets.*

The next several lines deal with what should be done with the non-apostle, and are not relevant to our purpose.

The first criterion of a true apostle, we have seen, is a desire not to stay longer than necessary. But a special option exists: *But every true prophet that willeth to abide among you is worthy of his support. So also a true teacher is himself worthy, as the workman, of his support.* The apostle, who has proven himself by producing something of value, that is, organization for the community, may, if he consents, be HIRED.

THE REWARD

At what price? *Every first-fruit, therefore, of the products of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, thou shalt take and give to the prophets, for they are your high priests. If thou makest a batch of dough, take the first-fruit and give according to the commandment. So also when thou openest a jar of wine or of oil, take the first-fruit and give it to the prophets; and of money (silver) and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruit, as it may seem good to thee, and give according to the commandment.*

It is not strange that the prophet is listed as the high-priest. I Cor. 12:28 makes it clear that the church is project oriented. Since we are a kingdom of priests, it is clear the leaders of those projects are the high priests, and get the first fruits.

Notice, it does not say the tithe. There are several reasons. For one thing, Christians don't tithe; we are beyond the laws of the Old Testament. We are Jesus' brothers and sisters; friends, not slaves. We do not tithe by law; we celebrate the revelation of constantly unfolding new life, by sharing it with those who open us to the new revelations, or with those in need while we are waiting for them to arrive. *But if ye have not a prophet, give it to the poor.* This is why Abel was blessed over Cain – he gave his first fruits. Cain could have given not just 10%, but 50% if he had wanted to – the 50% that was spoiled – and it would have been a major insult to God. (Gen. 4:3-4) The first fruit – the part that opens the womb of the future, giving the new revelation, is God's special gift, and it is our stock in trade as Christians. New revelation is the commodity we specialize in, as we transform the world. That's why Jesus based the Eucharist on Passover, the feast of first fruits. The Eucharist is a celebration of the grains of wheat that the people we associate with are, and God's crushing us to grain, kneading us together, and offering us to a starving world as the staff of life. It is the celebration of the constant new work God is doing in us. That is why first fruits are offered to those who lead us to the miraculous works (the next stage of I Cor. 12:28).

The salary of the Levites of the Old Testament, since they were one-twelfth of Israel, and they got 10% of everything, was just slightly higher than the average income of the rest of the people. The salary of the wandering apostle, once proven, who chooses to stay on, is enough to get by, and all the evidences of the new blessings that their ministry is bringing about.

