



I. Review

1) The Charismatic Movement and the Need for Realignment. 2) Eyewitness Apostles. 3) The unity of the Church. 4) Hero Worship and Charismatic Christianity.

II. Introduction to Apostles (1 Cor. 4)

The heart of the matter is that we need to align with Paul: there are no super apostles. Paul uses that term sarcastically for those who exalted themselves and led the Corinthians away from the pure gospel (2 Corinthians 11:5).

The Third Wave - C. Peter Wagner, watching independent charismatic networks in the 1990s, taught that God was birthing a new apostolic age, which he coined "The New Apostolic Reformation." This began in the 1990s.¹ The NAR has since become infamous and in disrepair. My main purpose is to reveal the thread of error that flows through the whole cloth. It generally centers on wrong perceptions of authority and church government, and it stems from conflating eyewitness apostles with general apostles. Wagner places authority as the central issue as well:

I believe there are two important characteristics that set apostles apart from other members of the Body of Christ: the authority of apostles and the spheres of apostolic authority.²

◆ Thesis

Biblical and historical evidence affirms *continuationism*, so modern apostles and prophets exist. Failing to define the gift of apostle properly and not seeking it in practice hinders the gospels advance. Apostle and prophet are functions, not titles. The biblical substructure for church government is *plural elders* and *deacons*. The gifts of the Spirit fall within that clear biblical substructure, not above it. The term fivefold ministry is extra-biblical, and as a concept it should not be placed in a hierarchical relationship to elders and deacons. The latter are offices; the former are functions. The emphasis on authority and government over "function" is the error which leads to affirming super-apostles and causes cultural perceptions of authority, class, and wealth to be imposed on the biblical model, replacing the collegiality expressed in Christ's teaching, and the result is that the spirit of the world enters the church. Subverting the biblical model of servant collegiality has perpetuated abuse, division, and theft, and it has fomented hero worship and division. Apostles and prophets must work within and under accountable eldership. We must not conflate "general apostles" with "founding eyewitness apostles." Further, when we expand the definition of an apostle to include ideas that are beyond what Scripture teaches, the role loses its primary force and purpose. A general apostle is a missionary, sent by the church to evangelize and make disciples, fulfilling the great commission of our Lord Jesus Christ among the unreached.

¹ Wagner, C. Peter. *Apostles and Prophets: The Foundation of the Church*, 17.

² Ibid, 21.

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III. We Need to Build According to the Pattern (1 Cor. 3:10-17; 14:40; Titus 1:5)

◆ Jesus' Brotherhood and Servant Leadership Paradigm (Matthew 23:1-12)³

The New Covenant structure is not based on authority (top-down), but on example (bottom-up), rooted in servanthood (Mat. 20:20-28; 2 Cor. 1:24; 1 Peter 5:1-3).⁴ The ascension gifts are to equip all believers for ministry in order to raise up a fully functioning priesthood of every believer!⁵

◆ Offices of Elders and Deacons

Churches today desperately need a revival of love, humility, and the servant spirit. Such a revival must begin with our leaders, and biblical eldership provides the structure through which leaders learn to work together in mutual love and humility. Since the eldership represents a microcosm of the whole church, it provides a living model of loving relationships and servanthood for the whole body. Thus, leadership by a plurality of elders ideally suits the humble-servants [model] church.⁶

Gift ministries must fit into the clear substructure of elders and deacons, not override or overrule it: 1) Plural overseers (elders) and deacons were normative in the early church (Phi. 1:1). 2) Elders were given the task of oversight, shepherding, and teaching.⁷ 3) Overseership is an office in the church.⁸

IV. The Two-Tiered Model of Elders and Deacons and the Gift Ministries Continued in the Early Church.

But concerning the apostles and prophets, according to the decree of the Gospel, thus do. Let every apostle that comes 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 goes away, let him take nothing but bread until he lodges; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet. Therefore, appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, and truthful and proven⁹

³ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, PNTC, Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 576.

⁴ Ibid, 511-512.

⁵ Conner, *The Church in the New Testament*, 151.

⁶ Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, 114.

⁷ Ibid, 180.

⁸ Ibid, 148, 175, 186.

⁹ New Advent, *The Didache*, Chapters 11& 15 (<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0714.htm>)