



The making of the New Apostolic Church (12)

An unceasing urge to complement the College of Apostles

The college of Apostles was getting smaller and smaller. In 1858 the eight remaining Apostles had agreed that God would once more take the Apostle ministry away. However, Taplin and Geyer, the two most remarkable Prophets of the apostolic church of their time, felt urged by the Spirit of God to call more Apostles to complement the college of Apostles.

Apostle Carlyle's death on 28 January 1855 was experienced as a heavy blow. The Angel Evangelist Charles J. T. Boehm had worked in close alliance with him and both were joint authors of a book on The Church in our time, which they published in German in 1843. It was Boehm whom Taplin, the "Pillar" of Prophets, called at Albury on 17 July 1859 to take the place of Carlyle. The words of his call have been preserved – but their interpretation depends much on intonation and then on the punctuation agreed on. They can be rendered as follows: "Jesus calleth thee, apostolic messenger. He would use thee, coadjutor, for him whom he hath gathered to himself. He shall recognize thee in the day when He shall appear. Seek to seal. Seek to gather and to bless the children of him who departed."

That is how the Prophet Geyer understood those words, taking them as a call to the Apostleship. The Apostles hesitated for some time, wondering what to make of the prophecy, and so the Prophets could take this as encouragement to persist in urging for a "perfection of the ordinances". As a consequence of Taplin's prophetic call the Apostle Woodhouse presented Boehm to the assembled north German Angels as his helper or coadjutor. But this was a far cry from Boehm laying on hands for sealing or ordination (as later coadjutors did) – this remained the exclusive right of the Apostle. Böhm continued to act first and foremost as an Evangelist with the Apostle who had to direct the work of other Evangelists. For several months each year he worked in Denmark instead of Germany.

Fill the empty chairs again

In 1860 the Apostles and Prophets assembled at Albury for their third prophetic conference. By that time Taplin had also died. He was the first of the "four Pillars" (of the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and Pastors) who died. Now the Apostles decided that God would also give the "Pillars" only once, meaning they could have no successors but only "acting Pillars" who fulfilled the tasks assigned to that position.

In retrospect Geyer wrote that he had called Boehm and Caird to be Apostles and fill some of the empty chairs reserved for Apostles in the council room where they assembled. The Apostles had after some hesitation rejected those calls. In the official minutes relating to that day – it was 30 May 1860 – such a call is not mentioned. The so-called record of prophecies only contains those prophecies which were officially sanctioned by the Apostles. And the Apostles had once again refused to accept an addition to their dwindling numbers.

Max von Pochhammer, who as an Evangelist had done a wonderful job in laying the foundations of several German congregations, confirmed in 1892 that Geyer had actually pronounced prophetic words on Boehm and Caird. He added, however: "This may sound as if those prophecies had contained an express call to the office of Apostle. But the wording was of such a kind that they were truly fulfilled when those two men were chosen as coadjutors or helpers of the Apostles."

Pochhammer's explanation is hard to accept because Boehm took up the position of helper to the Apostle Woodhouse before Geyer called him, and Caird was only made coadjutor five years after that call. The office of coadjutor only rose to prominence as of 1865. From then on the Apostles, further reduced in number and enfeebled through age, sent out the coadjutors to lay on hands for sealing and ordination in their stead.

Geyer reports to Schwarz

But let us look at the events of 1860 again! When Geyer returned from Albury he disembarked in Hamburg and stayed at the home of Friedrich Wilhelm Schwarz, the Angel of the local congregation, before continuing his journey home. In 1891 the latter wrote down what he remembered of their conversation on that occasion. He wrote that Geyer had told him that God had called Boehm and Caird as Apostles. He had been happy at first, but then Geyer had told him that the six Apostles had rejected those calls and would probably make the two brothers coadjutors. Geyer had expressed his discontent because first some Apostles had accepted the call of the two brothers and after the Apostles had conferred together they had said that they would not admit any new Apostles to their ranks.

Schwarz had advised Geyer to remain quiet and willingly submit to the Apostles' decision, seeing that the responsibility was theirs, not his. At the time, Schwarz reported, he felt that Geyer had gone to Berlin in peace. But that peace did not last long.

Geyer came to the conclusion that the British Apostles were resisting God's purpose. He inwardly ceased from obeying them and began to look around for allies among the ministers in the north of Germany. One gets the impression that they really hoped that Geyer might be right in insisting on the continuation of the Apostle ministry and that this was why they let Geyer have his way amongst them without reporting his activities to their ecclesiastical superiors.

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Additional information:

Coadjutors in the place of Apostles?

Coadjutor means helper or assistant and is a word mainly used in canon law. In the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches a bishop could be given an assistant or coadjutor who would in the course of time become his successor. The British Apostles did not include a right of succession when they chose coadjutors to assist them in their duties.

Already in 1838 they had ruled that in principle every minister should have a "help" or "coadjutor", and some Angels and Elders in large congregations in Britain were actually given such assistants. Only on 2 August 1865 the Apostles took steps to find Apostle Coadjutors and laid down rules for them.

In a special gathering appointed for that purpose some of the assembled Angels were designated by the Prophets as men fit to be Coadjutors to the Apostles. They actually became Coadjutors once an Apostle appointed them for a specified tribe. Before that time there had been only one Coadjutor: Charles J. T. Boehm. This had been due to the prophecy quoted in the article.

In 1865 the first rules were made to define the tasks entrusted to Coadjutors. They were to perform all the duties reserved for Apostles including ordinations and sealings, but only as they were authorised by the Apostle in charge of the so-called tribe.

In article 11 of this series the strange fact was mentioned that starting in 1858 twelve Prophets with the Apostle were to be appointed as a step towards a “perfection of the ordinances” although there were only eight Apostles. Something similar happened in 1865 when the Apostles started to find twelve Apostle Coadjutors at a time when there were only five of the original twelve Apostles left. If an Apostle was still alive he was given a coadjutor for his original tribe, or area of responsibility. However, the same Apostle was given one or more further coadjutors for the tribe or tribes he administered in the stead of a departed Apostle. Coadjutors of tribes whose Apostle was dead held even more authority than the other Coadjutors, for they were admitted to the Apostles’ conferences to represent their tribe.

If a Coadjutor once appointed for a tribe died, no other Coadjutor could be called to replace him. When Francis Valentine Woodhouse, the last of the Apostles separated in 1835, died in 1901 the surviving Coadjutors were not allowed to fulfil any apostolic functions.

Thus we find that at a time when they felt sure that their ministry would cease, the Apostles took steps towards a “perfection of the ordinances” by appointing those ministers of the Universal Church that were still missing according to the original plan. They succeeded in finding twelve Coadjutors, but failed to find the “Seventy” from amongst the Angels, meaning the “archangels” who were to replace the Apostles as leaders of the Church.