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## CONSIDERING THE NEED FOR APOSTLES IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CHURCH. A PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE

### Introduction

„It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4,11). There is a great emphasis in the New Testament on the fact that there are specific gifts that Christ has given to the church. There are various theological interpretations and ecclesiastical traditions that hold different points of view on the need of these gifts in the contemporary church and it looks as if one of the greatest debates is about the gift of apostleship. This may be because of the increasing popularity of apostolic movements and the growing debate about the „new apostolic reformation”. Therefore it is important to note that this article is written from Pentecostal perspective. In this essay I shall discuss how the New Testament scriptures portray apostleship and how this should impact our contemporary understanding of apostolic ministry.

### The Meaning of the Word „Apostle”

The title „apostle” is applied to certain leaders in the New Testament (according to Bruder’s Concordance it occurs about 80 times)<sup>1</sup>. The meaning of the verb

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<sup>1</sup> *Apostles*. In: *Catholic Encyclopedia*. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01626c.htm> [accessed 24.11.2009].

*apostello* is simply 'to send, send out' or 'send away'<sup>2</sup>. So basically *apostolos* means 'someone who is sent' (or sent as a special messenger and representative of the one who sends him). In the Greek version of the Old Testament it occurs once, in 1 Kings 14,6<sup>3</sup>. Therefore it is also important to remember that when *apostello* or *apostolos* is used in the New Testament it does not necessary mean that the person referred to is an apostle. Dr David Petts in his book *Body Builders* stated that the word *apostolos* can be translated as:

- apostle,
- messenger,
- delegate,
- representative,
- ambassador<sup>4</sup>.

So etymologically the word „apostle” has a very general sense. Probably this is why it has such a variation of meanings in the New Testament. In spite of the general agreement about the meaning of the word *apostolos*, there is a hot debate about what constitutes an apostleship. Before considering the characteristic features of apostles in the New Testament it is important to notice the derivations of the word *apostolos*. The most popular theory concerning the origin of the New Testament apostle concept is *Saliah* theory. This Aramaic word was used by Jews describing „those who were dispatched from the mother city by the rulers of the race on any foreign mission, especially such as were charged with collecting the tribute paid to the temple service”<sup>5</sup>. Most scholars agree that there are common elements between *Saliah* theory and apostle concept in the New Testament but I will not evaluate this because this is not the intention of the essay.

### Characteristic Features of Apostles in the New Testament

In the last section I mentioned that the word *apostolos* does not have to always refer to someone as an apostle. Nevertheless it is not hard to know whether it refers or not to someone as an apostle. In this chapter I shall consider characteristic features of apostles in the New Testament. It is necessary to answer the question is there a need for this ministry, and if there is, how it can be recognized?

<sup>2</sup> B.M. Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*. In: *The Greek New Testament*. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. Stuttgart 1998 (5<sup>th</sup> revised edition), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Ἐγὼ εἶμι ἀπόστολος πρὸς σε σκληρός.

<sup>4</sup> D. Petts, *Body Builders. Gifts to make God's People Grow*. Mattersey 2002, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> J.B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to Galatians*. Grand Rapids 1957 (10<sup>th</sup> edition), p. 93. More about this theory can be found in: F.H. Agnew, *The Origin of the New Testament Apostle-Concept: A Review of Research*. „Journal of Biblical Literature” 1986, vol. 105, no. 1, p. 75–96.

D. Petts showed three main ways the word *apostolos* is used in the New Testament and I am going to discuss them here<sup>6</sup>.

1) u n i q u e l y, to refer to Jesus who was sent into the world by God

„Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess” (Heb. 3,1). These two offices – apostle and high priest – are combined in the person of Jesus. It is a comparison between Jesus and Moses who was the apostle under the old covenant (Heb. 3,1–3) and between Jesus and Aaron, who was the high priest of God’s people under the old covenant (Heb. 5,1–5). Here it probably simply means that Jesus was sent by God. In Luke 4,18–19 we read about the things that was part of his apostolic mission: „The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim a year of the Lord’s favor”. Jesus was unique because no one else could die for our sins, but Jesus himself said: „As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (Jn 17,18). It is clear from here that there are some comparison between the apostolic mission of Jesus and those apostles sent by him.

2) s p e c i f i c a l l y, to refer to the Twelve appointed and sent out by Jesus

The first apostles were unique. They were people called by Jesus himself and He sent them into the world. They were with Jesus from the day He was baptized by John, until He was taken to heaven. They were also witnesses of His death and resurrection (Acts 2,21–22,26). In the Book of Revelation it is written that their names are engraved on the foundations of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21,14). The names of the twelve apostles are written in four places in the New Testament (Mt 10,2–4, Mk 3,13–19, Lk 6,12–16 and Acts 1,13). The New Testament shows that they performed miracles, signs and wonders while Jesus was with them and in my opinion we can see similarities between the apostolic ministry of Jesus and the Twelve. Petts wrote:

The apostle was sent and empowered by God to preach good news and to bring deliverance. However, although this summarizes the role of the apostles before Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, it was afterwards that the most important purpose of their apostolic calling began. They were now to be witnesses of the resurrection, and to do so they needed to be empowered by the Spirit at Pentecost<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> D. Petts, *Body Builders...*, p. 23–24.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27.

After the Pentecost the apostles were consistently using spiritual gifts and the Bible gives a few reasons for this:

- to confirm the word of the Lord that they preached (Mk 16,20);
- to fill those who saw it „with wonder and amazement” (Acts 3,10);
- to draw people to hear the Gospel (Acts 3,11);
- to cause people to praise God for what happened (Acts 4,21);
- to cause the church and other people to fear God (Acts 5,11);
- to cause people to turn to the Lord (Acts 9,35);
- to amaze and silence those who opposed the preaching of the gospel (Acts 13,11).

3) more generally, to refer to later apostles who emerged after the Twelve and who were sent out by the Holy Spirit

Apostle Paul is the most obvious example of someone in the New Testament who is called an apostle but was not one of the original Twelve<sup>8</sup>. I will try to comprehend Paul’s concept of apostleship by looking how he was opposed and why he was not recognized as an apostle by some people. Especially chapters 10 to 12 of 1 Corinthians can help with this because as some scholars argue they are written as Paul’s defense to those who opposed him as an apostle<sup>9</sup>. Also we can read in 2 Corinthians about those who are called by Paul „false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ (2 Cor. 11,13) and they were opposed by Paul<sup>10</sup>.

Apostle Paul in his writings gives some criteria for discerning true apostleship and I am going to suggest some of them<sup>11</sup>. For sure weakness was an integral part of Paul’s conception of Apostleship<sup>12</sup>. This weakness included the torn in the flesh because it was given to him so he could maintain the state of humility in his life (2 Cor. 12,7). He had a thorn which was a „messenger” of Satan. Some scholars suggest that Paul’s thorn was some kind of demonic bondage, for example that

<sup>8</sup> Some people suggested that Paul was appointed by God to be one of the twelve apostles. Nevertheless there is no such statement in the Bible. Acts 1 record that it was Matthias who was appointed as a replacement for Judas Iscariot. As Petts suggests this is theory based on assumptions that there could only be twelve apostles; D. Petts, *Body Builders...*, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> G.D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids 1987, p. 392–324.

<sup>10</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Signs of an Apostle*. London 1970, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> Hamon gives the list of six main functions of first century apostles: 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; B. Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God*. Shippensburg 1999 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> J.L. Sumney, *Paul’s Weakness: An Integral Part of His Conception of Apostleship*, „Journal of the Study of The New Testament” 1993, vol. 52, p. 72.

a demon was assigned to kill Paul<sup>13</sup>. Therefore it is possible that in 2 Corinthians 11,23–33 Paul describes how a demon attempted to execute this<sup>14</sup>. Another explanation can be that the thorn in the flesh was a picture of sickness.

Those who think it is a physical ailment say that the vision must have caused a nervous disorder to manifest, so they suggest physical problems like epilepsy and migraines that would fit this description and say that Paul thought of it as a „messenger of Satan“ because of his belief that demons caused illnesses<sup>15</sup>.

Despite many interpretations it is sure that the word „thorn“ communicates the idea of sufferings, humiliation and weakness. Paul was able to boast in his weakness and encourage other Christians to learn from his experience and not to boast in their abilities, but to overcome hindrances through the power of Christ. Paul used his weakness as an argument against those who opposed him<sup>16</sup> and who tried to use his weaknesses (such as lack of orally skills and good physical appearance) to undermine his apostleship. Paul’s defense was: „When I am weak, then I am strong“ (2 Cor. 12,10)<sup>17</sup>.

There is also no doubt that suffering was indispensable element of Paul’s life and ministry. It is another integral part of his concept of Apostleship<sup>18</sup>. Paul shared Christ’s sufferings in many ways. He had many hardships (Acts 14,22), great distresses because of the sin in society (Acts 17,16), many tears (2 Cor. 2,4), great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart because of the refusal to accept Christ by the Jews (Rom. 9,2–3), many trials and troubles and persecutions because of his ministry for Jesus (2 Cor. 11,23–29). Of course this suffering do not only belong to apostles but to all Christians, but in my opinion for Paul to suffer as an apostle meant to suffer as an example to other Christians.

According to Paul another thing that marks an apostle are signs, wonders and miracles. „The things that mark an apostle – signs, wonders and miracles – were done among you with great perseverance“ (2 Cor. 12,12). To better understand this criteria it is necessary to consider these three elements. Miracles are defined by Horton as „a supernatural intervention in the ordinary course of the nature“<sup>19</sup>. Signs are defined by Deere as „something that points beyond itself to something

<sup>13</sup> T. Marshall, *Foundations for a Healing Ministry*. Lancaster 1988, p. 122.

<sup>14</sup> J.E. Powers, A „Thorn in the Flesh“: *The Appropriation of Textual Meaning*, „Journal of Pentecostal Theology“ 2001, vol. 18, p. 93–95.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 95.

<sup>16</sup> S.J. Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit*. UK: Paternoster Press 1990, p. 75.

<sup>17</sup> T.B. Savage, *Paul though Weakness: Paul’s Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians*. Cambridge 2004.

<sup>18</sup> J.L. Sumney, *Paul’s Weakness...*, p. 82.

<sup>19</sup> H. Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit*. Nottingham 1934, p. 112.

greater"<sup>20</sup>. It is hard to describe wonders but they were to amaze people. Vine gives useful distinction between signs and wonders: „A sign is intended to appeal to the understanding, a wonder appeals to the imagination"<sup>21</sup>.

Nevertheless the most important in Paul's teachings is to be like Christ, in other words to be *imitatio Christi*, i.e., the imitation of Christ. Therefore his words „for to me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1,21) can describe his idea of Apostleship. All leadership is built on character, and definitely it is true also regarding the ministry of an apostle.

### The Need for Apostles in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church

In this section I will consider the need for apostles today and the question, whether it is reasonable to expect apostles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Church. Of course there are many different interpretations of the ministry of Apostles. It is obvious that there are different views about the need of Apostles. The first question we have to answer is whether or not the ministry of apostleship (and charismatic gifts which are undivided with this ministry) is a permanent gift of God to the Church.

Some scholars argue that miraculous gifts, such as prophecy, healings, etc. ceased with the Apostles. This view is called *cessationism*<sup>22</sup>; for example it is widely presented in John MacArthur's book *Charismatic Chaos*<sup>23</sup>. According to this doctrine the need of charismata such as listed in 1 Corinthians 12,7–10.28 ceased with the twelve Apostles<sup>24</sup>. It was needed only to prove the truth of the Gospel and accredited the apostles<sup>25</sup>. Charles Ryrie believes that:

After the church began, there was a period of immaturity, during which spectacular gifts were needed for growth and authentication (Hebrew 2,3–4). With the completion of the New Testament and the growing maturity of the church, the need for such gifts ceased with the apostles and the finishing of the canon of Scripture<sup>26</sup>.

So the gift of apostleship was only needed to lay the foundation of the Church until the complete revelation of the Word was finished and it is not the gift that God gives today<sup>27</sup>. Of course if someone believes as Warfield<sup>28</sup> that supernatural

<sup>20</sup> J. Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*. Eastbourne 1993, p. 221.

<sup>21</sup> W.E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. Nashville 1996, p. 682.

<sup>22</sup> Cessationists also believe that supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit were temporary; G. Rugh, *A Review of the (Nine) Temporary Spiritual Gifts*. <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/char/areview.htm> [accessed 24.11.2009].

<sup>23</sup> J. MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos*. Grand Rapids 1992.

<sup>24</sup> H.R. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*. Grand Rapids 1997, p. 449.

<sup>25</sup> C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. London 1982, p. 30.

<sup>26</sup> K. Uptegrove, *Dawning the Next Great Move of God*. Chapter 8, <http://www.arkhaven.org/chapter08.htm> [accessed 7.11.2009].

<sup>27</sup> C. Ryrie, *Podstawy teologii*. Dallas 1994, p. 422.

<sup>28</sup> B.B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles*. Edinburgh 1972, p. 6.

gifts and miraculous were part of the credentials of the Apostles and passed away, he must also believe that the ministry of Apostles are not for today. Cessationists argue that signs, wonders and miraculous were limited to the apostles, but it was not just the Twelve who performed them, but for example also the seventy-two (Lk 10,1). Finally we have to notice that the New Testament nowhere states that the gift was to be withdrawn. Therefore it is not only reasonable but also biblical to expect and believe for apostolic ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church<sup>29</sup>.

From the ministry of the New Testament apostles we know that one of the most important aspects of the apostolic ministry is planting churches. Scott stated: „The whole function of the Spirit is to represent Christ and to ensure that His influence shall continue in His Church”<sup>30</sup>.

Most Christians agree that there is still need to evangelize the world and that mission is responsibility of all Christians, but does it mean that all Christian have ability necessary to plant churches? In my opinion there is a need for qualified people to do this and, as we can see in Acts, apostles were appointing people according to their gifts (Acts 6). It is one of the reasons I believe there is a need for apostles today, especially that there also is a need for presenting the miraculous power of God. Pentecostals also stated that the Gospel is not fully proclaimed unless it is attested by signs and wonders. The Apostle Paul wrote:

I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done – by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ (Rom. 15,18–19).

It seems that Paul is saying that the fullness of the gospel is constituted by the combination of signs and miracles with his preaching and life. Ervin stated:

As in the ministry of Jesus, so also in the ministry of the apostles, signs followed and confirmed the preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom. The message and the sign are a united whole<sup>31</sup>.

Ervin goes on to say that: „The proclamation of the Gospel authenticates the sign; the sign confirms the message preached”<sup>32</sup>.

In my opinion it does not mean that when there are no miracles the gospel is not fully preached, but I agree with Deere who says:

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<sup>29</sup> D. Petts, *Body Builders...*, p. 31.

<sup>30</sup> E.F. Scott, *The Fourth Gospel, Its Purpose and Theology*. Edinburgh 1951, p. 341–342.

<sup>31</sup> H.M. Ervin, *Healing: Sign of the Kingdom*. Peabody 2002, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 32.

When miracles are given by God to authenticate gospel preaching, it is done on the basis of grace, not out of a divine necessity to make up for a deficiency in the gospel message<sup>33</sup>.

Nevertheless, as Petts explains, one of the main purposes of spiritual gifts is evangelism<sup>34</sup>. According to Gee the apostle was more an itinerant ministry<sup>35</sup>. Gee noted that healings have their true sphere in evangelism rather than among the saints<sup>36</sup>. If there is a need of spiritual gifts in today's mission and if they are integral part of apostolic ministry we can simply state that there is a need of apostolic ministry in 21<sup>st</sup> century Church.

### How Can the Apostolic Ministry Be Recognized Today?

According to Peter Wagner an apostle is:

a Christian leader gifted, taught, commissioned, and sent by God with the authority to establish the foundational government of a church within an assigned sphere of a ministry by hearing what the Spirit is saying to the church and by setting things in order accordingly for the growth and maturity of the church<sup>37</sup>.

It can be clearly seen that Wagner linked apostolic ministry to church growth and regard it as an integral element of apostle ministry. The criteria of true apostleship today for him are that he must have a spiritual gift, a calling, extraordinary character, followers and vision<sup>38</sup>.

There are many concepts of criteria of apostle but there is no doubt about apostolic ministry being overflowing with signs, wonders and miracles (2 Cor. 12,12). It is important to remember that although signs and wonders were a hallmark of the apostolic ministry they were not limited to it. For example in Book of Acts we see Stephen and Philip who were full of God's power and „did a great wonders and miraculous signs, among the people” (Acts 6,8; 8,6–7). As stated before, the

<sup>33</sup> J. Deere, *Surprised by the Power...*, p. 110.

<sup>34</sup> D. Petts, *Body Builders...*, p. 113. According to Petts the second purpose of spiritual gifts in the life of the church is edification.

<sup>35</sup> See argumentation of D. Gee for itinerant character of apostolic ministry in: D. Gee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody 1999, p. 708.

<sup>36</sup> K. Warrington, *Acts and the Healing Narratives: Why?* „Journal of Pentecostal Theology” 2006, vol. 14, no. 2, p. 190.

<sup>37</sup> P. Wagner, *Apostles in Today's Church*. Colorado Springs 2002, p. 59–60. Cannistraci's definition of apostle is very similar: „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”, 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 1998, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> Idem, *Apostles and Prophets*. Ventura 2000, p. 26–32.

Apostle Paul was not part of the Twelve, but also his ministry was significant and accompanied with spectacular miracles. He was one of the later apostles so his ministry can be a guide for the apostolic ministry today. It is also important to notice that supernatural signs can be also performed by „false Christs and false prophets“ (Mt 24,24), so it would not be wise to establish apostolic authenticity only on the evidence of the great signs and miracles. As Deere notes: „Miracles do not authenticate the apostles! but the message of salvation preached by the apostles does authenticate them“<sup>39</sup>.

In other words signs, wonders and miracles are a hallmark of apostolic ministry but spiritual gifts are promised by Christ for all „those who believe“. In Mark 16,15–18 Jesus commissioned apostles but in the context of evangelism, which is a task for the whole church, he promised „these signs will accompany those who believe“. So in themselves the „miracles were no evidence of apostleship, for signs and wonders could be counterfeited“<sup>40</sup>.

Jesus, as the apostle sent by the father, was able to accomplish his apostolic mission because of the anointing of the Spirit resting upon him (Acts 10,38) Luke 4,18–19. So in order to have God’s miraculous power working through man, he has to maintain the fullness of the Spirit. As Petts noticed:

The disciples were first filled with the Spirit while praying (Acts 1,14; 2,1–4) and it was while they were praying that they were filled again (Acts 4,31)<sup>41</sup>.

So an apostle for sure must be a man of prayer and it should be one of his fundamental practices<sup>42</sup>. There is a spiritual warfare but the fight is not with flesh but with principalities and spirits. This is true especially when we think about signs, wonders and miraculous power of God because very often it is a war against the work of the devil<sup>43</sup>. Another important aspect of apostolic ministry in connection with war against demonic forces is exorcism. Again, prayer, and very often fasting, are essentials as a method for exorcism<sup>44</sup>. For sure an apostle will be in such situation – especially when planting churches<sup>45</sup> – of war with demonic powers and to overcome it he has to be a man who established prayer and fast as a routine and standard practice. Fomum stated:

<sup>39</sup> J. Deere, *Surprised by the Power...*, p. 104.

<sup>40</sup> J.L. Sumney, *Paul’s Weakness...*, p. 83.

<sup>41</sup> D. Petts, *The Holy Spirit. An Introduction*. Mattersey 2005, p. 86.

<sup>42</sup> B. Clendennen, *Szkola Chrystusa*. Chelm 2001, p. 258.

<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless it is important to remember that the Bible does not teach that Satan is the cause of every disease.

<sup>44</sup> M. Whyte, *Demons and Deliverance*. New Kensington 1989, p. 135–136.

<sup>45</sup> The New Testament do not mention about exorcism in the church which might suggest that exorcism should occurred solely in connection with mission or evangelization.

One of the weapons by which the Apostle Paul and his co-workers labored in order not to put an obstacle in anyone's way was fasting. One of the things that they did to ensure that no fault might be found with their ministry was fasting. One of the ways by which the Apostle and his co-workers labored as servants of God to commend themselves was by fasting<sup>46</sup>.

To sum up this I suggest that a disciplined life of prayer and fasting would be one of the characteristics of apostolic life.

On the other hand the life centered on luxury living may be a characteristic feature of the false apostle.

This was such a common problem that one early tract „The Didache” contained instructions on how to distinguish between false and true apostles. An over-concern with money and comfort seems always to be a distinguishing feature<sup>47</sup>.

Paramount is also an appropriate understanding of acting in Jesus' authority. Apostle Paul knew that that he was speaking „in Christ” (2 Cor. 2,17). It is no surprise that in Gospels the name of Jesus is mentioned so many times. It must be noted that the use of Jesus' name is not simply uttering the word. It expressed trust put in Him on the basis of a personal relationship<sup>48</sup>.

Although the name of Jesus need not be taken to indicate the physical presence of Jesus, it does betoken the centrality of his person to the activity taking place<sup>49</sup>.

The apostle Paul remembered that it is God who is the healer. He knew that it is very dangerous if there is too much emphasis on the man whom God uses in a powerful ministry because it may lead to spiritual pride and eventually to a fall. It is Jesus who has the authority and apostles have His authority, because He lives in the apostle. Therefore prayer is submitting to His authority and to spoke „in Christ” and pray in the name of Jesus means abiding in Him and acting in His authority.

Cannistraci summarizes the work of the apostle with three key words: planting, watering and increasing<sup>50</sup>. Petts gives five features by which we can normally recognized apostolic gifting:

- preaching accompanied by miraculous signs,
- planting churches,

<sup>46</sup> Z.T. Fomum, *The Ministry of Fasting*. New York 2000, p. 54.

<sup>47</sup> J. Edmiston, *Are There Still Apostles Today?* <http://www.globalchristians.org/articles/apostle.htm> [accessed 14.11.2009].

<sup>48</sup> G.L. Munn, *The Importance of Praying in the Name of Christ*. „Southwestern Journal of Theology” 1996, vol. 38, no. 3, p. 42–44.

<sup>49</sup> K. Warrington, *Acts and the Healing Narratives: Why?*, p. 203.

<sup>50</sup> D. Cannistraci, *Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement...*, p. 103.

- laying a foundation for local churches,
- having authority over those churches,
- training others for works of service<sup>51</sup>.

There is also another important question, especially with the growing interest in the leadership studies, what should be their role within the contemporary context of the Church?

I suggest that partially it is the same as the role of the apostles in the early church. The most known verse regarding the apostolic ministry is found in Ephesians 2,20. In this verse of Scripture Paul declares that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Comparing this passage with Ephesians 3,1–7 and 4,11–16 Fee 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<sup>52</sup>.

Petts presents similar conclusion based on 1 Cor. 3,10, that apostle Paul laid down the foundation of the Corinthian church and in this sense the foundational role of laying down foundations of local churches can be attributed to contemporary apostles<sup>53</sup>. However he pointed out the unique role of apostles of the New Testament who received revelation of the word of God and therefore laid down a foundation for the universal church. Nevertheless above passages suggest that also in the contemporary process of planting and building churches we should expect the ministry of apostleship to be foundational.

Another role of apostle is found in Ephesians 4,11–12. Very often the title five-fold ministry is used to explain this passage. These ministries 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“. Definitely the church needs to be equipped and if the role of all of these offices (ministries) is to equip the church, there is also a need for the equipping role of the apostle in the contemporary church.

### Conclusion

In the present work I have attempted to answer the questions: is there a need for apostles in 21<sup>st</sup> century Church and how will their ministry be recognized?

At the beginning of this essay we have simply seen that the word „apostle“ comes from the Greek word *apostolos* which simply means ‘someone who is sent’.

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<sup>51</sup> D. Petts, *Body Builders...*, p. 38.

<sup>52</sup> G. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence...*, p. 688.

<sup>53</sup> D. Petts, *Body Builders...*, p. 33–34.

This helped us to understand that the Bible describes as an apostle not only The Twelve, but also Jesus and later apostles such as Paul. We considered characteristic features of apostles in the New Testament which make us realize how vital it is in the church to expect apostolic ministry today.

Another crucial matter was to establish elements by which we can recognize someone with apostolic gifting in 21<sup>st</sup> century church. It was stated that preaching accompanied by miraculous signs must be an integral part of apostolic ministry.

When it comes to the topic of leadership in contemporary church the crucial role of apostle in establishing new churches could hardly be denied. The evaluation of biblical passages regarding apostolic ministry seems to support the claim that apostles should also have a place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century church because of their foundational (especially in the context of planting new churches and helping them to grow in maturity) and equipping roles.

Nevertheless, it can be suggested that a ministry of apostle was needed not only for the early church but is also needed for the church today. Therefore the Christian Church cannot deny the fact of the importance of apostolic ministry in the modern world, nor should it overemphasize it. A proper balance is always needed so that our church work and ministry can be truly focused on God, *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*.

### **Rozważania nad potrzebą apostołów w Kościele XXI wieku. Perspektywa pentekostalna**

#### **Streszczenie**

We współczesnym Kościele obserwujemy wzrastające zainteresowanie tematyką przywództwa i innymi połączonymi z nią zagadnieniami, jak np.: różnorodne służby liderskie, dary i służby duchowe, autorytet i namaszczenie. Pojawiają się pytania na temat potrzeby funkcjonowania w Kościele wszystkich służb przywódczych opisywanych w Nowym Testamencie, ich kontynuacji do dnia dzisiejszego, charakterystyki i roli. Jedną z największych debat dotyczy tematu służby apostołowskiej w XXI wieku. Dlatego istotne jest właściwe zrozumienie terminu „apostoł” oraz cech charakterystycznych i roli służby apostołowskiej w Nowym Testamencie, co omawiam w tym artykule. Ma to wpływ na zrozumienie i dalsze studium potrzeby apostołów w Kościele XXI wieku, ich roli oraz kryteriów rozpoznawania takiej służby.