

Mission Subsidy: New Testament Policy and Practice

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Though it may be encroaching a bit on tomorrow's essay, "What Is Subsidy?", yet I feel that from the outset we need to keep in mind one important aspect of the term "subsidy." It will be useful to remember that our English word is derived from the Latin *subsidiium*. When the Latin term was used in the singular, it generally mean "help" or "support." Used in the plural, it became a military technical term for "auxiliary troops" or "reserves."

My intention at this point is merely to call your attention to the fact that in speaking of subsidy we are dealing with something that by definition plays a secondary role. Subsidy is not an end in itself. It is the program that is being subsidized which is the *sine qua non*. To return once more to the picture of the Roman army: if the front line is but a motley crew fighting in an ignoble cause, then it will not save the day to have impressive auxiliaries. But a noble campaign and a grand cause, that lends validity to whatever help and support can be marshalled for it.

So let us state at the outset, subsidy is not a bad word when it is used to describe the aid given to a noble cause. And what nobler cause could there be than that of the Son of Man who came into our world to seek and to save that which was lost. But even he who in his humiliation "had not where to lay his head" allowed himself to be fed and clothed by a human mother. And we may assume that from his stepfather he accepted the standard help of training in piety and in a craft. When he went out on his public ministry, the only means of support that we know of, other than his rare miraculous providing, was the good-will of followers, e.g. pious women from Galilee (Lk 8:1-3), or Mary and Martha, Simon the leper, etc. Nor did he hesitate to send out his disciples, seemingly dependent entirely on subsidy. He instructed them to take, not ample provisions and extra shoes and staves, but merely the message, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 10:7). While they were proclaiming that message, the disciples were to stay in the homes of those who received their message and gratefully to accept whatever hospitality was offered them. Moving to the apostolic age, we can hardly imagine St. Paul ever being any more busily engaged in kingdom work than when he was answering the jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30) and yet even that event is followed directly with the notice: "And when he (jailer) had brought them into his house, he set meat before them."

Obviously subsidy is not a bad word when that subsidy is applied to the grant cause of seeing to it that "repentance and remission of sins be preached in Christ's name among all nations" (Lk 24:47). The question before us is rather: How do we best apply such subsidy? Where will our "subsidiium," given from believing and grateful hearts, do the most good for the Kingdom? We might even see our role here as being in obedience to our Lord's advice, given in the parable of the unjust steward, "Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings" (Lk 16:9 NIV). It must be our constant prayer that the Lord guide us in every investment of our resources so that they will yield the maximum of spiritual gain.

My assignment, as I see it, is to investigate the New Testament references that have a bearing on the question of how the apostles in general, and St. Paul in particular, applied their resources to the situation at hand in order to effect the greatest spiritual gain. I have chosen to group the material under two main headings:

- 1) help (*subsidia*) which the apostles *gave* to local congregations
- 2) help which the apostles *accepted* from local congregations

I. SUBSIDY GIVEN

The greatest blessing that Paul could give to any man was to share with him the truth that he himself first learned on that fateful trip to Damascus, namely, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. But sharing that message ought properly not be called a *subsidiium*; it was not help or subsidy. That was the program itself. That was what needed to be helped and advanced.

One of the very real helps or *subsidia* that Paul regularly employed for those whom he served was to remember them in his prayers. Typical is his statement at the opening of his letter to the Romans:

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times. (cf. also Phil 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Th 1:2; 2 Th 1:3; etc.)

Paul was aware that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much, and he did not deprive his congregations of this divine subsidy. Perhaps there is in that a reminder for us whose first inclination all too often is to think that subsidy is something that we carry in our billfolds.

An additional form of help or subsidy that Paul gave his congregations was the pattern of regular return visits. Luke outlines the return portion of the First Missionary Journey by saying, "Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith" (Acts 14:21,22). The reason for going on the Second Missionary Journey is reflected in Paul's words to Barnabas: "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing" (Ac 15:36). That Paul himself was much aware of the value of his presence is evident from his remark to the Philippians. Though he has a desire to depart and to be with Christ, yet he agrees, "It is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith" (Php 1: 24,25).

Not only did Paul favor the early Christian congregations with his personal presence and preaching, but he sent them letter of inestimable value. Of the 13 letters from Paul's hand, 9 are to congregations. They treat a variety of subjects, but all served for the upbuilding of the body of Christ. That their enduring value was recognized immediately seems apparent from the fact that from the beginning there was adopted a policy of exchanging the letters received (Col 4:16).

An important supplement to the letters Paul sent in his absence was the rather regular flow of men who represented him to the various congregations. We think of Gaius and Aristarchus, Timothy, Titus, and Tychicus, to mention a few. How Paul viewed these men is evident from what he says about the three-man committee headed by Titus that he sent ahead to compose the difficulties in Corinth. He writes: "As for Titus, he is my partner and fellowworker among you; as for our brothers, they are the representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ (2 Co 8:2,3). Of Tychicus he says, "Tychicus will tell you (Colossians) all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord" (Col 4:7). To the Philippians he writes: "I hope in the Lord to send Timothy to you soon. You know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the Gospel" (Php 2:19,22).

It is important to keep in mind that these were temporary assignments that were given to these men. Just as Paul conducted an "itinerant" ministry, so Timothy, Titus, and Tychicus were itinerant pastors. They were subsidy, temporary help given to a specific congregation for a specific situation.

There was, however, another area in which St. Paul gave valuable help to local congregations, and that was in the matter of directing the establishment of a permanent "local" ministry. On the First Missionary Journey, as Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps through the congregations they had just founded, we are told that they "appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord" (Ac 14:23). "Elders" or "bishops," together with "deacons," would seem to have been the standard arrangement for all congregations, though they are not always specifically mentioned in every case. On his return to Jerusalem, e.g., Paul called the *elders* of Ephesus to Miletus (Ac 20). Timothy in Ephesus (1 Ti 1:3) and Titus in Crete (Tit 1:5) were given specific guidelines that would be helpful in supplying these areas with qualified bishops and deacons. Obviously Paul was concerned to have qualified men serve in the congregations that he had founded. It is therefore the more significant that we do not find instances of Paul's itinerant helpers being placed permanently in any congregations. Even Titus seems not to be permanently associated with Crete, for Paul urges him. "As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there" (3:12) and to Timothy Paul writes from captivity: "I send Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the

parchments . . . Do your best to get here before winter” (2 Ti 4:12,21). Apparently Paul’s policy of subsidy did not include providing a permanent “expatriate” staff, but assumed rather a local clergy, chosen by and from the congregation, as we shall try to demonstrate presently.

The other thing that seems significant is that we find no instances of direct monetary support being given either by Paul or by a patronizing mother church. Unless key pieces of evidence have been overlooked, it would seem that there are no instances of direct subsidy being given either to fledgling congregations or their clergy. The notable instances of direct subsidy to a congregation, namely help to the saints in Judea, seem rather to be the other way around, i.e., daughter congregations subsidizing the mother (Ac 11:27-30; 15:1-35; with Gal 2:10; 1 Co 16:1-4; 2 Co 8&9). In other instances of monetary subsidy (direct or indirect) the recipients seem to be, not local congregations, but Paul and his itinerant pastors.

II. SUBSIDY PAUL ACCEPTED FROM LOCAL CONGREGATIONS

So far we have spoken of help that Paul gave (or did *not* give) to local congregations. We turn now to the other side of the coin, help that Paul accepted from local congregations. That very terminology may sound strange, for our immediate reaction no doubt is to think of the firm and repeated asseverations on Paul’s part that he did *not* accept anything in return for having brought the Gospel to people.

After Luke has told us (Ac 18:3) that Paul in Corinth supported himself by tent-making, we later hear the Apostle directing his stinging question to the Corinthians:

Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to free of charge (*DWREAN*)? . . . When I was with you and needed anything, I was not a burden to anyone. . . I have kept myself from being a burden in any way, and will continue to do so. As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine (2 Co 11:7,9,10).

To the Thessalonians, who had some misunderstandings regarding work, Paul wrote:

We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it, On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you.

And then he adds, significantly:

We did this, *not because we do not have the right to such help*, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow (2 Th 3:7-9).

Perhaps the clearest and fullest statement of Paul’s policy is in I Corinthians 9:1-17. The whole passage is pertinent. We have selected merely a few snatches:

Don’t we have the right to food and drink? . . . Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living? . . . Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of the grapes? . . . If others have the right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more? But we did not use this right, On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

The principle that Paul applied to his own ministry he invoked also in the case of his traveling companions and helpers. After establishing his own blamelessness, he continues to the Corinthians:

Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you? I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course? (2 Co 12:17-19).

To the Ephesian elders Paul asserted.

I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs *and the needs of my companions* (Ac 20:33,34).

The same policy seems to have controlled also the mission outreach administered by the Apostle John. In his Third Epistle he commends a certain Gaius who has been helpful in the past by taking in certain traveling missionaries who have passed through his region. John now asks him to repeat that kindness. He says:

You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, *receiving no help from the pagans*. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth (3 Jn 6-8).

The apostolic principle then would seem to be that a traveling ministry, going to people who had not called them, insisted on proclaiming the Gospel without charge and therefore scrupulously avoided taking anything for their personal support from the congregations that soon resulted from God's blessing on their preaching.

That the apostolic ministry was essentially a "trail-blazing" or "pioneering" effort is apparent from the standard (*KANWN*) by which St. Paul measured his ministry against that of the intruders who had broken into his Corinthian congregation (2 Co 10:2-18). They glory in other men's work and build on foundations already laid, whereas Paul was the *first* to come to the Corinthians. Elaborating on this principle, he later tells the Romans,

Thus I aspired to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was already named that I might not build upon another man's foundation, but as it is written, "They who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand" (Ro 15:20,21).

From such congregations Paul would take nothing for his personal support or the support of his co-workers. That blanket statement, however, needs at least three qualifications.

First of all, though Paul did not accept personal support from congregations, yet from the very beginning, he did not quench the spirit by refusing to accept hospitality which flowed from the heart of *individuals* who had been touched by the Gospel. If we had fuller records, we would no doubt find such generous people in the history of every apostolic congregation. Some are mentioned and come to mind immediately. Lydia literally insisted (*PAREBIASATO*) that Paul and his party accept her hospitality by making it a test of her acceptance into the Kingdom. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house" (Ac 16:15). In Thessalonica the unruly mob expected to find Paul at Jason's house, no doubt because he had shown hospitality to Paul (Acts 17:5). In Corinth Paul "stayed with" (*EMENEN PAR AUTOIS*) Aquila and Priscilla and accepted the use of Titius Justus' house as a place of worship (Acts 18:3,7). And so one might continue to enumerate instances of Paul's accepting personal support from individuals. It is worth noting that Paul's strong statements against taking anything for his personal support are included in letters to *congregations*, not to individuals. Apparently Paul did not ask, or even allow, himself to be included in a congregation's budget.

But is not the case of personal support by the Philippian congregation an argument against this point of view? Not at all. Rather, it substantiates the point. The Philippians were an exception, and Paul clearly states that. In fact, that's the whole basis of the compliment. He says:

As you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, *except you only*. (Php 4:15).

The very fact that Paul lists them as an exception establishes the fact that there was a general rule that they could be an exception to.

A second consideration: While Paul would take nothing for his personal support from local congregations, yet from the first he trained his congregations to support the Gospel's program of outreach to others. Perhaps Corinth will again serve as the best illustration of this. Though Paul had made the strong assertion to the Corinthians that he had never been a burden to them and that no one in Achaia would deprive him of the boast that he had brought the Gospel to them without any charge whatsoever, yet Paul unabashedly proceeds in the same letter to enlist Corinthian support for two "programs" of Gospel outreach. The one is the well-known collection for the saints in Jerusalem, which need not detain us here. The other is of greater interest, for Paul there asks the Corinthians to subsidize his mission outreach to the west. Paul is confident that the difficulties that have beset the Corinthians congregation will be settled, and he therefore looks ahead optimistically, saying:

Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you (2 Co 10:15,16).

Obviously Paul is expecting their faith to support and subsidize the Gospel as he heads for Rome and Spain., This becomes clear from the letter to the Romans, written shortly after from Corinth, in which he solicits the same kind of congregational support from the Romans. He tells them:

Since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to Visit YOU while passing through *and to have you assist me on my journey there* (Ro 15:23,24).

It will be apparent that Paul has no scruples about talking stewardship and urging congregations to support and subsidize the spread of the Gospel.

A third consideration: While Paul would take nothing for his *personal* support from local congregations, yet he does not hesitate to urge congregations to support the *local* clergy that is breaking the bread of life to them. Again it is the Corinthian situation that serves as the occasion for Paul to set forth the principle most clearly. The unequivocal statement is at 1 Corinthians 9:14: “The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.” In writing to Timothy (1 Ti 5:17,18) he indicates where the Lord has commanded this; he refers to Deuteronomy 25:4 regarding not muzzling the ox and to Jesus’ remark in sending out the seventy, stating that the worker deserves his wage (Lk 10:7).

But in addition Paul bolsters his point with a host of examples drawn from everyday life: a soldier does not serve gratis, the vinedresser eats of the grapes, the shepherd drinks of the milk, the plowman and the thresher work “in hope”, even the priest in the temple gets his food from the temple (1 Co 9:7-13).

Why does Paul stress this point? Perhaps it is because his policy of not accepting congregational support for himself and his fellow itinerant pastors was in danger of being applied by the congregations to their local clergy. For this reason Paul asserts so clearly that he too has the right to accept support. It is only that the Gospel not be hindered that he has foregone that right. But his example does not change the principle. Because Paul has been willing to forego support from people who have not asked him to come into their midst with the Gospel, that does not mean that a congregation can shirk its responsibility toward men whom they themselves have chosen and toward whom they have accepted an obligation. In that case Paul applies the principle stated to the Galatians: “Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructors” (Gal 6:2 cf. also 1 Ti 5:7).

To summarize: While Paul accepted personal support from individuals, yet in the interest of not having the Gospel hindered, he declined to accept congregational support for himself and his itinerant coworkers. Within the congregations, however, Paul assumed that the local congregations would support their local clergy—and we seem to have no instances recorded where outside subsidy was applied to help them in this obligation.

ITINERANT MINISTRY vs LOCAL CLERGY

Obviously a key point in such an analysis of the situation is the distinction between “itinerant” ministry and “local” ministry. Perhaps this is the point at which to attempt something of a clarification of terms. The apostolic ministry was essentially an itinerant ministry. If by definition an apostle (*APOSTOLOS*) was someone who was sent out (*APOSTELLEIN*) then it will be evident that he was not closely tied to a geographical place. And with that the great body of tradition and church history agrees. Though the apostles at first retained Jerusalem as their headquarters, even in the days of the first persecutions (Acts 8:1), yet (perhaps after a decade or so) they carried the Gospel to the four corners of the then-inhabited world in compliance with their Savior’s commission.

Of their individual efforts we know very little. When we get our first glimpse of John, he already is an old man and apparently not ranging very far from Ephesus, but Peter’s ministry seems to have taken him from Palestine to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pe 1:1)—and if tradition is to be credited, to Rome as well. Our richest source of information regarding Paul’s ministry is, of course, Luke’s account. There can be no doubt that Paul’s was an itinerant ministry.

Of equal interest to us, however, in the matter of subsidy is the status of Paul's co-workers whom we have lumped together with the Apostle in an itinerant ministry. That they held an office in the holy ministry is apparent from the terms Paul uses for them. For example, just as Paul himself is a minister (*DIAKONOS*) who holds a *DIAKONIAN*, so Timothy is a "clear brother, a faithful minister (*DIAKONOS*) and fellow servant in the Lord" (Col 4:7). Timothy is "our brother and God's fellow worker (*SUNERGON*)" (1 Th 3:2). Titus is my partner (*KOINWOS*) and fellow worker among you" (2 Co 8:23). Obviously these were not Paul's flunkies but valued sharers in the Gospel's ministry.

How were such men chosen? Unfortunately, we generally come upon these companions of Paul simply through chance references to them after they already are in the ministry. In only a few cases do we have any record of how they entered upon their service. John Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas when they returned to Antioch after delivering the first collection to the saints in Jerusalem. On the First Missionary Journey, after hearing that the Holy Ghost had separated Paul and Barnabas for the work, we are simply told, "John was with them as their helper" (Ac 13:5).

After the painful disagreement with Barnabas regarding the role of John Mark on the Second Journey, we are told, "Paul chose (*EPILEXAMENOS*) Silas and left" (Ac 15:40). In the course of the Second Journey Paul came upon Timothy and wanted (*ETHELESEN*) to take him on the journey, so he circumcised him" (Ac 16:3).

The picture that seems to emerge is that the apostles had some choice in the selecting of their co-workers. We might note in this connection that some of these men worked with more than one apostle. Both Mark and Silas, co-workers of Paul, were at times also in the service of Peter (1 Pe 5:12,13). The point to note is that these co-workers were not called by the congregations but were selected by the apostles and shared in their itinerant ministry. Hence in the matter of subsidy, they fall under the general policy of not accepting personal support from congregations, though they no doubt also benefited from the generosity of individuals.

That theirs was genuinely an itinerant ministry is apparent from the way in which Paul used their services. Instances abound of Paul's sending them here, there, and the other place. Timothy and Erastus are sent to Macedonia (Ac 19: 22). Timothy alone is sent to Corinth (1 Co 4:17), to Philippi (Php 2:19), to Thessalonica (1 Th 3:1). He is told to stay in Ephesus (1 Ti 1:3) and to come to Rome (2 Ti 4:21). Similarly Tychicus is sent to Ephesus (Eph 6:22), to Colossae (Col 4:3), and to Philemon. If conditions warrant, he or Artemas is to replace Titus on Crete (Tit 3:12). Cases could be multiplied to establish the point that the co-workers were itinerant, responsible to Paul directly rather than to a local Congregation.

How were these co-workers trained for their work? If they were Jewish, they no doubt brought a great deal of valuable O.T. knowledge from their homes and synagogues, Paul reminds Timothy of the good training that he had received from his mother and grandmother. That at Paul's time Christians of Jewish background retained something of an edge in their spiritual understanding and historical appreciation of the Gospel may be implied by the fact that in writing to the Colossians Paul lumps together Aristarchus, Mark and Justus and says, "These are the only Jews among my fellow workers (Col 4:11). There were, of course, also extremely useful co-workers who were not Jewish. Epaphras and Luke are included among the non-Jews who are with Paul when he is writing to the Colossians. And Titus seems to have been a convert to Paul's preaching, for the Apostle calls him my true son in our common faith (Tit 1:4).

All of these workers no doubt benefited enormously from Paul's formal preaching, from his personal teaching and training, and from the indefatigable love and zeal for the Gospel that he showed at every turn. In writing to Timothy, Paul can make the confident statement,

You know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings, what things happened to me in Antioch. . . (2 Ti 3:10f.)

That implies some rather thorough training. Training is also alluded to when Paul tells Titus:

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, *as I directed you.*

And Paul assumed that the people to whom he sent these workers would recognize their quality and approved status. After promising to send Timothy to the Philippians, he adds.

You know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the Gospel (Php 2.23).

Perhaps this last is the best description that one can give of Paul's worker training program. The picture is that of a son being trained by his father. That conjures up the idea of on-the-job training, a vicar working with his pastor, being guided and supervised in lesser tasks until he can be trusted with larger assignments, and finally even be sent out on his own to handle not only routine but also delicate matters in outlying congregations. If difficulties then developed when the man was out in the field, or if additional information or instruction was needed, there was always the possibility of assistance by letter, but of that we have only three examples. Either other letters have been lost or Paul's "graduates" were equipped to handle their assignments. That there were some disappointments, however, is attested to by Paul's lament over the defection of Demas (2 Ti 4,10; Col 4:14). If Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Ti 1:20) were members of the clergy, which seems likely judging by their proximity to the mention of Timothy, then there may even have been a few cases where discipline was necessary among Paul's co-workers.

To summarize, there would seem to have been no N.T. "school of the prophets" to provide workers for the church at large. Paul's co-workers were largely handpicked. While they no doubt brought good gifts and a measure of spiritual understanding, their training was accomplished primarily under Paul's personal direction.

That would explain the staff of itinerant pastors whom Paul had at his disposal, but how were the congregations supplied with what we have called a permanent "local" ministry? In trying to get an answer to that question one is tempted to go immediately to Acts 14:23 and cite the case of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, where Luke's statement is generally taken by modern translators to say, "Paul and Barnabas *appointed* elders for them in each church." In order that that not seem to imply an arbitrary choice on Paul and Barnabas' part, I am inclined to feel that the situation might better be served if we retain the KJV's when they had *ordained* them elders in every church." The reason for saying that lies in a characteristic of Luke's narrative style.

Luke describes great episodes in the life of the church. He has retained for us a record of pivotal points in history. In connection with these pivotal points and turn-in-the-road events he gives details and a full description. But he does not repeat the details when a similar event is later alluded to. I would submit then that it is not at Acts 14 but in the selection of the seven deacons in Acts 6 that we get Luke's description of how congregational procedure worked in choosing and inducting into office the public servants who were to serve the church in a specified place.

The three elements of induction into congregational service would seem to be, a) the choosing or electing by the people, b) the approval (or veto) of their choice by God, usually through his apostolic representatives, and c) the "appointing" or "ordaining" by laying on of hands with prayer and fasting.

In Acts 6 we find these three elements clearly in evidence. After being apprized of the problem, the Twelve gathered *all the disciples (TO PLETHOS TWN MATHEWN)* together and said, "*Choose (EPISKEPSASTHE)* seven men and we will *appoint (KATAMSTEOMEN)* them." That this was formally carried out is clear from the following:

This proposal pleased *the whole group* and they *chose* (the Seven)... They presented these men to the apostles, who *prayed* and *laid their hands on* them (Ac 6:5-6).

The case of the choice of Matthias may not be strictly applicable because he was not being chosen for a congregational office but for the apostolate, and yet the three elements for induction into office, though not specifically enumerated, may well have been present. The congregation may have *elected* in setting up the slate of two candidates and *divine approval* was sought, directly in this case, by God's control of the lot. With prayer (Ac 1:24) Matthias then was "*added to the eleven apostles.*"

The fasting, praying, and laying on of hands on Saul and Barnabas at Acts 13:3 is not really pertinent to the subject under discussion. Laying on of hands accompanied actions other than ordination into office. It was used in N.T. times for healings (Mk 5:23; Lk 4:10; 13:13), for blessing (Mk 10:13,16), and in praying for the

Holy Spirit (Ac 8:17 19:6). In the case of Paul and Barnabas it was the Holy Ghost, not the people, who had chosen them for a great, new step in the program of the church. Hence Luke is interested in telling us that they were commissioned for the new phase of work, not ordained into office.

Acts 14:23 does of course speak of men in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch being inducted into office. If Luke does not repeat details already given, then the “appointing” or “ordaining” that Paul and Barnabas did may simply have been the last of those three elements that we noted in Acts 6. The congregation expressed its *choice* of men. Paul and Barnabas *approved* their choice (or we might say: did not veto their choice), the approval was then formally conveyed by the “appointing” or “ordaining” to office with *prayer* and *fasting*. The verb used here (*CHEIROTONESANTES*) is not the same as that at Acts 6 (*KATASTESOMEN*). The NIV, in one of its

fairly infrequent footnotes, suggests the alternate translation: Paul and Barnabas *had elders elected*. Perhaps that is the happiest solution to the translation problem.

When Titus is instructed to “appoint” or “ordain” elders in every town in Crete (1:5), the verb used is again that of Acts 6 (*KATASTESOMEN*). Together with Timothy in Ephesus (1 Ti 1:3), Titus was to share in the important work of placing workers in the local congregations. He may assume that in both of these places the congregations by election indicated their choice of men for elders and deacons. Their choices were submitted for apostolic approval, vested in Titus and Timothy. Timothy’s task, as described in connection with deacons, though it no doubt applied also to elders, is, “They must first be tested, and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons” (or elders) (1 Ti 3:10). If the task of the apostolic representatives was essentially that of approval or vetoing the congregation’s choice, then we will understand the use that Timothy and Titus are to make of those rather comprehensive listings of qualifications that Paul outlines. They are to lay hands suddenly on no man” (1 Ti 5:22) but rather to screen the candidates for the local clergy carefully lest harm come to the body of Christ.

You may ask: What has all this to do with subsidy? Two points might be noted. If the above distinction is valid, then one seemingly could conclude that the elders and deacons of the apostolic age were not “itinerant” but “local” ministry. As such they had an obligation toward their calling body, i.e., they were answerable primarily to their congregations, not to Paul. Hence they would not fall under Paul’s policy of not taking support lest the Gospel be hindered. And rightly so. Having “local” people accept support was not so likely to hinder the Gospel. It was Paul and his traveling missionaries who stood in danger of looking like fly-by-night teachers and disreputable tutors who fleeced gullible learners. Hence Paul wisely refrained from accepting support for himself, but he did not hesitate to apply to the congregations and their local clergy the principle that those who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.

The second point is merely the reverse of the same coin. A congregation, in exercising its right to choose elders and deacons thereby obligated itself to support the men called. To the congregations Paul says, “Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor” (Gal 6:6). That there could be adjustments in cases of local difficulty or hardship is not ruled out (2 Co 8:13-15), but the general policy would seem to be that Paul refrained from issuing a general appeal to the church at large to subsidize the operation of even fledgling local congregations.

How could such a system work? The rapid expansion of the Christian Church is eloquent testimony to the fact that the system *did* work, and so we ask ourselves: What resources did it have to work with? First and foremost, the apostolic church lived by the Word. Only implicit trust in Christ’s Word and Promise could move the early Christians to face up to the enormous task of evangelizing a whole world. In the flush of its first love for the Gospel, the apostolic church was able to accomplish truly tremendous things.

Secondly, we need to keep in mind that the apostolic church was blessed with a rich measure of special spiritual gifts. The situation in the Corinthian congregation does not seem to have been unusual in that it alone had special spiritual gifts, or even that it had them in greater quantity than other congregations. We know of their situation simply because Paul had to instruct them regarding the proper use and valuation of such gifts. We are specifically told that also the Ephesian congregation was blessed with “apostles...prophets...evangelists...

pastors and teacher” (Eph 4:11). And to the Romans Paul says, “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us” (Ro 6:6), and then he enumerates some of them: prophesying...serving...teaching...encouraging. . . contributing to the needs of others...leadership (Ro 6:6-8). No doubt all congregations shared in these gifts to greater or lesser degree. It is perhaps also in this area of spiritual gifts that we should find at least a partial answer to the question of how qualified men could be found so quickly to assume local leadership in the young congregations.

A third factor that may have been of advantage to the apostolic church was that it had not yet become conditioned to feel the need of special church buildings. The earliest structures identifiable as “churches” are the basilicas of the third century. But they are a far cry from the “house” churches of Acts and the Epistles. What would be very helpful for our present question regarding subsidy for church buildings would be if we had some knowledge of an intermediate stage between house churches and basilicas, let us say a church building seating about a hundred. How were they financed? Was subsidy necessary? But that information we do not have. Aside from a short, initial stint in the synagogue, worshippers in the apostolic age seem to have gathered almost exclusively in homes (Lydia: Ac 16: 40; Gaius: Ro 16:23; Philemon: v.2, Nymphas: Col 4:15, etc), though they did occasionally use also larger public facilities, such as the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Ac 19:9). At any rate, building programs seem not to have occasioned any need for subsidy in the apostolic age.

A fourth factor is one that I believe has occasionally been underrated in seeking reasons for the “success” of the apostolic church, and that is the rationale or the frame of mind that would have permeated a group whose nucleus at least, if not majority, came from a synagogue background.

One simply cannot overestimate the effect that the synagogue had on the Jewish mentality, particularly in the diaspora. The synagogue was the center of life for what was generally a minority group. It was their “church,” their school, their social center, their hostel, their relief center and soup kitchen. It replaced the Temple, but being forbidden to offer sacrifices, it turned increasingly to the O.T. Scriptures. It is the synagogue that made the Jews “the people of the Book.” It has aptly been said that the Jewish infant imbibed the Law and the Prophets with his mother’s milk. Such training in the Scriptures was invaluable preparation for the acceptance of Christianity. Without underestimating the difficulty of converting a Jew, one may nevertheless say that if an O.T. Jew could be convinced regarding the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, he could be turned into a mature, Bible-oriented Christian in a day. It was no doubt largely from such Scripture-oriented Jews and proselytes that the elders and deacons of the congregations were chosen.

But there is another feature one should not overlook, and that is the independence and self-reliance that the synagogue fostered. Lacking sacrifices, the synagogue had no priests. Nor was the synagogue ruler a pastor or spiritual leader. He was rather a caretaker, a sergeant-at-arms to keep order, and especially the program director who enlisted congregation members as readers and speakers for the synagogue services.

The synagogue was a democratic institution. It required only ten men, “sons of the synagogue,” to form a new congregation. The actual business matters of the congregation were handled by a board of elders that varied in size from place to place, but in all-Jewish communities (e.g., Palestine) and in the larger synagogues seems generally to have been seven men. The spiritual program, however, was handled by the individual congregation members. All the men of the congregation were eligible to take their turn at reading and explaining the Scriptures publicly. It is reported that in some places women and children also were allowed to read. I am not implying that all of this transferred to the Christian church, but the synagogue setting certainly does bespeak a situation where some members of the congregation would be willing to assume spiritual obligations and where the other members of the congregation would find it agreeable to elect them as elders and deacons who could then be approved by the apostles and ordained to the office of the Christian ministry. That further theological training could follow upon ordination is assumed in Paul’s direction to Timothy:

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Ti 2:2).

Here we see also the apostolic plan for the continuity of the local ministry.

And there is one final consideration: With the Jews being a persecuted minority, afflicted with a hard lot in hostile surroundings, it is unlikely that they could look for help or support outside of their own communion. Hence the synagogue bred a hardy, self-reliant type of person who had not come to depend on subsidy under Judaism and who did not look for such aid in the Christian Church either.

CONCLUSION

It would seem from the N.T. evidence that St. Paul and his itinerant co-workers as a general policy refrained from taking personal support from congregations, though they did accept it from individual Christians. The Apostles furthermore urged local congregations to support the local clergy of elders and deacons whom they themselves had chosen and toward whom they had accepted the obligation of support. While there certainly were continuing spiritual bonds between the apostles and their congregations (visits and letters), yet we have found no instances which would suggest that the apostolic church had any policy which obligated the mother church or sponsoring body to provide material aid, either initial or continuing, to newly-founded congregations.

Does that now imply that since the apostolic church seems not to have operated with subsidy to mission congregations, that we are now bound to the same? That might be a logical conclusion if all the conditions were the same. But are they? Surely, we have that same dynamic Word which still is the power of God unto salvation. And woe unto us if we ever neglect it or lose sight of its power and its indispensability in our mission outreach.

But virtually all of the other conditions have changed. In our worker training efforts we cannot count on an outpouring of special spiritual gifts such as that which marked the apostolic age and which provided so quickly a host of qualified men.

Furthermore, I believe it is fair to say that many of our mission prospects today are much "rawer" material than were those who formed the nucleus of the apostolic congregations. We cannot count on any knowledge of a Covenant-God who has promised his Messiah, as could Paul in speaking to Jews and proselytes in the synagogue.

And finally, even the emergence of the Christian Church as a recognizable entity has, in some areas at least, had the adverse effect of engendering in prospects a preconceived notion of what buildings and facilities are needed to convey the image of a respectable and respected "church."

The N.T. Church seemingly did not operate with subsidy, but that does not bind us in the changed conditions under which we must work. We need carefully and soberly to assess the situation of our day, to apply ourselves with prayerful earnestness to the knotty questions that arise both with having and not having a program of subsidy, and then to let the Holy Spirit direct us to decisions that will best further his work. The real question is not *whether* but *how* we are going to use the manifold gifts that a gracious Savior-God has laid into our hands.