

constantly exercised its three-fold power; he was recognized as one of themselves by the other apostles (Gal 2:9); his Apostolate was equally successful (2 Cor 3:1-3) and it was confirmed by numerous miracles (Acts 13:10-11, 14:3, 7-9, 16-18, 25-26, 19\_11-12, 20:9-12' 28:8-9; 2 Cor 12:12). It is interesting that the litany of the saints, the names Matthias and Barnabas are at the end of the list of the Apostles, before the evangelists Luke and Mark.

In Galatians, Paul vindicates his claim to the Apostleship, and the entire strength of his argument rests on the assumption that there is this universally accepted special calling, which he has received in full measure. The others were Apostles before him (1:17), but they are no more fully Apostles than he is, for their teaching is one with his (2:2-9), and his call has come directly from God (1:1, 12; cf. the first verse of Rom 1 and 2 Cor, Eph, Col, 1 & 2 Tim. Tit).

### **Apostolic Succession**

The personal witness of the Apostles ended with their deaths. However, their mission is enduring, to all nations, and for all time. Their work is Christ's work, which is for the benefit for the entire world, and on this essential framework, he built his Church, by which all men would profit by the Redemption. In their own lifetime, God directly extended the call to Paul, Barnabas, and perhaps others. However, this is not to be the normal method of passing on the Apostolic commission, authority and powers. The Apostles are seen giving a minor share in their powers to the seven

deacons (Acts 6:1-6); even this lesser authority is passed on by the laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 6:6). In addition, Paul appoints full successors to himself in Timothy and Titus. Timothy in Ephesus and Titus in Crete take Paul's place: they are commissioned to teach (1 Tim 4:6; Tit 2:1), to rule (1 Tim 5:17-20; Tit 2). Their powers came to them by a laying on of hands (1 Tim 4:14, cf. 5:22 for an extension of the principle; 2 Tim 1:16; Tit 1:5, where both principles are expressed). In these three epistles and in Galatians there is constant stress against innovation; the Apostle's mission is to hand on (*trader*) in all its fullness and all its purity what he has in turn received, the saving truth of Jesus. Thus, the Apostle's work in the world is to be a minister of Christ, a faithful transmitter of God's truth and God's grace. That is the Apostle's divinely appointed function, to extend the power of Christ in place and time. The Apostles, in their essential functions, must have successors, and similarly Peter, the head of the entire hierarchical structure, must have a successor to his primatial office. The essential functions of the Apostolic office must be handed on.

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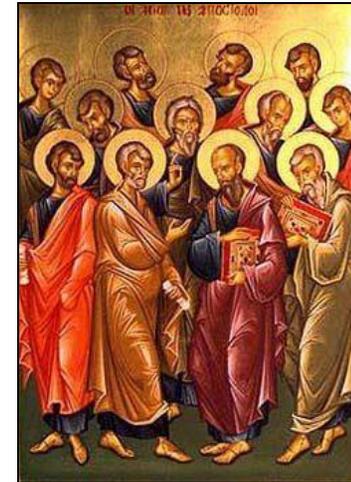
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Pamphlet 574

## **The Apostles**



*And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles (Luke 6:13).*

Many had attached themselves to Christ since the beginning of his public ministry. From among them, after a night spent in prayer, he made a significant choice of the twelve. The number suited his purpose, and it further symbolized that they are the twelve patriarchs of the new Israel (Mt 19:28, Acts 13:17, Gal 6:16, Rev. 21:14). Mark records the occasion with less solemnity, "And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach" (3:14) and Mt 10:1 gives it in a compressed form. All three synoptic then give lists of the twelve chosen,

The names fall into groups of four; Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16; and Acts 1:13. The first named in each group is the same, otherwise the order in the groups vary, with the exception that Judas Iscariot

is always last. Peter always heads the list, one of the many signs of the extraordinary prominence accorded him ‘the first’ a phrase unnecessary at the head of a list unless it indicates pre-eminence of dignity. If they had been listed in the order chosen, Andrew or John would have been placed first (Jn 1:40). Bartholomew is commonly identified with Nathanael, Jn 1:45, James of Alpheus (possibly ‘of Cleophas’, Jn 19:25 with James the Less, Mk 15:41, ‘brother’ of the Lord, first bishop of Jerusalem, Gal 1:19, Acts 15:13). Simon the Cananean’s title derives from an Aramaic root meaning ‘the zealous one’, which Lk is careful to translate for his non-Jewish readers. It is uncertain whether the title describes his personal zeal for the Law, or his membership of the fanatical party of the Zealots.

This definitive call of the twelve as a distinct group had been preceded by the call of Andrew, John, Simon, Philip and Nathanael (Jn 1:35-51), and by the second call of the first four of these, which involved their leaving their secular occupations to be with Christ; later, a similar call is given to Matthew

### **The Nature of the Apostolic Office**

Christ now sets the twelve aside as a distinct group, a unit for which he has definite plans. He begins to instruct and form them with special care; they are to share in his work, for they are destined to carry on his work; they are to be his envoys to the world. To them, he entrusts his own mission from the Father (Jn 20:21; 17:6, 8, 14, 18), and with whom he identifies himself: “He who receives you receives me,

and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (Mt 10:40). To them he commits the revelation of divine truth which is one of the chief purposes of his coming into the world: “things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him...To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Mt 11:27; 13:11). Their mission is, first, one of teaching (Mt 28:19-20) the entirety of Christ’s revelation, supported by the power of miracles (Mk 16:17-18, 20). The apostles will be enlightened by the spirit of truth (Jn 15:16-17, 26) and assisted by the invisible support of Christ himself (Mt 28:20). However, their mission implies more than teaching; they are, secondly, to govern Christ’s followers, who are bound to submit to them (Lk 10:16), for their judgments will be ratified in heaven (Mt 18:18), and their power extends even to that of excommunication (Mt 18:17). Thirdly, they are to sanctify Christ’s followers not only with the life-giving word of the Gospel, but by baptism (Mt 28:19), remission of sins (Jn 20:22-23) and the Eucharist (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24-25). This threefold mission corresponds to the threefold office of Christ in the world, for he is Prophet, King, and Priest. That His work should be continued by mere men, divine power is needed, and all necessary power and authority is given them (Mt 28:18-20; cf. Jn 15:16). Their mission among men in the name and in the power of Christ is guaranteed success through the effective

word of Christ (Jn 17:20-21). The frequent expressions ‘the twelve’, ‘one of the twelve’ show how clearly the distinct unity of the Apostolic College was recognized. They are still ‘the twelve’ after Judas’ defection and death (Jn 20:24’ 1 Cor 15:5).

Their special call is mentioned in the *Epistle of Barnabas*, 5:19, and either of the titles of the *Didache* bears witness to the recognition of their corporate unity. Their commission, authority and powers are given to them as a body. After the Ascension, the defection of Judas from their number must be made good; the college must be completed.

### **Mathias, Paul, and Barnabas**

Although not called by Christ himself, Matthias clearly ranks as an Apostle. After his choice, under divine guidance, (Acts 1:24-25), he is ‘numbered with the eleven apostles’ (Acts 1:16). Their mission in itself is universal and enduring, and it must be safeguarded. Yet they themselves are clearly mortal men (Jn 16:2; 21:18-19, 23), and it is noteworthy that the martyrdom of James (Acts 12:2) does not call for an identical completion of the ‘twelve’. They have been chosen as eyewitnesses of the Lord, and that personal testimony will sooner or later end in the death of all. However, their witness can and must endure; their mission, with its necessary authority is to all men, to the end of time. Even in their lifetime, God entrusts the same essential Apostolic office certainly to Paul (Acts 9:15 and 22:21) and most probably to Barnabas (Acts 13:2; 1 Cor 9:5-6). Certainly Paul always claimed the fullness of the Apostolic office, and