

Conflict as context for defining identity: A study of apostleship in the Galatian and Corinthian letters

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Abstract

This article examines ways in which Paul defined the notion of apostleship in the course of conflict with rival authority claimants in the early Church. In Galatians Paul defines and asserts his apostolic self-identity in order to regain the oversight of the Galatian churches which he had previously exercised as an apostle of the church of Antioch. In 2 Corinthians Paul asserts his authority as church founder against rivals who recognise no territorial jurisdiction. No common agenda, theological position, or conception of apostleship can be identified. Rather, rival authority claimants based their legitimacy on different criteria in different situations.

1. INTRODUCTION

That apostleship of Christ was a defining aspect of Paul's self-identity is widely recognised in scholarship (cf Dunn 1998; Taylor 1993). That this apostolic consciousness, and the authority claimed on the basis thereof, were crucial to the conflicts which overshadowed much of Paul's recorded ministry, is perhaps less widely acknowledged, particularly among scholars who emphasise the theological nature of the controversies in which Paul was engaged. While early Christian history can no longer be reduced to Pauline and anti-Pauline camps, there is a lingering tendency to view the conflicts in which Paul was involved in such terms (Barrett 1985; Lüdemann 1989). Despite attempts to demonstrate

alternative backgrounds to opposition to Paul's authority and theology (Georgi 1986; Jewett 1970; Munck 1959), the notion of a single, concerted, anti-Pauline movement of so-called Jewish-Christian origin, continues to be maintained in some scholarly circles.

I wish to argue that the parties Paul opposes in his letters must be examined individually, and not defined exclusively in terms of their opposition to Paul, but rather in terms of their own broader theological, missiological, and ecclesiastical agenda. I wish to argue also that the conflicts reflected in the Pauline literature cannot be understood simply in terms of doctrinal differences. Rather, the central issue is one of legitimate teaching and disciplinary authority in and over the early Christian communities. Paul's letters are assertions of authority, and claims to legitimacy where his authority is contested. Apostleship was a fundamental concept in Paul's rhetoric of authority, particularly, but in very different ways, in the conflicts reflected in Galatians and 2 Corinthians. I shall argue that these letters reflect hostility between Paul on the one hand and on the other groups of Christian Jewish missionaries who cannot be identified with each other. Whatever theological and missiological principles these may have held in common, their agenda are quite disparate, but the contested notion of apostleship is central both to Paul's authority claims and to attempts to supersede his authority in the churches. A study of the construction of apostolic identity can therefore shed useful light on the struggle for power in early Christianity, and, by extension, on the theological disputes which accompanied the contest for authority.

It is not necessary for the present purpose to discuss the origins and derivation of the term ἀπόστολος and the usage it acquired in early Christianity (cf Ehrhardt 1958; Hanson 1961; Klein 1961; Mosbech 1948; Munck 1949; Rengstorf 1933; Schmithals 1971b; Schnackenburg 1970). It is sufficient to note that the term would have been readily understood, even if not in widespread use, in the ancient world. The principle and practice of sending agents and messengers were well known, even if technical details regarding the scope and limitations of such representation were disputed (cf Buckland & McNair 1952;

Jones 1956). ἀπόστολος gained currency in early Christian usage, referring very generally to messengers and representatives of Christian communities (cf 2 Cor 8:23; Phlp 2:25). It acquired at an early date also a very much more specific sense, referring to those sent to proclaim the gospel (cf Ac 14:4,14). Paul's self-conception, as reflected in Galatians in particular and also in 2 Corinthians and other isolated texts, is derived from this usage, but gives apostleship very much greater theological weight, and claims greater authority on the basis thereof (cf Taylor 1992; 1993). The fact that Paul's self-designation was controversial and contested indicates that he was not alone in loading ἀπόστολος (Χριστοῦ) with theological, ideological, and rhetorical weight. Later usage of the term in Matthew, Mark, and Luke-Acts (Mt 10:2; Mk 6:30; Lk 6:13; 9:10; 11:49; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10; Ac 1:2, 26; 2:37, 42, 43; 4:33, 35, 36, 37; 5:2, 12, 18, 29, 34, 40; 6:6; 8:14, 18; 9:27; 11:1; 14:4, 14; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23, 33; 16:4; cf 1 Pt 1:1; 2 Pt 1:1; 3:2; Jude 17; Rv 2:2; 18:20; 21:14), and its ultimate restriction to the circle previously known as the δώδεκα and a very few privileged others, similarly suggests that term early became one of authority, and was used in articulating claims to authority in the Church. The concept was recognised, even if its definition and criteria, and the exercise of the authority attached to the title, varied considerably during the earliest decades of Christianity.

Paul's definition of his apostolic authority derives from a specific historical context. His extant letters all date from the period after his confrontation with Peter and Barnabas at Antioch (Gl 2:11-14) which ended his association with the church there (Brown & Meier 1983; Dunn 1983; Holmberg 1980; Taylor 1992). Paul had hitherto been a functionary of the church of Antioch, engaged in its mission to Cyprus and parts of Asia Minor (cf Ac 13:1-3; Dunn 1993:25; Holmberg 1980; Murphy-O'Connor 1996; Taylor 1992; cf Riesner 1998). Galatians in particular reflects Paul's reconstruction of his apostolic identity after ceasing to be a representative and missionary of the church of Antioch. It would therefore be helpful at this stage to consider such evidence as we may have of the nature of the apostleship to which the church of Antioch commissioned Barnabas, Paul, and presumably many others.

2. APOSTLESHIP OF THE CHURCH OF ANTIOCH

Ac 13:1-4 relates the church of Antioch commissioning Barnabas and Paul, described as προφήται and διδάσκοι for undefined work to which they had been called by the Holy Spirit. There follows the narrative of the so-called first missionary journey, and Barnabas and Paul are described as being ἀπέλυσαν by the community and, ἐκπεμθέντες by the Holy Spirit. While ἀποστέλλω and its derivatives are not used in this pericope, Barnabas and Paul are twice described as ἀπόστολοι in the ensuing narrative (Ac 14:4, 14), the only such designation of either of them in Acts. The absence of such terminology in 13:1-3 does not in any way mean that it is illegitimate to speak of Barnabas and Paul as apostles of the church of Antioch (Barrett 1994:598-601; Taylor 1992:88-95). If there is any significance to the word usage, it indicates no more than Luke's reticence with the title and the relative unimportance of personal designations in the work of Christian mission at this early date.

In 1 Cor 9:1-6 Paul indicates that he and Barnabas did not receive economic support for their work of Christian ministry. This text is significant for several reasons. While it is clear that Barnabas and Paul did not claim any support from the churches, it is equally clear that there was a generally recognised right of Christians fully committed to the work of the Gospel to do so. The wariness of claimants to financial support evident in later Christian writings in itself indicates that the claim was or had been regarded as legitimate (Mt 10:8-10; Mk 6:8-9; Lk 9:3-4; 10:4-5; Did 11:6, 12; 13:1-2). There is no indication elsewhere in the tradition that the right was exclusively associated with those who claimed the title ἀπόστολος. Paul cites as ἀπόστολοι who exercised this right Peter and the brothers of Jesus, all of whom were associated, at least initially, with the church of Jerusalem. The place in and from where Barnabas and Paul exercised a common apostleship was Antioch. This would seem to suggest that the custom of apostles' not receiving financial support from the churches in which they worked may have originated in Antioch. This was a practice which Paul continued during his years of independent mission. As the custom of the church of Antioch,

this practice would not have been at issue in Galatians, even though it was to become controversial in Corinth, as will be discussed below.

A further indication of Antiochene apostleship may be found in Paul's account of the Jerusalem conference (Gl 2:1-10; cf Ac 15:6-21/9; Taylor 1992:51-54, 95-122, 140-42, and refs). In Gl 2:8 Paul uses the term ἀποστολή to describe the work of proclaiming the gospel, rather than the personal designation ἀπόστολος. It has been argued that Paul cites the actual words of a formal agreement at this point (Betz 1979:98; cf Dunn 1982:473; Longenecker 1990:56; McLean 1991:67). However, ἀποστολή, while applied explicitly to Peter and the Jerusalem church and only implicitly to Barnabas, Paul, and the Antiochene mission, suggests a more fluid and less personalised conception of apostleship than is reflected in Paul's conception of his own apostleship. The work of Christian mission, rather than the status of individuals, is at issue (cf Holmberg 1980:18; McLean 1991). In a context in which the status and authority of individuals are not of primary concern, the term ἀπόστολος could be applied to any person involved in ἀποστολή. It may therefore not be insignificant that the only occasion in which Barnabas and Paul are referred to as ἀπόστολοι in Luke-Acts is in the account of their mission from Antioch (Ac 14:4, 14). A similar usage is found in 1 Th 2:7, where Silvanus and Timothy are included in the description Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι. This text may be particularly relevant if Silvanus represented an Antiochene notion of apostleship (Taylor 1992:148-52).

In summary, the apostles of the church of Antioch, so far as we have been able to reconstruct, were deployed by that church to proclaim the Christian gospel in other centres. They were supported either from their own resources or by the sending church, but not by the communities they established. They were defined not by status but by the nature of their commission, and were sent by and were presumably accountable to the church of Antioch. If Paul's acquaintance with Andronicus and Junia (Rm 16:7) dated to his Antiochene period, this would suggest that the apostolate of the church of Antioch was not exclusively male. However, it could be argued on the basis of 1 Cor 9:5 that a husband-wife

apostolic team would have been more characteristic of the circles associated with Peter and the brothers of Jesus, and have emanated from Jerusalem rather than Antioch. This point is inherently uncertain, as Barnabas and Paul are the only Antiochene apostles known by name. Furthermore, 1 Cor 9:6 could indicate that Barnabas and Paul were exceptional even among this group in not being accompanied by wives on their apostolic travels (cf Conzelmann 1975:153). As will be clear from our study of the relevant sections of Galatians, Paul departs from this notion of apostleship very fundamentally in his conception of the origin of his commission as an apostle.

In place of, and over against, the commission and authority he himself had previously derived from the church of Antioch, Paul expounds a conception of apostleship derived directly from God, superior in origin and authority to that of those whom he opposes. That this has shaped subsequent Christian notions of apostleship, and of Paul himself, requires caution in the reading of texts and reconstruction of the Christian mission and life which lies behind them. "Paul's discourse, which is situational, rhetorical, embattled to lesser and greater degrees, and in competition with other discourses, is imbued by later interpreters with the hegemonic status it seeks to claim" (Castelli 1991:33). Galatians and 2 Corinthians must be examined bearing this in mind.

2. APOSTLESHIP AND THE CONFLICT IN GALATIA

The churches in Galatia, to whom the letter is addressed, were established by Barnabas and Paul under the auspices of the church of Antioch (Dunn 1993; Longenecker 1990; Longenecker 1998; Taylor 1992:45-46; contra, Murphy-O'Connor 1996). In understanding Paul's ideology of apostolic authority asserted in the letter, we need to be aware of the situation both of the communities addressed and of Paul himself at the time of writing. The church of Antioch was the parent community of the Galatian churches, and Paul's relationship with the latter had hitherto been governed by his position as an apostle of the former. Antioch did not cease to be the parent congregation of the Galatian churches when Paul lost his position in that community. On the other hand, Paul's ceasing

to be an apostle of the Antiochene church meant that he no longer had a recognised authority relationship with the churches of Galatia. His purpose in the letter is to create such a relationship. Paul does this in two ways. Firstly, he claims an apostolic authority that is independent of the church of Antioch, deriving directly from God. Secondly, he claims in this capacity to have been the founder of the Galatian churches, and by implication not to have been acting on any commission from the church of Antioch. Paul's objective is therefore in effect to replace the oversight of the church of Antioch with his own apostolic authority in the Galatian churches. It is in the context of this conflict that Paul's claims to apostolic authority in Galatians are to be understood.

Paul's authority claims are most explicit in the epistolary greeting (Gl 1:1-2) and in the (auto)biographical narrative (Gl 1:11-2:14). Before these texts can be considered in detail, some attention to the rhetorical structure of Galatians is required. While the use of rhetorical criticism in the study of Galatians has been criticised, on the grounds that too rigid an application of the categories of the rhetorical handbooks of Cicero and Quintilian could be misleading (Kern 1996), we nonetheless need to be aware in general terms of the conventions which influenced the composition of speeches and letters. While this section of the letter is clearly the *narratio*, its parameters and purpose are both disputed (cf Taylor 1993:66-69). Several scholars have argued that Paul is concerned not so much with his own apostolic authority as with the content of the gospel he preaches (Brinsmead 1982:50; Kennedy 1984; Lategan 1988; Smit 1989). Others have argued that Paul portrays himself as an example to the Galatian Christians (Aune 1987:189-90; Gaventa 1986; Lyons 1985:75-176), or that he is seeking to persuade the Galatians to conform to his interpretation of the gospel (Hall 1991; Hester 1991:282; Kennedy 1984:146; Smit 1989:23). The last point might be regarded as self-evident from even a cursory reading of Galatians. However, it is crucial that we recognise that Paul was not participating in a free exchange of ideas regarding Christian living in the abstract, but asserting his position unequivocally in a specific and concrete ecclesiastical situation. His example would not be followed, nor would his injunctions regarding Christian life be

observed, unless Paul's authority to regulate the life of the Galatian churches was acknowledged. As we have already noted, Paul was addressing a situation in which his authority would not be accepted without question. His rhetoric is accordingly directed to establishing his authority, in order that he might govern the lives of the Galatian Christians in accordance with his interpretation of the gospel (cf Betz 1979; Taylor 1993).

It is clear from the way in which Paul qualifies his self-designation as ἀπόστολος in Gl 1:1 that the term was capable of alternative interpretation, and that the theological weight and authority claims Paul attaches to the term are at least potentially controversial (Dunn 1993:25-26; Longenecker 1990:4; cf Betz 1979:39). Paul cites nowhere any paradigm of apostleship, other than claiming for ἀπόστολοι pre-eminence in the church (1 Cor 12:28). Where criteria of apostleship are reflected in the letters, it is not clear to what extent these criteria were generally current in the early Church, and to what extent they reflect Paul's self-conception and ideological and rhetorical agenda in a particular letter (1 Cor 9:1-5; 15:7; 2 Cor 12:12; Gl 1:16; 2:7-9). Paul could recognise another as an apostle only insofar as that person met the criteria on which Paul based his own apostolic self-identity. At the same time, if Paul was to assert authority within established churches, as he does in Galatians, as well as in establishing new churches, he needed to define himself in terms of those who were able to exercise authority effectively in the various Christian communities.

The leaders of the Jerusalem church were the most effective wielders of authority in the Church of this period, and were acknowledged as pre-eminent by the church of Antioch (cf Gl 2:1-14; Brown & Meier 1983; Dunn 1982; 1983; Holmberg 1980; Taylor 1992). Paul therefore needed to model himself on them so far as he could, irrespective of whether they used the title ἀπόστολος or accorded it to anyone else. Paul could not claim to have been a disciple of Jesus (cf Hengel 1991; Riesner 1998:33-58), and his reference to σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι in Gl 1:16 may be wilful disparagement of this criterion of authority as well of James's blood relationship with Jesus (cf 2:2, 6; 2 Cor 5:16; Boyarin 1994:109-13; Betz 1979:72-73; Dunn 1993: 67-68; Longenecker 1990:32-35). Perhaps

more significantly, Paul did not have the support or commission of any community, such as the church of Jerusalem or of Antioch, on which to base his claim to authority. He was alienated from the eschatological centre of Christianity and could derive no authority from that centre without affirming the higher authority of the Jerusalem church in communities over which he asserted authority. Paul was obliged therefore to claim for his conversion experience the significance attributed to other prominent Christians' experiences of the risen Christ (Gl 1:16; cf 1 Cor 9:1; 15:1-8), and, moreover, to derive from it that authority which he defined as apostleship (Dunn 1982:463; Kim 1981:55-56; Stendahl 1976:7-11). The identification of Paul's revelatory vision of the risen Christ as a criterion for apostolic authority does not, however, imply that his vocation to apostleship was received in that vision (cf Taylor 1992:63-67). There is little evidence that anybody else was concerned at this time with personalising, or even with defining, the Christian apostolate, with the possible exception of Paul's opponents in Corinth, who will be considered below. Paul therefore does not need to counter in Galatians one explicit definition of apostleship with another, but rather to match the authority exercised by others with his own, which he linked to his self-designation ἀπόστολος. Galatians was written early in Paul's period of independent mission and therefore early in the process in which he sought to articulate his conception of his personal apostolic vocation.

The Galatian Christians had previously encountered apostles, including Paul himself and Barnabas, who had been commissioned by the church of Antioch (cf Ac 13:1-3; 14:4, 14). Insofar as they acknowledged any specifically Christian usage of the term, therefore, the Galatian Christians would have understood it in the Antiochene sense. Paul accordingly articulates against Antiochene conceptions of apostleship familiar in Galatia his ideology of apostolic authority derived from and accountable only to God.

2.1 Apostleship and the Rhetoric of Authority

Paul articulates his claim to authority over the Galatian churches in terms of an apostleship derived directly from God (Gl 1:1). The fact of preaching the gospel is

no longer an adequate qualification for apostleship in the ecclesiastical and rhetorical context Paul is addressing. Paul's apostleship διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Θεοῦ πατρὸς is contrasted with apostleship ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων οὐδέ δι' ἀνθρώπων. Paul's notion of his own apostleship is highly personalised and theologised. The exclusion of any human principal, including by implication a Christian community such as that of Antioch, and claim to direct and unmediated divine revelation and vocation, serve both to entrench Paul's claim to authority and to exclude rival claimants (cf Boyarin 1994:107-109; Burton 1921:37-39; Dunn 1993:25). Paul's apostolic self-conception is radically different from that of the missionaries of the church of Antioch among whom he had previously worked, and with at least some of whom the Galatian Christians would have been acquainted. The possibility needs to be considered that it is precisely this pattern of apostleship to which Paul is contrasting his own apostolic identity (cf Dunn 1993:14-17; Murphy-O'Connor 1996:193-94).

In seeking to identify the party Paul opposes in Galatians, a number of further factors need to be considered in addition to those identified above. One is that it is not clear that Paul himself knew precisely who they were (cf Gl 1:6-9; 4:20; 5:10; Kümmel 1975:300; Martyn 1985:313-14). It would seem clear from Gl 5:2-3 that Paul is attacking a party influencing the (gentile) Galatian Christians to undergo circumcision. His argument that the obligation to observe Torah in full is a corollary of circumcision would militate strongly against any figurative interpretation of περιτομή (Betz 1979:259-61; Dunn 1993:265-67; Longenecker 1990:226-27). In place of token incorporation into Israel signified by circumcision, Paul articulates the inheritance by gentile Christians into the promises made to Abraham (Gl 3:14-18; 4:21-31). The position Paul opposes seems similar to that which was repudiated at the Jerusalem conference (Ac 15:6-21; Gl 2:1-10), and which is excluded by the Apostolic Decree (Ac 15:23-29), a document or formulary which must be seen as subsequent to the Antioch incident (Borgen 1988; Taylor 1992:110-22, 140-42). There is no indication that the crisis reflected in Gl 2:11-14 concerned circumcision of gentile Christians, but rather the appropriate degree of commensality between Christians of Jewish and gentile

origin (Brown & Meier 1983:36-44; Dunn 1983; Holmberg 1998; Howard 1990:14; Taylor 1992:124-38). Apart from a passing mention of calendrical observations (4:10), Paul makes no reference in Galatians to any specific judaising practice other than circumcision (5:2, 3, 6; 6:12, 13, 15). There are very general allusions to Torah observance in 2:14-3:14 and elsewhere. While Paul may not respond to every aspect of the teaching he opposes (Barclay 1988:38), or may caricature it (Hall 1991:311), it is nonetheless surprising that he makes in the *probatio* and *peroratio* no reference to table fellowship and dietary laws which had been at issue in Antioch. On the contrary, Paul intimates that those he opposes demand circumcision to the exclusion of other observances (5:2-3), and he attacks an antinomian tendency in the Galatian churches (5:13-26). These factors suggest that the leadership of the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch cannot be identified with the party Paul opposes in Galatia. While tension between Paul and the Jerusalem church is clearly reflected in Galatians (1:16-2:14; cf 4:21-31), there is no evidence that either the Jerusalem or the Antioch church came to regard circumcision as obligatory for gentile Christians (cf Barrett 1985:6, 22; Watson 1986:59-61). There may well have been pressure on the Jerusalem church (cf Gl 6:12; 1 Th 2:14-16) not to allow the conversion of gentiles to abrogate the distinction between Israel and the gentile world (Reicke 1984; Taylor 1996). Such pressure may well have contributed to the confrontation between Paul and Peter in Antioch (Gl 2:11-14; Dunn 1983; Taylor 1992:124-38). There is nevertheless no indication of a fundamental departure from the consensus established at the Jerusalem conference, and the agenda of Paul's antagonists are quite contrary to implementation of the Apostolic Decree (Borgen 1988; Taylor 1992:110-22; 140-42; cf Murphy-O'Connor 1996:193-94).

In view of the difficulties in identifying Paul's antagonists with the Jerusalem and Antioch churches and their leadership, the majority of recent scholars argue that they represent a faction in the Jerusalem or Antioch church, but not the leadership of either community (Betz 1979:7; Burton 1921:ivi; Dunn 1993:14-17; Gunther 1973:298; Koester 1971:144-45; Longenecker 1990:xcv; Murphy-O'Connor 1996:193-94). That there was a faction in the Jerusalem

church which sought the imposition of the Mosaic law on Gentile Christians, and that they were active in the Antiochene church as well as Jerusalem, is clear from Ac 15:1-5 and Gl 2:3-5 (cf Watson 1986:50-51). This group were overruled at the Jerusalem conference, but pressure from them may have influenced James's subsequent despatch of emissaries to Antioch (Gl 2:12). However, there is no indication that James's delegation made demands comparable to those of the judaistic faction (cf Taylor 1992:128-31 & refs). They may, however, have had the same motivation, to ameliorate pressure on the Jerusalem church by reinforcing the distinction between Jew and gentile in ethnically mixed churches (cf Gl 5:11; 6:12; 1 Th 2:14-16). The resolution of this second crisis in the Apostolic Decree would have been a second defeat for this party. They may have taken matters into their own hands, either in response to the Apostolic Decree or by taking advantage of the crisis in the Antiochene church resulting from the confrontation between Peter and Paul, before the Apostolic Decree had been formulated and adopted. Churches established under Antiochene auspices, but remote from the oversight of that church, may have seemed susceptible to their influence, and have posed an opportunity to shape Christian communities in accordance with their vision (cf Barclay 1988:58-59; Taylor 1992:138-42). It is entirely possible that this movement was represented in Galatia by apostles of the church of Antioch, who had been known previously to the Christian communities there.

Some scholars argue that the party Paul opposes was unconnected with the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch (Barclay 1988:42-44; Brinsmead 1982:104; Gaston 1984:64; Howard 1990:xiv-xix ; Martyn 1985; Munck 1959:129-32; Schmithals 1965:9-10). Their apparently selective imposition of the Mosaic law, involving no more than token incorporation into Israel, noted above, may count against an association with these churches. Even allowing for the diversity of Judaism (Sanders 1977; 1992; cf Martyn 1985:308-11), and of gentile conformity with Christian (Taylor 1995) and other forms of Judaism (Cohen 1989), a movement which stressed circumcision cannot easily be identified with communities which waived circumcision for gentile Christians while imposing other observances on them (cf Ac 15:22-29). Another possibility is that those

Paul opposed would have regarded him (and Barnabas) as being unduly dependant upon the Jerusalem church, rather than as defying the authority of that community, as representatives of the Jerusalem and Antioch churches would maintain. Persons unconnected with the Jerusalem church, on the other hand, could have accused Paul of being unduly subservient to that community (cf Brinsmead 1982:104; Munck 1959:129-32; Schmithals 1965:9-10). Therefore, if attached to the Jerusalem or Antioch churches, this movement would have been something of a dissident faction, but nevertheless possibly one which enjoyed more support than Paul.

The convoluted manner in which Paul defines his relationship with the Jerusalem church and its leaders (Dunn 1982; Taylor 1992) indicates that this relationship is very much at issue. While there is no clear link between the party Paul opposes and the Jerusalem church, or that of Antioch, Paul's relationship with the former and its leadership is integral to defining his apostolic identity in Galatians. This is particularly clear in the autobiographical narrative (1:11-2:14; cf Taylor 1993). The *narratio* interprets selected events in Paul's life from his conversion to the time of writing in order to substantiate his authority, before proceeding in the remainder of the letter to articulate the position of gentile Christians in relation to the Mosaic law. Galatians may well be the earliest attempt to limit apostleship as an office or vocation belonging to particular people (Schmithals 1971b:86; cf Munck 1949:100-101; Taylor 1992:155-70). In order to define his own apostleship as independent of any human or ecclesiastical authority, Paul closely identifies his reception of the gospel (conversion) with his vocation to preach it (Gal 1:16; cf Schütz 1975:134; Segal 1990; Taylor 1992:62-67; pace, Kim 1981:55-66; McLean 1991:67; Stendahl 1976:7). He models his account of his conversion on the Hebrew tradition of prophetic vocational oracles, as reflected in Jr 1:5, claiming to have been chosen for his apostolic work before his birth (Gl 1:15; Malina & Neyrey 1996:40-41; Munck 1959; Sandnes 1991; Segal 1990). It is arguable that Paul, in claiming to have been called directly by God, claims a higher vocation than that of apostles sent by Jesus (Boyarín 1994:107-109; Malina & Neyrey 1996:40-41). It is doubtful, however, whether this distinction would have been recognised either by those thereby relegated to an

inferior status, or by Christians who acknowledged the authority of the latter. It would not have required a high christology to have regarded those sent by Jesus as being at the same time called by God. Paul's close association of Jesus and God as the authors of his own vocation (Gl 1:1) and frequent self-designation as ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; cf Rm 1:1; 1 Th 2:7) would also militate against such a reading, as would his explicit claim to have been sent by Christ (1 Cor 1:17).

Paul assimilates his conception of ἀποστολή into his self-identity. While anxious not to imply any hostility to the Jerusalem church, but rather to stress the unity between them, Paul articulates his self-understanding as ἀπόστολος of God and of Christ, independent of any human principal. He superimposes this on his account of his career as an ἀπόστολος of the church of Antioch. This serves both to legitimate his claim to continuing authority over the Galatian churches, and to counter any authority claims made by the party he opposes (cf Taylor 1992; 1993). There is no suggestion in the letter that these identified themselves as ἀπόστολοι in any sense of the word and especially in none that conveyed a claim to special status and authority. Paul does not compete with any authority claims made by the group he opposes, as he does in 2 Corinthians 10-13. Rather, he claims acknowledgement by the leaders of the Jerusalem church of his status, authority, and mission to the gentiles. The distinction therefore needs to be maintained between Paul's attack on his rivals in Galatia and assertions, however ambiguous and uncomplimentary, about the Jerusalem church (Betz 1979:92; Smith 1985:191).

2.2 Apostleship in the Autobiographical Narrative

Paul begins the autobiographical narrative (Gl 1:11-12) with a refutation of real or hypothetical contentions about the gospel he preaches similar to those about his apostleship which he refutes in Gl 1:1 (cf Betz 1979:62). While the verbal parallels are not precise, the correlation is nonetheless clear and significant. Gospel and apostleship alike do not derive from any human source. Just as his acquisition of Christian convictions had been without human intervention, so was

Paul's apostolic vocation received without human mediation. By associating his reception of the Christian gospel with his vocation to preach it, and claiming direct divine revelation as the source of both, Paul is able to assert an authority in Galatia which transcends that of the church of Antioch which had sent him to proclaim the gospel there.

Paul denies having sought an interpretation of his conversion experience from any human authority (Gl 1:16; Dunn 1982:463; cf Kim 1981:55-59), and explicitly having travelled to Jerusalem to consult those who were already ἀπόστολοι (Gl 1:17). The mention of τοὺς πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἀποστόλους indicates Paul's apostleship as the key issue in the autobiographical narrative, even if it had not been so at the time of the events related. While making no explicit statement that he was already an apostle, Paul nonetheless, intentionally if implicitly, conveys this impression (Taylor 1993:71-72). This reinforces Paul's claim, implicit in his use of the title ἀπόστολοι to authority independent of the Jerusalem church, and by implication also that of Antioch. At the time of writing he is operating independently of any Christian community, and the implication that he had begun his Christian missionary work without reference to the Jerusalem church serves to justify this (cf Schütz 1975:155). His subsequent participation in the apostolate of the church of Antioch does not mean that that church was the source of his apostolic authority.

After arguing the basis of his independent and absolute apostolic authority, Paul reports his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion. He identifies his purpose as ἵστορησαι Κηρᾶν (Gl 1:18). Any casual overtones to this phrase (Betz 1979:76; Campenhausen 1969:69; Hofius 1984:77-78; cf Dunn 1982:463-65) are rhetorical rather than historical. Paul seeks to demonstrate unity of purpose with Peter, and also with James, and leads the recipients to infer that they acknowledged the claim to apostolic authority he makes in the letter (cf Malina & Neyrey 1996:42-43). It would seem to follow that Peter at least is one of those τοὺς πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἀποστόλους (Gl 1:17), and any ambiguity in the reference to James in Gl 1:19, while significant for Paul's rhetorical purpose in

the letter, is of less importance for reconstructing early Christian nomenclature (cf Betz 1979:77-78; Dunn 1993:76-77; Howard 1977; Longenecker 1990:38; Schmithals 1971b:64-65; Trudinger 1975). Any others who could claim to be apostles senior to Paul are, by implication, of no consequence. While claiming acknowledgement by Peter and James, Paul is nonetheless concerned not to accord them, or anyone else who could claim apostolic title, any jurisdiction over his ministry which others, particularly those he opposes in Galatia, would recognise or claim for themselves.

Paul next travelled to Jerusalem, as the junior partner to Barnabas, as a representative of the church of Antioch (Ac 15:2; Gal 2:1; Taylor 1992:102). The details of the issues discussed and resolved, or left unresolved, are not of significance for the present purpose (cf Dunn 1982; Murphy-O'Connor 1996; Taylor 1992:96-122). Perhaps more than any other section of the auto-biographical *narratio*, Paul reinterprets the Jerusalem conference in the light of his situation at the time of writing Galatians. The church of Antioch is conspicuously not mentioned, and Paul's purpose in travelling to Jerusalem is stated in the singular. Paul distances himself from Barnabas, whose presence he acknowledges only in Gl 2:1 and 2:9, while his use of the singular in 2:2, 6-8 implicitly ignores him. Paul shifts the focus from issues between Jews and Gentiles in the Antiochene church to his own apostolic authority and the gospel he associates therewith (Gl 2:2; cf Betz 1979:81; Schütz 1975:140; Taylor 1993).

Paul relates that he had submitted his gospel to the scrutiny of the leadership of the Jerusalem church (Gl 2:2), and that these had affirmed his preaching (Gl 6:6). The redefining of the issue at stake in Gl 2:2 in terms of Paul's apostolic preaching and authority is followed here by the vindication of Paul's gospel. Affirmation by the Jerusalem church of the gospel preached at Antioch becomes Paul's claim that his own teaching and practice, and by implication his apostolic authority, were recognised by the Jerusalem leadership. Paul had been entrusted with τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας, just as Peter had been entrusted with the (gospel) τῆς περιτομῆς (Gl 2:7). The parallelism between the gospels preached in and from Jerusalem and Antioch (cf Taylor

1992: 110-22) is co-opted by Paul in defence of his own gospel and preaching. He claims further that the Jerusalem leaders recognised that God operates through Peter εἰς ἀποστολὴν τῆς περιτομῆς and through Paul εἰς τὰ ἔθνη (Gl 2:8). Two aspects of these statements are remarkable. εἰς τὰ ἔθνη designates the scope of Paul's work, whereas in the previous clause he had used ἀκροβυστία (Gl 2:7), indicating the distinctive character of the gospel he preached. This alteration to the wording of the agreement (Taylor 1992:166; cf Betz 1979:95-99; Dunn 1993:105-107; Longenecker 1990:55-56) reflects and emphasises Paul's later apostolic claims (cf Rm 1:5; 11:13; Gl 1:16), signifying his notion of his own unique and all but exclusive apostleship to the gentiles. Paul, in defence of his personalised notion of his own apostleship, uses the term ἀποστολή of Peter's mission but not explicitly of his own (Gl 2:8; Betz 1979:98; cf Longenecker 1990:56; McLean 1991). Reference is made to the ministry exercised, not the title of the one exercising it. The work of ἀποστολή in which several members of the two churches were presumably engaged, was the issue of the original agreement, and not the personal status of the various missionaries. The personalised concept of apostolic office has become important for Paul on account of his having ceased to be engaged in the apostolate of the Antiochene church, and forfeited the authority which derived from that commission. For apostles of churches whose authority is reinforced by the commissioning community, personal status is not so important. But for Paul, without any commissioning church after the Antioch incident, his authority needed to be sufficient in itself to be effective.

Paul briefly paraphrases the practical implication of the agreement: ἡμεῖς εἰς τὰ ἔθνη αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰς τὴν περιτομήν (Gl 2:9). I have argued previously that the agreement originally consisted in the mutual recognition of diverse interpretations of the Christian gospel by the two churches of Jerusalem and Antioch, and not in the division of the missionary fields along racial or geographical lines (Taylor 1992:112-15; cf Bornkamm 1971:39-40; Dunn 1993:111-12; Gaston 1984:65; Georgi 1965:22; Holmberg 1980:30-31; Schütz

1975:156). This does not mean that Paul does not imply precisely such an interpretation in order to substantiate his claim to jurisdiction in Galatia and to exclude rival authorities from involvement there. In this respect Paul's inclusion of Barnabas once again may be significant. He can plausibly argue that the agreement meant that the church of Jerusalem exercised no oversight of the Galatian churches, but he could not on that basis exclude the jurisdiction of the church of Antioch. Therefore, in order to maintain his claim to exclusive apostolic authority in Galatia, Paul needs to discredit the church of Antioch, and Barnabas in particular, which he does in relating the subsequent incident in Antioch.

Paul portrays as the sequel to the Jerusalem conference his confrontation with Peter and Barnabas in Antioch (Gl 2:11-14). While Paul does not criticise Peter's presence in Antioch as violating a division of influence, he condemns the violation of commensality by Peter when under pressure from James. The Jewish Christians of Antioch, including Barnabas, had at the very least acquiesced in Peter's withdrawal from table fellowship with gentile Christians, if indeed it was not their prevailing custom with which Peter was conforming. The implication is that the church of Antioch had abandoned τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας (Gl 2:7), at least as Paul understood it, and had thereby forfeited its oversight of the Galatian churches (cf Dunn 1983:124-26). This episode is significant for Paul's assertion of authority in Galatia also in demonstrating that he did not regard Peter and Barnabas as beyond his reproach. Paul's repudiation of any authority which conflicts with his interpretation of the Gospel is unequivocal. The implication is that, if Paul had authority to take issue not only with Peter and Barnabas, but also by extension with James and the Jerusalem church, his authority in the Galatian churches is unqualified (cf Sampley 1980:39).

In conclusion, Paul uses his notion of apostleship to articulate his claim to jurisdiction over the Galatian churches. His self-identity serves also to define his relationship with other effective bearers of authority in early Christianity, and in particular his unity with but independence of the leaders of the Jerusalem church. Paul's self-conception as apostle is, yet more significantly, the basis of his claim to continuing oversight of the Christian communities of Galatia after forfeiting his

position in the church of Antioch and its mission. While Paul provides evidence that his notion of apostleship, and the authority he derives from it, would be contested, there is no indication that the party he opposes claimed any similar status. This was not the case in Corinth, which we now turn to consider.

3. THE CRISIS IN CORINTH

The situation in Corinth which overshadowed the closing years of Paul's ministry belongs to a very different context to that of Galatians. Paul had established the church in Corinth during his period of independent mission after leaving Antioch (cf Ac 18:1-18). The community therefore had no connection with the church of Antioch or any other parent congregation. Whatever continuing connection Priscilla and Aquila may have had with the Corinthian church, there is no evidence that Paul's position as founder of that community was questioned (cf 1 Cor 3:6). Rather, opposition to Paul either originated within the Corinthian church itself, or with rivals who entered the community after Paul's mission. In this study we are not concerned with a detailed discussion of opposition to Paul in Corinth, but specifically with conflict in which apostleship, and claims to authority derived from use of such title, played a role.

3.1 The Situation prior to 2 Corinthians

There is considerable disagreement in scholarship as to the nature of the troubles which afflicted the Corinthian church and Paul's relationship with it (cf Chow 1992; Georgi 1986; Gunther 1973; Horrell 1996; Marshall 1987; Sumney 1990; Theissen 1982). In particular, it is unclear how the controversies reflected in 1 Corinthians relate to the conflict evident in 2 Corinthians. For the present purpose I shall presuppose the reconstruction I have argued previously, that Paul wrote the following sequence of letters to the church in Corinth: A. that including 2 Cor 6:14-7:1, alluded to in 1 Cor 5:9; B. 1 Corinthians; C. 2 Cor 10:1-13:10; D. 2 Cor 2:14-6:13; 7:2-4; E. 2 Cor 1:1-2:13; 7:5-8:24; 13:11-13; F. 2 Cor 9:1-15 (Taylor 1991). 1 Corinthians clearly reflects a fractious atmosphere in the church (1:10-13). Despite the mention of Peter (1:12; cf 9:5; 15:5), there is no evidence

that he or his followers had been in Corinth, and it is the continuing influence of Apollos (1 Cor 1:12-13; 3:4-9, 22; 4:6) which occasioned Paul's anxiety (cf Holmberg 1980:67-69; Robertson & Plummer 1914:16; Sellin 1987:3015; Watson 1986:81; pace, Barrett 1982:1-39; Conzelmann 1975:34; Hurd 1965:214; Munck 1959:167; Schmithals 1965:105). The competing inclinations and ambitions of the leaders of the various house churches in Corinth were at least as important a factor in the strife as any external influences, at the time 1 Corinthians was written (Chow 1992; Horrell 1996:88-125; Marshall 1987; Meeks 1983:56-63; Theissen 1982:69-143; Winter 2001).

Paul makes a number of potentially significant, if tangential, statements concerning apostles in 1 Corinthians. His identification of himself as κλητὸς ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος Θεοῦ in the epistolary greeting (1:1) gives no hint that Paul expected his self-designation to be contentious in the eyes of the recipients. The rhetorical question at 1 Cor 9:1 would seem to confirm this. While some scholars see this section as a response to a challenge to Paul's apostolic authority (cf Conzelmann 1975:151-53; Fee 1987:390-94; Horrell 1996:205-16; Hurd 1965:126-31; Lüdemann 1989:65-67), this interpretation does not take adequate account of the place of the passage in the structure of 1 Corinthians. In the context of admonishing the Corinthians regarding the consumption of meat which had been offered in pagan rituals (1 Cor 8:1-11:1), Paul cites the example of his renunciation of the rights and freedom to which he is entitled as an apostle (Barrett 1968:197; Mitchell 1991:243-50; Sumney 1999:58; Willis 1985:35). This would be possible only if Paul's apostleship and the rights attached thereto were not being contested in Corinth at the time.

An indication of Paul's understanding of his commission is provided in 1 Cor 1:17 where he states that ἀπέστειλέν με Χριστὸς ...εὐαγγελίζεσθαι. That proclamation of the gospel is the essence of Paul's interpretation of the apostolic vocation is corroborated or implied at several points in his letters (Rm 1:2; 11:13; Gl 1:16), not least in Paul's identification of himself as founder of the church of Corinth (1 Cor 3:6, 10; 9:2). This correlates with identification of apostleship as the highest calling in the Church in 1 Cor 12:28, notwithstanding

the sarcastic deprecation of that office at 4:9. The rights of apostles to material compensation for their efforts, which Paul waives (1 Cor 9:1-6), have already been discussed.

1 Cor 15:7 (cf 9:1) implies that a vision of the resurrected Christ, presumably accompanied by some form of vocational oracle, was the defining credential of apostleship (cf Conzelmann 1975:305; Moray-Jones 1993; Mosbech 1948; Munck 1949; Rengstorf 1933:431; Schmithals 1961; Schnackenburg 1970; Taylor 1992:176-94). Irrespective of the origins and parameters of the tradition Paul is citing (cf Allo 1956:341; Barrett 1968:341-42; Conzelmann 1975:299-303; Fuller 1971:14-29; Gaston 1984:66; Héring 1962:158; Robertson & Plummer 1914:335; Schmithals 1971b:74; Schütz 1975:96-97), his appending his own resurrection vision and defining it as the last (15:8-9) are both significant. Paul claims for his conversion christophany the same vocational connotations as the resurrection experience of the original followers of Jesus (cf Mt 28:19; Lk 24:47; Ac 1:8). This claim may have been contentious elsewhere in the early Church, but there is no indication that it was so in Corinth at the time 1 Corinthians was written (cf 9:1; Rowland 1982:376; Taylor 1992:190-94). That Paul is constrained to justify including himself among the ἀπόστολοι on the basis of his vision of the risen Christ, confirms very clearly that such visions were an important criterion of authority in the early Church. However, there is no evidence that there was at this time a more general association of apostleship with resurrection christophanies. Paul implicitly denies that any such vision subsequent to his own could have the same vocational significance as his (1 Cor 15:8). Paul therefore by implication defines out of legitimacy any later challenger to his authority. It is at least potentially significant that this argument is nowhere repeated in 2 Corinthians, where Paul's authority and the credentials thereof have clearly been challenged.

3.2 The Opponents in 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 10-13 reflects the most intense conflict between Paul and the Corinthian church, and also the zenith of influence in Corinth of Paul's opponents. The identity of these latter remains a matter of contention in

scholarship, but they are generally understood to be interlopers rather than Corinthian Christians (contra, McClelland 1982). Some scholars identify them as delegates, subordinate or otherwise, of the Jerusalem church (Barrett 1971; 1982:1-39; Gunther 1973; Holmberg 1980:45-46; Käsemann 1942; Lüdemann 1989:83-95; Thrall 1980). A minority identify Paul's opponents as Gnostics (Bultmann 1985; Kümmel 1975:209; Schmithals 1971a; Wilson 1982). Perhaps a majority identify them as Palestinian or Diaspora Jewish Christians, independent of the Jerusalem church (Black 1984; Bornkamm 1971:169-72; Crafton 1991:54; Furnish 1984:52-55; Georgi 1986; Sellin 1987:3023; Sumney 1990; Theissen 1982:27-77; Watson 1986:81-82). For the present purpose this issue is of importance only insofar as it concerns the basis of the challenge to Paul's authority.

The expression ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι in 2 Cor 11:5 and 12:11 is a potentially significant indicator as to the identity of Paul's opponents. However, it needs first to be established whether the term refers to persons present in Corinth, or to other figures, such as the leadership of the Jerusalem church. If the latter, the question arises as to whether it is a self-designation or positive attribution, or whether ὑπερλίαν has sarcastic overtones. Much therefore depends on whether the ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι are to be identified with the ψευδαπόστολοι of 2 Cor 11:13. It has been argued that ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι refers to the Jerusalem apostles, and ψευδαπόστολοι to Paul's opponents in Corinth (Barrett 1971; Käsemann 1942:20-24; contra, Bultmann 1985; Georgi 1986:32). The former expression is used precisely in contexts in which Paul refers to implied comparisons between himself and others whose activities the Corinthian Christians must clearly have witnessed (cf Furnish 1984:503-505). ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι can therefore refer to leaders of the Jerusalem church if these were present in Corinth in person (cf Barrett 1971; Käsemann 1942; pace, Furnish 1984:480-81). If this were the case, it would be surprising that Paul makes no claim to previous acknowledgement by the Jerusalem apostles (cf Gl 2:1-10). Given that, on whatever reconstruction, Paul

had already encountered his opponents with humiliating consequences (2 Cor 2:1) by the time 2 Corinthians 10-13 was written, he could have been in no doubt as to who they were and on what basis they legitimated their intervention in the Corinthian church (Taylor 1991; pace, Thrall 1980:48). It has been argued that ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι was a self-designation of pneumatic Christians in Corinth rather than intruders (McClelland 1982:82-84). This view requires the unlikely reading that a Corinthian Christian should have used his Jewish pedigree as a basis on which to challenge Paul's authority (cf 2 Cor 11:22). Furthermore, such a reading would require that Paul, elsewhere so defensive of his own apostleship (Gl 1-2; cf 1 Cor 9:1-6; 15:7-11) and exclusive in his claims (cf Rm 11:13), and patriarchal in his dealings with his churches (cf 1 Th 2:11), should give even the most tacit assent to such self-attribution among the Corinthian Christians. It is therefore more likely that Paul's opponents were interlopers, and that, despite his labelling them ψευδαπόστολοι (11:13), they must have had a reasonable claim to the designation ἀπόστολος even in terms of Paul's particular conception thereof. Otherwise, he would have refuted their claim altogether in 2 Cor 11:5 and 12:11, rather than merely asserting his equality with them, and indicating an intent to undermine their claims (11:12). While Paul's opponents cannot be identified with the leadership of the Jerusalem church, their claim to status in the Church, and to the designation ἀπόστολος is clearly incontrovertible. ἀπόστολος is not necessarily their only self-designation, and ἐργάται in 11:13 and διάκονοι in 11:15 could indicate that these titles were also in use (Crafton 1991:54; Georgi 1986:27-40). Nevertheless, it is apostleship that is crucial for Paul's self-understanding and assertion of authority, and it is the claim to apostleship which constitutes the opponents' threat to Paul's position in the Corinthian church (cf Crafton 1991:57).

Paul's polemic against his opponents, while clearly directed to regaining his authority in Corinth, extends beyond his claims to apostolic authority and jurisdiction to the content of their teaching. Their legitimacy cannot be undermined on the basis of apostolic credentials or lack thereof, and Paul

therefore delegitimizes them on the basis of their doctrine. His reference to ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν...ἢ πνεῦμα ἕτερον...ἢ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον (2 Cor 11:4; cf Gl 1:6-8) is not substantiated by any detail of his rivals' teaching, or refutation thereof on the basis of interpretation of Scripture. Labelling the teaching as deviant serves to categorise the teachers as illegitimate and unworthy bearers of the apostolic authority they claim. The vilification of his opponents as ψευδαπόστολοι, ἐργάται δόλιοι, μετασχηματιζόμενοι εἰς ἀποστόλους Χριστοῦ (2 Cor 11:13), and διάκονοι [Σατανᾶ] (11:14-15) is further deviancy labelling, or as it was known in the rhetorical schools, *vituperatio* (cf Barclay 1995:122-25; Wanamaker 1995). This reinforces the impression that Paul is unable to repudiate the credentials of his opponents on any objective basis. The fact that apostleship is explicitly cited in the contest for authority and legitimacy, and the designation subject to caricature, suggests strongly that authentic representation of Christ lies at the heart of the conflict. The issue is not so much of the content of the Christian gospel as the relationship of the preacher of that gospel to the community created through his preaching and the manifestation of the Spirit in his activities (cf 2 Cor 6:1-10; 12:12; Crafton 1991:54; Sumney 1990; Theissen 1982:40-54).

The absence of substantial theological differences suggests that Paul's rivals represented an essentially similar interpretation of Christianity to his own. They may nevertheless have been as forthright in their condemnation of Paul as he was of them (Green 1985:58; Wanamaker 1995). They may have held a less narrow and individualistic conception of apostleship than Paul, and not have recognised the exclusive and territorial aspect Paul as church founder attached to his notion of apostleship (cf Rm 1:5; 11:13; 1 Cor 3:6, 12; 9:2; Gl 1:6; 2:8-9). While they clearly challenged Paul's authority in Corinth (cf 2 Cor 10:10), and did not see themselves merely as working in continuity with him, they presumably regarded their activities as consistent with their own apostolic self-conception. We are dealing therefore with conflicting notions of apostleship. There is no indication that Paul's rivals differed from him in locating proclamation of the Gospel at the heart of their apostolic consciousness. However, Paul's self-

conception as a church founder (Rm 15:20; 1 Cor 3:6, 12) was presumably not shared by his opponents, who, like Apollos, were entirely willing to water what another had planted, and to build on the foundation laid by another without conforming to his plan (cf 1 Cor 3:5-15; Watson 1986:81-84).

A practice which distinguished Paul from his opponents was that of receiving financial support from the Corinthian church (2 Cor 11:9; 12:13-18; cf 11:20). The right of apostles to financial support is one which Paul had affirmed in 1 Cor 9:1-6, even though he himself did not avail himself of that right, at least not in Corinth (cf Phlp 4:15-18; Crafton 1991; Hock 1980). If we have been correct in associating Barnabas and Paul's custom with the church of Antioch, this would exclude that church as the origin of Paul's opponents, but would not in itself associate them with the church of Jerusalem. Given that Paul recognises the right, but makes a virtue of not exercising it (1 Cor 9:1-6; 2 Cor 11:7-11; cf 1 Th 2:9), the difference with his opponents is not one of substance or of apostolic self-conception. Paul's decision had become contentious not so much because his opponents chose differently, but because they interpreted Paul's waiving of his rights as evidence that his apostleship was deficient. Moreover, Paul's refusal of financial support kept him independent of the patronage networks of Christian householders, which would have cost him goodwill and social support during the crisis (Chow 1992:172; Hock 1980:50-65; Horrell 1996:210-16; Marshall 1987). The issue of financial support therefore does not constitute a significant difference in apostolic self-conception between Paul and his opponents in Corinth.

The use of letters of recommendation by Paul's opponents (2 Cor 3:1), presumably to gain influence and credibility in the community (cf Marshall 1987:268-72), is a practice Paul clearly abhors. This, however, does little to identify their origins and agenda (Furnish 1984:193; Georgi 1986:244-45; Watson 1986:83-84; pace, Barrett 1973:40-41; cf Holmberg 1980:45-46). The source of the letter/s is unclear, even if Paul knew the identity of the authors. In Acts 18: 27 it is reported that Apollos received a letter of introduction from the church in Ephesus when he travelled to Corinth. If the involvement of Aquila and Priscilla is

at all historical, this would count against identifying Apollos with the opposition to Paul reflected in 2 Corinthians, as Paul evidently remained well disposed towards them (Rm 16:3; cf Watson 1986:83-84). 2 Cor 3:1-3 implies that the Corinthian Christians themselves could have issued letters, so any Christian community could presumably have commended Paul's opponents to the church in Corinth. The letters carried by the opponents do not imply that they were ἀπόστολοι in the sense of being emissaries of another church. If this were the case, Paul would surely have capitalised on it, and relegated them to an inferior status, comparable to those of 2 Cor 8:23. The letters rather indicate a willingness and intent to move from one Christian community to another established congregation. Unlike Paul (Rm 15:20), his opponents do not limit their activities to planting new churches, or their assertion of authority to communities they themselves had founded. Rather, they are itinerants who assert apostolic authority wherever opportunity presents itself (cf Did 11:6).

To conclude, the conflict between rival claimants to apostolic authority in 2 Corinthians concerns not so much the essence of Christian apostleship, but the context in which it is legitimately exercised. Paul's apostolic self-conception, moulded at least partly in response to his alienation from the church of Antioch, embraces continuing and exclusive jurisdiction over churches he had established. His opponents differ from him not so much in doctrine as in knowing no boundaries to their apostolic activities. They would appear not to be church founders so much as itinerant missionaries exercising influence in established Christian congregations. They sought this influence through dramatic manifestation of pneumatic power, portraying theirs as greater than that which Paul had been able to exercise in the Corinthian church.

4. CONCLUSIONS

We have considered two situations in which Paul uses letters to assert authority over churches, and employs the self-designation ἀπόστολος to define his authority over against that which is being exercised effectively in the churches. In Galatians, Paul is seeking to regain oversight of communities he had established

while an apostle of the church of Antioch. He defines himself as an ἀπόστολος called by God, and claims that this status has been acknowledged by the leaders of the Jerusalem church. He therefore enjoys greater authority than those currently influencing the Galatian Christians towards circumcision. In 2 Corinthians, on the other hand, Paul is seeking to regain authority over the Corinthian church, which has been undermined by persons claiming an apostolic authority similar to but greater than his own. Paul claims, as the founding ἀπόστολος of the Corinthian church, an exclusive jurisdiction there, whereas his opponents represent a model of itinerant apostleship which knows no boundaries and does not acknowledge any limitation of their jurisdiction.

It is clear that the title ἀπόστολος became an effective vehicle for the assertion of authority at an early date in Christian history. While Paul may have been instrumental in developing a notion of apostolic authority independent of sponsoring Christian communities, the evidence of 2 Corinthians suggests that he was not alone in doing so. Paul was distinctive, it would seem, in defining an apostolic authority with geographical and ethnic boundaries, conceptual if not practical, which excluded others from jurisdiction where he had begun to work.

Ἀπόστολος as the designation of an authority bearer with a mission to proclaim the Gospel, may have been in wider use in the early Church than the New Testament would seem to indicate. The use of the title where authority was contested suggests that the term was not rigidly defined, and that the authority asserted by any claimant to the designation would not necessarily be recognised by rival claimants or by Christian communities over whom that authority was asserted. As an aspect of institutionalisation of authority in early Christianity, the notion of apostleship of Christ merits further examination, not least in situations of conflict, of which those involving Paul are only an example.

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