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St. Paul's Apostolic Authority and his First Letter to the Corinthians

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ST. PAUL'S APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY AND
HIS FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

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EN-200

by

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INTRODUCTION

The search for an authoritative word from God has been at the heart and center of man's struggle for existence since the beginning of time. God, in His wisdom, has seen fit to provide that authoritative word through many messengers in the course of history. Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah and Malachi were all messengers, mediators, of God's sacred will to his chosen and beloved people, Israel. With the sending of his own Son, God sent the ultimate messenger in the perfect God-Man, Jesus. Even though Jesus spoke God's message clearly and perfectly, man still needed guidance in understanding God's will for his life. To carry on His mission, after He would ascend into heaven, Jesus appointed the New Testament counterparts of the Old Testament prophets, the apostles.

The apostles were God's authoritative representatives. They were a select group of twelve, specially trained by Jesus in his ministry on this earth. They were called by the grace of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost to proclaim the Good News of Him who died and rose again so that all might truly live. God also selected, by the miracle of His grace, at least one other apostle - St. Paul. This study will be dedicated to understanding what it meant for Paul to be an apostle, what his relationship was to the other apostles, and how he expressed that apostolic authority to the members of his mission congregation at Corinth.

In Chapter I, we will take a brief overview of the nature of the apostolic office. In Chapter II, Paul's expression of his authority in general will be the subject and Chapter III will focus specifically on Paul's apostolic authority in our First Letter to the Corinthians. One brief note, all english Scripture passages quoted in the paper will be from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

CHAPTER I
THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLES
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

"The authority of the whole Church lies in the fact that she treasures the heritage of the first authentic witness to the facts of the Gospel."¹ This is the importance of the early apostles, for their actions and teachings have established the super-structure on the foundation that was laid by Jesus Christ. Their testimonies were the authentic witnesses for the early church and are our authentic Word of God today.

The Apostles in the Gospels

In the Gospels Jesus makes it very clear that the apostles, the twelve, were to be a distinct group who were to have special authority (Luke 9:1-10). This authority was to cast out demons, heal diseases and to preach the Good News. The nature of the twelve apostles was "neither (a) special spiritual endowment nor (a) special decision of the members, but solely (the) initiative of Jesus."² The meaning of the Greek word for apostle ("sent one") is critical in the understanding of the New Testament nature of the apostle. When Jesus sent the twelve out (Luke 9:1-11; Mark 6:7-13; Matt. 10:1-15), they were not sent to do their own work, but the work of him who sent them. This is especially true of the preaching and performing of miracles in the stead of Jesus and by His authority. "At all points there is a firm belief that

Jesus himself stands behind the miracles, that in them He displays His power through His messengers . . ."³ This concept of representation did not end in the Gospels but also carried into their ministry in the Acts of the Apostles.⁴

The Gospel of John is lacking the term apostle to refer to this special group, but refers to them as the "twelve" four times.

The Apostles in Acts

The Acts of the Apostles emphasizes the importance of the twelve apostles as authoritative leaders of the Church. Twenty-six times the term apostolos is used in Acts and 16 of those times the twelve are referred to as a distinctly authoritative group. Peter emerges quickly as the outspoken leader of the apostles as early as the fifteenth verse of Chapter One. However, there is a transition and by the time of the Apostolic Council in Acts 15 James, the brother of the Lord, has emerged as the leader in Jerusalem.

The distinctive marks of the apostles are also reaffirmed in Acts. The apostles' ability to perform signs and wonders (Acts 2:43; 5:12) is testimony to the power that lies behind their actions. Peter defines the reasons for their apostolic authority in Acts 10:39-42.

- 1) They were chosen to be witnesses by God.
- 2) They had seen Jesus after his resurrection.
- 3) They were to preach to the people.

These were their credentials as the ones sent by God to bring His message of salvation to the world.

One of the more interesting accounts in the New Testament of the apostolic structure in the early church is found in

Acts 15:1-16:4. It is here that the Apostolic Council is convened in Jerusalem to decide on the relationship of the Gentile converts to Jewish laws, especially with reference to circumcision. This council gives valuable insights into the relationship of Paul to the apostles at Jerusalem. There are two possible difficulties. First, there is an apparent conflict between the textual evidence for Acts and, secondly, Paul seems to speak differently about the council in his letter to the Galatians.

A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament presents this evaluation of the conflicting textual evidence:

"In the latter (B-text, Vaticanus) certain unidentified persons 'arranged' (ἔταξαν) for Paul and Barnabas, with others, to go from Antioch to Jerusalem; in the D-text (Bezae, Western tradition) on the other hand, the envoys from Jerusalem 'ordered' (παρηγγέλλαν) Paul and others to go up to Jerusalem in order to give an account of themselves to the apostles and elders."⁵

The commentary then offers this conclusion:

"The most that can be said is that the B-text reflects the point of view of Paul, whereas, the D-text is more sympathetic to the local tradition of the church of Jerusalem."⁶

The question that these differing accounts raise is, "What is the relationship between Paul and the apostles at Jerusalem with respect to their authority?" The B-text, which almost all scholars accept as the most trustworthy, gives the impression that Paul and Barnabas were simply conferring with the apostles in Jerusalem in an attempt to come to an equitable solution. But there is other evidence in the account that seems to support the interpretation of the D-text which indicates that Paul was to submit to a more authoritative decision from Jerusalem. One place that

supports the D-text in Acts 16:4. It reads:

"As they (Paul and Timothy) went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions (δὸγματᾶ) which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem."

The word dogmata is the same word Luke uses in Luke 2:1 and Acts 17:7 to refer to the imperial decrees.⁷ This implies that Luke considered Paul and Timothy as emissaries or delegates of the council.

This interpretation, however, opposes Paul's own discussion of the council in Galatians 2:2, "we did not yield submission even for a moment . . ." Paul also makes no mention of being a messenger for the council along with other details that are omitted in Paul's account. Foakes Jackson concludes,

"Whatever may have been the facts, Luke obviously wishes to represent Paul as the delegate of the apostles in Jerusalem in a manner which is incompatible with the Epistle to the Galatians."⁸

This writer, however, feels that simply because Paul and Timothy were delivering the dogmata of the council does not mean that they were not also involved in that decision-making process. This conclusion agrees with the more acceptable reading of the B manuscript. Paul's and Luke's interpretation of the council are not inherently incompatible, but lend support to Paul's position that he is on an equal plane with the apostles at Jerusalem.

The Apostle in the Letters of Paul

Whereas Luke is consistent in using apostolos to refer to the twelve in Jerusalem (the only exception is in Acts 14:14 where both Barnabas and Paul are referred to as apostles) Paul is less

precise with his use of the term. The following is a summary of people that Paul possibly refers to as apostles:

Andronicus and Junias	Romans 16:7
Titus and brethren	2 Cor. 8:23 (Cf. 2 Cor. 12:18)
Epaphroditus	Phil. 2:25
Barnabas	I Cor. 9:6
Apollos	I Cor. 4:6-9
James, the brother of the Lord	Gal. 1:9
Silvanus and Timothy	I Thess. 2:6

In each of the above cases, there are lengthy arguments in support of their apostleship and also against. We do not have time to discuss these arguments, but will look at Apollos and Barnabas in greater depth later. The point is that Paul does not use the term "apostle" only in a technical sense of the "twelve" and himself. Paul supports the position of a wider group of apostles but does not speak of them in the same authoritative sense that he refers to his own apostleship.

Paul refers to his apostleship in many different contexts. The following is a summary of his usage of the term:

Paul an apostle of Christ - Rom. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1;
Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 & 2 Tim. 1:1;
Titus 1:1 (Cf. 2 Tim. 1:11)

Paul, apostle to the Gentiles - Rom. 11:13, and I Tim. 2:7

Paul included, equally, with the other apostles - I Cor. 4:9;
9:1, 5; 15:9; 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11

Paul, the apostle, as performer of signs and wonders -
2 Cor. 12:12 (Cf. Acts 15:12)

Paul's apostleship had two peculiar factors that separated him from the twelve and also from the other missionaries that would be more appropriately included in a wider concept of apostle (See above list). These two factors are his persecution of

the church prior to conversion, and, his special calling.⁹ Paul's gross persecution will later be turned into a plus rather than a liability in our discussion of I Cor. 15:9. But the second distinguishing mark of Paul is worthy of note. Rengstorf comments, "The fact that his calling meant a complete upheaval in his life constitutes a basic difference between Paul and the other disciples of Jesus."¹⁰ It was this difference that separated Paul from the others, not because he had something to boast about, personally, but because he could boast only in the Grace of God so greatly manifested in his life (I Cor. 15:9; 2 Cor. 12:12).

Summary of the Apostle in the New Testament

- 1) The "twelve" had a distinctly authoritative office in the early church as a result of:
 - A) Their appointment and commissioning by Christ (Acts 1:2)
 - B) Their witness to the salvific events of Christ (Acts 10:39)
 - C) Their ability to perform signs and wonders (Acts 10:39)
- 2) Paul's apostleship is established as a result of his call (I Cor. 15:9) only with a different mission (Gal. 2:9). Paul, along with the twelve, filled the office of apostle in the formal sense with its special duties and responsibilities. Because of the changing status of the church, this meant the "apostles" also became missionaries.¹¹
- 3) A wider group of "apostles" is designated in Paul's letters (See above discussion). These people had a special role as missionaries or "sent ones" but not in the sense of filling the same authoritative office as Paul and the twelve.

Endnotes

¹John Lawson, A Theological and Historical Introduction to the Apostolic Fathers, (New York: Macmillan, 1961) p. 17.

²Karl Rengstorf, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. by Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) p. 424.

³Ibid., p. 433.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971) p. 184.

⁶Ibid.

⁷F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kersopp Lake, The Acts of the Apostles, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), vol. V: Additional Notes to the Commentary, p. 184.

⁸Ibid., p. 185.

⁹Rengstorf, TDNT, p. 437.

¹⁰Ibid., "In this and his immediate response to it, (his Damascus road experience) lies the uniqueness of his apostolate as compared with the other apostles, who came to a full dedication to Jesus only after much vacillation and a long course of instruction by Him."

¹¹Ibid., p. 431.

CHAPTER II
ST. PAUL'S AUTHORITY IN OUR FIRST LETTER
TO THE CORINTHIANS

Introduction

The question might well be asked "Why study I Corinthians in relation to Paul's apostolic authority?" This is a fair question. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians is concerned with Paul's authority (cf. Gal 1:11-2:21). In comparison, the letter we know as II Corinthians deals to a greater degree with Paul's authority than I Corinthians. The following reasons have been selected as a basis for selecting I Corinthians:

1) Paul's struggle with his apostolic authority at Corinth began already with I Corinthians.

2) Paul's references to his apostolic authority in I Corinthians serve as excellent windows into Paul's apostolic authority.

3) I Corinthians is at the heart and center of many very important issues for today's church (i.e. spiritual gifts, 12-14; and women in the church, 11:2-16; 14:34-36). The authority of St. Paul, as expressed in this letter, must be clearly understood if we are to understand how to apply his teachings to today's church.

We will begin by gaining an understanding of the Corinthian Church and the cultural background of the letter. Second, we will survey Paul's authority and its expression in general terms. This

will prepare us for a concentrated look at St. Paul's apostolic authority in Chapter III.

The Corinthian Church

The City of Corinth

Corinth has lived in infamy as a city of sexual immorality. Much has been made of the usage of "to play the Corinthian" as a reference to the practising of fornication.² This reputation was also supported by the fact that Corinth was the center of the worship of Aphrodite. Her temple was said to have been staffed by a thousand female slaves.

Corinth at the time of Paul was a relatively young city with a small established native population.³ This was a result of the destruction of the city by Lucius Mummius in 146 B.C. The city lay destroyed for approximately 100 years when Julius Caesar rebuilt it. By 27 B.C. Corinth had become a political center and rapidly regained its former stature in the religious and commercial world.⁴ Because of its ideal location (See Exhibit A) Corinth had ports on both sides of the isthmus and became a haven for seafarers and merchants. The transient nature of the merchants and the lack of an established native population led to much independence and free spirit at Corinth.

Robertson describes the character of the city as one whose "chief aim is commercial success and whose social distinctions are mainly those of wealth...and conceited self-satisfaction as to their intellectual superiority."⁵ Corinth was the empire in miniature--the major city, with political leadership, the center

of heathanism and commerce with a confluence of people from all over the then known world.

Paul and the Corinthian Church

From the above discussion, two points become clear for the early Christian church:

1) Corinth would be an ideal place to establish a congregation because of the opportunity to preach the Gospel to people from all over the world.

2) However, the challenges of the pagan culture present stiff challenges to the Christian message.

It is these challenges that Paul faces during 51 A.D. After being laughed at in Athens (Acts 17:32) Paul begins preaching to the Jews in Corinth. But here he was met with much opposition in the synagogue and soon left to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 18:4-6). Despite his difficulties, God had not deserted him and in a vision (Acts 18:9) God encourages Paul to stay there and preach. Paul stays in Corinth a year and a half (Acts 18:19) before leaving for Ephesus.

Paul probably wrote our First letter to the Corinthians in the spring of 53 A.D.⁶ in response to a Corinthian response to a previous letter of Paul's (5:9) that is not extant. As a result "It (I Corinthians) is very much an occasional letter directed to the immediate local needs of Paul's converts."⁷

Paul is well aware of the problems and peculiarities of this infant church. He personally was their spiritual father in the faith. Consequently, he writes a non-systematic letter (vs. Romans) but in comparison the letter is not the emotional tirade

of Galatians. It is a warmly affectionate censure of a struggling, confused group of Christians in a complicated and precarious situation.⁸

Most of the Corinthian Church consisted of converted pagans who, although pleased with Jewish religion, were put off by the customs⁹ and morality. They were possibly not familiar with the Old Testament and the apostles and their subsequent authority. These converts, although "saints" (1:2), had difficulty separating themselves from their ego-centered pagan culture and submitting themselves to Christ and to the Gospel-centered ministry of Paul. The latter was especially true and was a continual source of difficulty for Paul and he goes to great length to help the Corinthians understand their relationship to their spiritual leaders in I Corinthians.

Paul deals with their ethical difficulties not by simply condemning them as wrong, but by tying them into larger theological issues. The schisms were viewed in light of the Gospel and its ministry of service. Moral disorders were viewed as disruptive to the body of Christ. Marriage, the eating of meat from idols and spiritual gifts are seen in light of the subordination of the freedom of a Christian to the law of love.¹⁰

The ultimate challenge of the Christian minister is expressed in this letter as Paul leads the newly re-born in Christ to a fuller understanding of the Christian message.

"To that task (Paul) brings all the inspiration of his experience, all the authority of his status as an apostle, and all his unique understanding of the great gospel to which he is committed."

Today's Church can learn much as we watch Paul deal with these difficulties of authority in Corinth. In reality their problems are not far removed from our present environment.

A brief word about the teaching or doctrine of I Corinthians. Because of the "occasional" nature of the letter as mentioned above, there are few sweeping doctrinal statements. But one would be amiss if special mention was not given to the teaching of the resurrection in Chapter 15. The resurrection for Paul is clearly the heart and center of his theology now and in the future.¹² As a result we find Christ implied although not explicitly stated throughout the letter. A brief summary of the Christocentric nature of I Corinthians is as follows:¹³

Christ satisfies all needs	1:30
Paul knew nothing except Christ	2:2
Through "the Lord" we are all things	8:6
Union with Christ is the sphere of our whole life	15:58
social relations	1:22, 39
relations of the Church	5:4; 7:5, 12
Reference to grace.	15:56

An Overview of Paul's Authority in I Corinthians

At Corinth as in all of the early church, authority was an important issue. As the body of Christ grew and experienced the power and gifts of the Spirit there needed to be an authoritative voice to speak for the now ascended Lord. The ministry of Jesus had established the "Twelve" (Acts 1:2) as the leaders to carry on his mission (Acts 1:1-11). It was natural for the church to turn to the apostles of Christ for their leadership and guidance. Under their leadership the church grew and prospered. But God in his wisdom also appointed another "apostle" to carry on his mission--Paul.

Paul, Greek for Saul, did not have the obvious credentials of the "Twelve" and in fact had much in his past history that could discredit his ministry. (See previous discussion in Chapter I and I Corinthians 15) The Corinthian converts had difficulty understanding their relationship to Paul. I Corinthians therefore is Paul's attempt at informal "pastoral education." They were not only confused in their view of leadership, they also had a distorted view of the Christian way of life. The Corinthians were "saints" (1:2), but now, because of problems, needed to become more fully versed in the total Christian life under Christ.

Paul had a deep sense of love and concern for his "babes in Christ" (3:1). He treats them as children sometimes sternly, sometimes lovingly, but always as "brethren" (1:10). This paper wishes to focus primarily on Paul as an apostolic authority to the Corinthians. However, it would be a grave injustice if we were to suggest that this is the only expression of authority Paul brought to his relationship with the Corinthians. The following section is given as a summary with comments on the different "authorities" Paul appeals to in dealing with the Corinthians.

Paul's Apostolic Calling

1:1	"called by the will of God to be apostle of Christ Jesus"
4:9	"God has exhibited us apostles as last of all"
9:1	"Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus?"
9:2	"...you are the seal of my apostleship"
9:5	"Do we not have the right . . . as the other apostles"
12:28, 29	"God has appointed . . . first apostles"
15:8, 9	" I am the least of the apostles"

These passages will be looked at in greater depth later. A surface reading of these passages will note some interesting qualities that Paul appeals to. One is impressed with the unreserved claims of 1:1 and 9:1; with the equality of rights with all apostles (9:5); and yet a distinction between Paul and the others (15:8, 9). Paul's quality as an apostle, or "sent one" is also alluded to in 1:17, "Christ did not send (ἀπέστειλέν) me to baptize."

Paul as Possessor of the Word of God

2:2	"know nothing . . . except Jesus Christ" (2:1-15)
2:4	"words of wisdom . . . in demonstration of the Spirit"
7:10	"I give charge, not I but the Lord" (also 7:6, 12)
7:25	"I have no command of the Lord"
7:40	"I think I have the Spirit of the Lord"
11:2, 3	" . . . maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you."
11:23	"for I received from the Lord" (Lord's Supper)
10:14, 15	"I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves"
14:37	"what I am writing . . . is a command of the Lord"
13:12	"now I know in part"
15:3	"For I delivered . . . what I first received"
Special attention--"We, us"	
2:6, 7	"We impart wisdom . . . a secret"
2:10	"God has revealed to us"
2:12	"We have received the Spirit"
2:13	"We impart this in words . . . by the Spirit"
2:16	"we have the mind of Christ"

It is significant to note the emphasis Paul places on his reception of and proclamation of the "words of wisdom . . . in the Spirit" (2:4) at such an early point in his letter. In reality Paul places greater emphasis and priority on this aspect of authority than he does on his apostleship. For Paul, "the message not the office is the crucial issue of acceptance."¹⁴ Paul stresses in chapter two that the important reason why the

Corinthians should believe what he has to say is that he has the God inspired message of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (2:2).

The "We, us" passages of 2:6-16 have always caused translators and interpreters trouble.¹⁵ For some reason Paul switches from the singular to the plural at verse six. Does Paul include others with himself as equal in authority and inspiration? Is it simply the "epistolary plural?" Certainly both positions can be defended. Paul does include Apollos in the very important missionary preaching in 3:5, 6. But it seems more likely that this is intended as an "epistolary we" referring to Paul himself. This is supported by the fact that the section immediately preceding (2:1-4) and following (3:1-4) are written in the first person singular.

Even as this is perhaps the most important authoritative aspect to St. Paul it is also the most controversial. Only in I Corinthians does Paul at times speak so clearly the word of the Lord (11:23; 14:37; 15:3) and at other times acknowledge that he does not have the word of the Lord (7:6, 10, 12, 25, 40; 11:2-3; 13:12). Holmberg comments on 7:6 and 7:25:

"(These passages) might give the impression that Paul has no authority or right to order or instruct his fellow Christians, unless he has an explicit command from the Lord to support him."

Holmberg concludes as a result of Philemon 8 that Paul will

"purposely use a lesser normative force than that available to him, probably because he wants to preserve the personal, 'father-son' character of the relationship."¹⁶

Given the very personal, pastoral relationship between Paul and the Corinthians it is possible that Paul is, as in Philemon,

not taking the full liberty and authority given to him as an apostle. With regard to 7:12 it is also possible that Paul although not explicitly saying so, is wielding all the power and authority that his apostleship wields.¹⁷

In 11:23 there is some ambiguity as to Paul's source of authority. It is possible that he received the whole account of the Lord's Supper in a direct revelation from the Lord or it could have been an authoritative tradition handed down to Paul, "the Lord being here mentioned as the ultimate authority for the Rite."¹⁸ However, in 15:3 the phrase "from the Lord" is not used and would seem to indicate that there is a distinction between the two authorities or sources for the teachings (11:23 vs. 15:3). Given Paul's intimate personal visions not only at his calling but also in Corinth (Acts 18:9) it seems more likely that 11:23 refers to a direct revelation in conjunction with tradition.

I Corinthians 15:3 is worthy of discussion for it touches on a sensitive issue concerning the use of tradition as an authoritative source of doctrine. In what form and how does Paul receive his great teaching on the resurrection found in chapter fifteen? H. N. Ridderbos has an excellent discussion on the nature of tradition and its transmission.

"Today many scholars think that in I Cor. 15:1-4 Paul is here citing a more or less fixed ecclesiastical confession of faith¹⁹ with respect to the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. In my opinion, however, because of the paradoxical terminology,²⁰ the emphasis must be laid elsewhere . . . it is an instance of an authoritative, personal power, namely, that of the apostles . . . they deliver the tradition by reason of the authority that they had received from Christ, by reason of which they knew themselves to be the bearers and custodians of this tradition."²¹

This reception (παρέλαβον) and delivering (παρέδωκα) of the message of the resurrection is, therefore, not an uncontrolled process but a very careful transmission and preservation in the Judaic scribal tradition of the Gospel and all its teachings. This is why this tradition could have absolute authority to Paul's teaching as a word from the Lord.

Paul's Authority as a Pastor or Spiritual Father

3:8 "He who plants and he who waters are equal!" (3:1-10)
 4:14 "For I became your father"
 9:1 "Are you not my workmanship"
 15:11 "so we preach and so you believe"

This aspect of Paul's authority will be discussed again in relation to 9:1. It is important to note that Paul immediately follows his discussion in 2:1-16 on his character as the bearer of God's wisdom (2:7) with a lengthy discussion on his relationship to the Corinthians as their spiritual father and foundation layer (3:1-15). Also in the latter Paul claims Apollos as "fellow worker" and nurturer of the Corinthians. This is not to assume an apostolic position for Apollos or to deny Paul a special status (4:15), but it is an effort by Paul to convince the Corinthians that their stature as Christians was not tied to a particular person but only to the "foundation which is laid which is Jesus Christ" (4:14). Paul emphasizes this relationship with the verb *νουθητεω* which "is rather mild fatherly type of admonition" with the connotation "bringing (children or unreasonable persons) to reason."²² Paul clearly sees his status as "pastor" or spiritual father to be of utmost importance and seemingly only secondary in his eyes to his divinely appointed task as a proclaimer of the "wisdom of God."

Paul's Ultimate Motivation for Authority is Love

- 4:21 "Shall I come with a rod or with love"
 13:2 "If I have all prophetic powers . . . but have
 not love"
 16:14 "Let all that you do be done in love."

The law of love for Paul is closely associated with his role as pastor to the Corinthians but it is of such significance that it deserves special mention. In 4:21 Paul is closing this section on his role as nurturer and fatherly "lover" of the Corinthians. But this is not to be taken as weakness or tolerance towards sexual immorality. Paul quickly points this out in 5:3-5,

"I have already pronounced judgment . . . you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Even in this unusual case of forthright judgment by Paul his love and concern are clearly shown for the person's soul. 13:2 and 16:4 are strong statements (cf. all of chapter 13) on the need and necessity of tempering all that we do with love.

Paul and the Structure of the Early Church

- 4:17 "I sent you Timothy . . . to remind you my ways . . . as I teach them everywhere in every church."
 7:17 "This is my rule in all the churches"
 11:16 "We recognize no other practice"
 14:33 "As in all the churches of the saints"
 12:28 "He appointed first apostles . . ."
 16:1 "As I directed the churches in Galatia so you also are to do."
 16:10 "Timothy . . . is doing the work of the Lord, as I am"
 16:12 "Apollos, will come" (cf. 3:4-6, 21; 4:6)
 16:15-18 Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus - "be subject to such men and to every fellow worker."

These passages are evidence of Paul's identification with the whole body of believers that were known to him. He was deeply interested in unity and consistency in teaching (4:17) and in

practice (7:17; 11:16; 14:33; 16:1). Paul also recognizes and commends to the Corinthians the ministry of other peers (16:10-18). This is especially significant when considering the nature of the power struggle between various factions (not the leaders) in the Corinthian church. Paul on one hand condemns factionalism (1:10-17) and the misuse of their leaders but on the other hand shows them that their leaders are to be looked upon favorably and with high regard. Thus we see both the negative and positive aspects of Paul's attitude towards leadership in the church.

Paul's Written Authority

4:6 "That you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written"
 5:9 "I wrote to you in my letter"
 11:17 "In the following instructions"
 16:21 "I, Paul, write this with my own hand"

Despite the clear acceptance of Paul's written word as authoritative it is not necessarily clear to what extent Paul intended his letters to be followed. In I Corinthians Paul uses many different words to describe how his word is to be followed. The following is a short sampling:

παρακαλῶ -	I beseech, appeal	1:10; 4:16
διδάσκω -	I teach	4:17
κέκρικα -	I have judged	5:3
ὁμολογίαν -	allowance	7:6
ἐπιταγήν -	command	7:6; 9:14
θέλω -	I wish	7:7
παραπέλλω -	give charge	7:10; 11:17
ἰνύμην -	opinion	7:25
δοκῶ -	I think	7:40

Paul's authority as normative for the Corinthians must always be taken in relation to his saint-sinner relationship with the Corinthians. In some cases his normative apostolic authority needs to be expressed forcefully and sometimes it does not. Bjerkelund's comment on παρακαλῶ reflects this understanding.

"In the paradosis clauses παρακαλῶ has neither a sense of commanding (ἐπιτασσω) nor a sense of entreating (θεορῶ). παρακαλῶ is used by Paul when the question of authority is unproblematical and the apostle can address the members of the congregation as his brothers knowing that they will acknowledge him as apostle."²⁴

I Corinthians is especially unusual because there are three sections where Paul seemingly allows different choices concerning their behavior. They are:

I Cor. 7:3-6	Sexual relations in marriage
I Cor. 8:8-10; 10:25-28	Abstaining from food
I Cor. 7:8, 25, 38	Marriage

But "even in those cases where he explicitly qualifies the normative force of what he wishes and does allow different alternatives freedom of choice is in reality restricted."²⁵

I Corinthians 4:6 is a very controversial passage and interpretation is not at all clear. Discussion of this passage will be withheld and taken up later.

Even though Paul allows some flexibility and often uses words that imply differing degrees of authority (παρακαλῶ, θέλω, δοκῶ, etc.), he always writes authoritatively as a father to his children (4:14).

Paul and the Old Testament as Authority

4:6	"That you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written"
9:8	"Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same?"
10:1-12	"For these things (Moses and the people of Israel)

are a warning to us"
15:3 "In accordance with the Scriptures"

I Cor. 4:6 is more properly listed under Paul's use of the Old Testament as we will see later.

Three special references (9:8; 10:1-12; 15:3) are of great interest to the New Testament reader in that each one of these expresses a different way in which Paul uses the Old Testament. In 9:8 Paul appeals directly to Moses and the law to support his position of financial support for preachers. "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain" (Deut 25:4).

In 10:1-12 Paul provides an allegorical interpretation of Moses and the Israelites as a warning and example for the Corinthians. And in 15:3 Paul proclaims the resurrection as clearly being in fulfillment of the Scriptures. He mentions Scriptures twice (15:3 and 4) in this regard which is a direct reference to the Old Testament. Along with these three instances there are also two direct quotations by Paul from the Old Testament:

I Cor. 2:9 - Isaiah 64:4; 65:17
I Cor. 15:54-55 - Isaiah 25:8; Hosea 13:14

There are also other allusions and paraphrases of the Old Testament. For Paul the Old Testament is clearly reflected as authoritative for the New Testament body of believers.

Paul's Authoritative Example

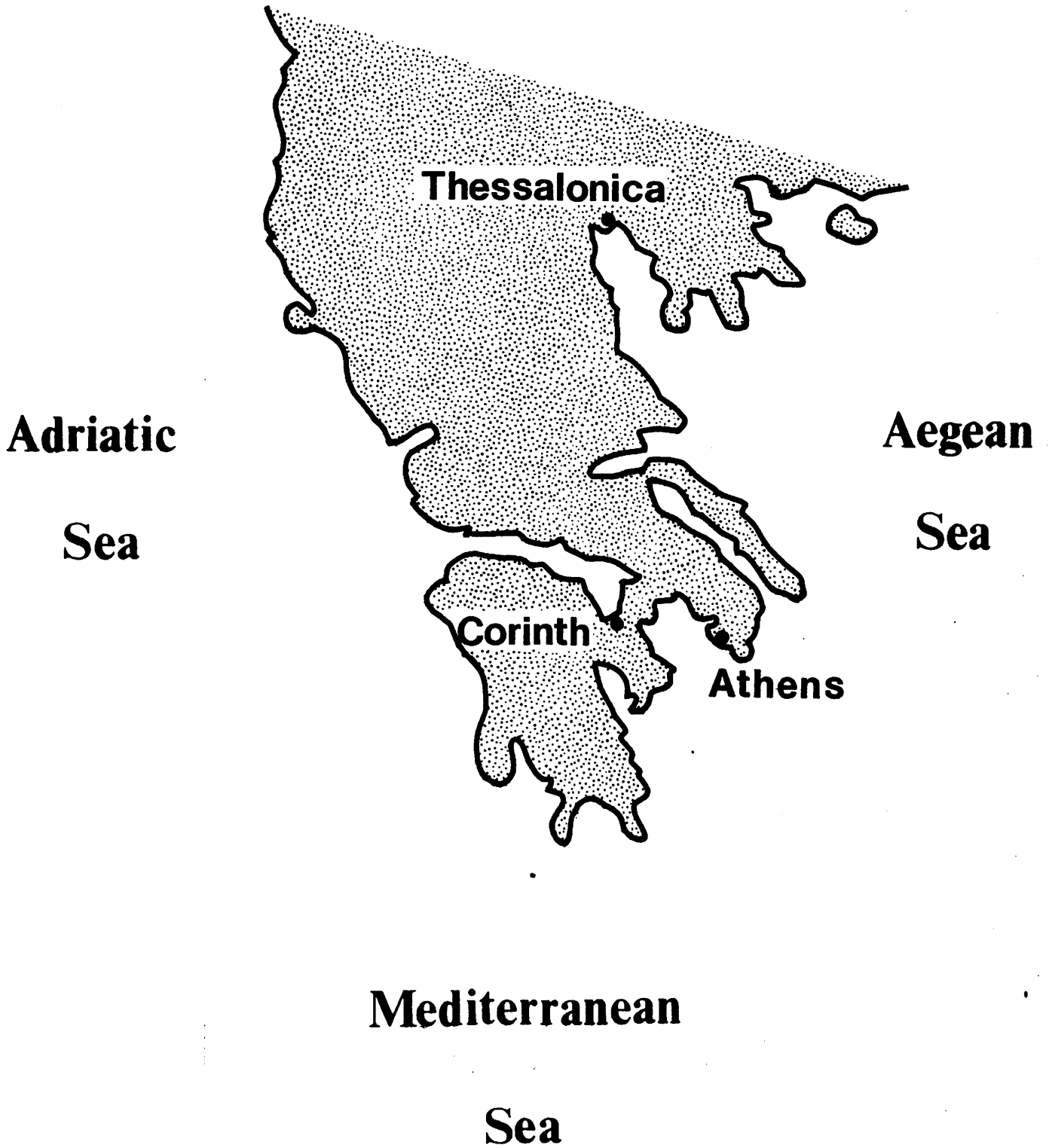
4:16 "Be imitators of me"
11:1 "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ"

One might accuse Paul of exactly the same abuse that he was condemning the Corinthians in setting himself as a μιμηταί -

someone worthy of imitation. But Paul does not attempt to set himself up as an idol for abuse, but sees himself as worthy of imitation only as he reflects Christ (11:1). As Paul has conformed his life to the will of Christ his life is therefore authoritative as an example for the Corinthians to follow.

In summary, we find Paul's first letter to the Corinthians a veritable gold mine of different models of authority. Paul is a master of persuasion and uses many different ways to help his "children" at Corinth grow to maturity. For the Christian pastor, or any Christian, to mark seriously Paul's inspired methods of proclaiming the message of salvation will be of tremendous reward as he helps others to understand the miracle of the resurrection.

Exhibit A



Endnotes

¹Johannes Munck, Paul and the Salvation of Mankind, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1959) "Paul's struggle with the Corinthians is vitally concerned with the apostleship. Even in I Corinthians he had to define his position . . ." p. 194.

²F. F. Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) p. 249.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 250.

⁵Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, The International Critical Commentary on First Corinthians, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1914) p. xv.

⁶R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of I and II Corinthians, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1928) p. 13.

⁷Leon Morris, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958) p. 26.

⁸Robertson, ICC, p. xlvi; John Short states in his interpretation in The Interpreters Bible: Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians (New York: Abingdon, 1953) "The evangelist who is depicted for us in the Acts of the Apostles pursuing his great missionary journeys is never far away; the teacher of the great doctrines who is so obvious in the mighty Epistle to the Romans is close at hand; but it is the pastor we see, as we look at Paul with his heavy heart, and yet with hopefulness dealing with the situation (at Corinth)." p.15.

⁹Morris, I Cor, p. 18.

¹⁰Robertson, ICC, I Cor is "an inexhaustible mine of suggestions." The "First utterance" of ascetic life is found in 7:1, 25, 40. The principle of higher expediency is "the Keynote of the Ethics of (I Cor.) p. xlvi. "Man limits his own Freedom (6:12, 9:19) in order to build others up. And Self discipline is a Key (9:24-27). p. xxxviii. "There is a close correlation between the glory of God (10:31) as the objective standard of action and the glory of God in sharing which our chief happiness is to exist." p. xxxix.

¹¹Short, IB, p. 15 also Robertson, ICC, " . . . it vividly reproduces the life of a typical Gentile Christian community, seething with the interaction of the new life and the inherited character." p. xxxiv.

¹²Robertson, ICC, p. xxxvi.

Endnotes

¹³Ibid., p. xxxviii.

¹⁴Walter Schmithals, The Office of Apostle in the Early Church, trans. by John Steely, (New York: Abingdon, 1969) p. 38.

¹⁵For the complexities of translating these and other passages in I and II Cor. see J. J. Kijne "We, Us and Our in I and II Corinthians" in Novum Testamentum, 1966 v. 8, pp. 171-179.

¹⁶Bengt Holmberg, Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles, (Sweden: Studenlitteratur AB, Lund, 1978) p. 87.

¹⁷Ibid., ". . . in one case its (λέγω ἐγώ) meaning is approximately "I, the apostle hereby declare." This is most obvious in I Cor. 7:12 "where . . . Paul formulates a command with a high degree of normative force." p. 86.

¹⁸Robertson, ICC, also H. N. Ridderbos, The Authority of the New Testament Scriptures, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1963) p. 18 supports the position that Paul receives the Lord's instructions through the formal apostolic apparatus for receiving and transmitting tradition. (See following discussion) p. xlv.

¹⁹Ibid., "It could be supposed that the tradition is the stage in which the content of revelation goes beyond the actuality of revelation and the history of redemption, and now becomes subject to the vicissitudes of ordinary human and ecclesiastical tradition. If such were the case tradition, even in its written form, would not be the creation of Christ himself, nor would it be the apostolic form of revelation, established by the special direction of the Holy Spirit. Tradition would simply be the form that the Church imposed upon the gospel, under all sorts of difficulties, and amidst diverse influences and contingencies. And it is also for this reason that many would examine the writings of the New Testament according to the same standards that are generally employed to investigate human tradition." p. 18.

²⁰Ibid., "From the terminology (παρέδωκα) used in the New Testament to describe the tradition, especially as employed by Paul, it rather appears that the concept of a Christian tradition is strangely determined by the corresponding Jewish concept of tradition . . . It is derived from the very nature of the transmitted material and from the office of the teachers of the law . . . Paul for example, when he urges the church to "retain" and to "hold" what he transmitted to them, uses the terminology that was currently used to refer to tradition." This is especially relevant in I Cor. 15:1-4 and I Cor. 11:23. p. 18-19.

Endnotes

²¹Ibid., p. 19-20, Ridderbos refers to Cullmann, Die ersten Christlichen Glaubensbekenntnisse, p. 18, 1943; Kummel, Kirchenbegriff und Geschichtsbewusstsein in der urgemeinde und bei Jesus, pp. 3ff, 1943; Bultmann, Theologie des N. T., p. 466, 1953.

²²Holmberg, Paul and Power, p. 86.

²³Ibid., p. 82.

²⁴Ibid., p. 85 from Carl J. Bjerklund, PARAKALÔ. Form, Funktion und Sinn der parakalo-Sätze in den paulinischen Briefen (BTN 1), Oslo, 1967 translated by Holmberg.

²⁵Ibid., p. 85.

CHAPTER III

ST. PAUL'S APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

St. Paul's apostolic authority is one unique facet or expression of Paul's authority. While it is inextricably bound up with Paul himself, he seldom appeals to his apostolic position to gain support for his pronouncements concerning the faith. Schmithals observes, "The fact that he is an apostle . . . has only the purpose of substantiating the message as such, not of attesting the messenger's preferential place."¹ But yet Paul is very protective and confident of his special position as an apostle. Why does he maintain that his apostleship is important? What argumentation does he follow? What is the position of the apostle in the early church? We have begun to answer some of these questions in Chapter I and II. Now we will look at the letter we know as I Corinthians to see what specific insights, answers and perhaps questions may be gained from this letter.

There are six specific references that Paul makes to "apostles" in I Corinthians. Each of these provides insight into Paul's relationship as an apostle. The six references are 1:1; 4:6-9; 9:1-3; 9:4-5; 12:28-29; 15:7-9.

I Corinthians 1:1 Paul the Called Apostle

"*Παῦλος κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ*" Looking at this passage carefully we note several things. First, that the letter is from Paul. It is

a letter, a personal letter to the church at Corinth from their founder and spiritual father, Paul. Secondly, he is a "called apostle." The commentaries are unanimous in interpreting the significance of these words. John Short is indicative of the position held. "Since Paul will be defending his apostleship in the letter, he begins by emphasizing his calling by Christ Jesus."² This reference by Paul as a "called apostle" is found elsewhere only at Romans 1:1. It is also significant in that Paul is distinguishing between himself and the rest of the church. Chapter 1:2 states that the church is called to be saints but in 1:1 he affirms his call to be an apostle with "special qualities and duties and status."³

Paul clearly does not simply wish to proclaim his apostolate as a title to be revered in itself, for this is only a secondary concern. His primary concern is shown by way of double emphasis. He emphasizes twice the source of his call. He affirms that he is an apostle of "Christ Jesus" and he is called "by the will of God." This is not an emotional appeal but "the mark of a deeply felt calm, assured authority."⁴ Short continues by stating that "his sense of vocation gives him a feeling of cosmic support."⁵ Short is definitely correct in assessing Paul's confidence in the apostolic calling. But it appears a better interpretation of this passage would place the cosmic support as the source of his sense of vocation rather than vice versa. By the dual emphasis Paul calmly underlines the focus, Jesus Christ, not only for himself but for all Christians and their vocation. (cf. 1:2)⁶

I Corinthians 4:6-14 Paul the Humble Apostle

This section brings to a head Paul's discussion of the problems with factions at Corinth. This problem was first mentioned in 1:10 but is not fully attacked until 3:4. With 3:4 until 4:21 Paul thoroughly denegrates a theology "of this world" (3:18) for those who are "in Christ" (3:23). It becomes clear that Paul is denouncing party spirit as the symptoms of a larger problem - that is a theology of glory. The Corinthians are looking for something to be proud of, to take the credit for being followers of a certain prominent person and thereby gain prominence. Morris summarizes the problem, "What is party spirit other than oneself writ large?"⁸

Beginning at 3:5 Paul directs attention away from himself by giving credit to Apollos as his "fellow worker" (3:9). Verse 8 makes the point clear, "He who plants and he who waters are equal," but Paul also gives the ultimate credit to God in verse 7, "Neither he who plants and he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth." As mentioned earlier, Paul illustrates this point by pointing only to Jesus as our true foundation (3:10-15).

Verse 18 of chapter 3 then attacks the Corinthians and the wisdom of this world. Paul quotes two Old Testament passages⁹ and Robertson comments, "it is man's self-deceit that is criticized in both cases: his estimate is all wrong."¹⁰ It has been man's problem ever since the Garden of Eden and that fateful wrong decision by Adam and Eve (II Cor. 11:3). Man has the desire to be wise, wiser than God. Robertson then points to the

"connexion (*Note*) (which) presupposes an affinity between conceit in one's own wisdom and a readiness to make over much of a human leader. The latter implies much confidence in one's own estimate of the leader."¹¹

The next verses (22, 23) then summarize the Christian paradox. Everything is ours, but we belong to Christ. We are free and have been given everything in the world but yet we have nothing to boast in because all that we have comes from Christ and thus belongs to him.¹²

Following on the principle that man's wisdom "is futile" (3:20) Paul describes his task as a servant of Christ (4:11). (Note Paul's use of the plural here.¹³) Grosheide rephrases the verse as such, "Let people consider us ministers of Christ in the way which we have demonstrated, i.e. negatively, let them not look on us as men in whom they can boast."¹⁴ Paul, and his fellow workers are only "stewards"¹⁵ of the mysteries of God." The caretakers, who "are servants of Christ not subject to the whims of the community."¹⁶

After asserting his position as caretaker of the wisdom of God Paul's next point is logical. If Paul is only a steward of God's wisdom the judgment of man is of little consequence (4:3)¹⁷ and therefore the Corinthians are not in a position to determine or judge Paul's teachings. Only at the last day will judgment truly have any meaning (4:5).

Although Paul has made his point he asserts "the full energy of the truth"¹⁸ in vs. 6-13. In v. 6 Paul again directs attention away from himself and as Phillips renders (v. 6), "I have used myself and Apollos above as an illustration."¹⁹

Next, follows a cryptic phrase - *μη̄ ὑπερ̄ τὰ γεγραπτα* (4:6) which literally means "not above what has been written." The verb has been left out and often is variously translated "go beyond what is written" (RSV), "not to think of men beyond what is written" (KJV), or "that you might learn not to exceed what is written" (NASB). Craig expresses the common feeling of most commentators,

"Does 'what is written' refer to the letter which Paul is writing, to words of the Lord, or to the Old Testament? Since the phrase is the usual formula for Scripture, most modern commentators believe that this is what Paul is commending."²⁰

Craig offers a logical explanation for Paul's emphasis, "There were Gnostics and spiritists at Corinth for whom the revelations which they themselves received took precedence over the written word."²¹ In any case it appears that the writing Paul refers to is something the Corinthians are familiar with, so familiar with that it does not have to be clearly identified. Therefore, Paul presents this writing as authoritative with no alternative for the Corinthians. It is the opinion of this writer that there is no other writing available that fits this description at this time (53 A.D.) other than the Old Testament.

In 4:6-8 Paul speaks with a biting irony that some feel that he could not possibly be addressing the church as a whole but he must have pointed his remarks directly at the leaders.²² His comments sting with amazing directness.

"that none of you may be puffed up" v. 6
 "What have you that you did not receive" v. 7
 "Already you are filled! Already you become rich!
 . . . And would that you did reign so that we
 might share the rule with you." v. 8

The sarcasm of Paul would surely have had its affect on the Corinthians even without any other comments. But Paul immediately follows these comments with the stark contrast to the apparent condition of the apostles.²³

I Corinthians 4:9a, "δοκῶ γὰρ, ὁ θεὸς ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀποστόλους ἐσχάτους ἀπέδειξεν ὡς ἐπιθαρτίους."

Paul begins with δοκῶ often translated "I think" (RSV). Lenski translates "it seems to me" which indicates only Paul's opinion. With this simple δοκῶ Paul immediately contrasts the pompous self-righteous attitude of the Corinthians with himself and the "apostles." The irony is that the Corinthians are sure of their position but Paul says "I think" when it is "an astounding fact"²⁵ that the apostles are last. δοκῶ is not to be seen as a sign of weakness or indecision but indicating an emphasis by Paul on his humility. He then follows with a clear indication of who is responsible for the apostles' condition, namely God.²⁶ God has placed the apostles in their condition as Robertson notes perhaps

"ἀπέδειξεν is used in a technical sense; 'placed upon the scene,' 'make a show of,' 'exhibited,' or, possibly 'nominated,' 'proclaimed,' as if being doomed men was an office or distinction."²⁷

In Romans, Paul saw his afflictions as something to boast about (Romans 5:3 "καυχμεθα "). To Paul his weakness was all that he could boast of (II Cor. 12:5) for in Paul's weakness God's power was made perfect (II Cor 12:9). The distinction between the rich of this world (the Corinthians, in this case) and the poor, and their special position is one Christ referred to (Matt. 19:30; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30). The parallel to Paul's current problem

and Christ's statements is evident.²⁸ Paul refers twice to the low stature of the apostles (*ἑσχατοὺς* - last²⁹ and *ἐπιθραυτίους* - men sentenced to death, "doomed to death"³⁰). They were considered common criminals. The similarity between the apostles and Christ's death on the cross as a criminal can also be seen.

But to whom does "*ἡγῶς τοὺς ἀποστόλους*" refer? Opinions are varied. Grosheide maintains, "apostles refers to Paul and to all who are his fellow apostles, the latter taken in its broader sense of all the preachers of the gospel."³¹ Robertson takes a different position. "St. Paul is thinking chiefly of himself; but to avoid the appearance of egoism, he associates himself with other apostles."³² These opinions neglect the fact that previously in verse 6 Paul sets up himself and Apollos as examples. This also follows the reference to Paul, Apollos, and Cephas as "stewards of the mysteries of God" (4:1). Paul's references to Paul and Apollos in 3:4, 5 also indicate a close connection between Paul and Apollos. One would be hard pressed to show why Paul has either broadened the group of people he is referring to to all the apostles or narrowed it simply to himself.³³ This writer feels it is neither but that Paul wished to include Apollos in his designation as an apostle. This is not to imply that Apollos has the same authority as Paul (4:15, 17) but that Paul wishes to include Apollos in the term "apostles" in a sense different than "all preachers."³⁴

The following verses (10-13) continue to compare the "wise in Christ" (the Corinthians) against "the fools for Christ's sake" (v. 10) in order to not make the Corinthians ashamed "but

to admonish (them) as (his) beloved children" (v. 14). Even in the midst of his biting contrasts Paul is not vindictive but pastoral, not hateful but loving. As Lenski comments "Shame touches the feelings, admonition reaches the heart."³⁵ For Paul does not wish to drive the Corinthians down by degrading them but to reach them with his love to encourage them to change their ways. Despite this his admonition proved unsuccessful and he followed this letter with another (II Corinthians, see especially chapter 11).³⁶

The above examination of I Cor. 3:5-4:13 surfaces at least one major aspect of Paul's apostolic authority. That is Paul, at this point in I Corinthians has no desire to use his apostolic authority as a point to convince the Corinthians that they should follow his instructions. Paul's intention is to lower himself and other apostles (4:9) while raising others up to equal status if not also equal importance with Paul (3:6, 22; 4:1, 6). This is the humble side of Paul's authority. It cannot be overemphasized enough. Paul wants to make it very clear early that he is not interested in a theology of glory but of humility. Almost immediately Paul does begin to attract attention to himself (4:14-21 and later in 9:1-5) as an authority but not until after showing the Corinthians the true nature of his apostleship.

I Corinthians 9:1-3
Paul and the Qualifications of an Apostle

Nowhere else in I Corinthians and very few times in his other writings (Gal. 1:11-2:21 and II Cor. 11:5) does Paul defend his distinctive apostolic authority with such specificity. His defense is brief and consists of only four rhetorical questions³⁷ and a

statement of evidence. But in these three verses we have an important picture of Paul's self-concept of his apostolic authority.

οὐκ εἰμι ἐλευθερός ; "Am I not free?" (v. 1). Paul begins his argument by asserting his freedom. The freedom that all Christians have is later summed up in 10:23-31, "All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful . . . Let no one seek his own good but the good of his neighbor" (vs. 23, 24). Of course Paul was free as certainly all Christians were but it was also known that Paul limited his freedom (9:19). Paul therefore starts this section to make it clear that as an apostle he was still free even though he did not exercise his freedom.³⁹

οὐκ εἰμι ἀπόστολος ; "Am I not an apostle?" (v. 1). Paul forthrightly affirms what he quietly asserted in the greeting of his letter - "I am an apostle! I am what I am. You cannot deny me this right." The earlier humility of the apostle (chapters 3 and 4) and his subsequent relinquishing of some of his rights are not evidence to be used to undermine his apostolic position. The former was brought about by God (4:9) and the latter was a result of his love for his brethren (9:22; 10:32) and to keep from putting an obstacle in the way of the gospel (9:12).

οὐκ ἴδον τὸν κύριον ἡμεῶν ἑώρακα ; "Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (v. 1). This question has caused the most discussion in trying to understand Paul's argument. The question revolves around the relationship of Paul's call on the Damascus road and having seen Jesus, and his apostolic authority. Foakes Jackson maintains that Paul is not in this case trying to connect his having "seen Jesus" with being an "apostle." He claims

that the first three phrases "are three separate claims of distinction" and that they are simply privileges that Paul puts aside in order not to give offense.⁴⁰ Robertson is of another opinion which is evident in his translation of v. 16, "I have seen our Lord face to face and He made me His apostle . . ."⁴¹ Here Robertson attaches the seeing of the Lord with Paul's appointment as an apostle. Later he comments that "it is a mistake to say that we are not told that he saw the Lord who spoke to him on the way to Damascus (Cf. Acts 9:17 (ὁ φθέρει), 9:27 (εἶδεν), 22:14 (ἶδεν))."⁴² Foakes Jackson maintains that this is forcing the epistle to conform with the Acts of the Apostles.⁴³ But for one who takes the inspired nature of Scripture seriously it seems that Acts and I Corinthians 9:1 would support the inextricable relationship between Paul's vision and his call as an apostle.

Paul included this statement, "Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" not for his benefit but for the Corinthians for "some may have questioned his right to bear such witness."⁴⁴ But to Paul there is no doubt to what he saw. "It was for him quite unconditionally an act of God, an objective event, not a visionary experience."⁴⁵ As a result, "He never doubts it, and he will never allow anyone else to do so."⁴⁶ Morris' comment also bears mentioning.

"It is rare to find the name Jesus in Paul's writing without Christ. Here we must assume that he wishes to place some emphasis on the human nature of the Lord."⁴⁷

This is speculation and perhaps Morris is too strong in his

evaluation but his point does support the strong objective nature with which Paul viewed his vision.

Paul then closes his brief but pointed defense of his apostleship by pointing to the Corinthians themselves (1b-2) as proof that he is an apostle. This is a curious sort of argument in that God surely established other congregations with people besides the apostles. Robertson reasons that the "remarkable spiritual gifts which the Corinthians possessed were a guarantee that one who was more than a mere preacher had been sent to them."⁴⁸ In any case, this is the subjective or functional nature of the apostleship. The previous questions affirm the objective nature of his apostleship. Paul also now sees the validity of affirming or sealing (σφραγίς) his apostleship through the evidence of the Christian church at Corinth.⁴⁹

Verse 3 is unclear as to which section Paul is referring to when he says "this" (αὐτη). Most commentators and grammarians see αὐτη as referring to the preceding section but not exclusively.⁵⁰ Grosheide however sees αὐτη referring exclusively to what follows.⁵¹ Despite Barrett⁵² this writer agrees with the opinion that αὐτη refers to the preceding argument. It is more logical to use verses 1-2 as a defense, even the Corinthian "seal" is visible, rather than the more subjective example of vs. 4-23 that follow. Lenski sees the term in verse 3 as "juridical"⁵³ which also lends support to this conclusion.

In verses 1-3 Paul outlines briefly the points that he sees as valid in establishing his apostolic authority. Paul uses the term apostle or apostleship three times in these verses and this

gives strong weight to the argument that the whole section deals with his apostolic office.⁵⁴ Also the brevity of the discussion keeps us from seeing it as a comprehensive argument for Paul's apostleship but it does provide the basic points of the apostolic office:

- 1) the freedom of the apostle to determine how he carries out his duties;
- 2) his personal encounter with Jesus which resulted in his commissioning; and
- 3) the fruits of his work through the Lord.

I Corinthians 9:4-6 The Rights of the Apostle

In this section Paul discusses two rights that are his but that he has freely forfeited. These two rights are 1) his right to be supported by the churches which he served and 2) his right to be accompanied by a wife. Paul had deemed it wise⁵⁵ to accommodate his freedom and relinquish these privileges, along with his companion, Barnabas. Paul does this rather than giving the Corinthians a sense of ownership of himself and thereby adding to the Corinthians' difficulty with schisms and thereby putting "an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ" (9:12).

In 9:4-5 Paul outlines these rights in two rhetorical questions and as a result, two interesting questions surface:

- 1) Is Paul's use of the plural (ἕξομεν) an "epistolary plural" referring to himself, or, does he include others with himself?
- 2) What is Paul's relationship to the "other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?"

As mentioned previously, Paul often moves from the singular to the plural with no clear explanation as to why (See 2:1-13).

In 9:1-3 Paul uses the singular in delineating his marks as an

apostle. But now in verse 4 he moves to the plural and it is not clear to whom the plural refers. Robertson comments,

"Where he means himself exclusively he commonly uses the singular: but it is more certain that the singular is always personal than that the plural commonly includes someone else."⁵⁶

Because of this ambiguity, only the context is left to help us to determine the content of Paul's plural. Morris believes that his is an "epistolary plural."⁵⁷ This position can be supported by the use of the singular in the previous three verses. Barrett on the other hand prefers the opinion that the "plural here refers to Barnabas and himself."⁵⁸ Because of Paul's reference to Barnabas in verse 6 it appears that Barnabas is included in the same category as Paul as one who has these rights but has refrained from exercising them. However, Morris also points out that the "Only (v. 6 - *μόνος ἐγὼ καὶ Βαρναβᾶς*) is singular, which makes it seem as though Barnabas was added as an after thought."⁵⁹ It must also be noted that after the use of the singular (*μόνος*) Paul immediately returns to the plural (*ἔχομεν*). It is the opinion of this writer that Paul wishes to include Barnabas with himself as one sharing apostolic rights. This confirms the reference to Barnabas as an apostle in Acts 14:14.⁶⁰

The second question refers to Paul's defense of his apostleship in relation to "the other apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas (v. 5)." A first observation indicates that Paul is distinguishing three groups within the apostolic body.⁶¹ But this cannot be automatically assumed because there is little evidence of James, the brother of the Lord, receiving his

apostolic call from Christ.⁶² James' prominence in the early church at Jerusalem is well attested (15:7; Gal. 2:9, 12; Acts 15:13) and he "is always shown as a leader in the Jerusalem church."⁶³ Having acknowledged this, a better interpretation of this passage would see the "other apostles" as those who were appointed and sent by Christ. The "brothers of the Lord" are to be interpreted as the natural descendents of Mary and Joseph⁶⁴ and, as a result of their closeness to Jesus, had a special position in the early church. The mention of Cephas can only be explained, assuming his apostleship, as a special reference to the equality of Paul and the preeminent Cephas. The schismatic activity at Corinth developed as a result of one group claiming that their leader was superior (1:12). Paul's point is to reaffirm to the Corinthians what he has proposed earlier (1:1 and 9:1-3) that he (Paul) is equal to the other apostles, even Peter, in authority and rights.

I Corinthians 12:28
The Apostle in the Structure of the Church

Whereas this passage does not refer specifically to Paul and his authority, some observations are important.

- 1) Paul sees the apostolic office as one of primary importance in the early church. (πρωτον ἀποστόλων)
- 2) Paul makes no mention of bishops, presbyters or deacons in the Corinthian Church.⁶⁶ Therefore, we are led to conclude that in this early stage of development the apostles, prophets, teachers, etc., had responsibility for oversight of the Corinthian church.⁶⁷
- 3) In the context of I Cor. 12, Paul's reference here to the various offices (apostle, prophet and teacher) and gifts (workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators, and speaking and interpreting tongues) has the primary purpose of affirming the differing roles of

each individual (12:27). His purpose, at this point, is not to defend his apostleship or his authority, but to affirm the diversity of all the gifts.

I Corinthians 15:5-11
Paul, His Relation to the Other Apostles

In 15:8 Paul returns again to his humble position in the apostolate of the early church (See 4:9) but with a different emphasis. In 4:9 Paul is referring to the humility of the apostles in relation to the church at large. Now in 15:8 Paul is concerned with his relationship to the other apostles. Paul sincerely does not claim to put himself on par with the other apostles because he was called, chronologically, after they were. For the Corinthians, as well as for most Christians then and now, they were concerned with establishing only those who were closest to Jesus as their authorities. Paul admits that "Last of all, as one untimely born, (ἐκτρώματι) he appeared also to me."⁶⁸ Literally, ἐκτρώματι means abortion, stillborn child, or "to that which is embryonic . . . that which is incapable of sustaining life of its own volition."⁶⁹ To the Corinthians Paul's reference to himself as an ἐκτρώματι would be a sign of weakness or marked inferiority, but Paul was "led to establish his apostolate in a way which saved him (from this verdict) . . . (and became the basis) and claim of the early Christian apostolate."⁷⁰ This worthlessness was not only demonstrated by being an ἐκτρώματι but was also evident because of his life as a persecutor of God before his conversion (v.9). Therefore this utter worthlessness gave him no other choice "but to see in his apostolate a proof of divine grace."⁷² (Cf. II Cor. 12:9). Because of the grace of God, Paul is able to point

to his devotion in that he "worked harder than any of them (v. 10)" and therefore claimed equal status with the other apostles.

Endnotes

¹Walter Schmittals, The Office of Apostle in the Early Church, trans. by John Steely, (New York: Abingdon, 1969) p. 35.

²John Short and Clarence Tucker Craig, The Interpreters Bible: Corinthians, Galatians and Ephesians (New York: Abingdon, 1953) p. 14. Also F. W. Grosheide, The First Epistle to the Corinthians in the New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) p. 21; Leon Morris, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958) p. 34; Karl Rengstorf, "Apostolos" in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament ed. by Gerhard Kittel trans. by Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) "whenever he has reason to speak authoritatively to his churches, Paul stresses in his salutations his apostolic authorization by Christ. What is a issue is not his own person but the cause for which he stands." pp. 440-441.

³Ibid., Short, IB, "but all are called to be saints." p. 17. Also Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, The International Critical Commentary on First Corinthians, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1914) p. 15.

⁴Ibid., Short, IB, p. 15.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Grosheide reaffirms our previous conclusions concerning the pastoral love which Paul shows the Corinthians. Grosheide states "They (the Corinthians) are saints in Christ in spite of all their sins." p. 23.

⁷Morris, Corinthians, p. 82.

⁸Ibid., "There is a sense in which Christians may rejoice in the leadership given by their eminent men. But when they find themselves so much in favour of one leader that they are against another they have overstepped the bounds." p. 78.

⁹v. 19 "He catches the wise in their craftiness." Job 5:13
"The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." Psalm 94:11

¹⁰Robertson, ICC, pp. 69-70.

¹¹Ibid., p. 71.

¹²Ibid., "While all things were theirs, they were not their own . . . Christians with all their immense privileges, are not the ultimate owners of anything. There is only one real Owner, God." p. 73.

Endnotes

¹³"This is how one should regard us . . ." (4:1) Again, as in 2:6-13, the plural is difficult to interpret. It is possible that Paul is referring back to Paul, Apollos and Cephas two verses prior in 3:21. The opinion of Robertson in ICC (p. 85) concerning the plural of 4:9 could also apply here. "St. Paul is thinking chiefly of himself; but to avoid the appearance of egoism he associates himself with other apostles." This writer prefers the former for the reason that Paul is not at all trying to separate himself from Apollos and Cephas. In fact he goes to great lengths to put himself on an equal plane (3:5) or even lower than the other apostles (15:9). There is no indication here that Paul is seeking to protect his apostolate as in 9:1-5. Paul is not about to risk any accusation of party spirit but this writer does not think this is just a semantic diversion as Robertson does.

¹⁴Grosheide, Corinthians, p. 98.

¹⁵Robertson, ICC, "The oikonomos was the responsible head of the establishment, assigning to each slave his duties . . . He was a slave in relation to his master (Luke 12:42)." "God is the Master (3:23) of the Christian household (I Tim. 3:15) and the stores entrusted to His stewards are the 'mysteries of God.' These mysteries are the truths which the stewards are commissioned to teach. Between the Master and the stewards stands the Son (15:25; Heb. 3:6), whose underlings the stewards are." pp. 74-75.

¹⁶Short, IB, "They are 'stewards of the mysteries of God' (cf. I Peter 4:10) not teachers of the doctrines which men might choose." p. 52.

¹⁷Robertson, ICC, "etoi de - The de implies contrast to something understood, such as 'I do not claim to be irresponsible; inquiry will have to be made as to whether I am faithful; but (de) the authority to which I bow is not yours, nor that of any human tribunal, but God's.'" p. 75.

¹⁸R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of I and II Corinthians (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1928) "(Paul's irony) flows out from a burning heart, one that itself deeply hurt, and it wounds others with stinging facts not in order to revenge itself upon them, but in order to save them from falseness by the full energy of the truth." p. 182.

¹⁹Morris, Corinthians, also Lenski, Cor, p. 174; and Robertson ICC, p. 81 agree with Philips and add "That there was no jealousy or rivalry between St. Paul and Apollos is clear from 3:6, 8-10; 16:12." "It is possible that it was the factious conduct of his partisans that drove Apollos from Corinth." p. 77.

Endnotes

²⁰Craig, IB, p. 54, also Grosheide, Cor, p. 103; Lenski, Cor, p. 175; Morris, Cor, p. 77 and Robertson, ICC, "It is strange that anyone should suppose that 'a gegraptai' can refer to what St. Paul himself has written or intends to write, or to the commands of our Lord. It was perhaps a Rabbinical maxim." p. 81.

²¹Craig, IB, p. 54. Also Johannes Munck, Paul and the Salvation of Mankind, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1959) "Thanks to the gifts of the Spirit, the newly won Corinthians believed that they were already on the same plane as the Christian leaders and were therefore in a position to criticize them. It was not necessary, they thought, to hold to the written word, nor to the unanimous witness of the Church for the Spirit could give instruction about everything and make one independent of Bible and Church." p. 165.

²²Morris, Cor., p. 79.

²³Munck, Salvation, "As the apostles are only the recipients who can neither boast of anything themselves nor become the objects of other peoples boasting, so it is with the Corinthians--no one sees anything different in them. Everything that they have they must not boast of it as if it were not a gift." p. 161.

²⁴Lenski, Cor, p. 182.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Grosheide, Cor, p. 106.

²⁷Robertson, ICC, p. 85.

²⁸Lenski, Cor, p. 183.

²⁹Lenski, Cor, "Us the apostles," and "lowest" are placed together in striking contrast. p. 183.

³⁰Alfred Marshall, R.S.V. Interlinear Greek English New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958) p. 665.

³¹Grosheide, Cor, p. 106.

³²Robertson, ICC, p. 85.

³³This position does find support in 4:14-21 where Paul uses the first person singular. However, Paul is very clear here that he is referring only to himself as opposed to his use of the plural in 4:8-13. This implies that Paul is careful to specify himself in clear distinction to others when this is his desire (4:15, 17).

Endnotes

³⁴Grosheide, Cor, p. 106. See also previous discussion in Chapter I on the other apostles.

³⁵Lenski, Cor, p. 185.

³⁶Munck, Salvation, "And in II Corinthians Paul continues his description of the true apostle as one who has failed in the eyes of the world and of whom we can be proud . . . Only the false apostle extols the values to which this world pays homage." p. 60.

³⁷Short, IB, Paul uses "rhetorical questions to make a point." p. 98.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1971) p. 200. Robertson, ICC, p. 174 translates "Can it be denied that I am a free agent, that I have the authority and independence of an apostle?" also Lenski, Cor, "He surely is (free) and not only objectively but also subjectively, as far as his own conscience is concerned, free so that no man dare dictate to him." p. 350.

⁴⁰F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, The Acts of the Apostles: Additional Notes to the Commentary, vol V, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) p. 50; also Schmithals, Apostle, "The apostle is called by the exalted Lord through an 'apokalupsis' . . . this does not, however, establish a special function of the apostle." p. 28.

⁴¹Robertson, ICC, p. 174.

⁴²Ibid., p. 177. Other commentators concur with Robertson contra Foakes Jackson. Morris, Cor, "Apostles were authoritative witnesses to the facts of the gospel, more especially to the resurrection." p. 131. Also Short, Cor, p. 100.

⁴³Foakes Jackson, Acts, vol. V, p. 50.

⁴⁴Morris, Cor, p. 131.

⁴⁵Rengstorf, TDNT, vol. I, P. 438.

⁴⁶Short, Cor, p. 100.

⁴⁷Morris, Cor, p. 131.

⁴⁸Robertson, ICC, p. 178.

Endnotes

⁴⁹Barrett, Cor, A seal "is a visible token of something that already exists; thus the Corinthian church does not make Paul an apostle and his apostleship does not depend on it, but its existence is a visible sign of his apostleship." p. 201.

⁵⁰Maximilian Zerwick, Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples, (Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963) "outos is no longer used, as in classical Greek, exclusively to refer to something which precedes, but may refer to something which follows." p. 513; also F. Blass and A. DeBrunner, trans. by Robert W. Funk, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961) "Outos is very common in the main clause with reference to the preceding subordinate clause . . . on the other hand outos is seldom used to point to a following clause." p. 151; and Robertson, ICC, "But it is more probable that it refers to what precedes." p. 178.

⁵¹Grosheide, Cor, p. 202.

⁵²Barrett, Cor, "the position of the pronoun at the end of the sentence suggests, as does the sense of the passage, that the defence now follows, but it would be possible to refer this to what precedes." p. 292.

⁵³Lenski, Cor, p. 352.

⁵⁴Contra Foakes Jackson (Cf. Footnote #40).

⁵⁵Munck, Salvation, "One cannot help thinking that Paul was wise enough to know when he could accept support from a church, and when not. And if he had not other reasons to guide him, it would have been wise to refuse the Corinthians' support from the first as in fact he did. The subsequent story, with the persistent controversies and the church's insubordination, showed that the Corinthians were not people from whom one could accept money or board without being misunderstood. So it was better to say No, and remain independent when the inevitable misunderstandings arose." p. 179.

⁵⁶Robertson, ICC, p. 179.

⁵⁷Morris, Cor, pp. 132-133.

⁵⁸Barrett, Cor, p. 202.

⁵⁹Morris, Cor, p. 133.

Endnotes

⁶⁰Craig, Cor, p. 100.

⁶¹Robertson, ICC, p. 181.

⁶²Munck, Salvation, p. 92.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Barrett, Cor, p. 203.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 204.

⁶⁶Robertson, ICC, p. xxxix.

⁶⁷However, Grosheide asserts in his commentary (p. 17) that we are justified in asking "if Paul appointed officers in every church he founded why not Corinth?" (Cf. Titus 1:5).

⁶⁸Regstorf, TDNT, " . . . the objection to his claim to be an equal of the twelve seems to have here at least some relative justification." p. 437.

⁶⁹Johannes Munck, "Paulus tanquam abortivus," New Testament Essays, Studies in Memory of T. W. Manson (1893-1958) in "Apostolic Authority and the Control of Tradition ICor. 15," by John Howard Shutz, New Testament Studies, 1968, p. 455.

⁷⁰Rengstorf, TDNT, vol. I, p. 437; also Schmithals, Apostle, p. 38.

⁷¹Lenski, Cor, "Paul was a persecuter of the church, a vile, dead thing spiritually, fit only to be carried out and buried from sight. Yet to him while being such, the risen Lord also appeared." p. 240.

⁷²Rengstorf, TDNT, vol. I, also Morris, Cor, p. 208. Paul has "a profound sense of personal unworthiness. He is the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15)." pp. 438-439, and Shutz, NTS, p. 454.

⁷³Morris, Cor, p. 208.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The authority of St. Paul is a fascinating study in Christian leadership. This authority, as expressed in our First Letter to the Corinthians, is anything but a legalistic display of absolute authority. Despite the Corinthians' abuse of authority, Paul does not demand unswerving allegiance to his inspired words, but is both assertive and humble in exercising his apostolic authority at Corinth. Two times in the letter Paul assertively expresses his position as an apostle. The salutation (1:1) clearly distinguishes between his call as an apostle and those called to be saints (1:2). Paul emphatically reasserts his distinctiveness as an apostle in 9:1 in the form of a rhetorical question ("Am I not an apostle?"). These are the only two times Paul refers to himself as an apostle without focusing on the humility of his position (Cf. 4:9 and 15:9).

Paul's vision certainly was important to him in establishing his apostleship (9:1). Even though there is some debate as to the relationship between his apostleship and vision at this point, this writer believes the evidence points clearly to Paul's vision as supporting evidence for his apostleship.

Paul also does not shirk from claiming equality with Cephas and the other apostles (9:5; 15:10). However, in 15:10 Paul does

not flaunt himself as the power behind his actions, but gives the credit solely to God.

Paul's position as an apostle is also one which allows him special privileges not as a ruler, but because of the freedom granted him by God (9:1-6; 3:21; 4:1, 6). Paul's ministry, as a result, is not judged by men but by God (4:3). Paul, however, has willingly withdrawn these rights (9:12) so as to not provide a stumbling block to the weak (9:12).

In 12:28 Paul describes the apostles, in general, as being of first importance. It is true that Paul lists the apostles first, but Paul also reaffirms the place and importance of all the gifts.

There are several important points that are essential to understanding Paul's authority, but direct attention away from Paul's apostolic authority. First of all, is Paul's position as a possessor of the Word of God (2:1-16). This is the first topic that Paul discusses concerning his relationship to the Corinthians. Paul clearly sees his most important role as "proclaiming the testimony of God" (2:1) not by his power "but in the power of God" (2:5). Even though this appears to have highest priority for Paul, his position as bearer of God's wisdom is not without problems. In 2:6-16 Paul speaks in the plural which is difficult to interpret. Many times in the letter Paul expresses some doubt as to what the clear Word of God was in a particular case (7:6, 10, 12, 25, 40; 11:2-3 and 13:12). Despite these difficulties, one cannot play down the priority of this function in Paul's ministry.

A second quality of Paul that was extremely important to him was his relationship as spiritual father to the Corinthians (3:1-15). This discussion of his spiritual parenthood follows immediately after Paul's discussion as proclaimer of the Word of God. Even though this is an important aspect, Paul is willing to share this role with Apollos (3:6) and give all the ultimate credit to God (3:6). This point also surfaces later in 9:1-2 and is a significant support to Paul's argument for his apostleship.

One aspect of Paul is continually in the background, but even though it seems to detract from his authority, it points to one of his greatest characteristics - his humility. The whole section from 1:18-4:21 does not lift Paul up but lowers him as the humble but fatherly admonisher of the Corinthians. The climax of this discussion is 4:9, "For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all . . ." and sincerely points to God as the one who humbled the apostles and especially himself, even to the point of being an "ektrwma" (15:8).

Last of all, special mention needs to be made of Paul's references to his contemporaries that are usually considered outside of the apostolic circle - Barnabas and Apollos. The evidence is simply too overwhelming at 9:6 not to include Barnabas as an apostle (Cf. Acts 14:14) at least in a wide sense of the term. The ministry of Apollos also was significant (3:5-9) and Paul refers to him as an "equal" (3:8) and a "fellow worker" (3:9). The reference to "us apostles" (4:5) could also include Apollos who was previously mentioned at 4:6. These references show that

Paul was not overly protective of the term apostle and was willing to include others along with himself in this description.

St. Paul's apostolic authority must be considered a factual truth, but must also be viewed as subsidiary to his other roles. Certainly Paul considered himself an apostle, but to Paul this was not the basis of his authority. The basis for his authority was not the "office" but his function as the proclaimer of the Word of God and spiritual father of God's people. This aspect of Paul's leadership is not purely his domain, but is also the domain of all Christian pastors and serves as an example to all those who strive to follow in his footsteps.

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