



The Conceptions of Salvation and of the Indispensability of the Apostle Ministry for Salvation in the Teachings of the Catholic Apostolic Church

Introduction

In the ensuing text we shall endeavour to give a concise explanation of Catholic Apostolic teachings concerning the task the Apostle ministry has to fulfil in bringing salvation to man.

It can be clearly shown from relevant teachings of the Catholic Apostolic Church that it attributed a special importance to apostles in preparing a group of firstfruits and that in this sense the apostle ministry was necessary for salvation. In the following survey special attention will be given to a study of teachings that were authoritatively delivered until the beginning, in 1863, of what was eventually called the New Apostolic Church.

Christ central to all hope of salvation

Contrary to some of today's discussions of ecumenical questions in which Christ is not seen as **the** way, but as one of several possible ways, thus advancing a plurality not only of Christian denominations, but also of world religions, Catholic Apostolics stressed **Christ as the only possible way** towards salvation for all mankind. They never doubted that basically the Christian faith was necessary for salvation and consequently that Christianity was essentially different from all other world religions.

The principle of progressive insight

The apostles of the Catholic Apostolic Church considered it possible from a study of biblical texts to arrive at an insight into God's plan of salvation for all mankind. After some all too rashly advanced expectations had been disappointed, they became aware of the **limits imposed on the human mind in its attempts at recognizing God's will** and learned to trust in **progressive insight**. This did not, however, hinder them from teaching and acting on the basis of the insights reached at any given time. Within the Catholic Apostolic Church there were mutually exclusive positions that led to different doctrinal developments.

The loss of the apostle ministry resulted in a loss of unity among Christians

In the "Great Testimony" of 1837 and in other writings Catholic Apostolics mourned for the **division of Christendom** into many "sects". In their mind these included the three big denominational groups of their time: the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches and the Protestant Churches. To them this state of things was one of the **sins** of Christians in general. Accordingly, they explained its origin as a result of the early Christians' sinful behaviour.

The early Christians' sin, they taught, consisted in refusing to let the Apostles they had been given act amongst them in the full authority of their ministry. In teaching thus, they distinguished between an apostleship sent to the Jews and an apostleship sent to the gentiles. The Jews, they taught, had in their majority rejected the apostles sent to them. When the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 their time had come to an end and the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21, 24) had begun. During a time when two epochs overlapped, the activity of the Jewish Christian apostles had gradually ceased and that of the gentile apostleship ought to have started. The Apostle Paul's letters showed, however, that the local churches gathered from amongst the gentiles had resisted Paul in his activity as an apostle to such an extent that the gentile apostleship had finally been "bound" in the latter part of Paul's life. God had taken it away in a judicial act in order to lead Christians to repentance.

Instead of doing penance the church had attempted by **human means** to maintain unity and spiritual life within Christendom. The Roman church, they taught, had stressed unity and paid for it by a loss of spiritual life while the Protestant churches' attempt at restoring spiritual life had destroyed church unity. Only **God Himself** could restore church unity and spiritual life together, and He would do this by means of **a church led by apostles and organized according to the perfect pattern given by Him**.

For as long as this was not the case, the Catholic Apostolic Church taught, **the Holy Spirit continued to be active** within the Church – but only **in limited power**. Similarly, the sacraments of the Church could not be fully effective.

Eschatology is of central importance for the idea of the church

In order to understand the Catholic Apostolics' **idea of the Church** and its unity we must study their **eschatology**.

In the "Great Testimony" the apostles addressed all who were in places of authority in the Christian world and appealed to them to lead their folds into a new church led by apostles as soon as **God would send out His Apostles "in power"**. In the latter days the Holy Spirit would be poured out in a large measure. He who would receive that measure of the Spirit of God would thus receive power not to be deceived by Antichrist and to be saved. Ministers who were not prepared to accept the Testimony of the Apostles and God's help thus offered them, would in the battle of the latter days be helpers of Antichrist and judged together with him.

During this phase of eschatological expectation the attainment of salvation in the end times is restricted to those who follow the apostles as divinely commissioned leaders of Christendom. In this sense the idea of the church can be called "exclusive".

Disappointed hopes bring about a crisis in the college of apostles

It is well known that the "**Great Testimony**" was ignored by the Christian authorities addressed in it. This **rejection** together with the fact that the sending out of the apostles "in power" failed to take place led to a **crisis of the Catholic Apostolic Church in the 1840s** which was brought to an end for a time by introducing the **sealing** in 1847. Once again one of the explanations forwarded to explain why the apostles were not sent out in power consisted in pointing out that nineteenth-century Christians had sinned like those in the first century in rejecting the apostles sent to them and thus making it impossible for God to perfect His work by them.

While still waiting for the Lord's imminent second coming **their disappointment led Catholic Apostolics to radically different conclusions**:

Some **Apostles ceased to be active** (either for some time or permanently). Apostle Drummond caused a greatly changed version of the Great Testimony to be printed in which he declared that, if the Church did not accept apostles, God would have to send His Son without any preparation through apostles and just take to Himself the best Christians from all denominations.

In England the introduction of the **Liturgy** (1842 ff.) and of the **sealing** were interpreted thus: that God first of all erected within the Christian Church a special "**Work under Apostles**" which was to serve **as a model of a future universal Church of Christ**. According to the views of this group of Catholic Apostolics the "latter rain" as an abundant outpouring of the Holy Ghost was yet future – in spite of the giving of the Spirit through the laying on of apostles' hands in sealing. Soon it was not taken for granted any more that the latter rain was connected with apostles being active on earth.

A special "Work of the Lord" within Christendom as a prefiguration of a time when all Christians are united under apostles

Soon after sealing was introduced **Apostle Carlyle made consistent efforts to build up a special work** in Northern Germany, the sphere of action designated to him. Compared to other Catholic Apostolic apostles he was tremendously successful there. In his view there existed **only one legitimate, divinely appointed ministry** since the Separation of the Apostles (1835), and those were **the ministers ordained through apostles**. He, too, was still waiting to be sent out in power, but he only saw in this act a continuation in greater power of the work that had already been begun. The latter rain had in principle begun when the apostles started to seal, even though only some few Christians had come under it. He hoped that by means of the expected sending out in power his fellow apostles would become fully active and the reduced number of apostles would be filled up again. The church gathered under apostles would be able to resist and finally judge Antichrist.

Changes in eschatology about 1858: The translation of those sealed by apostles is expected before the apostle ministry becomes extinct

After Apostle Carlyle's death (**1855**) the surviving apostles gradually began to shift the hope that the apostles would be sent out in power to a later phase in God's plan of salvation. At that time they would in some not clearly defined way assist the church militant on earth, coming to their aid from "Mount Zion" whose exact quality and location was equally undefined. The idea that the Catholic Apostolic Church was a "model" of a future church allowed them to entertain the thought that the apostle ministry might once again die out. They did, however, expect the **sealed ones** to be **translated** to "Mount Zion" together with the apostles. There were differences of opinion among the apostles concerning the question if the sealed ones would already have a glorified body. Since 1858, two further translations were envisaged in the course of latter day events. In any case there was **a special group** within the Church, **defined by their being sealed** and having a special function in God's plan of salvation.

So at this stage of eschatological expectation the idea was prevalent that there was a special group within Christendom who, by taking part in the translation, obtain salvation that is not available to others. In this respect the idea of the church can also be called exclusive.

Preparations for a church without apostles

Starting in 1858/1860 Catholic Apostolic apostles issued statements pointing to a future **episcopal church** that would succeed the church led by apostles. Again they argued that the gentile apostleship was bound or rather had remained bound because it had been rejected by the Church. After the removal of the sealed ones that new episcopal church would be active and successful at the time of the latter rain (meaning the abundant outpouring of the Spirit). Already in 1865 authorized Catholic Apostolic prophecies were issued that referred to a work under **70 Archangels** (meaning Archbishops) that would succeed the work of apostles. After Apostle Cardale's death (1877) this teaching was systematically developed. It was taught that once again a time of overlapping had started similar to that in which Paul had been "bound" (cf. above, item no. 5). The active work of apostles was due to finish soon and that of the Archangels was in process of preparation. Archangels were actually ordained – and they had to face the fact that they would have to stay behind when the firstfruits were taken up from the earth. Under those Archangels the Liturgy of the apostles was to be in use, they were to experience the latter rain and a sort of "perfection" of the church and its ordinances. They were to be translated together with the church gathered under them before the Great Tribulation was due to begin. Even then not all Christians would have accepted the Archangels and the Liturgy. Those would have to experience the Great Tribulation. Many of them would "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 12: 17) while being persecuted by the antichristian powers. Only then (after a further translation) the First Resurrection was due to take place.

It was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that the Catholic Apostolic Church in England stopped expecting that Archangels would soon become active. In Germany there are people represented by a certain Reiner Friedemann **Edel** who are still waiting and trying to get ready for this "**work of the Seventy**". Edel tries to make his audience believe that this will be an ecumenical work because it will lead to a "perfection of the universal Church of Christ", but he does not mention that it can only be brought about if all denominations give up their several identities and submit to a new charismatically accredited leadership (meaning the Seventy) – a requirement that means that after the taking away of the apostle ministry salvation will be mediated by a special group of ministers not bearing the name of apostles, but still specially commissioned by God.

In Britain this position is represented by Columba Graham Flegg.

The Bride of the Lamb

If we ask which group belongs to the Bride of the Lamb we find different answers in the writings of Catholic Apostolic Apostles. One position says that those who have been sealed by apostles make up the Bride. Another position gives a wider definition of those who are called the Bride of the Lamb and includes such souls who attain salvation after the translation of those who have been sealed by apostles and who will eventually be included in the royal priesthood.

The future of Israel

With reference to above, items nos. 1 and 5, it remains to be mentioned that according to Catholic Apostolic Church teachings and with reference to the eleventh chapter of the letter to the Romans the Jews were appointed for a special role in God's plan of salvation. The ten lost tribes would be found again and the Jews would be led back to their country through mighty battles. After recognizing and accepting Christ in those battles they would be given the task of doing missionary work among the heathen whereas the church's task would be continually to praise God at His throne. These teachings were more or less irrelevant where Apostle Carlyle was active. They were cultivated amongst those who in their present lives

emphasized contemplation and adoration or, in other words, **liturgically rich church services**. They considered it more important to intercede in prayer for their fellow Christians rather than bring them the tidings of a re-established apostle ministry. They got into conflict with those who stressed the work to be done by the “Sixty to the Nations”, i.e. that of evangelizing among other Christians. Apostle Carlyle’s achievement, among other things, was that he actively furthered evangelizing while not closing his mind to the liturgical aspirations of his fellow apostles.

Change of perspective: The importance of the apostle ministry as envisaged by the prophet Heinrich Geyer

Having thus outlined the **concepts within the Catholic Apostolic Church concerning the way divinely appointed ministries mediate salvation**, it is appropriate briefly to direct the reader’s attention to the **beginnings of the New Apostolic Church**. In the face of assertions that Geyer began some sort of “ecumenical” work it remains to be shown that he, too, believed that the church needed a special work under apostles for its perfection.

When the Prophet Geyer got into conflict with his ecclesiastical superiors in 1862, one of the reasons was that **he was not ready to give up the doctrine taught by Apostle Carlyle that the Church had to be perfected by Apostles**. Thus he could not accept that an end of the activity of apostles was envisaged before a considerable part of Christendom had been gathered under apostles. Together with him the Apostles Preuß and Schwartz continued to hope like Apostle Carlyle that apostles were still due to be sent out in power. They thought it was time to put an end to that state in which the gentile apostleship was bound, a state which they came to see ever more clearly as a result of the errors maintained by the British apostles concerning the task given to a Church led by apostles.

They were no longer willing to put up with limits set to their missionary efforts among their fellow Christians, as they had been imposed on them by Apostle Woodhouse in the face of restrictions imposed by the civil authorities. Already in 1858 Geyer had prophesied that “the wheels had to follow the Cherubim”. He interpreted this prophecy as an encouragement to proceed with the missionary work in spite of restrictions imposed by the authorities, seeing that developments in the states (in this case possibilities for apostles to become active through toleration by the authorities) were due to follow developments within the church led by apostles. Those apostles who accepted their call in 1863 and 1864 held that the time had come when apostles would be sent out “in power” in order to carry their tidings to all Christians. **In this respect they together with Geyer represented a tradition founded by Apostle Carlyle.**