

Rudolf Schnackenberg, "Apostles Before and During Paul's Time," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.297-303.

## CHAPTER XX

### *Apostles Before and During Paul's Time*

**Rudolf Schnackenberg**

English translation by Manfred Kwiran and W. Ward Gasque

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In spite of the strenuous efforts of scholarship during the past few decades,<sup>1</sup> the origin and early history of the apostolate remain still quite obscure. Yet there seems to be a consensus on some of the problems which would not have been self-evident a few decades ago. This is true, for example, in regard to the question whether the Lucan concept of "twelve apostles" is an early or late usage. Contrary to the opinion of the renowned English exegete, J. B. Lightfoot, who gave impetus to the critical debate with his excursus on the subject in his commentary on Galatians (1865), most critics today believe that Luke presents a relatively late idea which already assumes an entire history of the concept of apostleship. But concerning the question whether Luke created this idea, or whether he made it fit his theology in a special way, the most recent contributions to research are unable to agree.<sup>2</sup>

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There is no lack of literature on the subject of Paul's concept of an apostle. Most of the material pertaining thereto is readily available. Paul's own understanding of his ministry as an apostle stands in obvious tension with the Lucan concept of an apostle as a witness to the earthly life of Jesus. On the other hand, the question of how far Paul's conception of an

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<sup>1</sup> Surveys of research: O. Linton, *Das Problem der Urkirche in der neuern Forschung* (Uppsala, 1932), pp. 69-101; E. M. Kredel, "Der Apostelbegriff in der neuern Exegese", *ZKT* 78 (1956), pp. 169-93, 257-305. — G. Klein, *Die zwölf Apostle* (Göttingen, 1961), pp. 22-65, gives an account of the present situation of the debate; J. Roloff, *Apostolat-Verkündigung-Kirche* (Gütersloh, 1965), pp. 9-37, presents the "main lines of the discussion concerning the apostolate" and attempts definite groupings. — For our examination, the following deserve special mention: K. H. Rengstorff in *TWNT* 1 (1933), pp. 406-48 [= *TDNT* I, pp. 407-47]; G. Sass, *Apostelamt und Kirche* (Munich, 1939); K. H. Rengstorff, "Der Apostel in der Didache", in *In Memoriam E. Lohmeyer* (Stuttgart, 1951), pp. 233-9; E. Käsemann, "Die Legitimität des Apostels", *ZNW* 41 (1942), pp. 33-71; A. Fridrichsen, *The Apostle and His Message* (Uppsala, 1947); H. von Campenhausen, "Der urchristliche Apostelbegriff", *StTh* 1 pp. 96-130; H. Mosbech, "Apostolos in the New Testament", *StTh* 2 (1948), pp. 166-200; A. Verheul, "De moderne exegese over ἀπόστολος", *Sacris Erudiri* 1 (1948), pp. 380-96; J. Munck, "Paul, the Apostles and the Twelve", *StTh* 3 (1950), pp. 96-110; A. Wikenhauser, "Apostel", *RAC* 1 (1950), pp. 553-55; E. Lohse, "Ursprung und Prägung des christlichen Apostolates", *ThZ* 9 (1953), pp. 259-75; C. K. Barrett, "The Apostles in and after the New Testament", *Svensk Exegetisk Arsbok* 21 (1956), pp. 30-49; L. Cerfaux, "Pour l'histoire du titre Apostolos dans le Nouveau Testament", *RechSR* 48 (1960), pp. 78-92; W. Schmithals, *Das kirchliche Apostelamt* (Göttingen, 1961); P. Bläser, "Zuni Problem des urchristlichen Apostelates", in *Unio Christianorum, Festschrift für Archbishop L. Jaeger* (Paderborn, 1962), pp. 92-107; B. Gerhardsson, "Die Boten Gottes und die Apostel Christi", *Sv. Ex. Arsbok* 27 (1962), pp. 89-131; G. Schille, *Die urchristliche Kollegialmission* (Zürich, 1967); A. Satake, "Apostolat und Gnade bei Paulus", *NTS* 15 (1968/69), pp. 96-107.

<sup>2</sup> It is G. Klein's main thesis that the apostleship of the twelve had its origin in the theology of Luke (*op. cit.*, pp. 202-10). In opposition to this, J. Roloff thinks that Luke has adopted existing traditions and made them serve his theology (*op. cit.*, pp. 232-5); likewise, H. von Campenhausen in *St.Th.* 1 (1948), pp. 117 f. Again different is W. Schmithals, who places Luke in a late tradition (he dates the Lucan writings as late as A.D. 120-30; *Op. Cit.*, pp. 243 f.) which developed in a branch of Hellenistic Christianity (*op. cit.*, pp. 233-8, 244-55).

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apostle of Christ Jesus has influenced the development of the idea is debatable.<sup>3</sup> The biggest question is still, which concept of an apostle did Paul find present when he joined the church? In his epistles there are a number of passages where he mentions and recognizes those who were apostles before him and during his time. Since these references seem especially important in the task of trying to discover the original view of an apostle in the early church, perhaps even coming nearer to the origin of apostleship itself they have received special attention in a number of recently published works. However, the incidental nature of the references to such apostles in the letters of Paul makes it quite difficult to understand. A renewed concern with these texts, which underlies the present discussion, need not be without value, although it cannot present the final word on the issue.

## I

Some preliminary hermeneutical and methodological considerations are essential.

From the casual remarks of Paul, we cannot expect to derive a comprehensive view of the conception, or conceptions, of an apostle as held by the early Christian churches; his witness, therefore, remains of limited value. It would also be inappropriate to assume that later witnesses (e.g., the deutero-Paulines, the Apocalypse, or the Didache) would be entirely without value, since they may also, in spite of the fact that they were written at a later time, show clearer outlines and more distinct lines of development than the brief remarks of Paul. The uncertain factor in our investigation stems from the scanty knowledge which we possess of this early period, whether we view it from the point of view of the travelling missionaries in the Didache who, surprisingly, are called "apostles" (which seems to suggest a continuing concept of an apostle), or whether we start with the earliest witness and view those later appearances only as degenerate forms. Without denying the importance of later witnesses, I will limit

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myself primarily to the Pauline texts as the oldest documents available. For the historian these are, in any case, vital.<sup>4</sup>

With reference to the methodological treatment of the Pauline statements, the following points still need to be considered:

(a) Paul does not take us directly to the origin of the concept of apostleship. Even the oldest letter in which the term "apostle" appears (1 Thess. 2:7) was written about twenty years after the death of Jesus. During this time the idea of an apostle could have been already developed,

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<sup>3</sup> Klein (*op. cit.*, p. 61), taking his cue from a remark by H. von Campenhausen, believes it to be a fact that Paul had nothing to do with the future development. This is true insofar as the idea of the "twelve apostles" is meant. It does not, however, exclude the idea that Paul in another respect had an indirect influence on the later image of an apostle. Cf. section VI of the present essay.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the methodological observations of H. Greeven, "Propheten, Lehrer, Vorsteher bei Paulus," *ZNTW* 44 (1952/53), pp. 1-43, especially pp. 1 f. He consciously places the evidence for later developments to the side and tries to gain a picture of the organization of the church on the Pauline mission field solely from the most ancient sources.

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changed, standardized, or even differentiated. Paul offers direct evidence only for the way in which the term was understood in his day, and he bears witness from his own perspective.

(b) It could also be, however, that Paul, by the use of a traditional formula, would become a witness of an earlier concept of an apostle, or even of one which he did not personally share. Of all the passages worth noting, only 1 Corinthians 15:7 deserves special attention in this connexion. The appearance of the resurrected Lord before "all the apostles" is mentioned. Whether or not Paul here formulated his own concept or made use of a traditional form is still debated by scholars. This we would like to examine.

(c) It would be incorrect and misleading to assume that Paul *must have* found a uniform concept of apostle in the early Christian churches. Even if he encountered divergent conceptions of an apostle, it is entirely possible that he had to fight for his own apostleship because, for various reasons, he was refused the recognition due to an apostle. D. Georgi deserves credit for being the one to point out that this is an often overlooked possibility. Since Paul in a dispute with his opponents never refers to a recognized characteristic of an apostle, Georgi attempts to win an *argumentum e silentio* by suggesting that at that time no such uniform designation of an apostle was in existence.<sup>5</sup> This argument needs to be examined and, if possible, supported by means of positive evidence.

(d) It is also important to note the place of origin and early Christian environment of the "apostles" mentioned by Paul, i.e. their connexion with certain congregations and areas. If it is possible that Paul came upon differing concepts of an apostle, it is worthwhile also to ask where these were recognized. The old interpretation of a "double" concept held by the church and the apostle, supported by K. Holl, the one typical of Jerusalem and the other of Paul, can be carried further by showing that it was not Paul who created a new concept, but that he found two or more differing interpretations already present.<sup>6</sup> *In concreto* this verification will

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be difficult, especially so for the opponents of Paul in 2 Corinthians, whose place of origin and self-image are highly disputed; yet this factor must be kept in mind.

## II

Because the first appearance of the expression "apostle" in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 refers to Paul and probably also to his co-workers, Silvanus and Timothy (see below), we shall best start with Galatians 1:17-19. Paul, who in confrontation with his opponents insists that he does not owe his apostleship to men (1:1, 11 f.), did not after his call (on the road to Damascus) go immediately to Jerusalem to consult with those who were "apostles before him." That is to say, prior to Paul there were apostles in Jerusalem, and at least one of them is named — Cephas. When Paul, exactly three years afterwards, came to Jerusalem, he wanted to make the

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<sup>5</sup> D. Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief* (Neukirchen, 1964), pp. 42 f.

<sup>6</sup> K. Holl, "Der Kirchenbegriff des Paulus in seinem Verhältnis zu dem der Urgemeinde," *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* II (Tübingen, 1928), pp. 44-67. According to Holl, Paul's concept of the church was in "extreme opposition" (p. 62) to the one represented by the early church in Jerusalem, and because of this the apostles also appear in a different perspective (p. 63). This contrast of Jerusalem *versus* Paul is still noticeable in much present-day research.

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acquaintance of Cephas (Ἰστροῦσαι), not just to meet him but also to discuss with this leader his future work (cf. 2:2).<sup>7</sup> "But I saw none of the other apostles, except James, the Lord's brother" (v. 19). Cephas is without question an "apostle"; but who are the others? Because the grammatical construction is vague, it is open to question whether Paul considered the Lord's brother, James, to be an apostle.<sup>8</sup> That the reference is to the "twelve" is also uncertain. At that time, long before the "apostolic council", they could still have been "in office"; it is only after the execution of James the son of Zebedee (Acts 12:1-2) that this group moves into the background. No new election takes place. But does Paul adapt himself to the language of Jerusalem? Or does he speak of the "apostles" from a later perspective? Since James, the brother of the Lord, did not belong to the twelve, and, according to our knowledge, did not do mission work, one has to ask whether he was even considered an "apostle". Yet we dare not dismiss it as a distinct possibility, not even after 1 Corinthians 15:7.<sup>9</sup> All that can be

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ascertained from this passage in Galatians is that three years after Paul's conversion there were apostles in Jerusalem, the majority of whom were not present during his visit.

Something more can be said, perhaps, if we compare 1 Corinthians 15:7 with this passage. The reference that Christ appeared to James and "then to all the apostles"<sup>10</sup> is obviously open to debate, because of the connexion with 15:5: "He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." Are there two parallel traditions present here? That is, was one tradition more interested in Cephas, and the other more in James, the Lord's brother? Does the phrase, "all the apostles", mean essentially the same group of individuals as "the twelve", perhaps only with the addition of James (as K. Holl has argued)? Or have the "apostles" no real connexion with the "twelve"? For methodological reasons (the investigation would lead too far and still remain unsolved) we must forget, for the time being at least, the question concerning the connexion between the "twelve" and the "apostles." Quite apart from the answer to this question, the following facts can be derived from 1 Corinthians 15:7:

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<sup>7</sup> The verb means, first of all, "to visit for the purpose of coming to know someone" (Arndt, p. 383). It was chosen thoughtfully in order to avoid the impression that Paul received instruction from the authorities of Jerusalem (cf. H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater*,<sup>2</sup> Meyer (Göttingen, 1962), p. 60. However, 2:2 shows that Paul valued the contact in Jerusalem at least for reasons of co-operation. J. Roloff, *op. cit.*, p. 86, believes that "the visit with Peter (Gal. 1:18) undoubtedly provided the opportunity for the exchange of παραδόσεις."

<sup>8</sup> W. Schmithals, *op. cit.*, pp. 54 f., supposes that the vagueness was intended by Paul: one could possibly include James among the apostles, though he does not care to do this himself. — In fact, it is quite conceivable that Paul himself was not sure who should be numbered among the "apostles" in Jerusalem. Concerning the difficult question of James, cf. P. Gaechter *Petrus und seine Zeit* (Innsbruck, 1958), pp. 258-310.

<sup>9</sup> J. Roloff, *op. cit.*, p. 64, n. 82, thinks that 1 Cor. 15:7 dispels every doubt concerning the apostleship of James, since a definite climax is implied in the order "James — all the apostles." However, this is not so certain, since the accent may also rest on the "apostles" (as a new reality); cf. next footnote.

<sup>10</sup> By placing πῶς after the noun which has the article, the noun is emphasized; cf. Blass-Debrunner, sec. 275:5. Following the evidence of the papyri, E. Mayser thinks, however, that the linguistic sensitivity for such an emphasis was mostly gone (*Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit* II/2 (Berlin-Leipzig, 1934), pp. 97f.

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(a) "Apostles" meant, at the time of Paul's writing, a cohesive group. This was recognized by K. Holl.<sup>11</sup> (b) This group could be situated in or near Jerusalem, since they are referred to in close connexion with James.

(c) These "apostles" based their accreditation on the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus, or at least they valued it (otherwise this tradition could hardly have continued in the present form). This conclusion is supported if it is true that Paul has not formulated the definition but rather has received it by tradition. G. Klein's argument<sup>12</sup> seems quite probable: In the larger context (vv. 9 f.) Paul lays great stress upon the fact that he is an apostle, although, in the immediate context, it is the appearance of the risen Lord which receives attention. Why should he, on his own initiative, have stated that the risen Christ appeared to "all the apostles", a group in which he himself would not have been included? But if he had met this phrase, which apparently excluded his own apostleship, as a traditional formula, then one understands that he now wishes to point out his own apostleship. The appearance before all the apostles does not exclude the fact that he also, as last among those called to be witnesses,<sup>13</sup> was granted an appearance, that he too was an

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apostle. His own understanding of what an apostle was need not match the concept present in that formula.

If that is correct, then it does not follow that the appearances of the risen Lord created the apostleship; but it follows that in certain groups (in Jerusalem) an appearance of the Lord was evidently a qualifying, confirming, identifying, and perhaps also primarily an authorizing fact for an apostle. It is because of this that Paul stresses the fact that his Christophany is viewed as an appearance of the risen Lord with equal standing to the appearances to the "twelve", even if his was the "last" one. The expression which has just been mentioned also underscores the fact that Paul is interested in a chronological order of events without being able to guarantee them in detail — for ἔσχατον (in contrast to ἐλάχιστος (v. 9)) is surely meant to be chronological. On the other hand, it is this list which shows that the appearance of the risen Lord does not in itself make apostles out of those who were fortunate to have had the experience. That the "more than five hundred brethren" (v. 6) all became active as apostles and as such found recognition, is highly improbable; such an army of "apostles" would have left greater traces in the early Christian writings.

Another passage, 1 Corinthians 9:1, also records the fact that at least some of the early Christian apostles appealed to an appearance of the risen Lord and, on this basis, were recognized as "apostles" in certain circles. The context of the verse, however, is not altogether clear. According to his exposition concerning the partaking of meat offered to idols (ch. 8), Paul wishes to make clear by his own example that one can do without "authority" or freedom, and even under certain circumstances must forgo it (cf. 8:9-13). He himself does not

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<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 48; cf. also U. Wilckens, "Der Ursprung der Überlieferung der Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen," in *Dogma und Denkstrukturen, Festschrift* for E. Schlink (Göttingen, 1963), pp. 56-95, especially p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 40 f.; *contra* W. G. Kümmel, *Kirchenbegriff und Geschichtsbewusstsein in der Urgemeinde und bei Jesus*<sup>2</sup> (Göttingen, 1968), p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Contra* J. Roloff, *op. cit.*, p. 51: πάντων in v. 8 includes πᾶσιν in v. 7 and carries it further. But then one would have the somewhat strange idea that the appearance to "all apostles" had not yet been concluded, i.e. that the risen Lord appeared successively to "all the apostles."

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make use of his right as an apostle to be supported by the church (9:12, 15, 18). But for this he was also apparently attacked. If he really knew himself to be an apostle, it may have been argued, he would not have forgone the support of the church. It is against this false conclusion that Paul wishes to defend himself (cf. v. 3), and he attempts, therefore, to substantiate his claim to apostleship. He asks, "Am I not an apostle?" It occurs to him that some deny him his right. It is for this reason that he continues to ask, "Did not I see the Lord?" Admittedly, it does not follow that an appearance of the Lord is an absolutely necessary qualification for an apostle;<sup>14</sup> but it is valuable to be able to claim it. In connexion with 1 Corinthians 15:7 it maybe concluded that "to have seen the Lord" was understood, at least in certain circles, as the mark or confirmation of an apostle. As far as Paul is concerned, this is not enough to attest his apostleship; he adds still another argument: "Are you not my workmanship in the Lord?" That is to say, the congregation brought into existence through his preaching is also evidence of his apostleship. Paul

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underlines this point in the following sentence: "If to others I am not an apostle (i.e., if they reject me as an apostle), at least I am one to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord" (v. 2). Who are the "others" who do not accept Paul as an apostle? It is probable that they are not any of the members of the church addressed by Paul, since he says they cannot doubt his apostleship. The indefinite expression allows for a number of possibilities: other missionaries, other congregations, perhaps also certain groups in Jerusalem. Here Paul is already conscious of opponents to his apostleship (as later more clearly — 2 Cor.) who could confuse the Corinthian congregation which he had founded (cf. 4:1-6), and he defends himself primarily against just such attacks. One may boast of an appearance of the risen Lord or claim successful missionary efforts; Paul was able to meet both requirements. It could very well be that the approaches of different groups lie behind the criteria mentioned above.

### III

There are other passages in the Pauline epistles in which an appearance of the risen Lord as the qualification of an apostle is practically excluded. In the table of greetings in Romans 16, Andronicus and Junias are named. They are kinsmen (*συνγενεῖς*) of Paul and fellow prisoners, "men of note among the apostles", men who were Christians already before Paul. Their characteristics leave little doubt that they were Hellenistic (Diaspora) Jews who became heralds of Christ after their conversions. They shared with Paul an imprisonment (in Ephesus? or in Antioch?); or, as a less probable alternative, Paul calls them "fellow prisoners" because they too had once been in prison because of the gospel.<sup>15</sup> At any rate, they were active in the missionary churches. (For our purpose it makes little difference whether this list of greetings is from a letter addressed to Ephesus or to Rome. Because the early conversion of these men points towards the East, to Palestine or Syria, they could have come to Ephesus, or even to Rome, from there.)

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<sup>14</sup> This was seen already by A. von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*<sup>4</sup> (Leipzig, 1924), I, p. 335, n. 5 [= ET, I, p. 322, n. 2]; cf. H. von Campenhausen in *St.Th.* 1, pp. 112 f.

<sup>15</sup> So W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*,<sup>3</sup> ICC (Edinburgh, 1954), *cit.* Cf. however, Col. 4:10 and Phil. 23.

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Are Andronicus and Junias actually considered "apostles"? The phrase ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις allows also the translation: "well known among the group of apostles"; they themselves need not be apostles. But the supposition that they are characterized as exceptional apostles among other apostles is more likely.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, it is also possible that they belonged to the church at Antioch and that Paul had met them there.<sup>17</sup>

However, since they are not mentioned among the leading men of

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Antioch, the "prophets and teachers" of Acts 13:1, it is also possible that they belonged to the "Hellenists" of Jerusalem, of which Acts 11:20 speaks. "But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus." Even if we assign these early Christians, Andronicus and Junias, to the Jerusalem church, we must count them among the "Hellenists", as their names suggest and as their later activity as missionaries confirms. However, it seems highly improbable that they had seen the risen Lord. Luke deserves to be trusted in his account as far as the time when these Hellenistic Jews turned to faith in Christ, that is, a time when the appearances of Jesus were already past.

Andronicus and Junias, therefore, belonged to a group of "apostles" who were early and recognized heralds of the gospel, without being able to lay claim to an appearance of the risen Lord. Paul grants them the designation "apostle", certainly not just because of his own understanding of apostleship, but also because he had found this concept already present in the church. We may assume that this way of speaking of "apostles" was widespread among the Hellenistic Christian congregations, as also among the Jewish Christians of the Diaspora. Luke is of little help as far as Antioch is concerned, where one might suppose this way of speaking originated. This is not too surprising when one looks at Luke's concept of an apostle. Yet those who are sent out by the leading men of Antioch (i.e. Paul and Barnabas) are called apostles (Acts 13:1-3). It is worth noting that in Acts 14:4 and 14 Luke again uses the expression for Paul and Barnabas. However one may interpret this "inconsistency" (a problem which cannot be dealt with here), these passages are, nevertheless, witnesses for the fact that such recognized preachers of faith were designated "apostles."

The concept of an apostle which appears here can hardly be traced back to "emissaries of the church."<sup>18</sup> That is a special concept which rather reminds one of the Jewish institution of the *š'êlûhîm*. Wherever such emissaries of the church are mentioned in the letters of Paul, they are clearly designated as such (2 Cor. 8:23: ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν; Phil. 2:25: ἀπόστολος ὑμῶν). The "apostles" referred to in Romans 16:7, without further qualification, could hardly have been anything else but itinerant missionaries.

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<sup>16</sup> So also most recent commentaries; *contra* B. Weiss and T. Zahn.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. A. Schiatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit: Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief*<sup>2</sup> (Stuttgart, 1952), p. 399. Schiatter thinks that they received the title "apostles" as emissaries of the church in Jerusalem, but there is no evidence for this. See following footnote.

<sup>18</sup> This is the main thesis of E. Lohse in his essay in *ThZ* 9 (1953). Against this view, cf. (among others) H. von Campenhausen, *art. cit.*, p. 103; W. Schmithals, *op. cit.*, p. 50; J. Roloff, *op. cit.*, pp. 39 and 209.

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It is in this connexion also that the expression "apostles of Christ" (1 Thess. 2:7) takes on significance. It is only a slight exegetical possibility to understand the plural as referring to Paul alone.<sup>19</sup> If one compares this

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with the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:19, where the reference to the proclamation "through us" is expressly qualified by "Silvanus and Timothy and I," then it becomes clear that Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 also includes his co-workers in the plural. In the address of the letter he refers to himself, Silvanus, and Timothy in one breath, although without the expression "apostle." "Apostle of Christ" Paul calls himself. But this need not be understood as a term coined by Paul. Rather, if Paul found the designation "apostle" already in existence, he could easily, in accordance with his personal understanding and manner of speech, refer also to the others as "apostles of Christ." Evidently, the "false apostles" whom Paul opposes in 2 Corinthians referred to themselves by that terminology (11:13). An appearance of the risen Lord to Silvanus, who already belonged to the church of Jerusalem (in Acts, he is called Silas: 15:22, 27, etc.), is not impossible; but for Timothy, it is out of the question. When Paul in 1 Thessalonians, then, calls himself and his fellow workers "apostles of Christ," this is an indication that this concept of apostle, i.e. as an early Christian preacher and missionary, was familiar to him. He probably knew it from the use which was made of the term in the church of the Hellenistic missionary region. When he later attaches the term "apostle of Jesus Christ" to himself and refrains from using it for his co-workers (cf. 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1 f.), this could mean that by now his apostleship had been questioned from various sides and, as a result, he lays greater stress on his own qualifications as an apostle. He is a "called" apostle, "set apart for the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1), authorized by Jesus Christ and God himself (Gal 1:1).

Even so, in his major epistles Paul is still very conscious of the fact that as an apostle he is also an active participant in the larger group of apostles. In 1 Corinthians 4:9 he brings the overbearing pneumatics of Corinth face to face with "the apostles", who, in their lowly existence, often faced with suffering and death, present a totally different picture from the one presented by those people who think of themselves as already "filled, having become rich, having reached the kingdom" (v. 8). The eyes of the Corinthians should have been opened by this comparison to see what the true Christian existence in this world is. It is clear that Paul here attaches himself to the apostolic band ("us the apostles"),<sup>20</sup> and according to the account which follows, and in view of his own hard apostolic life, one can scarcely doubt that he understands them to be preachers who labour in the Hellenistic missionary area. The apostles mentioned in this passage could hardly have had the experience of an appearance of the risen Lord; rather, they are recognized preachers. There is nothing to suggest that Paul was using a "wider" concept of apostle, since he includes himself in his specific under-

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<sup>19</sup> C. Masson, *Les deux Epîtres de Saint Paul aux Thessaloniciens* (Neuchâtel and Paris, 1957), *loc. cit.*, expresses some hesitation in connecting the title of apostle with these three passages, but only by reference to later passages which avoid using the title for Timothy. Against this view, cf. K. Staab, *RNT* (Regensburg, 1959), *loc. cit.*; E. M. Kredel, "Apostel", in *Handbuch theobogischer Grundbegriffe*, ed. by H. Fries (Munich, 1962), I, pp. 61-67, especially p. 65.

<sup>20</sup> Ἐσχάτους can hardly be connected as an attributive to τοὺς ἀπόστολους ("us, the last apostles"), and the plural can scarcely be understood as an editorial plural (so that Paul would be speaking only of himself). Cf. Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung* I, p. 334 (n. 3) [= ET, I, p. 321, n. 1], who suggests this.

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standing of an apostle (1 Cor. 1:1; 9:1 f.). Therefore, a certain tension arises out of 1 Corinthians 15:7, 9; cf. 9:1, where Paul attaches importance to the appearance of the Lord to him. If one wishes to connect these observations, it might be suggested that Paul knows different "apostles" who are active in the early church, for whom there were no clear-cut and uniform criteria of recognition. In some circles, especially in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, the experience of an appearance of the risen Lord was important; yet in other regions it did not matter. Which criteria were used outside of Palestine to give recognition to "apostles" remains an open question, in spite of the passages discussed.

It may be asked, to which group did the "other apostles" (1 Cor. 9:5 belong? Paul mentions them in connexion with his freedom as an apostle to request support from the churches. Verse 5 is probably to be taken with the following verse, where Paul asks whether Barnabas and he do not have the freedom to forget about manual work. That they might bring their wives along with them means that the congregations had to take care of them also.<sup>21</sup> In addition to the "other apostles," Paul also refers to "the brothers of the Lord and Cephas." These need not, however, be subsumed under the concept of an apostle. Yet according to the context Paul seems to think of them also as missionaries. The expression "apostle" is not, however, used with respect to them, nor is it in connexion with Barnabas. Thus the "other apostles" could mean "missionaries in the Hellenistic missionary area" (as 1 Cor. 4:9). This interpretation is supported by verse 12, where "others" who make use of their right to support from the church in Corinth are mentioned — surely, other itinerant preachers who had come into the church. Paul adds the "brothers of the Lord" and Cephas, because they were also known and respected in the church.

Alongside of Paul, those people whom he opposes in 2 Corinthians 10-13 have declared themselves to be apostles. The identification of these men, who so strongly irritated Paul with their missionary methods and presumptuous claims, is a subject of dispute among scholars, and it is impossible to re-open the question in detail at this point.<sup>22</sup> Paul's opponents are of interest to us only insofar as they claim the position of apostles. From Paul's words, which are partly merely ironic and partly passionately serious, we understand that they themselves used the expression. Twice Paul asserts that he

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is in no way inferior to the "super-apostles" (11:5; 12:11), and once he speaks of the "false apostles" as disguising themselves as "apostles of Christ" (11:13). In an insistent manner the expression "apostle" was claimed by them, probably with the desire to push Paul to the side; it

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<sup>21</sup> ἦ of v. 6 could correspond to μὴ of v. 5 (even though it could lead further; cf. 1 Cor. 1:13) cf. 9:8, 9; 11:22. Likewise most commentaries, among others: O. Kuss (1940), J. Moffatt (1938), H. Lietzmann-W. G. Kümmel (1949), J. Héring (1949) H.-D. Wendland (1949), J. Kürzinger (1968), H. Conzelmann (1969). — *Contra* J. B. Bauer, "Uxores circumducere (I. Cor. 9:5)", *BZ* 3 (1959), pp. 94-102.

<sup>22</sup> See especially E. Käsemann, *art. cit.*; R. Bultmann, "Exegetische Probleme des zweiten Korintherbriefes", *SBU* 9 (1947), pp. 20-30; J. Munck, *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte* (Copenhagen, 1954), pp. 162-89. [E. T. *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London, 1959), pp. 168-95]; G. Friedrich, "Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief", in *Abraham unser Vater, Festschrift* for O. Michel (Leiden and Cologne, 1963), pp. 181-215; D. Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus*; J. Roloff, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-82; W. G. Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Heidelberg, 1964), pp. 210 f. [= E.T., pp. 209 f.].

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is for this reason that he calls them ironically "super-apostles."<sup>23</sup> Whether they called themselves "apostles of Christ", or whether Paul only uses the expression, cannot be clearly determined from 11:13; yet one must consider the first as a possibility, as though they consciously desired to compete with Paul.<sup>24</sup> It appears that Paul does not necessarily intend to question their use of the term "apostle"; what he is concerned about, rather, is the true function of an apostle. That is why he calls them "false apostles", a term which he coined especially for the occasion (*hapax legomenon*).<sup>25</sup>

In the course of the discussion there does not appear to be a recognized test of apostleship on either side. The opponents of Paul have registered their claim to still other titles besides the designation of apostles — "servants of Christ" (11:23; cf. also 11:15) and "workmen" (cf. 11:13). These expressions point in the same direction and permit the designation of "apostles" to be applied to them, because they considered themselves to be primarily heralds of Christ who pursue his cause in the churches with the aim of winning people and establishing churches. No matter whether they did this with impure motives in order to gain selfish honour and influence, were jealous of Paul (cf. Phil. 1:15, 17), were "deceitful" (2 Cor. 11:13), or were "bad" workers (cf. Phil. 3:2); in this activity they considered themselves to be "apostles". Only in this way can the reaction of Paul be explained: he does not attempt to deny their intended activity as apostles and servants of Christ, but he takes care to show that he is engaged in the same activity and has the qualities which they claim for themselves, only in a much higher degree. In a "jesting speech" Paul states: "Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one — I am talking like a madman!" (11:23). The difference lies for him in the understanding of the position of the herald: instead of self-honour, presumptuous behaviour, and proofs of power, there is labour and suffering, weakness and misery. Again, as in 1 Corinthians 9, he defends himself against the misinterpretation of his refusal to accept support from the Corinthians: it is just this which is proof of his correct understanding of the ministry of an apostle (11:7-12).

It is worthy of note that the question of an appearance of the risen Lord

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is not mentioned, either by the opponents or by the apostle. If those boastful messengers were Palestinians ("Hebrews" — 11:22), it is probable that they would have claimed the experience of an appearance of the risen Lord; of this, however, we hear nothing; it evidently does not belong to their claim. Paul makes one passing reference to the "signs of an apostle" (12:12); this was probably a shibboleth of the opponents, who understood thereby "signs and wonders and mighty works," as can be seen from what follows. Paul, who can also claim for himself such demonstrations of power, recognizes these as signs accompanying the spiritually effective proclamation (1 Cor. 2:4; cf. Rom. 15:19). Prior to that, however, he mentions the successful endurance of all difficulties ἐν πάσῃ ὑπομονῇ, cf. 6:4,<sup>26</sup> which he evidently

<sup>23</sup> The conviction that ὑμερλίαν ἀπόστολοι cannot refer to the "first apostles" in Jerusalem, or to other men in the background there, but must be thought of in terms of the preachers who had come into the church is very prevalent in present-day research; cf. D. Georgi, *op. cit.*, p. 39; J. Roloff, *op. cit.*, p. 79, n. 129.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. D. Georgi, *op. cit.*, p. 39: "Thus with the ἀπόστολους Χριστοῦ in 2 Cor. 11:13 a self-designation of the opponents is quoted..."

<sup>25</sup> Cf. K. H. Rengstorff in *TWNT* 1, pp. 446 f.[= *TDNT* I, p.445.]

<sup>26</sup> The similar passage, 2 Cor. 6:4 with the catalogue of sufferings which follows, shows that Paul does not mean simply "patience", but rather the conscious acceptance and endurance of the labours connected with the missionary task. Cf. H. Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*<sup>f</sup>, Meyer (Göttingen, 1924), on 12:12: "The word is

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values as a greater "sign of an apostle" than wonders and mighty works.<sup>27</sup> This is the reason why he speaks with great hesitancy about the "visions and revelations" (12:1-5) which were granted to him. On the other hand, his opponents, it seems, used such things for their own boasting. Paul, by way of contrast, only wishes to boast about his weakness, by means of which he testifies to the power of Christ (12:9 f.).

Without going into the other possible claims of the opponents which marked their conception of an apostle, we can say that they considered a proclamation of Christ, produced by the Spirit and filled with power, as essential. Paul accepts this underlying conception of an apostle, but interprets the resulting image of an apostle in a very different manner. Christ himself must be proclaimed as crucified, and only in the second place as risen in the life of the one who proclaims (cf. 13:3 f.); or better, Christ wants to show his power of life to those who receive the gospel, primarily through the weakness of the herald.

The concept of an apostle, then, as a (charismatically effective) herald of Christ and itinerant missionary is confirmed through Paul's polemic against those people who caused trouble in Corinth. It is a concept which was in existence in the Hellenistic congregations of the Pauline missionary area.

## V

Upon what did the apostles who were active in the Hellenistic mission alongside of Paul base their claim to apostleship? Here one must be careful in drawing upon the references to the "super-apostles" of Corinth, since not all "apostles" would have acted in a similar manner (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9 ff.).

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According to 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 one may suppose that the opponents of Paul attempted to have their position certified by means of letters of recommendation; these cannot have been certificates of authorization from authorities in Jerusalem however, but rather recommendations from churches where these people had previously been active. Paul is here not only concerned with letters to the Corinthians, but also with those which had been written by them (3:1). Those messengers, in all probability, had the congregations give them letters attesting their "deeds"; this Paul had not done (cf. 12:11). For this reason, the letters of recommendation are no basis for assuming that these men had the official sanction of the Jerusalem church.<sup>28</sup> What Paul recognizes by his reference to "all the apostles," who are active alongside of him in his missionary area, and what he does not oppose in the "deceitful workmen" in Corinth, is the proclamation of Christ as such, which calls forth faith and establishes churches.

This observation throws light on 1 Corinthians 12:28. In dealing with the charismatic manifestations in Corinth, Paul, after he has stressed the diversity and the unity, the complementarity and the co-operation of the charismatic gifts, finally writes: "And God has

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thus used for positive accomplishments and describes the perseverance and intensity of the productive activity...."

<sup>27</sup> Accurately, E. Käsemann, *art. cit.*, p. 63: Paul gave miracles "only secondary importance".

<sup>28</sup> Cf. D. Georgi, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-6.

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appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers..." Are the ministries which Paul, for personal-subjective reasons, lists in the definite order of apostles, prophets, and teachers to be understood as charismatic offices which, like the gifts of the Spirit which immediately follow, are available to everyone who is baptized? Do we see here a charismatic constitution of the church, which consists only in gifts of the Spirit belonging to the church universal (i.e. above the congregational level) and localized only in individual churches where the gifts happen to be actually present?

In spite of the widespread acceptance of this hypothesis of Harnack, the reference to prophets and teachers should give one pause: these also had their place at first in local congregations. Certainly, at this point there appears a universal-church-oriented horizon, not with reference to the constitution of the church, but rather to the "principle of the life of the church" (J. Roloff) — that is, the principle that the body of Christ is made up of many members and every individual has his special task and service for the whole (cf. vv. 29 f.). Paul places "apostles, prophets, and teachers" at the head of the list as the holders of the three chronologically and essentially primary functions for the edification of the body of Christ."<sup>29</sup>

Is it possible to obtain still more detail concerning the office of an apostle from this passage? If one observes the special position of the three first mentioned ministries,<sup>30</sup> their arrangement and order of sequence in the

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sentence, one may infer the following: (a) The enumeration is a traditional one, which existed before Paul, and therefore also implies a concept of an apostle which he had adopted. Thus it need not necessarily match his personal understanding of the meaning of the office of an apostle.

(b) In attempting to answer the question whether these are ministries which are tied to a specific congregation or extend beyond it, it is necessary to assume a downward progression from the apostles to the prophets and to the teachers. The teachers are by task and function<sup>31</sup> certainly members of a local congregation. The prophets, even though they also were residents in a fixed locality,<sup>32</sup> may have been more active beyond the individual congregation. However, the apostles are, according to the other passages which are similar to the present one (1 Thess. 2:7; 2 Cor. 9:5; 2 Cor. 11-12; Rom 16:7), itinerant missionaries. Thus one can understand that they head the list because of their "universal churchly" importance.

(c) But for this reason also the apostles receive priority; through their preaching churches were established and nourished. Thus there is also an anti-climax: their work is supported by the prophets (cf. also Eph. 2:20), while the teachers safeguard, deepen, and make fruitful the preaching and tradition within the churches.

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<sup>29</sup> J. Roloff, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>30</sup> The special position is underlined by μέν, which is followed by no δέ. However, the activities introduced by ἔπειτα are clearly to be set apart from the triad at the beginning. δέ, which corresponds to μέν is often dropped; cf. Arndt, p. 504, especially 2.c.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the careful presentation of H. Greeven in *ZNTW* 44 (1952/53), pp. 16-31. He understands the main task of the teachers to be the "presentation, transmission, and enrichment of the tradition" (p. 28).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. H. Greeven, *art. cit.*, p. 9.

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(d) Whether or not the apostles are here a closed group is hard to say. In the case of the teachers, there is a steady development in the nature of this ministry, which is borne witness to directly by Ephesians 4:11, the Pastorals (where teaching is a task of the officials in whose charge is the instruction of the church), and in James 3:1. In the case of the prophets, one may suppose that there was a period of transition: it is possible that this charisma was given to all members of the church. But actually it appears that a limited and closed circle of prophets had come into being (cf. 1 Cor. 14:29 with Rev. 11:18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 22:9). Is it also possible that the "apostles" had been at one time an "open" group, but later limited themselves more quickly to a closely knit circle of individuals? In Paul's time we find ourselves in a period of transition. In Ephesians 4:11 the distinction between apostles and "evangelists," who rank behind the prophets, is already drawn. In the area of the Hellenistic mission no clear-cut criteria for recognizing apostles could have existed in this time, although the situation might have been different in Jerusalem. Luke, in Acts 21:8, calls Philip, who was active in missionary work and who no doubt would have been recognized as an "apostle" in the Pauline mission field, only an "evangelist." Still, the designation might be simply Luke's.

(e) Apostleship is viewed as a charismatic ministry; otherwise the apostles could hardly be at the top of the list of charismatic gifts, named

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ahead of the prophets and teachers. But the manner in which God appointed the apostles and called them into the service of the body of Christ is not mentioned. The definite call to apostleship remains a problem here as well.

## VI

What conclusions may we draw from these observations?

First, it has been confirmed that Paul did not know of a uniform concept of apostleship which had clear-cut criteria. Not once does he argue from such a basis, even though this must have been desirable in his case against those who opposed his apostleship. However, this *argumentum e silentio*, brought forward first by D. Georgi, can be supplemented by positive evidence. It has been observed that, on the one hand, Paul regarded the (last) appearance of the risen Lord in his Christophany on the road to Damascus as support for his claim to apostleship, and, on the other hand, that he places himself alongside of those apostles who, without these credentials, were active as itinerant missionaries and charismatic preachers. This can hardly be explained apart from the conclusion that he himself was confronted by different concepts of an apostle which did not show uniform criteria. He himself, in his claim to apostleship, being attacked from every side, tried to satisfy all the requirements which were placed before an apostle; and, beyond this, he attempted to prove that he was himself a true apostle of Jesus Christ by calling attention to his life of misery and suffering.<sup>33</sup>

A further conclusion which has been drawn is that in certain circles at Jerusalem it was expected, evidently, that an apostle should have experienced an appearance of the risen Lord,

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<sup>33</sup> On this topic, see E. Güttgemarms, *Der leidende Apostel und sein Herr* (Göttingen, 1966), especially pp. 142-70.

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while in the Hellenistic mission field this requirement was not only waived but an emphasis was placed on successful missionary activity, which was possibly confirmed by "signs of an apostle," powerful preaching and proof of authority. In Corinth, which was a meeting point of the early Christian mission, the various interpretations came together. To this congregation, founded by Paul, came various messengers of Christ, especially itinerant missionaries who, upon their arrival, wanted to push Paul aside and who offered a different image of an apostle from the one the Corinthians had received from Paul. Also, at least some information had come to this church from the mother church in Jerusalem, and there had come into existence groups who guided themselves by the thoughts of those in Jerusalem and identified themselves with authorities there (cf. the Cephas-party of 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22). How far those preachers who were active in the churches of Galatia and whose requirement that the Gentile Christians should also be circumcized and

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follow the law had been rejected at the "apostolic council" in Jerusalem still depended on groups in Jerusalem and could call on them for support must remain finally undecided. But it is certain that they called Paul's apostleship into question. Paul does not recognize the opponents as "apostles", since they proclaim a gospel different in content from the true gospel and which is no longer the gospel of Jesus Christ (Gal 1:8 f.). As a positive proof of his apostleship Paul calls on his own Christophany, in which God himself revealed his Son to him, as well as the call to preach which was given simultaneously (1:15 f.). Also at this point, Paul safeguards himself in a basic way against the contesting of his apostleship, so that he lacks nothing by way of comparison with those who were "apostles before him." Nevertheless, it is not quite clear which criteria for judging the qualifications of an apostle one used in Jerusalem.

If one considers Paul's choice of words in 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 1 Corinthians 4:9; 12:28 f., and Romans 15:7, it appears that in the mission field he clearly associated himself more readily with the usage which regarded apostles as preachers and missionaries of Christ. To call this a "broader" concept of apostle would be misleading, since Paul himself does not make this distinction. It is only from our perspective that the "narrow" qualification of an apostle in Jerusalem sets itself over against the former usage. The "narrow" usage led to the limitation of the group of the apostles and to the guiding image of the "twelve apostles." Nevertheless, Paul's disputations with other preachers who appeared as doubtful "apostles" indicate that, in his mission field, reflection on the nature of apostleship became essential. As Paul himself pointed to his possession of the qualification of an apostle which had originated in Jerusalem and, at the same time, to his appointed mission through the Lord (on the Damascus road), he became, at least as far as his mission field is concerned, the model of an apostle. This is clearly shown by the Deuteropaulines (cf. Eph. 3:1, 7 f.) and the Pastorals. In this case he may have influenced the later development.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> The "ideal" image of the apostle which the pseudonymous epistles of Paul present should enable one to observe which features and functions of the prototype of an apostle are emphasized at any given time. In Eph. 3:1 ff. they are the (prophetic-apocalyptic) revelation of the mystery of Christ and the corresponding proclamation of the kingdom of Christ; in the Pastorals, Paul becomes the "herald and apostle" (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11), the guarantor of the tradition, of the correct teaching and the authority of the ecclesiastical official. The consciousness of the Pauline apostolic authority is at least reflected in these late writings. "They authorize the preaching and order of the church of the post-apostolic time by referring to the authority of the apostle," and they "turn the attention of the church for whom they have been written on Paul, and indeed exclusively on him"

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It makes no sense to play the "charismatic" and "institutional" concepts of an apostle one against the other. Rather, the concept of an apostle, at the beginning, was not carefully defined. During this period Paul had to be active as an apostle and needed to succeed against those who contested

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his apostleship. He faced all the requirements, the ones which came from the "apostles before him" in Jerusalem, as well as those which were presented by "apostles during his time," and in this he clarified his own understanding of his ministry as an apostle. In a unique way he connects the consciousness of apostolic authority (cf. 1 Thess. 2:7; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10) and the charismatic preaching in which Christ makes himself known. By making this identification Paul made a major contribution to the clarification of the position of an apostle within the early church. Because he wished to become "all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22) and only desired to be a servant of Christ (2 Cor. 4:5) and "not to run in vain" (Gal. 2:2), he also helped to bridge the unexplained and diverging interpretations in the early church — as a true apostle of Jesus Christ and a promoter of unity and ecumenical co-operation.

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Converted to PDF by Robert I Bradshaw in May 2005.

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(N. Brox, *Die Pastoraibriefe* [Regensburg, 1969], p. 68). Cf. Further J. Roloff, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-50; N. Brox, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-74.