

THE NEW TESTAMENT BASIS FOR THE CONCEPT OF COLLEGIALITY

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ON OCTOBER 30, 1963, at the Second Vatican Council, a vote was taken on five questions proposed by the cardinal moderators to the assembled Council fathers with a view to revising the second chapter of the constitution *De ecclesia*. As three of the questions attempted to describe the collegial character of the hierarchy of the Church, they deserve to be cited here by way of clarifying the rather recent term "collegiality" as it is now applied to the episcopacy.

It was asked "whether every bishop who is in union with all the bishops and the pope belongs to the body of the college of bishops"; "whether the college of bishops succeeds the college of the apostles and together with the pope has full and supreme power over the whole Church"; and finally, "whether the college of bishops in union with the pope has this power by divine right." It is interesting to observe that while the great majority of the Council fathers voted affirmatively on all three questions, the number of those opposed increased as the questions progressed towards a clearer definition of collegiality.¹

Bishop Luigi Carli of Segni, Italy, the relator who presented the schema on the episcopacy,² strenuously opposed the favorable vote on collegiality and even declared that the whole action was null and void.³ He found support from Cardinals Ottaviani and Ruffini⁴ among others.

What was the cause of this opposition? According to Bernhard Häring, C.S.S.R.,⁵ the notion of episcopal collegiality is regarded by those who deny its reality as infringing upon the monarchical power exercised by a bishop in his own diocese. Those who espouse this view assert that only two kinds of monarchical authority exist in the Church: that of the pope over the Church universal, and that of the bishop in his own diocese.

¹ Cf. *Documentation catholique* 60 (1963) cols. 1587-88.

² *Ibid.*, col. 1670. ³ *Ibid.*, col. 1706, n. 3. ⁴ *Ibid.*, col. 1675.

⁵ Cf. *Catholic Messenger* (Davenport) 82, no. 4 (Dec. 12, 1963) 1, 13.

In his speech to the Council on this topic, Cardinal Ottaviani⁶ declared that collegiality sets unjustified limitations on the universal primacy of the pope. He insisted, in addition, that there is little or no foundation in the New Testament for the view that the original apostolic college possessed a collegial character. "The fact is that Peter only has responsibility for the whole flock of Christ. It is not the sheep who lead Peter, but it is Peter who leads the sheep."⁷

Fr. Häring has remarked that those who support the notion of episcopal collegiality put the emphasis upon "moral unanimity as a greater bond or motive for action," rather than upon the question of "jurisdiction and the might of law." This moral unanimity is regarded as a consequence of the sacrament of orders, specifically episcopal consecration, and of the unity of the Church. On this view the bishop through his incorporation into the episcopal college is not only obliged "to respect the vertical relationship of subordination to the head of the episcopal college, the pope," but also to "enter together into what could be called a horizontal community of pastoral work devised according to a common plan—one which facilitates the organic union with the pope."⁸

THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

In the light of these recent conciliar discussions and of the numerous articles now appearing in theological journals, we may here define episcopal collegiality as "the universal mission of the Christian apostolate" (the phrase is that of Msgr. A.-M. Charue, Bishop of Namur)⁹ which is incumbent upon the whole hierarchy of the Church as a collegial body. B.-D. Dupuy, O.P., asserts that the bishop

is first of all member of a college, of an *ordo*. He has been constituted guardian of the gospel, responsible for the growth of the Church. . . . He forms part of the order of those who have received the gift of the Spirit in order to continue, by their service and by their example, the work of Christ in the Church. . . . Episcopal collegiality is a fundamental datum of the constitution of the Church.¹⁰

⁶ *Documentation catholique* 60 (1963) col. 1687.

⁷ *Ibid.*, col. 1687, n. 3. ⁸ *Catholic Messenger*, *loc. cit.*

⁹ Cf. *L'Episcopat et l'église universelle*, ed. Y. Congar and B.-D. Dupuy (Paris, 1962) *Préface*, p. 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, "Vers une théologie de l'épiscopat," p. 22.

The aspect of this whole question which engages us in the present study is whether the New Testament provides a basis in fact for such a conception.¹¹ Did Jesus during His earthly life give any indication that He willed to confide the Church He intended to found to the charge of the apostolic college as such?¹² Did the Church of the apostolic age leave in her inspired literature any proof that thus had she understood the intentions of her Lord? Moreover, if evidence be forthcoming which substantiates the notion of collegiality, what relationship can be discerned between such a collegial body of the apostles and Peter, the primate of the Church? Finally, does the New Testament give us any insight into the relations existing between the college of the apostles and those charged with the direction of local Christian communities?

We intend to make Jesus' selection of the Twelve our point of departure. Then we shall examine what we know of their history during our Lord's public life. We wish to investigate the continuity, if any there be, between the Twelve and the apostolic college of the early years of the Church. Finally, we shall in the course of our investigation take cognizance of any other New Testament texts which may throw light upon the nature of episcopal collegiality.

JESUS' INSTITUTION OF THE TWELVE

According to the Synoptic tradition, Jesus' selection of a special group of disciples known as "the Twelve" is a significant datum of the apostolic reminiscences of the Lord's earthly ministry (Mk 3:16-19; Mt 10:2-4; Lk 6:13-16). That this tradition saw some special significance in this action of Jesus as *the institution of a group* appears from the fact that it is recounted in our Gospels in addition to narratives relating the call of certain of these same disciples as individual followers. Mark, who is followed by Matthew in this, recounts the vocations of two pairs of brothers, Peter and Andrew, John and James

¹¹ Cf. G. Dejaive, S.J., "Episcopat et collège apostolique," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 85 (1963) 809, who remarks that it is insufficient to add a scholion regarding the prerogatives of the episcopacy to the definitions of Vatican I regarding the papacy. "Il faut contempler, à partir de l'Écriture et de la Tradition qui la prolonge et l'interprète dès les premiers siècles, le sens et la structure de la fonction apostolique et du ministère épiscopal qui la continue."

¹² Cf. J. Bainvel, "Apôtres," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 1, 1650-51.

(Mk 1:16-20; Mt 4:18-22)—a story retold with some variations by Luke (Lk 5:1-11). Mark also records the call of Levi-Matthew (Mk 2:13-17), which is taken up by Matthew and Luke also (Mt 9:9-13; Lk 5:27-32). The author of the fourth Gospel alludes to the call of Peter, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, and one unnamed disciple who may possibly have been John (Jn 1:35-45).

Moreover each of the Synoptic writers expressly affirms that Jesus formed "the Twelve" *as a group*. Mark declares that "He formed the Twelve" (Mk 3:14). Matthew simply makes the assumption that his reader is aware of the group-character of the Twelve in his first reference to them: "And summoning the Twelve of his disciples, He gave them power over unclean spirits . . ." (Mt 10:1). Luke states that it was after a night spent in prayer that Jesus "called His disciples and chose twelve of them, whom He also named apostles" (Lk 6:12-13). We may note in passing that Matthew also takes it for granted that the Twelve are known as apostles in his day (Mt 10:2). This choice of the Twelve is also mentioned in the fourth Gospel, where towards the conclusion of the discourse on the Bread of Life Jesus declares: "Did I not choose you the Twelve—yet one of you is a devil?" (Jn 6:70).

It is noteworthy, I feel, that Acts repeats the list of the Twelve in describing the life of the little band of disciples prior to the first Pentecost (Acts 1:15). The whole context here appears to indicate that the author wishes to define the character of the primitive Jewish-Christian community of Jerusalem as a prelude to his narrative of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Twelve named here constitute the leaders of a community, which consisted of the minimal number requisite to possess its own governing body or Sanhedrin in the Palestine of that day.¹³ When we recall Luke's characteristic technique of linking various parts of his narrative together (his repetition of the account of Jesus' ascension forms a hinge between his Gospel and Acts), it appears probable that his resumption of the list of the Twelve at the opening of Acts reveals his conviction that they became in the apostolic Church the apostolic college. As G. Dejaifve, S.J., has recently observed, Jesus' "first institutional act" was the establishment of the Twelve.¹⁴

¹³ Cf. L. Cerfaux and J. Dupont, *Les Actes des apôtres* (Paris, 1953) p. 39, n. c.

¹⁴ G. Dejaifve, *art. cit.*, p. 810: "le premier acte institutionnel du Christ est d'établir Douze Apôtres qu'il associe plus intimement à son oeuvre messianique."

A closer consideration of the four lists of the Twelve found in the New Testament discloses the importance attached by the evangelical traditions to the group-character of the Twelve. While the names do not appear in the same order in each list (indeed, as we shall note, there are certain discrepancies between them) they consist of three series of four in which the same names appear at the head of each series, namely, Peter, Philip, and James of Alphaeus. This seems to have been a mnemonic device to aid the faithful in committing the list to memory. If this conjecture be correct, then the tradition regarded as significant the "Twelve"-character of the group. Other features of these lists seem to heighten this impression of the collegial nature of the Twelve. Peter is always named first (indeed, Matthew adds the adjective "first" to indicate Peter's place of privilege within the group; cf. Mt 10:2)—a fact that would suggest, given his clearly attested leadership both during the public life of Jesus and the early years of the Church, Peter's role as principle of unity within the Twelve. Again, the candor with which in the Gospels Judas Iscariot is always identified—as he also is in these lists—as the betrayer of the Master implies the importance attaching to the preservation of the memory of the Twelve as such (cf. Mt 26:14, 47; Mk 14:10, 43). Indeed, as Karl Heinrich Rengstorff has observed,¹⁵ the fact that traditions concerning the time between Judas' death and the election of Matthias speak of "the Eleven" can only be explained satisfactorily on the assumption that the Twelve actually existed as a group previously (cf. Mk 16:14; Mt 28:16; Lk 24:9, 33; Acts 1:26; 2:14).

A final proof that the evangelical traditions constantly affirmed the group-character of the Twelve may be seen in the variations of certain names, which appear to us without any satisfactory explanation. Is the "Thaddeus" of Mark and Matthew to be identified with Luke's "Judas of James" (Mk 3:18; Mt 10:3; Lk 6:16)? What is to be thought of the testimony of certain Greek manuscripts in which "Lebbaeus" is added to or substituted for "Thaddaeus" in Mark and Matthew? Whatever be the answer to such problems, their very presence bears witness to the fact that in the early Church the recognition of the Twelve as a group enjoyed priority over the accurate recollection of all the names in the list.

¹⁵ Cf. Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "Dödeka," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* 2, 326.

Is there any significance to be seen in the number "twelve" itself? Why did Jesus choose twelve and only twelve from among His disciples? Rengstorf's suggestion¹⁶ that this number is related to Jesus' purpose in fulfilling the divine design for sacred history is a plausible one. By His choice of twelve special disciples Jesus demonstrated His determination to create the new People of God. Thus the Twelve are not merely symbolic representatives of the twelve tribes of the old Israel, or a kind of Messianic royal retinue with which Jesus surrounded Himself. In constituting the Twelve, Jesus looked backwards to the creation of God's chosen people and forward to the constitution in the Church of the Messianic community of the end-time.

We have thus far attempted to show that there are certain clear indications that Jesus established the Twelve as a collegial body. We have also at least insinuated that there is some connection between this intention of our Lord and His indication during His earthly life of an intention to found the Church. We must now pose the problem of the connection between the existence of the Twelve as a group during Jesus' public ministry and the existence of the apostolic college in the primitive Church. As is well known, such a relation of continuity is denied by the majority of non-Catholic New Testament critics. Yet, as Vincent Taylor has admitted, "it is highly improbable that men who during the Ministry had been designated as 'the Twelve,' and to whom the Risen Lord had appeared, can have disappeared as a body before Pentecost or even immediately after it."¹⁷

It seems crucial for a New Testament basis of the modern concept of episcopal collegiality to be able to show a real evolution of the Twelve into the apostolic college. If it could be apodictically demonstrated that the Twelve, instituted by Jesus (as we have attempted to show) as a group, did not in the early Church advance to a new position as the college of the apostles, then it is highly dubious whether episcopal collegiality is really part of the Church's constitution, or that it is of divine origin. Unless a real link between the Twelve and the apostolic college can be shown to exist, it seems irrelevant to assert or deny "that the apostolic college acted collegially outside the Council of Jeru-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London, 1952) p. 624.

salem."¹⁸ In fact, it may be questioned whether one could demonstrate such a presumed collegial character in the activity of that celebrated synod of the Jewish-Christian Church.

THE TWELVE AND THE APOSTOLIC COLLEGE

Accordingly we must examine once again the New Testament data which might lend support to the conviction that the Twelve, appointed by Jesus in His earthly life, eventually became the apostolic college in the primitive Church.

We may begin by recalling a feature of Matthew's discourse in which Jesus instructs the Twelve on the occasion of their being sent out to evangelize the hamlets of Galilee (Mt 10:5-42). Modern commentators have observed¹⁹ that while the first part of Jesus' exhortation deals with the immediate task of preaching and healing during the Galilean ministry (Mt 10:5-15), the second section is concerned with the experiences of the apostolic Church during the first years of her missionary life (Mt 10:16-25). The reader will discern several indications of such a radical shift in the historical perspective of the instruction. Whereas in the early section the disciples are forbidden to work among the Samaritans or pagans (v. 5) and are instructed to restrict their ministry (after the practice of Jesus Himself in His public life) to "the sheep lost of the house of Israel" (v. 6), they are represented in the sequel as giving their (apostolic) "testimony" before rulers and pagans (v. 18). That such "testimony" is in fact the apostolic kerygma may be gathered from the promised assistance of "the Spirit of my Father" (v. 20). The mysterious coming of "the Son of Man" (v. 23) is probably a reference to the destruction of the Temple in the year 70 A.D., which Matthew depicts in chapter 24 as a divine "visitation" of the risen Christ. The universal hatred in v. 22 (which implies a universal proclamation of the gospel) is ascribed to the fact that they will bear the name "Christian." They will even seal their testimony to the apostolic faith in Christ with their lifeblood (v. 21). It is instructive to recall that one of the principal parallels to this

¹⁸ *Documentation catholique* 60 (1963) col. 1687.

¹⁹ Cf. P. Benoit, *L'Evangile selon saint Matthieu* (3d ed.; Paris, 1961) p. 78, n. e.

second section of the Matthean missionary discourse is to be found in the Marcan apocalypse (Mk 13:9-13).²⁰

This development in depth, which permits Matthew to include here the experiences of the Church in the apostolic age, is a well-known feature of Matthew's Gospel.²¹ What interests us here, however, is the support it gives to Matthew's identification of the Twelve as the apostles (Mt 10:2).

The principal objections against an identification of the Twelve with the apostolic college of the primitive Church, who on the testimony of Acts and of Paul were the leaders of the Christian faithful in Jerusalem, are (1) the silence about the Twelve in the New Testament apart from the Gospels, (2) the notable difference in function between the Twelve and the apostolic college, and (3) the later development by which the term apostle is extended beyond the circle of the twelve members of the apostolic college mentioned in Acts 1 to include not only Paul and Barnabas but even lesser figures like Junias and Andronicus (Rom 16:7).

The argument *ex silentio*, which has been taken by many critics as an indication that the Twelve were only constituted by Jesus to share in His own public ministry and then vanished into oblivion in the early years of Christianity, becomes less formidable in the light of the following considerations. In the first place, the Twelve are explicitly mentioned (apart from the Gospels) in three different New Testament books. It is the Twelve who settle the dispute between the Hebrews and Hellenists (Acts 6:1-6) by appointing the Seven to attend to the material needs of the young community. It will be recalled that in

²⁰ It will be recalled that it is also Matthew who has recorded the logion of the *universal* mission of the disciples "to all the nations" in the apostolic age. As G. Dejaive (*art. cit.*, p. 811) points out, this diversity of peoples may be another reason for Jesus' selecting not one but twelve to continue His mission on a world-wide scale; hence the Twelve were established "as plenipotentiaries of this mission of salvation." "En tant qu'envoyés, tous sont égaux puisqu'ils participent également à son pouvoir messianique et se voient confier la même mission. . . ." He adds: "La mission qu'il leur transmet, comme il l'a reçue du Père, est participée par chacun d'eux d'une façon indivise; mais elle l'est également par tous solidaires de la même mission—celle du Christ, Apôtre de Dieu—pour constituer un seul peuple de la diversité des nations, ils ne peuvent agir qu'en communion étroite les uns avec les autres. . . ."

²¹ Cf. D. M. Stanley, *The Gospel of St. Matthew* (2nd ed.; Collegeville, Minn., 1963) p. 58.

this same passage the role of the Twelve is chiefly thought of as devotion "to prayer and the ministry of the Word" (v. 4). That the direction of the Church also lies within their competence is clear from the whole narrative. From v. 6 of this pericope it appears certain that the Twelve were also called "the apostles." Here we might cite a remark of Rengstorf in support of his contention that the existence of the Twelve must go back to a historical act of Jesus during His public ministry. "The rejection of such an act makes the existence of a group of *apostoloi* named *hoi dōdeka* in the primitive community incomprehensible, while its assumption on the basis of the data of the Synoptics clarifies their existence and their special position."²²

The next mention of the Twelve occurs in the series of appearances of the risen Christ cited by Paul (1 Cor 15:5)—a passage which has the air of a confession or credal formula. "He was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve." One can only conclude that the testimony of the Twelve to the resurrection of Christ was authoritative in the early Church. The inclusion of a fifth appearance "to all the apostles" (v. 7) has led some to question the identification (elsewhere attested in the New Testament) of the Twelve as "the apostles." However, the addition of the word "all" in this verse probably indicates a group, enjoying the title "apostle," which early in the history of the Church included others than the original twelve. Already in this letter to Corinth Paul has acknowledged Barnabas' right to this title (1 Cor 9:6)—a right based, it would seem, upon his personal experience of the risen Christ (1 Cor 9:1). We note from 1 Cor 15:9 that these "apostles" stand in contrast with Paul's own claim to the title "apostle." He is an *ektrōma*, an "abortion," that is, one called to the apostolic dignity after the death of his mother Judaism, which "died," i.e., was superseded by the death and resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit. Thus "all the apostles" of v. 7 were disciples of Jesus during His earthly life and would certainly include the Twelve.

The last passage in which mention is made of the Twelve is found in the Apocalypse. The description of the Church as the heavenly Jerusalem refers to its twelve foundation stones, on which "were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Ap 21:14). As Rengstorf rightly observes, this picture of the Church reminds us that

²² Rengstorf, *art. cit.*, p. 325. ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

the new community which is the Christian Church cannot be conceived of without the Twelve.²³ I venture to suggest that only if the Twelve actually became the directive group in the primitive Church could this apocalyptic description of the heavenly Jerusalem be comprehensible to the Christians of Asia Minor for whom the seer wrote.

What is to be said of the second objection, that the role of the Twelve during Jesus' public ministry is seen to diverge notably in the New Testament from the apostolic office in the early Church? The difficulty can only be felt as serious if one were to equate these two groups in somewhat mathematical fashion, while ignoring the whole developmental process that went on between the days of the Galilean ministry and the first years of Christianity. During Jesus' earthly life He remained the Master, and hence sole leader of His disciples. Besides, in the Galilean period there was no community in any proper sense in which the Twelve could function as leaders. Moreover, the apostolic testimony to Jesus' resurrection and the saving significance of His death had not yet been created under the impact of the events which concluded our Lord's earthly career, and particularly of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, it can be shown that there was a real continuity between the role of the Twelve, whom Jesus chose "to be with Him . . . and to preach and have power to expel the demons" (Mk 3:14), and the apostolic college of the primitive Church. The apostolic kerygma was, in a true sense, the authentic fulfilment of that proclamation which Jesus sent the Twelve to make in Galilee: "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 10:7). The focal point of the apostolic preaching, the death and resurrection of Christ, was to the eye of Christian faith the inauguration of God's reign in this world. The evidence provided by Acts at least in the New Testament reveals that the apostles came to realize during the first years of their existence as the New Israel that their mission was primarily the spread and confirmation of the divine dominion through the mediation of the Church.²⁴ In an article

²⁴ Perhaps the greatest theological problem for the primitive Church was the meaning of the time between the first and second comings of Christ. The nostalgic remark of Heb 2:8b bears poignant witness to the puzzlement of even second-generation Christians, while the cynical remark cited in 2 Pt 3:3-4 discloses the mocking attitude of infidelity. Only gradually was the answer given to Paul through his missionary experiences and the great "tribulation" (2 Cor 1:8) which he expresses in Rom 11:25, viz., that Israel's entry

written some years ago in this periodical, I pointed out the danger of attempting "to express the relation of Kingdom to Church in a neatly conceptualized equation."²⁵ The same point may be validly made here to the present question of the relationship between the Twelve and the apostolic college. The coming-to-be of this latter body in the early Church was a development that of its very nature extended over a period of time and was directed by certain significant events of the Christian *Heilsgeschichte*; and their relation to one another can be grasped only through an insight into that privileged set of experiences recorded in the pages of the New Testament.²⁶

The basis of the third objection, namely, that the term "apostle" was, in the early years of the Church, extended beyond the limits of the Twelve, will likewise be seen to disappear once attention is paid to the historical developments which occurred shortly after the emergence of the Jewish-Christian community. It appears that the primitive community of Jerusalem took it for granted that any or all who would respond to the kerygma and enter the Church would come out of that Judaism in which they themselves had been born. But the message and martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 6:88 ff.), Peter's unprecedented admission of pagans to Christian baptism (Acts 10:44-48), and the new missionary tactics in the city of Antioch of the dispersed Hellenists (Acts 11:19-26) ushered in a new phase of Christianity. The Jewish-Christians were made to realize the universalist import of Jesus' command "to preach the gospel to all the nations" (Mt 28:19). With the conversion and missionary vocation of Saul of Tarsus the truly missionary character of the Church was revealed. It was this orientation of the early Christian Church which was mainly responsible for a widening of the notion of apostle. Thus it came to be applied to Barnabas, to Paul, and other missionaries who participated to some degree in the prerogatives of the original apostles. The period covered

as a people into the Church must await the conversion of the Gentiles. Once this perspective was perceived, the hopes of an imminent Parousia were replaced by a limitless vista of salvation-history reaching far into the future.

²⁵ Cf. D. M. Stanley, "Kingdom to Church," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 16 (1955) 1-29.

²⁶ Pierre Benoit makes this point admirably in discussing the reasons why there is no mention of the human head of the Church in Paul's letter to the Ephesians: cf. "L'Unité de l'église selon l'épître aux Ephésiens," *Studiorum Paulinorum congressus internationalis catholicus 1961* 1 (Rome, 1963) 74-75.

by the New Testament writings was one of great fluidity, for the evolutionary process of the coming-to-be of the Church was still being deployed. The "monarchical episcopacy had not yet been differentiated from the activity of the apostles."²⁷ Likewise, the very notion of apostle itself underwent a remarkable development. It is only by ignoring this existential situation of primitive Christianity that this third objection can be made seemingly cogent.

THE NATURE OF APOSTOLIC COLLEGIALLY

We are justified, I believe, in concluding at this point that the group of apostles, which appears in Acts as the leaders of the Church constituted in her existence by the descent of the Holy Spirit,²⁸ derived from the men known as the Twelve during Jesus' earthly life and selected by Him for closer association with Himself and His work of preaching the advent of God's kingdom. We must now inquire into the nature of this collegial character of the apostolic college by recalling the principal events in which the Twelve participated during our Lord's lifetime and by reviewing the functions of the apostolic group in the life of the nascent Church.

Attention should be drawn at once to a remark of Vincent Taylor to the effect that some of the logia addressed by Jesus to the Twelve in the Gospels "by wide consent are coloured with later Christian beliefs."²⁹ This opinion of the majority of modern New Testament critics, it will be noted, far from weakening our contention that the Twelve evolved into the apostolic college of the early Church, in reality strengthens it greatly. For why should the Evangelists or the creators of the oral evangelical traditions have "Christianized" such sayings if the Twelve had no part to play in the Christian Church?

We may begin by asking what led Peter and the early disciples gathered in Jerusalem before Pentecost to elect a candidate to succeed the unfortunate Judas. Certainly no reason can be discovered in the Old Testament texts cited in Acts 1:20. The most satisfactory explanation derives from Jesus' own action in selecting the Twelve

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁸ Cf. D. M. Stanley, "The Conception of Salvation in the Primitive Preaching," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 18 (1956) 243-45.

²⁹ Vincent Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 623.

during His public life.³⁰ Even prior to their enlightenment by the coming of the Spirit, the disciples seem to have realized that Jesus' action in sharing His mission with the Twelve had indicated an intention to extend His influence through this group beyond the limits of His own earthly career. Jesus' overt design of extending Himself, so to say, in space during the Galilean ministry revealed to His followers a deeper wish to prolong Himself in history.

When we recall the "life situation" in which the narrative of Jesus' choice of the Twelve probably arose, that is, the doctrinal instruction of the apostolic Church, we discover an additional argument that the first Christians saw an act of paramount importance for the life of the Church in the Master's creation of the Twelve. The alternative to simply admitting that the first Christians were wrong in this view is to grant that this action contained a lesson in the nature of the Church itself. For unless the early Church was convinced that this action of the Master contained a profound lesson for her concerning the nature of the new People of God, it seems unlikely that she would have preserved the memory of His choice of the Twelve in all four versions of the Gospel record.

We learn from the Evangelists that the Twelve shared *as a group* the most important experiences of Jesus' public life. They received, moreover, certain instructions from our Lord which were directed to them alone and to them as a body. We have already noted the significance which Matthew saw in Jesus' mission of the Twelve insofar as it provided a pattern and a program for the missionary enterprises of the apostolic age. Mark tells us explicitly that Jesus explained His parabolic teaching to the Twelve: "To you the mystery of the kingdom of God has been given; but to those outside everything comes by way of parable . . ." (Mk 4:10-12). The same Evangelist informs us that it was to the Twelve that Jesus taught the great lesson that service is the hallmark of leadership in the future Church (Mk 9:35-50). Again, it was to the Twelve that Jesus unveiled the dread secret of His vocation as a suffering Messiah (Mk 10:32-34; Mt 20:17-19; Lk 18:31-34). It was the Twelve who upon their return from their evangelical tour of the Galilean villages participated in the feeding of

³⁰ Cf. D. M. Stanley, "Reflections on the Church in the New Testament," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963) 390, n. 6.

the crowd in a deserted place (Mk 6:30-44; cf. Jn 6:67, 70). The Twelve were privileged among all Jesus' disciples to share with Him the events of the last week of His life in Jerusalem (Mk 11:11 ff.). It was they, as all the Synoptic writers expressly note, who sat down with Him at the Last Supper; hence it was between them *as a group* and Himself that He inaugurated the New Covenant (Mk 14:17 ff.; Mt 26:20 ff.; Lk 22:14 calls the Twelve "the apostles"). This last point is of paramount interest for the notion of collegiality. In the making of the New Covenant foretold by the Old Testament prophets (cf. Jer 31:31), the Twelve appear *as a collectivity* to play a role analogous to that of Moses in the making of the Sinaitic pact. They are thus constituted one mediating body which guarantees the unity of the Christian people. Jesus' institution of this New Covenant reveals, perhaps more strikingly than any other act of His earthly life, His intention to found the Church as His covenanted People. As Yahweh had welded the disparate, freedom-loving Hebrew clans into one People through the intervention of Moses, so Jesus by means of the Twelve, whom He had already formed into one collegial body by His special instructions and by sharing with them the most formative experiences of His public life, instituted the Christian Covenant that was efficaciously to realize the unity of the Church.

Of the many instructions addressed by Jesus to the Twelve as a group we must limit ourselves to one: that mysterious promise, "You shall sit on (twelve) thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In Mt 19:27-29 this remark is set in the context of the glorification of the Son of Man. Lk 22:28-30 explains it as a "being vested with the kingship which my Father vested in me." Thus from both these writers one receives the distinct impression that this investiture with authority, which is a participation in the universal lordship of the risen Christ, was not to await the great eschatological judgment of the end-time. Rather it was to become a reality with Jesus' exaltation. Hence this exercise of "judgment" (a term which not infrequently in the New Testament stands for the exercise of jurisdiction) is to be deployed in the Church, which is also the result of our Lord's elevation "to God's right hand."³¹

³¹ Cf. A. Feuillet, "Le triomphe eschatologique de Jésus d'après quelques textes isolés des évangiles," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 71 (1949) 701-22, 806-28.

The most satisfactory explanation of Peter's decision to replace Judas by electing a twelfth member of the group is to be found in the disciples' memory of this logion of Jesus to which we have just referred. Acts 1:21-22 gives an important insight into the role of the twelve apostles (as we may now call them) in the infant Church. Peter declares that the candidate for election must be "one of the men associated with us during the entire period that the Lord Jesus moved about among us, from the baptism of John until the day when He was caught up from among us." Such a one is to be chosen "to join us as a witness to His resurrection." This office of witnessing is—as has already been pointed out in Acts 1:8—the characteristic feature of the apostolic office. From what Peter states in the text cited above, it is clear that this *martyrion* possesses a twofold quality. It is based upon personal, collective, human experience of Jesus' public life, and it is pre-eminently the attestation of Christian faith by which the sacred and redemptive meaning of these events is elucidated for the Christian faithful.

Moreover, this *testimonium apostolicum*—as we learn from the later chapters of Acts—is directed both to those outside the community of Jesus' followers and to those already members of the Christian Church. The incident of the selection of the Seven (Acts 6:1-6) provides one example of the Christian witness of the Twelve within the community. It is also alluded to in several of the summaries which Luke has intercalated into his narrative. The Jewish-Christian community "met constantly for the teaching of the apostles" (Acts 2:42). They handed over to the apostles the proceeds of the sale of their property and possessions for the sustenance of the poor among the brothers (Acts 4:35). In their turn "the apostles gave testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power . . ." (Acts 4:33); "and many remarkable and wonderful things took place among the people at the hands of the apostles" (Acts 5:12). This role of the apostolic college continues the function of the Twelve during Jesus' Galilean ministry. But there is development in this continuity. Then they were chosen "to be with Him"; now they have the privilege and responsibility of remaining with the believing community to enlighten and deepen its Christian faith.

The apostolic witness was also deposited, in the first years of the

Church, before the disciples' Jewish compatriots; and here its purpose was *metanoia*, the conversion to Christianity of their former coreligionists. The first summary in Acts of the apostolic preaching is introduced with the words, "Then Peter stood up with the Eleven around him, and raising his voice addressed them . . ." (Acts 2:14). As in the old days in Galilee the Twelve had been chosen and sent to announce the good news of the imminent coming of God's kingdom, so in the post-Pentecostal era they fulfil their function of proclaiming the Christian gospel. The office of the apostolic college is indeed different from the role assigned to the Twelve, because it has been transformed by the dynamic salvation-event, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Paul in his turn attests the collegial character of the original apostles' role in the Church. In his letters the apostle constantly acknowledges his indebtedness to the apostolic traditions "handed on" to him by the apostolic college (cf. 1 Cor 11:23; 15:3-4; 2 Th 2:15; 3:6; Rom 6:17). How great was the extent of this indebtedness of Paul for the evangelical content of his own preaching and teaching may be gathered by adverting to the many references and allusions in his letters to the sayings of Jesus.³²

Nowhere perhaps does the Apostle attest his care to preserve contact with the apostolic college quite so dramatically as in the opening chapters of his letter to the Galatians. There is simply no other gospel than that which he himself has preached (Gal 1:6-9). He has personally assured himself, since the opening of his missionary career, of the validly Christian character of his preaching by laying it "before the leaders" in Jerusalem and receiving their solemn approbation of his doctrine—an event which for Paul guaranteed his *koinōnia*, his fellowship with them in the Christian apostolate (Gal 2:1-10). Galatian's testimony to Paul's awareness of his own dependence on and continuity with the apostolic college will be judged all the more sincere and significant when it is recalled that in this same passage he is very much concerned to assert the authentic character of his own apostleship and, in a certain sense, his personal apostolic autonomy. Still, if his apostolic calling owes its existence "not to any man, or any man's mediation" (Gal 1:1), he frankly admits his indebtedness

³² Cf. D. M. Stanley, "Pauline Allusions to the Sayings of Jesus," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 (1961) 26-39.

to Cephas and "the other columns" (Gal 1:18; 2:2-10) for their authoritative reassurance of the genuinely Christian character of his version of the gospel.

PETER'S ROLE WITHIN THE APOSTOLIC COLLEGE

It now remains to describe Peter's relationship to the other members of the apostolic college and his function within its ranks. In the first place, it should be noted that Peter's headship, so clearly attested in several New Testament books, clearly presupposes the institution of the Twelve. It appears evident that the Twelve were in existence some time before Peter's special role within their group was announced and created by Jesus. But another and more significant facet of this relationship between Peter and the Twelve should not be overlooked. Peter's office as primate—as is evident from Mt 16:18; Jn 21:15-16—did not derive from the Twelve but from Jesus Himself. On the other hand, the Twelve did not receive their powers and missionary mandate from Peter but from Christ—and this as a universal mandate.³³

Thus it is within the context of the existence of the Twelve that both Peter's Caesarean profession of loyalty and his constitution as head of the future Church are made. His profession of faith in the Master voices the convictions of the Twelve and is made in their name (Mt 16:15-16). Peter's possession of "the keys," his universally valid powers of jurisdiction (Mt 16:19), stand in necessary relation to the same powers conferred upon the Twelve as a group (Mt 18:15-18). While perhaps this Matthean text does not clarify fully the inter-relationship of Peter's powers to those of the Twelve, Lk 22:28-32 illuminates it admirably. The Evangelist has already noted that "the apostles" were present with Jesus at the Last Supper (Lk 22:14), whom Luke obviously identifies (v. 30) with the Twelve. Jesus' words to

³³ Cf. G. Dejaifve, *art. cit.*, p. 812; and he adds (p. 813): "... il semble bien que les décisions majeurs en vue du ministère ont été prises par le Collège apostolique et d'un commun accord. C'est en tout cas ce que le texte des Galates nous laisse entrevoir sur la manière dont les Apôtres ont envisagé concrètement leur mission respective. . . ." Père Dejaifve feels that the division was first between missions to the Jews or to pagans, and then later, when ethnic division seemed to prejudice the unity of all in Christ (Gal 2:11-41), the apostles followed a geographical division. Whatever is to be said for these observations, Paul's practice seems clear from Rom 15:20-21.

Peter, "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and you in your turn³⁴ strengthen your brothers"—placed as they are immediately after the logion concerning the Twelve—have reference to Peter's relationship to that group first of all. If the Twelve as a collegial body are to mediate the New Covenant to the future new covenanted People of God (and so function as a principle of unity in the Church), Peter is the effective symbol of that unity within the apostolic college. By his role as "confirmer" of the brothers, he guarantees the special fellowship (*koinōnia*) of the Twelve, which provides the basis for the fellowship or *koinōnia* of the Christian community.³⁵

The role of Peter as it is described in Acts, that is, as "primate" or leader of the entire community as well as of the apostolic college, can only be properly assessed if one accepts at their face value the affirmations of Matthew and Luke which we have just been discussing. Peter in Acts speaks for the group on the occasion of the election of Matthias. He speaks with authority for "the Eleven" on the day of Pentecost to the crowd. In later crises, when the life of the little community is threatened by the opposition of the supreme council of Judaism (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29-32),³⁶ it is Peter who acts as head of the Church. Peter makes the pastoral visitation of the newly-founded communities along the Mediterranean littoral (Acts 9:32-43), and he has the privilege and responsibility of taking the history-making step of admitting the first pagans into the Christian communion (Acts 10:1 ff). Peter is present at the apostolic synod in Jerusalem which grants liberty to Christians of pagan origin from Jewish observances, and so paves the way for the missionary work of Paul amongst the peoples of the Greco-Roman world (Acts 15:6-29). If James presides at this meeting in Jerusalem, one receives the distinct impression from Luke's narrative that Peter attends, in Msgr. Cerfaux's happy phrase, as

³⁴ The more common translation is "being once converted." The translation given above rests on the conviction that *epistrephein* here is the equivalent of the Hebrew *šûb*.

³⁵ Cf. G. Dejaive, *art. cit.*, p. 812, who describes Peter's role as effective symbol of unity within the Twelve: "Et l'unité qu'il est chargé par le Christ de garantir, n'est-elle pas l'unité d'un Collège souverain, établi par le Christ et où tous participent avec lui à une même mission universelle?"

³⁶ We draw attention to the translation of 5:29 which appears in *The New English Bible: New Testament* (Oxford-Cambridge, 1961) p. 206: "Peter replied for himself and the apostles. . . ."

"the legate of Christ."³⁷ The previous revelation made to Peter personally invests his words with a special authority to declare the will of the Master; and he takes no part at all in the debate. He is faithful to his function of "confirming" his brothers.

Yet Peter's conduct in Acts also evinces his fidelity to that express warning of Jesus to the Twelve that "whoever would be first must become the willing slave of all—like the Son of Man" (Mt 20:24–28). If Peter's primacy of place in the apostolic Church is a datum of Acts, this primacy is one surely of service.³⁸ He is represented in this book as continually at the beck and call of "the brothers." He goes with John to Samaria at the suggestion of the apostles. He explains to an indignant Jewish-Christian assembly that his admission of Cornelius and his family to the Christian faith is not a derogation from Jesus' aim to save mankind. He quietly disappears from prominence in Luke's narrative (save for the apostolic congress in Jerusalem) to go "to another place" in a quite mysterious manner. Peter is undoubtedly primate after the fashion of his Lord, whose place he has assumed upon the Master's command within the infant Church.

And the faithful, even outsiders, recognize this pre-eminence of service. They have recourse to him, as one of Luke's summaries informs us, as formerly they had had to Jesus during His life among them, for help and for cures. The little vignette in Acts 5:15–16 bears a remarkable resemblance to one of Mark's summaries of events in Jesus' ministry. Acts describes Peter's position and activity in the apostolic age as follows: "In the end the sick were actually carried out into the streets and laid there on beds and stretchers, so that even the shadow of Peter might fall on one or other of them as he passed by. And people from the towns round Jerusalem flocked in, bringing those who were ill or harassed by unclean spirits; and all of them were cured" (Acts 5:15–16). Mark had recorded a similar situation during Jesus' lifetime: "Wherever He went, to farmsteads, villages, or towns, they laid out the sick in the market places and begged Him to let them simply touch the edge of His cloak; and all who touched Him were cured." Inasmuch as these two passages occur in the works of distinct

³⁷ L. Cerfaux, *La communauté apostolique* (2nd ed.; Paris, 1953) p. 96.

³⁸ Cf. G. Dejaifve, *art. cit.*, pp. 812–13: "Pierre agit comme l'aîné, le 'primus,' mais les Onze sont avec lui et l'on ne voit pas qu'une autorité séparée oppose Pierre à ses frères."

New Testament authors, their converging testimony to the fact that Peter had assumed the role of "the sweet Christ upon earth" is the more impressive.

As G. Dejaive notes in an article already referred to, "the relation between Peter and the Twelve is at once more complex and less adequately distinct than our categories of *human law* might lead us to think."⁸⁹ It is worth recalling, I believe, that those who opposed the concept of episcopal collegiality during the recent session of Vatican II denied the validity of the notion out of a concern for the "rights" of the papacy and the "monarchical" jurisdiction of the bishop in his own diocese. In contrast with this group, those theologians who insist that service and a universal missionary orientation are the hallmark of the Christian episcopate find the conception of collegiality most congenial.

CONCLUSION

We have attempted to trace the grounds for the idea of episcopal collegiality in the writings of the New Testament. It seems clear that the origins of the group, which appears in the Gospels and elsewhere as "the Twelve," go back historically to Jesus Himself during the Galilean ministry. This determination of such a group by Christ has been shown by an examination of the evidence to be part of His intention to found the Church, indeed to be intimately associated with that intention. The continuity, which is of a very real nature, between the Twelve as a group and the apostolic college in the primitive Church has been presented as evolutionary or developmental in character—much like the realization of Jesus' intention of establishing the Church, which was not the work of a moment but the effect of a continuing historical process. Finally, we have seen that the New Testament passages apart from the Gospels and Acts that bear upon our theme repeat and confirm the impressions left by the records of Jesus' earthly history and the story of the early years of the apostolic Church.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 812.