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## Chapter 8.1

# Defining Biblical Apostles

*Messengers of God*

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### **Primary Points**

- In ancient Greek an *apostolos* carried the message and authority of his sender.
- Jesus Christ was the Apostle of God the Father (cf. Heb 3:1)
- The unique requirements of being an Apostle of Jesus Christ included being: 1) personally commissioned by Christ, 2) given new extra-biblical divine revelation, and 3) given supernatural authenticating abilities.
- Apostles of Jesus Christ included "the Twelve," "The Seventy," Paul, Barnabas, James, and Ananias.
- While there were others such as Paul who could be designated Apostles of Jesus Christ, "the Twelve" are still in a position by themselves.
- Some suggest that Silas, Timothy, and Apollos should be included among the ranks of Apostles of Jesus Christ as well, but we have no biblical record of them meeting the requirements above.
- "Apostles" of churches like Epaphroditus need to be distinguished from Apostles of Jesus Christ.
- Remembering that "Apostle" often merely meant a messenger, it is not surprising that we encounter people in the NT with this designation who are simply ambassadors of a local church.

## A) Defining God's Apostles: *What & who was an Apostle?*

The greatly respected German NT scholar Rudolph Schnackenburg (1914-2002) wrote some years ago: "In spite of the strenuous efforts of scholarship during the past few decades, the origin and early history of the apostolate remain still quite obscure."<sup>1</sup> The same would seem to reflect current scholarship as well, as there is a great deal of confusion regarding the purpose, nature, definition, and duration of Apostles in the early Church. Here we hope to glean from the Scriptures and history sufficient answers to such issues.

The word "Apostle" (*apostolos*) and related words occur in the NT over 80 times.<sup>2</sup> It literally means "sent one" and generally meant "messenger" in the time of Christ. This common usage is reflected by the Apostle John when he records Christ as saying, "**I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger [*apostolos*] greater than the one who sent him**" (John 13:16).

However, the term had a special significance, meaning more than just someone who carried a message. An *apostolos* also carried the authority of the sender as well.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the authenticated *apostolos* of a king had the authority of the king in his role as a messenger. The authority of the office depended upon the level of authority and honor of the one who appointed the Apostle to represent them. Thus, when Jesus Christ Himself is called an "Apostle" of the Father God (Heb 3:1), the term takes on special significance. This is also true when Christ "**appointed twelve--designating them Apostles**" (Mark 3:14). To be an Apostle of men was one thing (cf. Gal 1:1). To be an Apostle of Jesus Christ was quite another.

There are a myriad of men labeled as "Apostles" in the NT. As mentioned above, Christ Himself is given the title, as is the "Twelve" (cf. Matt 19:28; 26:20; Mark 4:10; Acts 1:16-26; 6:2; 1 Cor 15:5; Rev 21:14). Other examples include Paul (cf. Acts 26:15-16; Rom 11:13; Gal 2:8; 1 Tim 2:7), Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor 9:6), Epaphroditus (cf. Phil 2:25), James the Lord's brother (cf. Gal. 1:19; 2:9; 1 Co. 15:7-9),<sup>4</sup> and Andronicus and Junias<sup>5</sup> (cf. Rom 16:7).

The early Church Fathers refer to others as Apostles as well, including such men as "the seventy" disciples (cf. Luke 10:1), Philip the Evangelist (cf. Acts 21:8), Philemon (cf. Phlm 1:1), Archippus (cf. Col 4:7; Phlm 1:2), and even Mary Magdalene (cf. Matt 27:56),

and Apphia (cf. Phlm 1:2).<sup>6</sup> With so many being called “Apostles” in the early Church it becomes helpful to make some distinctions.

## B) The Apostle of God the Father: *Jesus Christ*

The writer of Hebrews describes Jesus as, “the Apostle [*apostolon*] and high priest Whom we confess” (Heb 3:1). It is not surprising that the writer would describe Christ as a “messenger” of God as the first verse of the epistle says: “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the Prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son” (Heb 1:1).

Jesus Christ is no doubt the preeminent messenger and Apostle of God. One of His most repeated statements concerns His being sent to represent and speak for God the Father. Accordingly, Christ said, **“I came from God and now am here. I have not come on My own; but He sent Me”** (John 8:42). In Matthew we read, **“he who receives Me receives the One Who sent Me”** (Matt 10:40; cf. Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48). The Apostle John seems especially interested in depicting Christ as the Apostle of God the Father, recording almost forty statements of Christ regarding this very thing. These include: **“My teaching is not My own. It comes from Him Who sent Me”** (John 7:16), and **“I did not speak of My own accord, but the Father Who sent Me commanded Me what to say and how to say it”** (John 12:49; cf. John 7:17-18; 8:28-29; 17:6-8).

Obviously, Christ was not only a messenger for God—He was God. He was **“in very nature God”** (Phil 2:6) and “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being” (Heb 1:3). This is why the Bible often describes Christ simply as **“the Word [*logos*: “expression”] of God”** (John 1:1, 14; cf. Rev. 19:13). Only this Apostle of God could say **“Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father”** (John 14:9) and **“I and the Father are one”** (John 10:30; cf. v. 38). Likewise, in a statement that probably communicates the unique apostleship of Christ the best, Jesus said, **“When a man believes in Me, he does not believe in Me only, but in the One Who sent Me. When he looks at Me, he sees the One Who sent Me”** (John 12:44-45).

While other Apostles were granted similar revelatory and miraculous powers as Christ, they were still mere men, and the greatest of them all still had to confess that, **“sin [is] living in me”** (Rom 7:17). So indeed, we can properly refer to Christ as an Apostle of God, but He was something much more. He uniquely,

directly, and personally represented God the Father and was deity Himself.

### C) The Apostles of Jesus Christ: *The Twelve, Seventy, & Paul etc.*

While Christ was uniquely the Apostle of God the Father, there were a number of men who were in turn Apostles of Jesus Christ. This was how Paul, for example, repeatedly referred to himself, often beginning his epistles with, "**Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus**" (2 Cor 1:1; cf. 1 Cor 1:1; Rom 1:5; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 2:6; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Tit 1:1).

The *essence* of this apostleship is described by Paul when he writes, "**Through Him [the Lord Jesus Christ] and for His name's sake we have received grace [gifting] and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith**" (Rom 1:5).

The *uniqueness* of this apostleship is reflected when Paul describes himself as, "**Paul, an Apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father**" (Gal 1:1).

Of course the first Apostles of Jesus Christ were the "Twelve." Matthew records:

**<sup>1</sup>He called His twelve disciples to Him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. <sup>2</sup>These are the names of the twelve Apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup>Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup>Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.**

**<sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup>Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. <sup>7</sup>As you go, preach this message: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is near.' <sup>8</sup>Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. (Matt 10:1-8; cf. Mark 3:13ff; Mark 6:7ff)**

Luke succinctly describes this mission of the Twelve when he writes:

**He sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. . . . So they set out and went from village**

**to village, preaching the Gospel and healing people everywhere.** (Luke 9:2, 6)

The unique requirements of being an Apostle of Jesus Christ are all described here. They include: 1) being personally commissioned by Christ (Matt 10:1, 5), 2) being given new extra-biblical divine revelation (i.e. **"The Kingdom of Heaven is near"** v. 7) and, 3) being given supernatural authenticating abilities **"to heal every disease and sickness"** (v. 1), and even **"raise the dead"** and **"cleanse those with leprosy"** (v. 8).

It is these attributes which are unique to Apostles of Jesus Christ and which others who are called Apostles in the early Church did not possess. This is an important point, as many claim that the only distinguishing characteristic of Apostles of Jesus Christ was that they had personally seen Christ. While this was certainly one important requirement (cf. Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:4-8), it was not the only one, as many could claim this. However, only a very few, such as Apostles of Jesus Christ, could claim both divine supernatural revelation and accompanying authentication.

While there were others such as Paul who could be designated Apostles of Jesus Christ, "the Twelve" are still in a position by themselves. Mark tells us, **"He appointed twelve—designating them as Apostles—that they might be with Him"** (Mark 3:14), granting them the exclusive privilege of being Christ's personal companions for several years.<sup>7</sup> Their foundational role in establishing God's New Covenant people will be forever memorialized by the fact that their names are inscribed on **"twelve foundations"** (Rev 21:14) of the eternal paradise of New Jerusalem. They are the "patriarchs" of the Church, much like the sons of Jacob are the patriarchs of God's Old Covenant people.

In addition, "the Seventy" would also seem to meet the qualifications of Apostles of Jesus Christ. Luke tells us:

**Now after this the Lord appointed seventy<sup>8</sup> others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. And He was saying to them . . . . "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.' . . . The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One Who sent Me."**  
(Luke 10:1, 8-9, 16)

What Christ tells the Seventy is identical to what He told the Twelve, so much so that some think they are identical missions.

But this would make Luke's description of the sending of the Twelve in Luke 9 rather absurd when he follows it in chapter 10 with the sending of the Seventy. These are clearly two different missions, with identical instructions, including all the things required to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ. First, the Seventy are personally commissioned by Him, such that their words are to be considered His words (v. 16). Secondly, they are to preach the new, extra-biblical revelation that "**The Kingdom of God has come near to you**" (v. 9). Thirdly, they were given miraculous powers to "**heal those . . . who are sick**" (v. 8).

Additional evidence that the Seventy were Apostles of Jesus Christ is found in the early Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-339). First, based on Paul's reference to Christ appearing "**to all the Apostles**" (1 Cor 15:7) in addition to the Twelve, Eusebius claims that there was "a large number of Apostles."<sup>9</sup> He then proceeds to tell the story of Thaddeus, one of the Seventy, who after the Ascension of Christ, certainly had an apostolic ministry, being described as "an Apostle . . . from Jesus," "instantly" healing people on command "performing many wonders and preaching the word of God," which included the New Covenant which would not have been available in NT Scripture to the people of Edessa where Thaddeus ministered, at such an early date.<sup>10</sup>

The Apostle Paul, of course, met all of the biblical requirements for apostleship. First, it was a fact of early Christian history that the risen Jesus Christ had personally appointed him (cf. Acts 9:1-19; 26:12-20; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11; Tit 1:3). Accordingly he writes the Corinthians, partially at least to defend his claim of being an Apostle of Jesus Christ:

**Am I not free? Am I not an Apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?** (1 Cor 9:1)

**He [Christ] was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and . . . He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the Apostles, and last of all He appeared to me also.** (1 Cor 15:4-8)

Secondly, Paul obviously received new extra-biblical divine revelation, and accordingly claimed:

**I want you to know, brothers, that the Gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I**

**received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.** (Gal 1:10-11; cf. 1 Cor 2:6-13; 2 Cor 11:6; Eph 3:2-11; Col 1:25)

Finally, Paul's apostolic authority was supernaturally authenticated by his miracle working, and he told the Corinthians, again in the context of defending His claim to apostolic revelation:

**I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the "super-Apostles," even though I am nothing. The things that mark an Apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance.** (2 Cor 12:11; cf. Acts 14:3)

In addition to "the Twelve," "the Seventy," and Paul, we would include James the Lord's brother, Barnabas, and Ananias in the list of probable Apostles of Jesus Christ, as we have evidence of them having the above qualifications.

Concerning Barnabas, Luke refers to him as an Apostle in the same breath as Paul when he writes, "**the Apostles Barnabas and Paul**" (Acts 14:14, cf. v. 4; 1 Cor 9:5-6). Luke also seems to describe him as possessing both new divine revelation and the authenticating miraculous gifts of an Apostle when he records: "**Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there [Iconium], speaking boldly for the Lord, Who confirmed the message of His grace [i.e. new divine revelation] by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders [i.e. supernatural authentication]"** (Acts 14:3). As for the personal commission of Barnabas, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215), a very early historian of the Apostolic Church indicated that he was one of "the Seventy"<sup>11</sup> which involved the privilege of being personally commissioned by Christ (cf. Luke 10:1ff).<sup>12</sup>

While, we have no record of James the Lord's brother authenticating himself as an Apostle of Jesus Christ with "**the signs of an Apostle**" (2 Cor 12:12), Paul seems to repeatedly rank him with other Apostles of Jesus Christ (cf. Gal 1:19; 1 Cor 15:7), as does Clement of Rome (c. 96).<sup>13</sup>

Finally, Ananias would seem to meet the qualifications of an Apostle of Jesus Christ as well, although perhaps for only a short time. "**The Lord called to him in a vision**" (Acts 9:10), personally commissioning him with a message of new extra-biblical divine revelation concerning God's plans for the monumental and unique calling of the Apostle Paul (v. 15). And Ananias was given the miraculous authentication of commanding a miracle by restoring Paul's eyesight (cf. vs. 12, 18). We have no knowledge of how Ananias continued to serve Christ after this incident, but in this episode he was an Apostle of Jesus Christ in every sense.

Some suggest that Silas, Timothy, and Apollos should be included among the ranks of Apostles of Jesus Christ as well, but we have no biblical record of them meeting the requirements above.<sup>14</sup> For example, it is clear that Apollos did not receive his knowledge of the New Covenant from divine revelation, as we read:

**Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. (Acts 18:24-26)**

We need only to compare how Apollos received his knowledge of the New Covenant, with the Apostle Paul's experience (cf. Gal 1:10-11), to say confidently that the former was not an Apostle of Jesus Christ. It was the revelatory *Scripture gifts* that such Apostles of Jesus Christ possessed that perhaps distinguished them more than anything else. Accordingly, it is perhaps even better to refer to them as *revelatory Apostles*, which we do throughout *Knowing Our God (KOG)*.

It is important to refer to them as such, as some in Evangelical theology make careless or intentional statements to deny this. For example, the highly regarded NT scholar C. K. Barrett has written:

An Apostle is, in Paul's understanding, one called by Christ and sent by him to preach the Gospel. . . . Perhaps their only really distinctive feature in the present list [at 1 Cor 1:28 which included "teachers"] is that they [Apostles] were itinerant.<sup>15</sup>

Such a definition makes NT revelatory Apostles little more than modern day evangelists or teachers.

NT scholar E. F. Harrison is considerably more biblical when he remarks:

In the apostolic age, one who held this rank [of Apostle] was more than a preacher (1 Tim 1:11). . . . Paul would not have needed to defend his apostleship with such vehemence if he were only defending his right to proclaim the gospel.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, it was because such Apostles possessed new extra-biblical divine revelation that needed to be believed and obeyed by all Christians, that their ministries required the divine authentication God gave them, and which we discuss in a subsequent chapter.<sup>17</sup>

## D) The Apostles of the Early Churches: *Epaphroditus, etc.*

Remembering that “Apostle” often merely meant a messenger, it is not surprising that we encounter people in the NT with this designation who are simply ambassadors of a local church. For example, Paul writes of Epaphroditus: **“I think it is necessary to send back to you [Philippians] Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger [apostolos], whom you sent to take care of my needs”** (Phil 2:25; cf. Gal 1:1). Epaphroditus then would seem to have been an “apostle” of the Philippian church, personally appointed by them to represent their church. Similarly, Paul refers to other men as **“representatives [apostolos] of the churches”** (2 Cor 8:23; cf. 12:17).<sup>18</sup>

Such men did not possess new divine revelation, nor miraculous gifts to authenticate such revelation. Therefore, they were not direct messengers of God the Father or God the Son, but of the leadership of local churches. They were no doubt very respected and trustworthy men, but in today’s vocabulary they would be better labeled couriers or ambassadors of churches rather than Apostles.

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### ***Extras & Endnotes***

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#### **A Devotion to Dad**

*Father, we thank You for Your Apostles. What would we know of You and Your plans and purposes without them? We look forward to meeting them one day, and pray that until then we would carry out their commandments because they represent You.*

#### **Gauging Your Grasp**

- 1) What did the Greek word *apostolos* mean in the first century?
- 2) Why do we claim that Jesus Christ was an Apostle?
- 3) What do we claim was required to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ? Do you agree or disagree and why?

- 4) Who do we include among the Apostles of Jesus Christ? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 5) What is unique about "the Twelve"?
- 6) In what way should an "apostle" like Epaphroditus be distinguished from Apostles of Jesus Christ?

### **Publications & Particulars**

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolph Schnackenburg, "Apostles," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, Ward Gasque and Ralph Martin, eds. (Eerdmans, 1970), 287.

<sup>2</sup> "Apostles," *New Bible Dictionary (NBD)*, J. I. Packer, et al. eds., 3rd ed., (Intervarsity, 1996), 58

<sup>3</sup> E. F. Harrison notes that:

Whereas several words for *send* are used in the NT, expressing ideas as dispatch, release, or dismiss, *apostellein* [from which *apostello* is derived] emphasizes the elements of commission—authority of and responsibility to the sender. ("Apostle," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (EDT)*, Walter Elwell ed., [Baker, 1984], 70-1; cf. D. Müller, "Apostle" *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)* Colin Brown ed., 4 vols., [Zondervan, 1986], 1:127-8; W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* Vine's [Thomas Nelson, 1996], 560).

While there is some debate on the issue, there would seem to be good evidence that the NT writers even gained some of their understanding of *apostolos* from the Jewish rabbinical conception of the *šālīah*. Accordingly, W. C. Robinson writes in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*:

Rabbinic Judaism used the Heb. *šālīah* to describe an agent authorized by someone else to act for the sender in personal, legal, or financial matters. In such cases a man's ambassador was as himself (cf. IS. 25:40ff.; 2 S. 10:1ff.). . . . When Paul started to Damascus with letters of accreditation, he may have been *šālīah* of the Sanhedrin, as were later emissaries of Judaism who opposed the Christian message (cf. Justin Dial. 17, 108). ("Apostle," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley ed., 4 vols., [Eerdmans, 1988], I:192).

Robinson adds that in classical Greek the word Apostle, "is also used by Epictetus to describe Zeus's sending a teacher of philosophy as his messenger. This would make the messenger a minister of the god." (Ibid.)

<sup>4</sup> As Dr. Harrison notes, "The most natural explanation of Gal. 2:9 is that Paul is declaring James, the Lord's brother, to be an Apostle" (*EDT*, 72).

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For further discussion on this point, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), 908

- <sup>5</sup> Regarding Andronicus and Junia, Paul says in Romans 16:7, “**Greet Andronicus and Junias . . . They are outstanding among the Apostles.**” The wording is admittedly ambiguous here and instead of stating clearly that they were Apostles, Paul may be simply saying that they had an extraordinary reputation in the minds of the Apostles. Still, it would seem Paul’s statement is best understood as describing them as Apostles themselves.

Some have taken this probability and tried to make Junias an example of a female Apostle who taught men and held authority over them in the Church. For an extended discussion on the probability that Junias refers to a man, see John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Crossway, 1991), pp. 79-81, 214, 221-22. That this would be among the most important evidences espoused by those who argue for female pastors and teachers in the Church, reveals the weakness of their claim.

- <sup>6</sup> For references to Apostles in the Early Church Fathers see “Apostle” in John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature (M&S)*, CD-ROM (Ages Software, 2000). Philip is called an Apostle by Eusebius (cf. *Ecclesiastical History*, G. A. Williamson trans., Andrew Louth ed., (Penguin Books, 1989), 102.

- <sup>7</sup> This would of course exclude Matthias who was “**chosen to take over this Apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs**” (Acts 1:24-5). While the Apostle Peter says Matthias had, “**been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us**” (v. 21), it would not seem he had the intimate relationship with Jesus that the others had. Nonetheless, we believe he truly did take Judas’ place, being “**added to the eleven Apostles**” (v. 26), and that Matthias’ name is written on the foundation of the New Jerusalem with the rest of the Twelve.

- <sup>8</sup> It is perhaps impossible to be certain whether Jesus sent out 70 (NASB, RSV, NRSV, KJV, NKJV) or 72 (NIV, NLT, NCV, ESV) missionaries. The diversity in the English translations reflects the diverse textual evidence which is also practically divided between the two. Some lean toward 70 because of its symbolic emphasis in the OT including Moses’ 70 elders (cf. Exod 24:1, 9; Num 11:16-17, 24-25), and the Genesis list of 70 nations on the Earth (chs. 10-11, although the LXX lists 72).

It is because of these obvious parallels that most modern Evangelical scholars think a copyist would have been likely to modify the original to fit these OT analogies (cf. Bock, 1016). If we had to choose, we would maintain that 70 is the correct number, and that there were intentional OT analogies on Christ’s part. At least the early Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 315) agrees, referring to this group as the Seventy.

- <sup>9</sup> Eusebius, I:12.

- <sup>10</sup> For the full, believable, and amazing story of Thaddeus see Eusebius, I:13.
- <sup>11</sup> Eusebius, II.1. Although, Clement's wording may distinguish the Apostles from "the Seventy" suggesting in his mind that Barnabas was not an Apostle.
- <sup>12</sup> On the other hand, John MacArthur specifically denies that Barnabas was an Apostle of Jesus Christ, claiming that their number was "limited to thirteen and were well known." (*MacArthur's New Testament Commentary*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM [Parsons Technology, 1997], 1 Cor 12:28).
- <sup>13</sup> Eusebius, II.1
- <sup>14</sup> The suggestion that Silas and Timothy should be included among the Apostles of Christ is derived from some statements of Paul in 1 Thessalonians. In the greeting, Paul indicates that the letter is from "**Paul, Silas, and Timothy**" (1:1), and then later in the epistle he remarks, "**As Apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you**" (2:6), apparently including Silas and Timothy in the designation of Apostles of Christ.

However, John Stott has a particularly thorough refutation of this interpretation. After going into some detail about Paul's varied use of "we" in his epistles, Stott turns to the following evidence as well:

Three points may be made. First, Luke in Acts is quite clear that Paul was the leader of his mission team. Silas had been chosen to replace Mark, and Mark had been only a 'helper' [cf. Acts 13:5; 15:37ff]. Timothy, though much loved, was clearly a junior [cf. Acts 16:1ff]. Luke does indeed couple 'Paul and Silas' as fellow prisoners [cf. Acts 16:19, 22, 25, 29], Roman citizens [cf. Acts 16:38], and co-labourers [cf. Acts 16:40; 17:4]. Yet he makes it clear that Paul did the preaching, in both the Thessalonian and the Berean synagogues [cf. Acts 17:2-3, 11]. If, then, he was the leading preacher, it is all but certain that he was the leading writer [of 1 Thessalonians] too.

Secondly, Paul was an Apostle, whereas Silas and Timothy were not. True, Silas was a leader in the Jerusalem church, an official delegate of the Jerusalem Council and a Prophet [cf. Acts 15:22, 27, 32], but he is never named an Apostle. Nor is Timothy. In fact, in later letters Paul deliberately distinguishes himself from Timothy in this respect by writing 'Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus and Timothy our brother' [cf. 2 Cor 1:1; Col. 1:1; cf. 1 Cor 1:1; Phm 1].

It is in the light of this that we must understand the surprising expression 'as Apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you' (1 Thes. 2:6b). Either Paul was using the word 'Apostles' here in its broader sense of 'missionaries' [cf. Acts 14:4, 14; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25], or he was referring to himself as the Apostle but was forced by grammar to write 'Apostles' in the plural, in order to be in apposition to 'we' (rather like 'we were left alone [*monoi*, plural]' in 3:1).

Thirdly, there are many examples in Paul's other letters where he moves from "I" to "we" without appearing to change the identity of

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the subject. . . . his use of "we" is never incompatible with his leadership role in the mission team and never lessens his authority as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. (*The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians* [Intervarsity, 1994], 71-74).

Many of the same arguments would lead us to deny that Apollos was an Apostle (cf. 1 Cor 4:6, 9)

<sup>15</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC) (Hendrickson, 2000), 293-4.

<sup>16</sup> Harrison, 72

<sup>17</sup> Regarding the divine authentication of Apostles see section 8.4.B.

<sup>18</sup> D. Muller comments in the *NIDNTT*:

When Paul calls Titus, Epaphroditus and others "apostles of the churches" in 2 Cor. 8:23 (cf. Phil. 2:25), he is clearly not using *apostolos* as a technical term for a member of the Christian apostolate but rather as "messenger" (so AV, RV, RSV; NEB renders "delegates" in the former case). (Muller, I:130)