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Paul: The Unique Apostle

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Much has been written on apostleship since the appearance of Rengstorf's article on *apostolos* in Kittel's Word Book.¹ J. Andrew Kirk makes an able survey of the problem of the origin of the concept and the discussion that has gone on from the time of Rengstorf's article to the present day.² Though the discussion still continues and the problem is far from settled, the majority of scholars now are of the opinion that the Jewish institution of *shaliach* was not the precursor of the Christian apostle.³ Alan Richardson has challenged the two main points of similarities between the *shaliach* and the Christian apostle that Rengstorf points out, namely the laying on of hands and the sending of the apostles two by two (cf. Lk. 10:1).⁴ Erhaardt points out that it cannot be proved that the word *shaliach* was used before A.D. 140.⁵

The attempt of Walter Schmithals⁶ to trace the origin of the New Testament concept of apostle to Gnosticism also has not proved much. The date of Gnosticism as a developed system is a controversial matter and it cannot be established beyond doubt that Gnosticism as an established system existed before the second century.⁷

In the New Testament there is no uniform concept of apostleship and no clear distinction between the 'charismatic' and 'institutional' expressions of apostleship. The trend towards the institutional pattern

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¹ K. H. Rengstorf, 'Apostolos,' *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. G. Kittel), vol. I, pp. 407-47.

² J. Andrew Kirk, 'Apostleship since Rengstorf: Towards a Synthesis,' *New Testament Studies*, XXI (1974-75), pp. 249-64.

³ There are also supporters of Rengstorf's view: e.g. Eduard Lohse, 'Ursprung und Prägung des Christlichen Apostolates,' *Theol. Zeit.*, IX (1953), p. 260, note 7.

⁴ A. Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, New York, 1959, p. 325, note 3.

⁵ A. Erhaardt, *The Apostolic Succession*, London, 1953, p. 17.

⁶ W. Schmithals, *The Office of the Apostle in the Early Church*, London, 1971.

⁷ R. McL. Wilson, 'Gnosis, Gnosticism and the New Testament,' *Le Origini Dello Gnosticismo* (ed.) U. Bianchi (colloquio de Messina, 1966), Leiden, 1970, pp. 511-27, has pointed out that just as the N.T. thought may have been influenced by first century ideas, early Christianity also may have influenced the thought-world of its time, and some of the parallels that we see may be due to the Christian impact on the other.

is a post-Pauline phenomenon, just as the restricted use of the term 'apostle' to the Twelve in Acts and in Revelation is a later development. There is no clear evidence to show that the term was used only to designate the Twelve before Paul's time though the Twelve were known as a group (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5). Paul uses the term in a comprehensive sense to include the missionaries of the gospel and the missionaries of particular congregations (Rom. 16:7; 1 Cor. 9:5; 15:7; 1 Thess. 2:7) as well as in a more limited sense to refer to the Twelve and himself (Gal. 1:17). Without reservations Paul is able to include himself in both categories. On the one hand he places himself as the last one to have a Christophany (1 Cor. 15:8), as if to have seen the risen Lord is the criterion of apostleship, while on the other hand he includes himself with those of whom we have no information that they have seen the risen Lord. Paul uses the term 'apostle' in yet another sense, pejoratively, to signify the false apostles and the enemies of the gospel (2 Cor. 11:5, 13; 12:11b; Phil. 3:2).

We read more about the apostles in Acts than elsewhere in the New Testament. In Acts the Twelve are *the* apostles though the term is used, by the way, for Saul and Barnabas as well (Acts 14:4, 14). For the author of Acts the number Twelve is important (1:2). Matthias is chosen to fill the vacancy of Judas and he is qualified for that post due to his association with the historical Jesus (1:15-26). However, the Twelve need not be a Lukan creation, as Günter Klein argues,⁸ since the Twelve were already known as a group.⁹ The apostle of Acts is the symbol and figurehead of the expanding Church. Though Acts too speaks of suffering and hardship for the apostles, the overall tone is one of triumph under the leadership of the apostle and the Church tends to point to a *theologia gloriae* unlike the suffering apostle in Paul's letters, where the dominant note is a *theologia crucis*.

In Ephesians and Pastorals Paul is referred to as the 'apostle of Jesus Christ'. Though there is a concretization of the office of the apostle in the person of the bishop, the Pauline doctrine of apostleship still seems to be retained in the Pastorals. In Ephesians Paul is the great apostle, the man trusted by God with the responsibility for the Gentiles (Eph. 3:1, 6, 8). But we also see in Ephesians the apostles as a group who, with the prophets, form the foundation of the Church. The Pauline model of apostleship is retained in 1 Peter (also the Pauline form of letter writing). The Second Epistle of Peter and Jude reflect the second century idea of apostleship. In Hebrews Christ is the apostle (3:1). In Revelation the number Twelve is retained (21:4). It is not clear, however, whether the Twelve is used here in a restricted and technical sense as in Acts, for the author of Revelation seems to be fond of the number Twelve and its multiples. In the Johannine writings the figure of the apostle is absent though apostolic witness to the Word

⁸ G. Klein, *Die Zwölf Apostel*, Göttingen, 1961.

⁹ E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Oxford, 1971, p. 215, says 'the apostles are therefore not a group first created by Luke, but a circle which was already found before him in the tradition.'

still exists. In the Synoptic Gospels there is the tendency to project the Twelve as the authorised agents of the proclamation of the gospel with the authority to maintain discipline, teaching and administration of the Church (Mt. 16:19; 18:18).

A major portion of the New Testament, excluding the Gospels, contains Paul's letters. Even in those letters which are of doubtful Pauline authorship the main character is Paul. Almost half of Acts speaks about Paul. All these indicate that Paul, the *ektrōma*, the least of all the apostles (1 Cor. 15:8f.), has become the apostle *par excellence*, though the concept of apostleship has taken new forms to adapt itself to the needs of the growing Church.

Any attempt to speak of Paul's apostleship must take into consideration two factors: his direct call to be an apostle, and his particular commission to the Gentiles. Paul makes it unequivocally clear that he received his apostleship directly from God and not mediated by human agency (Gal. 1:1,15). He was also overwhelmingly convinced that God had willed that he should become an apostle (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1). This conviction was not just a matter of subjective experience. He saw his call to apostleship as part of God's larger plan for the world and he was aware that God had set him apart even before his birth to be an apostle (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:15), so as to play a decisive role in the eschatological drama of salvation.¹⁰ Paul's eschatology was influenced by Jewish apocalyptic thinking: that the present age is evil and that the world lay in the power of the evil one until Christ triumphed over him are ideas common in Paul's writings (cf. 1 Cor. 1:20; 2:6; Gal. 1:4). Paul was aware that he was living in the penultimate stage of the eschatological drama and that the denouement was just round the corner. This awareness of Paul is exemplified in his ironical, yet poignant, remark against the Corinthians who believed that they had already entered the kingdom (1 Cor. 4:8ff.). In this awareness of having been set apart even before his birth he has parallels in Isaiah and Jeremiah (Isa. 49:1; Jer. 1:5). This eschatological awareness in Paul's apostleship, minus the apocalyptic framework and its timebound character, still holds good as a criterion to be taken seriously in the Church's concept of ministry.

The relation between the apostle and his message

Paul sees a very close relation between the apostle and the message (gospel). He wants to be known primarily as a preacher and not one who baptised many (1 Cor. 1:14-17). The gospel has priority over the preacher, and as a preacher of the gospel the apostle is a servant (*doulos*) of the community (2 Cor. 4:5). Because apostleship is primarily for preaching the gospel, he is concerned that he does not 'run in vain' (Gal. 2:2; Phil. 2:16). The priority of the gospel over the preacher is obvious in Paul's metaphor of earthenware containing the treasure (2 Cor. 4:7).

¹⁰ A. Fridrichsen, *The Apostle and his Message*, Uppsala, 1947, pp. 3f. provides a possible eschatological setting in which we can see Paul's role as an apostle.

Paul's tireless resistance to those who adulterate the gospel and 'peddle' it (2 Cor. 2:17), going to the extent of anathematizing them (Gal. 1:8) and his tirade against his opponents in 2 Cor. 10-13 have to be seen in the light of this overwhelming conviction of the priority of the gospel. This conviction also provides the compulsion in him to preach the gospel as if he is destined to do so (*anangkē*—1 Cor. 9:16).

The close relation between the apostle and the message is further reflected in the way that Paul refers to the gospel as 'my gospel' (Rom. 2:16; 16:25) and 'our gospel' (1 Thess. 1:15; 2 Thess. 2:14). He has identified himself so much with the gospel that he could look at his imprisonment as a means of furthering the cause of the gospel (Phil. 1:12). He is prepared to become 'all things to all men' for the sake of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:22f.). For Paul to be true to the gospel, without distorting it, is an important criterion of apostolicity and, therefore, he is at pains to defend his integrity as a preacher (Rom. 15:17-20; 1 Cor. 9:12b, 15-18; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2, 5; Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:3-6). Coercing the Gentile Christians to be circumcised and to make them follow Jewish practices, and thereby infringe on their liberty in Christ, is as much a perversion of the gospel as adulterating it for profit ('peddlers of the gospel'—2 Cor. 2:17). It is in submission to the supremacy of the gospel that Paul is content to resort to the 'foolishness of preaching', avoiding the popular means of eloquence and *sofia* (1 Cor. 1:17b; 2:1-5) and thereby making himself vulnerable to the criticism that he is unskilled (*idiotēs*—2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6) in speaking.

Gospel and tradition

If gospel is the key factor in apostleship, according to Paul, how does Paul view tradition in relation to the gospel? It is beyond the scope of this essay to go into the quagmire of the controversy between gospel and tradition. The problem becomes more acute in Paul because he makes apparently contradictory statements in Gal. 1:12 and 1 Cor. 15:3. In Gal. 1:12 Paul asserts that he received his gospel directly from the Lord by a revelation and that he was not taught by anyone, while in 1 Cor. 15:3 he speaks of the tradition (*paradosis*) that he received and which he faithfully transmitted to the Corinthians concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23ff. —the tradition concerning the Lord's Supper which Paul claims to have received from the Lord).¹¹

Both references (Gal. 1:12 and 1 Cor. 15:3) related to the gospel, and yet there is a distinction in the use of the word *euangelion* in each case. In 1 Cor. 15:3 (also in 1 Cor. 11:23) Paul is referring to the historical tradition concerning Jesus (gospel-tradition), while in

¹¹ There have been various attempts to explain this contradiction. The more prominent ones are: O. Cullmann, 'The Tradition,' *Early Church*, New York, 1956 (also *La Tradition*, Neuchatel, 1953); K. Wegenast, *Das Verständnis der Tradition bei Paulus und in den deuteroPaulinen*, Neukirchen, 1962, pp. 44-46. J. H. Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 54-83, surveys the discussion on this problem.

Gal. 1:12 Paul uses the word *euangelion* (gospel) in a particular sense. In the latter case he is referring to his experience of having been apprehended by Christ, and gospel here means that transforming power of Christ which made him what he is now. Paul's coming to Christ was due to a direct experience with Christ. Paul has been called to witness to this transforming power of Christ, and in that sense he can say that he has received his gospel directly from the Lord. But this does not rule out Paul's indebtedness to the Church or to the earlier apostles for his information concerning Jesus. In Paul's mind there seems to be no contradiction in the use of the word 'gospel' in these two references. For Paul the clash comes only when the truth of the gospel that he has personally experienced suffers at the hands of those who restrict the freedom of the gospel in the name of tradition and apostolicity.

In both the above references Paul's apostolic legitimacy is evident: in the first instance, as one belonging to the apostolic band to whom the risen Christ appeared and who are the guarantors of the tradition, and in the second, as one who has received his apostleship and message (gospel) directly from the Lord.

Metaphors used for apostleship

Paul uses various imagery to exemplify his vocation as an apostle. In Rom. 15:15ff. he uses cultic imagery: he compares the fruit of his labours, as an apostle to the Gentiles, to the sacrificial gift which a priest offers to God. The quality of the gift offered is as important as the act of offering. He is not only keen to offer to God the obedience of the Gentiles (Rom. 15:18), but also keen to see his converts grow in conduct and thus become a gift acceptable to God (cf. Rom. 12:1—'present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God'). This 'priestly' vocation of Paul is not distinct from his vocation as a preacher of the gospel (cf. Rom. 15:18-21).

The more frequently used imagery is the athletic imagery (the *agon motif*).¹² Paul compares his apostolic activities to a man running to a definite goal (1 Cor. 9:26f.; Gal. 2:2; Phil. 2:16; 3:13f.). He is indeed concerned that he is not disqualified after preaching to others (1 Cor. 9:27). He is keen to practise what he preaches (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6). He uses the metaphor of gardeners or workmen who are called to work in their master's garden to describe his apostolic vocation as well as that of his colleagues (1 Cor. 3:5-9). For Paul the apostle's work has to be qualitatively high. It is like a master-builder building with good raw material and whose work will stand the severe test of the master (1 Cor. 3:10-15). It is interesting that Paul uses these metaphors in the context of his discussion on preaching the gospel. In other words, all these different activities are related to his primary vocation as a preacher of the gospel.

Paul also uses various titles to designate his vocation as an apostle. Though these titles are not exact synonyms of the word *apostolos*, they

¹² V. C. Pätzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif*, Leiden, 1967, describes the athletic metaphors that Paul uses in his letters.

are closely related to it, and through them we get a much broader spectrum of apostleship as Paul understands it. The titles are *doulos*, *diakonos*, *hupēretēs*, *sunergoi theou*, *oikonomos*, *presbutēs* and *leitourgos*.

Doulos stresses the fact of Paul being a Christian as well as an apostle of Christ (the slave of Christ). As a Christian Paul is a slave of Christ, one who has accepted the mastery of Christ over his life. As an apostle too Paul is Christ's slave, one who carries out the order of the master. In this sense he is similar to the servants of Yahweh ('*ebed Yahweh*') in the Old Testament, men such as Moses, David and the prophets. As a *doulos Christou* he has been chosen for a specific task, i.e. to preach the Gospel. As one who has carried out his commission by preaching the Gospel and calling the Church into being, Paul is also a *doulos* of the community of faith (Church) (2 Cor. 4:5).

Diakonos (servant or minister) also denotes practically the same idea of Paul's apostleship. But in this term the stress is on the work or ministry, while in the case of *doulos* the stress is on Paul's submission to Christ. Of course, there is no sharp distinction between these terms. The term *diakonos* also denotes the eschatological character of Paul's vocation (2 Cor. 3:6). Those who pervert the gospel, moving around as apostles, are *diakonoι* of Satan (2 Cor. 11:15).

The term *hupēretēs* means one who takes orders from a superior. It is used only once by Paul (1 Cor. 4:1) and this term, like *doulos*, stresses Paul's subservience to Christ: one who does nothing but the will of him who has commissioned him. Though etymologically the word *hupēretēs* has more dignity than *doulos*, for Paul both denote essentially the same thing. The word is used in the plural in 1 Cor. 4:1 to refer to Paul and his co-workers: Sosthenes, Apollos, Timothy and others.

Sunergoi theou is used in 1 Cor. 3:9 (in some manuscripts of 1 Thess. 3:2 Timothy is *sunergon tou theou*) to refer to Paul and Apollos, the apostles who are instrumental in the origin and growth of the Church at Corinth. The interpretation of this phrase is a controversial issue: there are those who take it as 'God's fellow-workers', while others take it as 'fellow-workers for God' or 'colleagues in God's service'. I consider the second one as more probable because in the context in which it appears such an interpretation seems to make better sense.¹³ Paul is trying to admonish the Corinthians, who have aligned themselves around personalities, by showing that there is no distinction between workers since all are alike and are for God (1 Cor. 3:8). Here again the term is used to denote Paul's task as an apostle, a worker in God's field.

Oikonomos (steward) is used only once in relation to Paul's apostolic task (1 Cor. 4:1) and is used in the plural along with *hupēretēs* to refer to Paul and his colleagues in apostolic vocation. This word denotes the content of Paul's ministry, namely to make known the mystery of God.

¹³ V. P. Furnish, 'Fellow-workers in God's service', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXX (1961), pp. 364-70, shows convincingly that this interpretation is the more probable of the two.

revealed in Christ. Apostolic ministry, therefore, is an *oikonomia* (Col. 1:25).

In 2 Cor. 5:20 the verb *presbeuomen* is used in the sense of ambassadorial task (probably *presbutēs* in Philemon 9 also is used in the sense of an ambassador of Christ). Paul sees his ministry as well as that of the other apostles as a ministry of reconciliation in so far as they become instrumental in enabling others to be reconciled to God in Christ. In that sense they are ambassadors for Christ. This term expresses the tremendous importance of apostolic vocation.

Lastly as an apostle Paul is like a priest who offers to God the sacrifice which is acceptable to God (Rom. 15:15). Paul, the *leitourgos*, is offering the fruit of his labour among the Gentiles as an offering well pleasing to God.

The above titles express and emphasise different aspects of Paul's apostleship. They are all dynamic concepts and are functional titles, which supports our earlier finding that apostleship, as Paul understands it, is not a static concept relating to an office but a ministry for Christ.

Norms of apostleship

It may not be wrong to say that at least in 2 Cor. 10-13 the clash between Paul and his opponents is a clash over the norms or criteria of apostleship.¹⁴ Paul has not laid down any norms as such except what we can make out from his polemics against his critics. Paul's opponents, however, had definite notions of apostleship: the apostle should have eloquence and persuasive speech; Paul was unskilled in speech (2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6). His opponents carried commendatory letters in support of their credentials (probably from the Jerusalem Church) while Paul had none (2 Cor. 3:1). The signs of a true apostle, according to his opponents, are wonders, mighty works, pneumatic phenomena, ecstatic and visionary experiences (2 Cor. 12:1-6, 12). Though Paul too claims to have all these, they are not obvious to others. The true apostle, according to his critics, will be worthy to receive wages. Paul's reluctance to receive support from Corinth was interpreted by his critics as a disqualification.

For Paul, the fact that he was called to be an apostle and the experience of having seen the risen Lord are strong points in support of his apostleship. But he brings in an even greater norm of apostleship, namely the apostle's work for Christ and the gospel (1 Cor. 9:2; 2 Cor. 3:2). The apostle's work for Christ is a far superior proof of apostleship than a letter of recommendation (even if it is from the Jerusalem apostles who were with Jesus). The existence of the Church which came into being due to Paul's preaching is the real proof (seal) of his apostleship and the most obvious letter of recommendation. Little wonder that this Pauline criterion of apostleship got pushed to the background in favour of apostleship as an institution with a halo, in which the stress was on the office of the apostle (bishop) and his

¹⁴ C. K. Barrett, *The Signs of an Apostle*, London, 1970, discusses this topic in detail.

authority. Of course, it was but natural that the charismatic concept of apostleship had to give way to a more institutionalised form when the Church grew as an institution. But the idea that the apostle is essentially a missionary, one who carries on the work of Christ, somehow has to be rediscovered along with the pastoral and cybernetic responsibilities of the apostolic office, and to that end Paul's example is a worthy pattern.

The suffering apostle

Another important Pauline contribution to the concept of apostleship is the manner in which Paul saw his suffering. Suffering is nothing peculiar to the apostle for it is the lot of all Christians. But the apostle bears the brunt of attack and suffers the worst of blows, since he is in the vanguard of the battle against the forces opposed to Christ and his gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 10:5). The apostle's suffering becomes a witness to the world a, 'spectacle before men and angels' (1 Cor. 4:9f.).

The suffering and the victory through suffering in the life of the apostle is modelled on the suffering and victory of Christ (Cross and Resurrection). The apostle through his suffering witnesses to the saving power (*dunamis*) of the Cross and he confirms through his life what he has preached, i.e. the message of the Cross.¹⁵ Suffering for Paul is at once his identification with the crucified Lord as well as the fact of his existence.¹⁶ The ongoing nature of suffering and its gruesomeness is portrayed by Paul through the expression: 'carrying the dying of Jesus in the body' (2 Cor. 4:10). For Paul his own bodily marks have become a means of participating in the sufferings of Jesus (cf. 'I bear on my body the marks of Jesus'—Gal. 6:17). Paul uses the expression, 'the fellowship of his sufferings' (Phil. 3:10), to show his identification with Christ in his suffering, and Paul is convinced that only through such an identification with the suffering (death) and resurrection of Christ could he really know Christ (Phil. 3:10).

Besides this personal experience of knowing Christ through participation in suffering, Paul sees that his suffering has a redemptive and vicarious effect as well. By witnessing to Christ through his own suffering Paul is able to lead others to the new life in Christ (2 Cor. 4:12). Moreover, the apostle's suffering on behalf of the Church, by virtue of his close identification with the Church, amounts to the suffering of the Church itself. Paul believed that the Church had to endure a certain quantum of suffering before the end, and his suffering on behalf of the Church would make up for the deficiency in the Church's suffering (Col. 1:24). Paul's suffering has an exemplary value as well: by his imprisonment for the sake of Christ and the gospel

¹⁵ A. Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, London, 1926, p. 189, writes: 'Paul is not so much the Christologos as the Christophoros.'

¹⁶ R. C. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, Berlin, 1967, p. 87, says that 'for Paul the idea of participating in Jesus' death and resurrection is not a mere theological generality but a means of understanding the particular experiences of his own life . . .'

the Christians have been made confident to face suffering on their part (Phil. 1:4).

Thus Paul sees the suffering (weakness) in his apostolic existence as the surest proof of his apostleship and the closest link between Christ and himself.¹⁷ Though Paul could boast of many things, the only sure ground of his boasting was his suffering and weakness through which he experienced the power of God (2 Cor. 12:9f.; 13:4a).

The apostle's authority

Except for two explicit references (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10) and a few indirect ones (e.g. 1 Cor. 4:21) we do not see many expressions of Paul's apostolic authority. In the two explicit references Paul says that he received his authority from the Lord. The comparatively few references to his authority is due to the fact that Paul did not want his apostleship to be understood so much as an office as a ministry. Only when his apostleship and apostolic legitimacy were challenged did he defend them.

Some insights that we get from Paul's understanding of his apostolic authority are: (i) apostolic authority is only for building the Church up and not to destroy it. On this criterion Paul's opponents in Corinth, who encroached into Paul's territory and tried to disrupt the Church, ceased to have apostolic authority despite their commendatory letters. This Pauline criterion of apostolic authority should always be seen as a valid criterion for assessing the authority of ministers (bishops) in the Church; (ii) apostolic authority is relevant and valid only in the actual exercise of the ministry in the community. Apostolic authority is not an abstract power vested in the office of the apostle which he can wield as and when he likes. For Paul, the community or the congregation has priority over the apostle, and the apostle is a *doulos* (slave) of the community for Christ's sake (2 Cor. 4:5). Paul never sees himself apart from or above the community, though he knows that he has authority over them as the apostle. Paul's insistence on having the decision on the incestuous man in Corinth made by the community when they have met in the name of the Lord (1 Cor. 5:3ff.) is indicative of this. (I am aware of the other possibilities of interpretations of 1 Cor. 5:3-5.)¹⁸

This paradoxical notion of authority in Paul (being the apostle as well as the *doulos* of the community) is in line with the authority of Jesus who being God took the form of a slave (Phil. 2:5f.). The apostle's subservience to the community recognises the fact that the community (Church) belongs to Christ, whose servant the apostle is, and that both the community and the apostle are subject to the authority of Christ. No wonder Paul appeals to the churches over which he has apostolic

¹⁷ E. Güttgemanns, *Der Leidende Apostle und sein Herr*, Göttingen, 1966, deals in detail with Paul's view of suffering.

¹⁸ It is interesting that Ignatius of Antioch, while asserting his episcopal authority and demanding obedience of the people in his charge, always ends his letters with the words your *diakonos* (servant) Ignatius, instead of your bishop Ignatius. Of course, Ignatius was a great imitator of Paul in many respects.

authority, pointing to the 'meekness and gentleness of Christ' (2 Cor. 10:1) and Christ's self-abasement (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5-11). We see more of *parakalō* (I beseech) and less of *paraggellō* (I command) in Paul's letters.

Though Paul is aware of his overall authority as the apostle to the Gentiles, he sees himself in a special relation to the churches of his own creation, i.e. those churches which came into being through his preaching. He is *their* apostle because he has begotten them in Christ through the gospel (1 Cor. 4:14f.). This parental relationship with his churches is expressed through the father-children metaphor and the related metaphors that he often uses (1 Cor. 4:15; 2 Cor. 2:14; Gal. 4:19; 1 Thess. 2:11). Besides his God-given authority Paul feels that he has earned for himself an authority through his work and suffering on behalf of the churches. This is yet another insight that we get from Paul's view of apostolic authority. Only one who exercises his ministry in the community and suffers for the community is worthy of being an apostle (minister). This understanding of ministry and authority in Paul is, again, in line with the ministry and authority of Jesus, Paul's master and example, who though being the Son and having the authority of the Son exercised it by giving his life for the sheep (Jn. 10:18; cf. Mk. 10:45).

The moral authority that Paul has earned through his work and suffering also provides the basis for his exhortations to his converts to live a life worthy of their calling. He is confident to point to his own life and witness as an apostle (1 Thess. 2:3-6, 10f.). He even goes to the extent of inviting his converts to 'imitate' him (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17). Here the imitation of Paul does not mean that Paul is the perfect example, but to imitate him in so far as he imitates Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). Paul is able to point to his suffering and the way he endures it as a model for his converts to endure suffering in their turn (Phil. 1:14).

By virtue of his divine commission to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:13f.; 11:13; 15:15; Gal. 1:16; 2:7f.) Paul considers himself to have authority over all Gentiles. This explains Paul's writing to the churches in Rome and Colossae, churches which he had not founded nor visited before he wrote to them.

Once the real Paul, the *apostle par excellence*, is forgotten, apostleship tends to become institutionalised and concretized in the person and office of the apostle or his successor (bishop) as it did happen not much after Paul's time and has continued ever since in the Church. This also explains the craving and frantic work to get oneself elected as a bishop. Would there be any attraction if apostleship or bishopric were to be like Paul's apostleship?

India can respect and take seriously only that ministry which is sacrificial and self-giving as exemplified in the life of Mahatma Gandhi and that of his followers. For that reason Mother Teresa, a non-national, commands more authority than the authority of all the bishops put together.