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## Alastair Campbell

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# 'Do the Work of an Evangelist'

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*Mr. Campbell, who teaches at Spurgeon's College, is engaged in research in the Pastoral Epistles. This by-product of his study tackles a theme of some importance for the mission of the church today.*

Considering the centrality of the gospel in the New Testament and the importance of evangelism in the early church it is surprising that the word 'evangelist' appears so rarely in the NT. Moreover, considering the interest in evangelism in the church of our own day it is surprising that this rarity has not attracted more comment and that the few appearances of the word have not received more attention.<sup>2</sup> 'Do the work of an evangelist.' (2 Tim. 4:5) So Paul concludes his farewell instructions to Timothy, and as churches in Britain nineteen hundred years later begin a 'decade of evangelism' it may be of interest to ask what these words mean, or at least what they meant. They prompt three questions: who or what is an evangelist? What is the work of an evangelist? To whom does this instruction apply? We can only hope to answer these questions by first putting them into the past tense: what was an evangelist at that time? What, for the writer of this letter, was his work, and who did he think was to do it?

### 1. What was an evangelist?

The work 'evangelist' occurs only three times in the New Testament,<sup>3</sup> and then not again in Christian literature for well over a hundred years, by which time it has acquired an entirely different sense. It does not occur in non-Christian Greek writing at all, so that for U. Becker to say in *NIDNTT* that the word is rare in

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<sup>1</sup> The RSV rendering has been retained in the title because of its familiarity. Elsewhere in this article the version quoted is the REB.

<sup>2</sup> An exception to this neglect is D. Y. Hadidian, 'tous de evangelistas, Eph. 4:11' *CBQ* 28, 1966, 317-21. His argument that the reference is to the writers of the gospel traditions has not received much support.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5.

pagan literature is an understatement, and for him to say that it is 'common enough in early Christian literature' is misleading.<sup>4</sup> I am not of course suggesting that what the word 'evangelist' is generally held to denote in these passages, namely travelling preachers or missionaries, was equally rare, or late in appearing, or so short-lived, but the word itself is rare and the places where it is found are significant.

The three occurrences of 'evangelist' are not scattered about the New Testament randomly. Rather all of them occur in writings that stem from the Pauline churches either just before or just after Paul's death in the mid-60's. This is not the place for a full discussion of the date and authorship of Acts, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles. If they belong to the period of the Apostle's lifetime, then all would agree that they belong to the end of it. If they belong to the years immediately after it,<sup>5</sup> they show the writers anxious to hold the churches of the Pauline mission true to the Pauline gospel and the Apostle's legacy. The outlook of these writings as regards both Paul and the church is remarkably similar, and seems to many people to be in some ways different from that of the earlier Pauline writings. Each of them has in recent years been attributed to the hand of Luke,<sup>6</sup> but I think it is safer to speak of a 'Pauline circle', a concept to which a strong form of the 'secretary hypothesis' virtually commits us in any case. If that is correct, the term 'evangelist' appears for a short while in a particular area of the emerging church. What did it mean?

It will be helpful to chart the changing meaning of 'evangelist' by reference to that of two other words, 'apostle' and 'gospel'. How the word 'apostle' came first to be used in the Christian church is hotly disputed, but there would be wide agreement that it originally denoted men and women who in the earliest days of the church experience a sense of commission from the risen Lord

<sup>4</sup> *NIDNTT* Vol. 2, 107-115, U. Becker, 'Gospel'.

<sup>5</sup> Because of the undeveloped state of the church order they reflect I would be very reluctant to put them more than twenty years after the Apostle's death. Suggestions that they belong to the same period as Ignatius seem to me wide of the mark.

<sup>6</sup> By 'Luke' I mean here the author of the third gospel, whom I believe to have been a member of the Pauline circle. Whether he was or not, his authorship of Acts is generally agreed. For his possible authorship of Ephesians, see R. P. Martin *NT Foundations* Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, 1978), 230. For his possible authorship of the Pastorals, see C. F. D. Moule *BJRL* 47, 1965, 430-52 and S. G. Wilson *Luke and the Pastoral Epistles* (London, 1979). Neither of these suggestions has met with wide approval, but the similarities are sufficient for us to speak of a Pauline circle. In the rest of this article I shall call the author of Ephesians and of the Pastorals 'Paul' without further discussion.

to go and preach the gospel, first in Palestine and then further afield. They may have constituted a closed circle with fixed membership, but if so it was a group considerably wider than the Twelve, though including them. We meet apostles in this sense in Paul's list of resurrection appearances in 1 Cor. 15:7, 'then to all the apostles'. It is in this sense that Paul himself uses the word in an early letter, referring to himself, Silvanus and Timothy as apostles of Christ (1 Thes. 2:7), and in the greetings at the end of Romans where Andronicus and Junia are said to be 'eminent among the apostles' (Rom. 16:7), and it is in this sense too that Luke has used the term of Barnabas and Paul on the missionary journey from Antioch (Acts 14:4,14). The same sense clearly survives in the Didache where 'apostle' means travelling preacher (Did. 11:3-6).

In the writings of the Pauline circle, however, the word 'apostle' has come to connote something more like 'founding father of the church'. Both Ephesians and the Pastorals lay some emphasis on Paul's apostleship in a way which, if it does not imply that he was the only apostle, certainly marks him as a member of a select group and as a final authority for those who come after.<sup>7</sup> Ephesians speaks of the church as built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets' (2:20), and follows this with a passage in which Paul reminds the reader of his claim to be an apostle by virtue of being the recipient of special revelation regarding the place of the Gentiles (3:1-13). The apostles are foundational by virtue of the revelation entrusted to them, and the Gentile readers are to know that Paul, in virtue of the commission and revelation given to him is to be reckoned among their number. In the Pastorals Paul twice asserts that he has been appointed a 'herald, apostle and teacher' (1 Tim. 2:7, 2 Tim. 1:11), and begins the letter to Titus with a particularly solemn and elaborate declaration of his apostolic commission (Tit. 1:1-3).

It has often been maintained that Luke has a different view of the matter, since though he too wants to restrict apostleship to the founding fathers, he is at pains to exclude Paul from their number. On the one hand, through the story of the election of Matthias, he spells out what it means to be an apostle: 'one of those who bore us company all the time the Lord Jesus was going about among us from his baptism by John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of those must now join us as a witness to his resurrection.' (Acts 1:21-2). On the other, apart

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<sup>7</sup> S. G. Wilson op. cit. 120f.

from the two references to Barnabas and Paul just noted Luke restricts apostleship to this group and never otherwise calls Paul an apostle. However, S. G. Wilson has shown the implausibility of simultaneously crediting Luke with a strong theological interest in thus defining apostles and also with carelessness in the use of supposed sources at just this point,<sup>8</sup> and wonders whether we have exaggerated the importance of apostleship to Luke. J. A. Kirk has successfully shown that the attempt to set Luke against Paul, and the later Pauline circle in this regard fails.<sup>9</sup> Luke's attitude to Paul is better seen in the vast amount of space he gives to his ministry, and to his encounter with the risen Lord in particular, so that Brown is surely right to say, 'In short the picture Acts paints is not that Paul was not an apostle, but that he was an apostle extraordinary.'<sup>10</sup>

This view did not, of course, originate with Paul's friends, but derives from Paul's own debate with his Jewish-Christian critics against whom he asserts his membership of the apostolic circle as they were defining it: 'Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?' (1 Cor. 9:1) One of Paul's aims in writing Galatians is to assert his claim to be a true apostle, which in this letter refers to far more than his activity as a preacher, but rather connotes someone directly appointed by the risen Christ to the work in his case of evangelizing the gentiles. Ephesians and the Pastorals strenuously this claim. 'Apostle' is now clearly changing its meaning, as words are inclined to do in the course of debate. As different interested parties restrict the denotation of a word, making it refer to those they wish to include and excluding others, so that in time, if they are successful, the connotation of the word changes too, as in this case.<sup>11</sup> The new meaning prevailed over the old and for most of subsequent Christian history 'apostles' has been synonymous with the Twelve plus Paul.

For the Pauline circle, however, that left a problem: how to refer to those who had been companions of the apostles in their missionary labours (including some from among the writers' own

<sup>8</sup> S. G. Wilson *Gentiles and Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts*, (Cambridge, 1973), 113-120.

<sup>9</sup> J. A. Kirk 'Apostleship since Rengstorf', *NTS* 21, 1975, 249-64.

<sup>10</sup> C. Brown in a comment appended to article on 'Apostello', D. Müller, *NIDNTT* Vol. 1, 128-37.

<sup>11</sup> For an illuminating parallel provided by the changing meanings of 'levite' in the OT see G. B. Caird, *Language and Imagery of the Bible*, (London, 1980), 68-72, and for another provided by the terms for various Christian offices, 81-3.

circle), and those who continued to spread the Christian message into new areas, people like Epaphras, through whom the Colossians and (probably) the readers of Ephesians had themselves first come to faith (Col. 1:7). Paul himself had tended to refer to such people as 'brothers', 'fellow-workers', or 'servants' (*diakonoi*),<sup>12</sup> terms which had emphasised their equality with himself. The Pauline circle on the other hand were anxious to make clear Paul's authority. 'Brothers' and 'fellow-workers' were terms which enabled Paul to include others within his ministry, but they obviously could not stand alone to describe the activity of missionaries. '*Diakonos*', while certainly used for those engaged in a preaching ministry basically meant a messenger or representative of somebody else and was already on its way to acquiring a specialized meaning with reference to those who assisted the overseer of a local church.<sup>13</sup> The situation called for a new word, and the word they coined was 'evangelist'.

The first ingredient of the new word was therefore negative, 'non-apostle', as '*diakonos*' in appropriate contexts meant 'non-episkopos'. But the word, of course, was not randomly chosen. Evangelists were so called because of their relation to the gospel, the '*euaggelion*', they proclaimed and the activity of evangelization, '*euaggelizesthai*' in which they engaged. The roots of this use of the word-group by Christians to describe their message and mission are disputed, some drawing attention to its use in the pagan world for the announcement of royal births and victories,<sup>14</sup> and others giving more weight to the influence on the early Palestinian church of the prophecies of Isaiah which Jesus was seen to have fulfilled.<sup>15</sup> It seems more likely that while the pagan use made the word readily understandable in the ancient world, the absolute sense of the word 'gospel' goes back through Jesus to Deutero-Isaiah and his oracles of one whose coming would bring the good news of God's saving reign. However that may be, at the time the New Testament documents were being written the word '*euaggelion*' meant just one thing, the Christian message itself, and in the Pauline circle the gospel as Paul had received it and understood it. An evangelist was the name given by the Pauline circle to a person who, not being himself an apostle, went about preaching that message and by means of it bringing new

<sup>12</sup> E. E. Ellis, 'Paul and his Co-workers', *NTS* 17, 1970-1, 437-52.

<sup>13</sup> J. N. Collins, *Diakonia*, (Oxford, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> e.g. G. Friedrich, '*euaggelizomai etc*' *TDNT* II, 707-37.

<sup>15</sup> P. Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium—1. Vorgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1968).

communities of believers into being. This is the conclusion of H. Merklein, who says that it provides a term for:

those who in the apostolic age preached alongside the apostles but were not subsequently recognized as apostles in the proper church sense of the word, and also for those who were engaged in missionary activity at that present time.<sup>16</sup>

It should be plain that no order or office of evangelist ever existed, and the word itself did not enjoy a long life in this sense. As Merklein says its dogmatic origins told against its adoption by the church at large. Quite simply the word was something of a tendentious neologism coined for a polemical and dogmatic purpose that was not shared by Christians as a whole, who appear to have continued cheerfully to refer to travelling missionaries as apostles and prophets. By the time 'evangelist' is heard again in the church<sup>17</sup> the word 'gospel' itself has undergone a profound change. Where 'gospel' now meant a written record of Jesus, 'evangelist' now meant the author of such a gospel. Although there are references to evangelists in the original sense of the word in Eusebius,<sup>18</sup> it is plain that Eusebius is merely quoting scripture and not referring to anything that survived under that name into his own time.

## 2. What was the work of an evangelist?

If we want to know what it was meant by 'the work' of an evangelist, we need to ask those writers who use the word what they understood by it. In the case of Luke the answer is clear. He only employs the word once but significantly as a descriptive title for Philip (Acts 21:8), the same Philip to whom he has already devoted a chapter of his second volume.<sup>19</sup> The eighth chapter of Acts describes how Philip was one of those who 'went about preaching the word' (*euaggelizomenoi ton logon*) (8:4). First we are told of his visit to Samaria, where great numbers believed his preaching 'about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ' (v. 12). From the fact that the Holy Spirit is not given to the

<sup>16</sup> H. Merklein, *Das Kirchliche Amt nach dem Epheserbrief*, (München, 1973), 346. Cf. L. Goppelt, *Apostolic and Post-apostolic Times*, (Göttingen, 1962, E. T., London, 1970), 191f. Goppelt however does not sufficiently stress the way in which this word seems to have been limited to the Pauline circle, which I think is important for explaining its rapid disappearance.

<sup>17</sup> Tertullian, *adv. Prax.* 21,23 and Hippolytus, *Antichrist.* 56.

<sup>18</sup> e.g. Eusebius, *H. E.* 3:37.2; 5:10.2.

<sup>19</sup> So Merklein, *op. cit.* 345.

new believers until apostles come down from Jerusalem it is sometimes thought that Luke is hinting at the subordination of evangelists to apostles, which in his own day would mean the importance of evangelists being true to the apostolic gospel. Too much should not be made of this, however. Howard Marshall points out that Ananias is used to bring the Spirit to Saul without any need of apostolic endorsement (9:17), and the delay in receiving the Spirit is better explained by the need to show that the ancient divide between Jews and Samaritans has been overcome in the church.<sup>20</sup>

Then we are given a long story of Philip's successful evangelization of the Ethiopian official (*'euēggelisato autō ton Iēsoun'*) (8:35). While this story is undoubtedly of interest to Luke for the part it plays in the story of the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles, it also serves as a paradigm of the work of evangelist. The story is remarkable for the way it 'presents Philip in a manner reminiscent of the inspired men of ancient Israel who were the objects of sudden and dramatic interventions of the Spirit's action',<sup>21</sup> but the heart of Luke's narrative consists of Philip's interpretation of the scripture that the Ethiopian is so conveniently reading. To do the work of an evangelist is to proclaim Jesus and to do so by the interpretation of scripture. That this is indeed Luke's point of view is confirmed both by another programmatic story, the conversation on the road to Emmaus,<sup>22</sup> where exposition of scripture plays a central role, and by the picture of Paul's preaching provided by Acts 13:16–41 and 17:2–3. Philip thus conforms to the pattern later outlined in a speech attributed to Paul that offers Paul's own ministry for the imitation of those who will come after: he taught them publicly and privately (20:20), 'insisted on repentance before God and faith in our Lord Jesus' (v. 21), and finally commended his followers 'to God and to the word of his grace', a reference surely to the scriptures (v. 32) from which he had himself taught them. The story of Philip's mission ends with him 'preaching in all the towns till he reached Caesarea' (8:40), where we find him twenty years later providing hospitality for Paul. Is there perhaps a recognition that evangelists can properly settle down and build churches?

What is presented in narrative form in Acts we find as a farewell charge from Paul to Timothy in the PE. The passage to

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<sup>20</sup> I. H. Marshall, *Acts*, (Leicester, 1980), 153.

<sup>21</sup> D. Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, (Basingstoke, 1979), 100.

<sup>22</sup> Luke 24:13–35. The connection is made by Marshall, *op. cit.* 161, among others.



which the words 'Do the work of an evangelist' form the conclusion begins at 2 Tim. 3:10. First we are reminded of the example of Paul the supreme evangelist: 'But you, my son, have observed closely my teaching and manner of life, my resolution, my faithfulness, patience and spirit of love, and my fortitude under persecution and suffering' (v. 10), and we are told that the work of an evangelist will always be hard in a God-rejecting world (v. 12f). Then we are pointed to the scriptures as the evangelist's essential equipment. They are said to 'have power to make you wise and lead you to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus', which is to say that they have an evangelical ministry, both leading people into the way of salvation and keeping them in it, being useful 'for teaching the truth and refuting error, or for reformation of manners and discipline in right living.' (v. 16) Timothy is then given a solemn charge to preach the word, using every means and taking every opportunity, and we notice that of the scriptures just described: 'use argument, reproof, and appeal, with all the patience that teaching requires.' (4:2) A further warning about the hardness of the task in these last times follows, and the whole charge concludes with an appeal to Timothy to live the life and do the work of an evangelist.

The passage in fact is arranged in the following chiasmic pattern:

- A. My teaching, manner of life and suffering, 3:10-11
  - B. The galloping progress of opposition and error, 3:12-13
    - C. The many-faceted evangelistic ministry of the scriptures, 3:14-17
      - C1. The many-faceted evangelistic ministry of the Christian leader, 4:1-2
        - B1. The galloping progress of error and opposition, 4:3-4
- A1. Your suffering, manner of life and ministry, 4:5.

If it be objected that much of what the scriptures do, and of what Timothy is called to do through them, looks more like what we would call teaching than evangelism, then I would reply that that is exactly the point! The work of an evangelist is not an additional duty that Timothy is being asked to take up. On the contrary the work of an evangelist sums up the preaching and teaching activity just described, since the evangelist is to be defined not by his audience but by his message, a message which comes as teaching, proof, correction or appeal depending on

where it 'finds' its hearers. Unbelievers need to be taught, if they are to be made wise unto salvation, and backsliding believers need to be evangelized, corrected by the gospel, if they are not to lose their salvation.

In all this the Pastorals are entirely true to Paul's earlier view of his assistant. Paul did not use the term 'evangelist', but he can describe Timothy as a 'fellow worker with God in the service of the gospel of Christ' (1 Thes. 3:2), and can tell the Philippians that Timothy 'has been at my side in the service of the gospel like a son working under his father.' (Phil. 2:22) For the men who coined the word 'evangelist' there was one adequate picture of the work of an evangelist, that provided by Paul himself. Had they spoken Latin they might have said, 'Si monumentum requiris. . .?', or more likely, since they were presumably also the collectors of Paul's letters, 'Tolle, lege!'

The bare mention of evangelists in the list of gifts given by the ascended Lord to his church in Eph. 4:11 might seem to tell us little of the work of an evangelist, but that would be a misleading impression, since in fact this verse agrees closely with the picture we have already formed from Acts and 2 Timothy. In the first place we should question the usual translation of '*tous men apostolous, tous de prophētas. . .*'. Rather than, 'Some to be apostles, some prophets. . .', we should read, 'It was he who gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists etc. . .'.<sup>23</sup> Christ has given the preaching and teaching ministries to build up the rest of the church. This has the effect of linking evangelists very closely with the other ministries mentioned, in particular with the ministry of the pastor-teachers. The only distinction to be made is probably that the apostles and prophets have passed on and their work is now performed by the evangelists and pastor-teachers.<sup>24</sup>

If, then, evangelists stand very closely with the other gifts mentioned, the threefold purpose of the ministry in verse 12

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<sup>23</sup> So A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, (Word, Dallas, 1990), 249, following Merklein, op. cit. 73-5.

<sup>24</sup> Lincoln, Op. cit. 250: 'In the post-apostolic period it is the evangelists who continue to carry out many of the activities of the apostles and it is the pastors who now exercise the leadership role, alongside the teachers, previously held by the prophets.' Lincoln has argued that prophets are to be distinguished from apostles in Eph. 2:20 and teachers from pastors in this verse, but I am persuaded by those who see the absence of the definite article with the second member of the pair in each case indicates that the apostles are explained as prophets in Eph. 2:20, (so W. A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, (New York, 1982), 97ff; D. Hill, *NT Prophecy*, (Basingstoke, 1979), 139), and the pastors are explained as teachers in Eph. 4:11 (so M. Barth, *Ephesians*, (New York, 1974), 438f.).

belongs equally to the evangelists as to the pastor-teachers. That purpose is defined as, 'for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.'<sup>25</sup> Although it has been fashionable to join the first and second members of this trio together so that the saints (i.e. all Christians) are to be equipped for doing the work of ministry, this has been rejected by recent writers including Lincoln<sup>26</sup> and Collins in the special study of *diakonia* already referred to. Instead we should see here three parallel expressions. The first word 'equipment' translates a word (*katartismos*) whose cognate verb Paul uses several times for the result of his pastoral and teaching ministry.<sup>27</sup> It is also used by Plutarch of the work of the philosopher and educator.<sup>28</sup> A similar verb from the same family occurs in the passage of 2 Timothy we have already studied, where the man of God is said to be equipped (*exērtismenos*) through the scriptures for every good work—though whether the man of God is the recipient of preaching or the bringer of it is moot. In view of 1 Tim. 6:11 ('But you, man of God . . .') I am inclined to think that Timothy (or the preacher) is himself the man of God equipped by the scriptures for every good work, and especially the work of an evangelist. The 'work of ministry' combines two favourite Pauline words for his own ministry and that of others, both inside and outside the congregation,<sup>29</sup> while upbuilding (*oikodomē*) is the word Paul uses elsewhere for the beneficial effects of intelligible speech in the congregational meeting.<sup>30</sup> All three expressions refer to the same thing, to the result of the work of those who bring the word of God, whether they are evangelists or teachers. If the recipients seem to be those inside the church rather than those outside, that is probably due to the particular perspective of this passage where the Christian readers are being assured that Christ has provided everything needful for their growth in love and walk worthy of the Lord. In particular he has provided the gospel, and people to teach it, to those inside the church no less than those outside, and such teaching is the work of an evangelist.

<sup>25</sup> Eph. 4:12 RSV. REB runs the first two together by translating, 'to equip God's people for work in his service'.

<sup>26</sup> Lincoln, op. cit. 253f.

<sup>27</sup> eg. 1 Thes. 3:10; Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor. 1:10.

<sup>28</sup> Cato Minor 65.5, Alex. 7.1, Them. 2.5–6.

<sup>29</sup> For *ergon*, see R. J. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, (Exeter, 1980), 161–70. For *diakonia*, see E. E. Ellis, 'Paul and his Co-workers', *NTS* 17, 1970–1, 437ff, and Collins, op. cit. chs. 10, 11.

<sup>30</sup> See especially 1 Cor. 14:3–5, 12, 26.

### 3. Who is to do the work of an evangelist?

What, finally, is the significance of the fact that this charge is given, not to an itinerating preacher, but to the leader of a local church? It may be objected that Timothy is not presented as a local *'episkopos'*, but as the personal representative of the apostle under instructions to leave his present post and join Paul in Rome. However this does not really alter the case, since the instructions given to Timothy at this point are clearly related to what he is to do at Ephesus. They do not read like a list of things Timothy is to remember to do before he catches the boat for Rome, but rather things Timothy is to do for the rest of his life in the place Paul has left him. In any case they are hardly private counsels. They are written to Timothy for the sake of those in the church who will hear and read the letter, and Timothy is to pass them on to other leaders (2 Tim. 2:2), for whom he is called to act as a model (1 Tim. 4:12-16). So whether or not Timothy was ever an overseer, in these letters he certainly models that role, and overseers are addressed through him and told to do what he does.

The Pastorals may therefore be making a deliberate claim here. The work of the evangelist, he is saying, is properly done by local church leader. Not that he alone is to do it, but that he is to do it. Not that the work of itinerating preachers is discounted, especially into new areas, but the church once established is not to rely on visiting preachers, but is to develop its own evangelistic ministry both to its own members and to the community in which it is set. If this is what is implied by the verse under consideration, then the Pastorals are here making much the same point as the Didache:

Appoint therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, meek men and not lovers of money, and truthful and approved, for they also minister to you the ministry of the prophets and the teachers. Therefore do not despise them, for they are your honourable men together with the prophets and teachers. (15:1-2)

The points of similarity with the Pastorals are clear: both concern the appointment of *'episkopoi kai diakonoi'*; both are concerned for the character of these men; the 'honourable men' in the Didache recalls the 'noble task' of the Pastorals (1 Tim. 3:1). In the Didache the new leaders are to fulfil the ministry hitherto exercised by prophets and teachers (also called by the Didache *'apostles'*). In other words they exercise a ministry of the word,<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> This is surely implied by calling the itinerants 'prophets and teachers', and therefore for those now to be honoured alongside them, even though the preoccupation of the Didache is with their leadership of the Eucharist.

and the congregations are urged to value such ministry. In the Pastorals the appeal is not to the congregation but to the leaders, and they through Timothy are called to do the work hitherto done by itinerants (whom the Pauline circle was calling evangelists). They are thus being called, not to add an itinerating ministry to their normal work, but to recognize the local congregation under its teaching overseer as a potent evangelistic force.

What conclusions can we draw from this discussion for the life of the church in our own day? It is not my premiss that if we understand more clearly how the first Christians used words or delineated ministries that we are bound either to use words in the same way or organize our own work just as they did. On the other hand a careful examination of what 'the work of an evangelist' actually meant to the NT writers will help us not to imagine that *they* necessarily used words as *we* do or had in mind the same structures of ministry. In this way we are better able to listen to the biblical writers as we seek to achieve in our day what they did in theirs. Accordingly I draw the following modest conclusions:

1. There was never an office of evangelist, but there were of course many who spread the gospel and founded churches, which they then proceeded to build up over a period of time. The need for this pioneer has continued into to our own day, and may even need to be rediscovered, and we may well want to call the people who do it evangelists, though not for the same reasons as those who first coined the term.

2. Evangelism was never a specialist ministry of people called evangelists. There were of course people who showed themselves called to particular ministries of evangelism and who were recognized by others as gifted in a special way. Paul's word for this is 'the grace given to me' (Rom. 12:3). But those who coined the word 'evangelist' to distinguish itinerant preachers from founding fathers did not think that the work of an evangelist could be limited to them. In our own day, as in every age of the church's history, there are those with highly effective specialized ministries, but the work of an evangelist as properly belongs to the local church leader in the exercise of his normal duties.

3. The work of an evangelist was inseparable from explaining the scripture, that is, from the work of a teacher, and this will still be true today. The scriptures provide the evangelist with his essential resource, so that however far from that centre the evangelist may need to begin in his work of building bridges for the gospel, it is to an understanding of the scriptures that he will be seeking to bring his hearers in the end. For the work of an

evangelist is not complete 'until we all attain to the unity inherent in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God—to mature manhood, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ.' (Eph. 4:13).