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# THE OFFICE OF APOSTLE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

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The justification of a paper on this subject is not in a previous neglect of it by New Testament scholars. On the contrary it has been the subject of discussion not only in lexicons and commentaries but in a number of monographs by able writers.<sup>1</sup> The differences of opinion among those who have written, and in the view of the present writer at least, a certain inharmoniousness of their conclusions with the evidence even when they are most in agreement with one another, demand and warrant a re-examination of the whole question. Under these circumstances, moreover, it seems best to examine the evidence from the beginning rather than simply to discuss the points on which there has been disagreement or to criticize the views of those who have already written upon the subject. We begin, therefore, with a treatment of the usage of the word *ἀπόστολος* in literature preceding the time of the New Testament.

## I. CLASSICAL AND OTHER NON-CHRISTIAN USAGE OF Ἀπόστολος

The word *ἀπόστολος* is manifestly cognate with the verb *ἀποστέλλω*. In classical authors it is employed both as an adjective and as a noun. Joined with *πλοῖος* it was used much as our modern word despatch is, the phrase meaning a despatch boat, i.e., a boat in commission. In Demosthenes 252:7; 262:15 *et al.*, *ἀποστόλος* (paroxytone) alone signifies a naval expedition. In Hdt. *ἀπόστολος* (proparoxytone) is used of a person, meaning an ambassador or delegate, a person commissioned by another to represent him. Thus in 1:21, *ὁ μὲν δὴ ἀπόστολος ἐς τὴν Μίλητον ἦν*; in 5:38, *ἐς*

<sup>1</sup> For example: Lightfoot, *Commentary on Galatians*, 6th ed., pp. 92-101; Harnack, "Die Lehre der zwölf Apostel," in *Texte u. Untersuchungen*, II, 93-118; Hincks, "Limits of the Apostolate," in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1895, pp. 37-47; Haupt, *Zum Verständnis des Apostolats*; Monnier, *La notion de l'apostolat*.

Λακεδαίμονα τριήρεϊ ἀπόστολος ἐγίνετο. In a similar but more general sense, it occurs in the LXX (A) and Aq. in I Kings 14:6, ἐγὼ εἰμι ἀπόστολος πρὸς σε σκληρός, "I am a hard messenger to thee," I bring thee heavy tidings. It is found also in Sym. at Isa. 18:2, but not elsewhere in the Greek Old Testament. In Josephus, *Ant.*, XVII, 11, 1, ἀπόστολος apparently means a despatching, a sending, ἀφίκετο εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην πρεσβεία Ἰουδαίων, Οὐάρου τὸν ἀπόστολον αὐτῶν τῷ ἔθνει ἐπικεχωρηκότος ὑπὲρ αὐτήσεως αὐτονομίας, there came to Rome an embassy of Jews, Varus having granted the people the privilege of sending it for the purpose of asking for autonomy. The indirect evidence of Christian writers seems to show that in the post-Christian period the Jews used the term ἀπόστολος, or a Semitic term which was expressed in Greek by ἀπόστολος, (a) of persons despatched from Jerusalem to other cities especially to gather the temple tribute, and, after the destruction of Jerusalem, (b) of those who were associated with the patriarch in deliberations and in the carrying out of what was agreed upon. See the evidence in Lightfoot, *Commentary on Galatians*, pp. 93 ff.

## II. NEW TESTAMENT USAGE IN GENERAL

In the New Testament the term is used of persons only. Its general meaning, clearly seen in passages in which it is used in a non-technical sense, is a delegate, a representative, one commissioned by another to represent him in some way. Thus in II Cor. 8:23, and Phil. 2:25, it is used of persons delegated by a church to execute a commission.<sup>2</sup>

In Heb. 3:1 Jesus is spoken of as "the apostle and high priest [ἀπόστολος καὶ ἀρχιερεὺς] of our confession," and is immediately afterward characterized as faithful to him that appointed him.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In both cases, a journey is involved, the matter to be attended to a financial one, and the person who makes the journey does not simply bear a message, but in a larger way represents the church. This may, indeed, be accidental coincidence, rather than decisive indication of the constant usage of the word. Yet compare the Jewish use of the term, as stated above.

<sup>3</sup> A similar idea of Christ is several times expressed in the Gospel of John, e.g., John 17:3, "This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

In John 13:16 the word is used in such a way as almost to involve a definition of the word. "A servant is not greater than his master, nor a delegate [*ἀπόστολος*] greater than he that sent him."

### III. THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST

But in the majority of its occurrences in the New Testament the word is used of a class of persons in the Christian church, or among the followers of Jesus. The full expression was evidently *ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ*, or *ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ* (II Cor. 1:1; 11:13, etc.). But for this full expression *ἀπόστολος* alone is much more frequently used. It is found in nearly all the books of the New Testament, and was evidently in the apostolic age the common term for a well-known class in the church.

The earliest references to the apostles of Christ (reckoned by the date of the writing in which they occur) are found in the Pauline epistles, and bear witness not only to Paul's claim to be himself an apostle but to the existence of other members of the class, who were apostles before him (Gal. 1:17). In the effort to trace the development of the apostolate it will be well therefore to begin by inquiring as to the identity of these apostles before Paul.

1. *The apostles before Paul.*—(a) The twelve and their earliest designation: In the number of those who were apostles before him, Paul evidently includes Peter, and in all probability John (Gal. 1:17-19; 2:9). In the Gospels there are frequent references to twelve disciples of Jesus, whom Matthew once calls the twelve apostles and Luke refers to as the apostles, but who are most frequently spoken of simply as the twelve. Of this company Peter and John were members. These facts do not warrant the assumption that the twelve and the apostles are identical, especially in view of the apparent distinction between them in I Cor. 15:5, 7; but they suggest the wisdom of beginning with an inquiry concerning the twelve, while avoiding any presupposition as to their precise relation to the apostles.

The expression "the twelve," *οἱ δώδεκα*, in I Cor. 15:5, consisting simply of the numeral with prefixed article, taken in its context makes it evident that when the epistle was written this was a recognized title of a certain group who had been in his life-

time disciples of Jesus. This is made the more clear by the fact that, according at least to the Third Gospel and the Book of Acts, the company consisted at the time referred to, not of twelve, but of eleven persons. The existence of this company which Paul predicates for the time immediately after the resurrection, the Gospels carry back into the lifetime of Jesus. All the four Gospels frequently mention "the twelve," *οἱ δώδεκα*, with evident reference to a company of Jesus' disciples (Mark 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10, 17, 20, 43; Matt. [20:17, text uncertain]; 26:14, 47; Luke 8:1; 9:1, 12; 18:31; 22:3, 47; John 6:67, 70, 71; 20:24).

It should be observed, however, that all the references in Matthew and all those in Luke except 8:1 and 9:12 are parallel to passages in Mark and probably derived from that source. Mark (3:14, 15) followed by the other synoptists records the selection of these twelve by Jesus, and Matthew and Mark give the list of them by name (Mark 3:16-19; Matt. 10:2-4; cf. also Acts 1:13, 14). That such a company did exist not only in Paul's day, when retrospectively at least it was referred to as the twelve, but also in Jesus' own day—on this point there is no reason to question the testimony of the Gospels.

It is not so clear by what name this company was known in the lifetime of Jesus. In Mark 14:20 Jesus is said to have used the words, "one of the twelve," but this may mean only one of the twelve then at table with him. John 6:70, "Have I not chosen you the twelve?" is also indecisive, especially in view of the late date of the Fourth Gospel. Yet in view of the evidence that this was a very early, probably the earliest now extant, name for the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, and of the probability that even in Jesus' ministry there was some common title for the company, it is not unlikely that it was then known as "the twelve." The persistence of the name, even in the latest gospels, and its occurrence in Acts 6:2 shows that it continued in use also to a late period in the apostolic age.

The phrase *οἱ μαθηταί*, frequent in all the Gospels, probably often refers to the twelve, but is not in itself restricted to them. The expression *οἱ δώδεκα μαθηταί* occurs in Matthew only (10:1;

11:1; 26:20), and is in all instances clearly a secondary form of expression, due to the editor, not to his sources.

(b) The application of the term "apostles" to the twelve. Reference has been made above to the evidence that Peter and John, who were among the twelve, were also counted by Paul among those who were apostles before him. Matt. 10:2 shows that when this passage of the First Gospel took its present form, all the twelve were accounted apostles. Yet this designation of the twelve as apostles is rather infrequent in the gospels. It occurs, besides Matt. 10:2, in Mark 3:14 (on the text see below); 6:30; Luke 6:13; 9:10; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10 (perhaps also in Luke 11:49). Of these passages Matt. 10:2 only uses the expression *οἱ δώδεκα ἀπόστολοι*, found elsewhere in the New Testament in Rev. 21:14, and in early Christian literature in the title of the *Διδαχή*. In Matthew it is clearly an editorial equivalent of *οἱ δώδεκα μαθηταί* in vs. 1, which itself represents the simple *οἱ δώδεκα* of Mark 6:7.

In Luke 22:14 *οἱ ἀπόστολοι* represents *οἱ δώδεκα* of Mark 14:17. In 17:5 and 24:10 we have no source with which to compare the Lukan form of the passages, but in view of 22:14, the word *ἀπόστολοι* cannot with confidence be carried back to any older source than the editor of this gospel. In Luke 9:10, however, the expression is taken over from Mark 6:30, which therefore attests the use of the term as a title of the twelve as early as the date of the Second Gospel, subject only to the possibility of an early and now unattested corruption of the text. Only Mark 3:14 and Luke 6:13 ascribe this usage to Jesus.<sup>4</sup> The text of Mark 3:14 is open to some doubt. The words *οὗς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν*, though attested by *NBCΔ et al.*, and on this evidence included in the text by WH and set in the margin by RV, are rejected by Tisch., Tr., W. The words are evidently either in Mark a scribal addition from Luke 6:13, or in Luke are taken over by the editor from Mark. In other words, we have here a single witness, either the second evangelist or the third. Whatever the date of this testimony it does not affirm that Jesus *at this time* gave to the twelve the name

<sup>4</sup>The utterances of Luke 11:49 and John 13:16 are ascribed to Jesus, and in both cases the term *ἀπόστολοι* includes by implication his immediate followers, but it is not restricted to them or employed as a title for them.

apostles, and does not necessarily mean that he at any time conferred on them the *title* of apostles. If it is of late origin, it probably referred in the author's mind to the bestowal of a title, but if early may have meant only that he was wont to speak of them as his messengers, using the term with descriptive rather than titular force.

According to Acts 1:21-26 there existed within the company of one hundred and twenty disciples of Jesus who gathered in Jerusalem after his death and resurrection, a smaller company having a distinct *διακονία*. This smaller company constituted not an indefinite group, but an organic body of definite number and function. The context leaves no room for doubt that it is the twelve that are here referred to. Note the list of the twelve in vs. 13, the mention of Peter and Judas, vs. 15, 16, and the implication of a definite number, within the company of the one hundred and twenty, which is to be kept complete. This passage purports to represent the thought of the twelve themselves very soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Acts author by his use of the word apostles in vs. 2 and 26 attaches these ideas to the apostolate. The divergence between the conditions here implied as those of the apostolate and those which the rest of the book shows to have been regarded by the author himself as necessary, makes it improbable that the passage has been essentially modified from the source. For example, these conditions would have excluded Paul from the apostleship. Yet the general point of view of the Acts author forbids us to suppose either that he denied that Paul was an apostle, or that it was his intention to bring into prominence the conflict between the early Christian and the Pauline definition of apostleship. The reasonable explanation of the existence of this narrative is that the Acts author took it over substantially unchanged from some earlier source. As concerns the historicity of this source, it might conceivably have been an anti-Pauline source written with the purpose of excluding Paul from the apostolate. But two things are against this. First, Luke was evidently unaware of any such anti-Pauline bias in his source; and secondly, the word apostle does not occur in the body of the passage, as would almost certainly have been

the case if it had been written to bear a part in the controversy over the apostolate. It seems probable, therefore, that this passage, which undoubtedly reflects the idea held at some period of the apostolic age as to the function and status of the *twelve* at the beginning of that age, does in fact convey to us the thought of a very early period.

But a part of the same evidence which points to the early existence and recognition of *the twelve* as a definite group with a distinct *διακονία* indicates also that this group was not yet called *the apostles*. The Acts author, indeed, not only in this passage but throughout the first twelve chapters of Acts, assumes the identity of the twelve and the apostles. But this identification belongs to the author, not to his sources. In the narrative of the selection of Matthias, the term apostle does not occur either in the speech of Peter or in the body of the narrative, but appears first in the statement of vs. 26 that Matthias was numbered with the eleven apostles, the language of which is naturally referred to the Acts author rather than to an earlier source. While, therefore, the author of the source clearly conceived of "the twelve" as constituting in this early period a definitely organized body, and the Acts author thought of them as the apostles, the evidence indicates that in the period of the events here recorded the twelve were probably not as yet known as apostles.

In Gal 1:19 Paul applies the term apostles to a company some of whom at least were included in the twelve. It is improbable that Paul would have used the term as he does in this passage unless those whom he there calls apostles were also so designated in their own circle. That he speaks of them as having been apostles before him implies that before he entered on his career as an apostle they were already exercising the function by virtue of which he now called them apostles, most naturally also that they bore the name before that time. Paul is thus in agreement with the Acts author in Acts 1:26, in that he carries the apostolic function at least back to a very early period in the history of the Christian community.

If now we compare this evidence with that of Luke-Acts each will perhaps be found to throw light upon the other. It is



clear from evidence cited above, that when the Gospel of Luke was written, all the twelve were counted as apostles, and that they were supposed to have constituted the original company of the apostles. To say "the apostles" when speaking of the life of Jesus was, therefore, equivalent to saying "the twelve." From the usage of the Third Gospel that of the first twelve chapters of the Book of Acts differs only in that Matthias takes the place of Judas. With the latter portion, in which Paul and Barnabas also receive the title, we are not at present concerned. What we have to note is that from the point of view of Luke-Acts all the twelve were apostles and had been such from the beginning. The apostle Paul also refers to certain of the twelve as apostles, and though he does not definitely include *all* of them under the term, yet in the absence of any limitation of the title to a part of the twelve, it is probable that he is in agreement with Luke on this point. The usage of Luke-Acts in this respect would then be carried back to the date of Galatians at least, and by probable implication to a point a decade or two earlier, when Paul became an apostle. Farther than this we cannot go with confidence. It is not indeed improbable, in view of Mark 3:14 and the evidence of the early designation of the twelve as apostles, that Jesus was wont to speak of the twelve as his שְׁלִיחִים (messengers), or in Greek ἀπόστολοι. But in view of the fact that our earliest definite knowledge of its use with titular force comes from the sixth decade of the first century, and in view of the possibility that Mark 3:14 and Luke 6:13 may involve some antedating of the usage of a later period, we cannot date the use of the term as a title applied pre-eminently or exclusively to the twelve more definitely than between the middle of Jesus' ministry and the middle of the century, and cannot say whether it was first used as a Hebrew or as a Greek term.

There are indeed four possibilities which with their subdivisions become seven. First, the term apostle may have been applied first of all to the twelve (*a*) by Jesus in his lifetime, (*b*) after the death of Jesus, and in either case have been gradually extended to include other men of like function in the church. Secondly, the term may have first been applied to a company that included

both the twelve and others (e.g., the seventy) (*a*) in Jesus' lifetime, (*b*) after his death, in either case subsequent additions being made to the company. Thirdly, the term may have been first applied to a company within the twelve (*a*) in Jesus' lifetime, (*b*) after his death, in either case the number being afterward extended to include all the twelve and some others also. Fourthly, the term may have been first applied after Jesus' death to a company of influential men, partly of the twelve, partly not, e.g., Peter, James, the Lord's brother, and John, and afterward been extended as on the previous supposition. Bearing in mind these hypotheses we may pass to consider—

(*c*) The extent of the company of apostles before Paul. The evidence already cited tends to show that though Paul had personal relations with only a few of the twelve, perhaps only with Peter and John, yet the expression "apostles before me" would on his lips have included, potentially, all the twelve. It remains to inquire whether it would have included any others.

Reference has already been made to the fact that, according to Acts 1:21-26, within the larger company of Jesus' disciples, the twelve constituted an organic body having a definite number and specific function. Eventual diminution of the number is potentially involved in the limitation (implied in the passage) of those from among whom vacancies may be filled; indeed this limitation implies the extinction of the body within a generation. But the passage makes no reference to such diminution, or to any possible increase of the number; it contemplates only the restoration and maintenance of the number which had been reduced by the treachery and death of Judas. That the Acts author by his vs. 26 associates these ideas with the apostles indicates that he supposed that in the early apostolic age there were twelve apostles, no more, no less. But the passage cannot be cited as evidence that the early apostolic age itself held this opinion; for aside from the editorial setting in vss. 2, 26 it certifies only that in that period it was believed that the number of the *twelve* was to be preserved intact for the time being, and presumably as long as there were among those who fulfilled the conditions here laid down competent persons to fill the vacancies as they occurred. Nothing

is implied as to the opinion of the Acts author on the question how many apostles there might come to be.

Paul's inclusion of James among the apostles (Gal. 1:19) following closely upon the mention of those who were apostles before him (1:17) suggests, but does not necessarily imply, that James was an apostle before Paul was. It does, however, show that as early as when Paul wrote Galatians, probably at the time of the visit to Jerusalem to which he here refers, the apostolic body included others than the twelve, i.e., the original eleven and Matthias. But we do not know whether James was added to the twelve, as Matthias was, by being elected to fill a vacancy, and acquired the title of apostle by virtue of his membership in the twelve, or whether he became an apostle without being numbered with the twelve. It is, however, distinctly improbable that the apostles and the twelve were at the time when James became an apostle wholly distinct bodies. This was clearly not the case when Paul wrote, nor when Acts was written. We have no evidence that it was the case when James became an apostle.

I Cor. 9:3 ff. indicates clearly the existence of a class of apostles which included on the one side Paul and doubtless also Barnabas, and on the other, certain unnamed persons, whose standing as apostles was, however, quite assured and undisturbed. It may be safely assumed that "the rest of the apostles" here spoken of included those to whom in Gal. 1:19 Paul refers as "those who were apostles before me." The mention of Cephas cannot be understood as excluding him from the group of apostles, and since this is so, neither can it be assumed that the brethren of the Lord are so excluded. Yet the most probable explanation of the somewhat peculiar enumeration in verse 5 is that the brethren of the Lord constituted as such a different group from the apostles (i.e., that not all of the brethren of the Lord were apostles, as certainly not all of the apostles were brethren of the Lord), but that they occupied a position in the church, of dignity, influence, and privilege, similar to that enjoyed by the apostles. If we seek an explanation of this withholding of the name apostle from those to whom practically the same position was accorded, it seems to be suggested by vs. 1 compared with 15:5-7. Vs. 1, "Have I

not seen Jesus our Lord?" suggests that to be a witness of the resurrection was now regarded as a condition of apostleship, as Acts 1:22 shows that it was esteemed a condition of inclusion in the company of the twelve, while I Cor. 15:5-7, mentioning specifically the epiphany to James, but none to his brothers, suggests that he alone of the brethren of Jesus enjoyed this privilege and distinction. If this is the correct explanation, the passage, though furnishing no specific names to add to the list of apostles before Paul, makes an important contribution to our knowledge of the limits of the apostolate on the non-Pauline side, suggesting that James was an apostle and his brethren not, though occupying a kindred position in the church, and that the reason for this discrimination was that he was a witness of the resurrection and they were not.

I Cor. 15:5-8 manifestly requires careful consideration in connection with the question of the extent of the apostolate. It reads as follows: "that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles. And last of all as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also."

The phrase "all the apostles," used in a series such as that in which the phrase occurs here, might refer to a group entirely distinct from those previously mentioned, yet most naturally designates the whole of a group in distinction from a portion previously mentioned. Such portion may be found either in the twelve (so, Chrysostom, who found in the phrase a reference to a band of apostles including the seventy), or in James. The *prima facie* view of the language would also be that the phrase refers either to all who were apostles at the time of the event narrated or to all who were such at the time of writing. The latter hypothesis is, however, in this case improbable. For (*a*) the meaning "all who are now apostles" implies a detachment of the thought from the narrative that is improbable both in itself and because it would involve the mental addition to an original number of apostles of those who had subsequently acquired the title, and (*b*) the phrase would strictly include Paul himself, whom, therefore, since he certainly

was not present at the time referred to, he must have tacitly excepted. That he means "all the apostles" in distinction from the twelve, with the implication that the latter constituted a part of the former, is also improbable in view of the remoteness of the mention of the twelve and the intervention of the mention of the five hundred brethren and of James. The improbability of this view is further increased by the absence of any other evidence that there was at that time any such larger group. If then we set aside the hypothesis that the phrase means those who are now apostles, and the supposed reference to the twelve, and if we assume precision of expression on Paul's part, we shall infer that he is speaking of a company which was composed of those who very soon after the death of Jesus were called apostles, and which included *all* such in contrast with James, who was only one of the company. In this case we shall conclude that James was at that time one of the apostles. But that Paul spoke with such precision of expression is, itself, by no means certain. Such a passage as I Cor. 9:5, in which Paul speaks of "the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas," warns us against treating his enumerations as if they were drawn up by a statistician or a logician. If, as is probable, he means by James the same person to whom he refers in Gal. 1:19; 2:9, to affirm that at the time referred to he was not an apostle, would be indeed to beg the question at issue, but it is at least true that we have no evidence outside this passage that he was such, and that this passage is not decisive evidence on this point. It seems necessary, therefore, to reckon with certain other possibilities. Having in mind that James was not an apostle at the time referred to, or thinking of the five hundred as not being apostles, Paul may have used the expression "all the apostles" with the emphasis on "apostles" rather than on "all." Or, thinking of James as now an apostle, he may have been led half unconsciously to the use of a phrase including the word apostle to describe the next group, which, however, still meant all who were apostles at the time of the event referred to. Or without intention of comparison with any previously mentioned person or group, Paul, long accustomed to the term apostle, scarcely aware indeed of a time when the

term was not in use, may have employed the expression "all the apostles" of all who were, at the time of the event referred to, members of the company which at the time of writing had long been known as the apostles. In itself the phrase would not tell us who these were. But in view of the other evidence we should naturally assume them to have been the twelve, or rather, perhaps, the eleven. It may, indeed, be asked why, if the expression "all the apostles" is of identical content with "the twelve," the apostle should have used the two instead of repeating the same phrase. A confident answer cannot perhaps be given to this question, but instinctive desire for variety of expression combined with the intervention of the reference to the five hundred and to James may have been sufficient to lead him to say "to all the apostles," rather than "again to the twelve."<sup>5</sup>

It seems impossible, therefore, to deduce from this passage any definite indication as to who constituted the apostles at the time of the epiphany which Paul here relates, or indeed that there was at that time any definite group of persons called apostles. Read in the light of the other evidence it distinctly implies the existence of a definite company of Jesus' disciples, known at the time of this epiphany or not much later as the twelve, and a definite company then or afterward known as the apostles. This passage itself does not define the extent to which these two companies were identical, but leaves unanswered the question whether they were mutually exclusive, partly identical or wholly so. The last view is, on the whole, more consistent with all the evidence.

The reference to "false apostles" mentioned in II Cor. will require consideration at a later point. It is sufficient at this point to note that Paul's attitude toward them renders it improbable that they were included in those whom he designates as having been apostles before him.

In Rom. 16:7 mention is made of Adronicus and Junias as *ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις*. This is generally understood to mean that they were themselves of the number of the apostles and

<sup>5</sup> It is a tempting suggestion made by Valckenarius and cited by Heinrici in Meyer, *Kom.*, 8te Aufl., that for *πᾶσιν* we should read *πάλιν*; but in the absence of any external evidence the interpreter can scarcely avail himself of this way of escape.

occupied a position of eminence among them. If this is correct these men may well have been among those who were apostles before Paul, as he expressly says that they were Christians before he was. In that case, they were probably like the men referred to in II Cor. in that they constituted an early addition to the apostolic company and, like them, were apparently itinerant missionaries.

2. *The apostleship of Paul.*—With the conversion of Saul and his adoption for himself, or the ascription by others to him, of the title *ἀπόστολος*, that title enters upon a new stage of its history. It evidently passed from the twelve, or the company of which they were a part, to him, not the reverse, but its application to him became the occasion of no little controversy.

Acts 13:1-3 relates that the company of prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch set apart two of their own number for a specific task, which though not sharply defined was apparently that of carrying the gospel into regions as yet unevangelized. There is a manifest parallel between this act and that of the one hundred and twenty in Jerusalem (Acts 1:15-26), and it is not improbable that in this event we have an important step in the creation of an apostolate not authorized from Jerusalem or by the twelve. But as in the case of Matthias, so in the case of Barnabas and Saul, there is no assertion that the term apostle was applied at the time of appointment, but only a subsequent reference to them as apostles by the Acts author, and no distinct evidence that those who took part in the Antioch incident looked upon it at the time as having any important bearing on the development of an office or the definition of a term.

For direct evidence as to the origin of Paul's assurance of his own apostleship and his conception of the functions of an apostle, we must depend upon his own letters. In II Cor. 8:23 and Phil. 2:25 he uses the term, with limitations, in the general sense of messenger or delegate. This evidence is valuable as showing what was for Paul the fundamental idea of the term, but it in no way obscures the fact that Paul applied the term to a certain limited number of persons including himself and the twelve, in a more specific sense. In the salutation of the Thessalonian letter (or letters if II Thess. be from Paul), he couples with his own name those

of Silvanus and Timothy, and adds no title, but in I Thess. 2:6 he uses the term *ἀπόστολος* of himself, or of himself and one or more of his companions at Thessalonica, in such a way as to imply that to be an apostle of Christ carried with it either authority, or the right to be supported by his converts; it is impossible to say with certainty which is the implication of *ἐν βάρει*. In Gal. 1:1-3 he affirms his own apostleship with emphasis, and thereafter in the salutation of all the Pauline letters, except Philippians and Philemon, the term *ἀπόστολος* is closely joined to the personal name *Παῦλος*. In all these cases the term is clearly restricted to Paul himself and is evidently of titular force. Gal. 1:1 and its context also make it clear that Paul's right to this title was disputed, and scarcely less so that the ground of objection was that the title and appointment had not been authorized in Jerusalem. To this his defense was not that he had been duly appointed, but that such appointment was unnecessary, and that he had never sought it, having received his apostleship by direct divine commission. In I Cor. 9:1 Paul couples the assertion of his apostleship with the affirmation that he had seen Jesus our Lord, evidently referring to the post-resurrection vision spoken of in I Cor. 15:8. As therefore the Galatian passage suggests one element of the conditions of apostleship implied in Acts 1:21, 22, so the Corinthian passage suggests another. It is not, indeed, perfectly clear whether he conceded that such a vision of the risen Jesus was a necessary condition of apostleship or, only since he fulfilled it, preferred simply to affirm the fact and so avoid controversy on this point. On the one side, the general type of his thought, his emphasis on the purely spiritual as against the physical in religion, would favor the view that he did not attach vital importance to his having seen Jesus.<sup>6</sup> But on the other hand, the great significance which he evidently attached to this particular experience, and his apparently careful avoidance of the ascription of apostleship to other missionaries of Christianity, such as Timothy, Titus, and Apollos, point to the conclusion that he included ability to bear personal testimony to the resurrection among the conditions of apostleship. We may concede that his view would have been more thoroughly self-consistent if he had attached no importance to this condition;

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Hincks, "Limits of the Apostolate," in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1895, pp. 37-47.



but it seems on the whole probable, nevertheless, that he did include it in the necessary qualifications of an apostle.

If this is the case it was implied in the view both of Paul and his opponents that the apostleship could not last many years since the supply of those who fulfilled this condition would inevitably be exhausted within a generation. But it is probable that this consideration was deprived of any importance by their expectation of the consummation of the age by the coming of the Lord. Cf. Matt. 19:28.

3. *The false apostles.*—The mention by Paul of those whom he, in II Cor. 11:13, characterizes as “false apostles [*ψευδαπόστολοι*], deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ,” though adding of course none to the list of those whom he accounted apostles, throws considerable light on the whole problem of the conception of apostleship held in the apostolic age. The letter which has been preserved to us in part in chaps. 10–13 of what is commonly known as II Corinthians shows clearly that there had been in Corinth certain persons who, claiming themselves to be apostles of Christ, denied Paul’s right to that title. If II Cor. 3:1 (written a little later) refers, as it probably does, to the same persons, it suggests that these persons brought with them letters of commendation, and that not improbably their claim to the apostleship was supported by these letters. We have no means of knowing whether these men had been elected as Matthias was to fill a vacancy in the original twelve, or were an addition to the twelve. In any case, Paul’s objection to their apostleship was not based on the method of their appointment, but on the spirit and purpose of the work they were doing. The expression “false apostles,” however, confirms what the evidence previously examined implies, that to be an apostle was a definite fact. In other words, while neither Paul nor, so far as we know, the Jerusalem Christians were insisting on the maintenance of the number twelve, the term apostle still conveyed a definite meaning; it was not applied indiscriminately to any preacher or missionary of the Christian message.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The assertion frequently made (see, e.g., Robinson in Hastings’ *D.B.*, art. “Apostle,” and Robertson and Plummer on I Cor. 12:28) that the expression “false

II Cor. 10:7 and 11:23 strongly suggest that among the qualifications which these persons affirmed that they possessed and Paul lacked was a certain relation to Christ. In all probability this was in part at least personal knowledge of him in his lifetime. This view is in some measure confirmed by I Cor. 1:12 (*ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ*) and 9:1, if, as is probable, the former passage refers to the same persons, or at least to the same movement, as II Cor. 10:7; 11:23, and if I Cor. 9:1 conveys a veiled and passing allusion to that party, with which the apostle for some reason did not, in this letter, wish to deal openly.<sup>8</sup> Cf. on the general situation Weizsäcker, *Das Apostolische Zeitalter*, p. 299,, E. T., Vol. I, p. 354, and Sanday in *Ency. Bib.* I, 905.

When these men set up their claim to be apostles is indicated only by the mention of them in the letter of Paul which we now find imbedded in what is known as II Cor. This would point to a date in the early fifties as the time when they were in Corinth. How much sooner they claimed or were given the title of apostle we have no means of knowing. Whether elected to fill a vacancy in the number of the twelve or added to that number, they may have been accounted apostles in Jerusalem even before Paul acquired the title. His subsequent denial of the title to them, when he discovered the spirit in which they were working, does not exclude the possibility of his having at first accounted them apostles.

apostles" implies that the number of the apostles was indefinite is inaccurate and misleading. The expression shows only that there was difference of opinion as to who were apostles. It suggests no indefiniteness as to what it was to be an apostle, but quite the contrary, for had the term been of quite indefinite meaning (signifying, e.g., only itinerant preacher), Paul would have had no motive to refuse it to the emissaries from Jerusalem, or, it may be added, to claim it for himself. Nor does the term of itself exclude definiteness of number; since an agreement, e.g., that there could be but twelve apostles, would only have given acuteness to the question who were the genuine, who the spurious. Cf. the case of delegates to a political convention. Probably on neither side was the number definitely restricted, but the expression "false apostles" would not of itself prove this.

<sup>8</sup> It is not improbable that in II Cor. 5:16 also there is an allusion to the same emphasis of Paul's opponents on personal knowledge of Jesus; in which case, however, the apostle's phrase *ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν* must be taken as a general expression inclusive of estimation of Christ on any basis of the physical and external, which estimation he now abjures, whatever may have been, in fact or according to the accusation of his opponents, the case in the past.

Such evidence as there is, however, would suggest that these were relatively late additions to the company of those who bore the title of apostles.

In Rev. 2:2 reference is also had to false apostles in the church at Ephesus, men who call themselves apostles and are not. Whatever the point of view of this portion of the Apocalypse, and whatever the test by which the Ephesians tried them and discovered that they were false, the passage testifies to the fact that to be an apostle was something definite and desirable.

4. *The use of the term in Acts.*—Sufficient reference has already been made to the usage of the word apostle in the first twelve chapters of Acts. It remains only to observe that while in chap. 14 Paul and Barnabas are spoken of as apostles, the word occurs elsewhere only in chaps. 15 and 16, and in the phrase οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ[οἱ] πρεσβύτεροι ἀδελφοί, designating the leading men of the church assembled in Jerusalem. While the epistles of Paul recognize the apostleship of James, and of Andronicus and Junias, and testify that others also claimed the title, which though denied by Paul was apparently conceded by others, the book of Acts makes no mention of any of these as apostles, but restricts the term to the twelve with the addition of Paul and Barnabas.

5. *Summary of New Testament usage.*—These facts, respecting the usage of the word in the several New Testament books, suggest that the term was first used of a narrower circle, then of a wider, and again in certain quarters of a narrower. They do not clearly indicate when the term was first applied to the twelve except that it was at some time before the writing of Galatians. They do not show clearly whether the term was first applied to the twelve only and afterward to others, or whether it first arose as a title of a larger group including the twelve. They suggest that while the twelve were at first the eminent body among the followers of Jesus, and were known simply as the twelve, the raising of James, and in a lesser measure of his brethren, to a place of influence in the Christian community only second, and in the case of James scarcely second, to that of the twelve, gradually led to the partial displacement of the numerical term, the twelve, by the more descriptive and honorific term apostles. Not improbably from the beginning,

this term included all the twelve, but also James. Eventually all who like these were regarded as founders of Christianity were called apostles (cf. below on the function of the apostle). For this use of the term there was doubtless some preparation in earlier usage. This may have been furnished by the use of some such term as *ἀπόστολοι* or *שליחין* not as a title but as a term descriptive of the function of the twelve. Subsequently, doctrinal differences led to the denial of the apostolic character of some of these later additions to the apostolic circle, each party denying the title to those whose views they disapproved, but none apparently questioning the apostolic title of the twelve. The Book of Acts represents a stage of the controversy and a circle of thought in which it was held that in the early days the twelve were the only apostles and there was caution in recognizing the legitimacy of any addition to that number except Paul and Barnabas. Of the persistence in other circles of another point of view, something will be said later in discussing the usage of the *Διδαχή*.

If this hypothesis be accepted as probable, we should reconstruct the history of the use of the term apostle in what we call the apostolic age somewhat as follows: In the midst of his ministry Jesus gathered about him a company of twelve disciples who companied with him, learning from him as pupils, and sharing in his work as his representatives. The earliest name that we can discover for this company was "the twelve," a title which they not improbably bore even in Jesus' lifetime. Assured by their visions of him after his death that he still lived, they were impelled to continue their organization such as it was, and to fill the vacancy caused by the treachery and death of Judas. They conceived it to be their function to testify to the resurrection of Jesus and in general to transmit the message of Jesus' life and teaching which they had received through their association with him. They were not ecclesiastical officers but bearers of a message. They continued for some time, precisely how long we cannot tell, to be known as the twelve. With them were early associated the brothers of Jesus, of whom James was especially prominent, and these grew in influence. James being a witness of the resurrection and a man of weight and influence assumed functions quite like those of the

twelve. This fact gradually led to the adoption of the term apostles, which may or may not have already been applied to the twelve, as the title of all who shared the function of the twelve.

Converted to an enthusiastic faith in Jesus by his Damascus vision, Paul felt himself called by God to become a preacher of the gospel message, as he conceived of it, to the Gentiles. This was for him a divine commission and he unhesitatingly appropriated to himself the title and function of an apostle of Christ, which he conceived himself to hold by direct divine authority, subject in no way to the control of those who were apostles before him.

When Paul had been at work for some years, there went out into the territory which he conceived to be his and into the churches which he had founded, certain men, perhaps by authorization from Jerusalem, who denied Paul's apostleship, apparently either on the ground that he had not been a personal companion of Jesus, or had not been commissioned from Jerusalem, or both, and no doubt claimed for themselves what they denied to him. These men Paul in turn denounced as false apostles.

It is clear that there had grown up two contrasted views of the conditions of apostleship, having much in common but sharply differentiated on certain points. Both parties were agreed that to be an apostle was something very definite, and, as will appear later, were not widely divided as to what the function of an apostle was. Of the existence of a loose sense of the term as applied to apostles of Christ (II Cor. 8:23 and Phil. 2:25 do not come into account here), either as the only meaning or parallel with a stricter sense, the books of the New Testament give no evidence. The difference of opinion pertained chiefly to the conditions of apostleship. The party of Paul's opponents probably held respecting the apostolate substantially the position which Acts 1:21, 22 takes respecting the twelve. An apostle must have known Jesus personally, must be able to bear witness to the resurrection, and must have been commissioned from Jerusalem. Paul denied the necessity of personal acquaintance with Jesus on earth, or of any commission whatever from men. On the basis of his Damascus vision he claimed to have seen Jesus and so to be a witness of the resurrection. Other conditions than this, he maintained, were

purely spiritual, and apostleship came by unmediated divine commission.

How many of those who were eligible to apostleship under either of the two views eventually came to bear the name apostle it is impossible to state. We can definitely name only about twenty, but quite possibly it was given to all who having been sharers in the epiphanies of Jesus afterward assumed positions of responsibility in the church, especially perhaps if they became itinerant preachers and founders of churches.

6. *The function of an apostle.*—For the interpretation of the epistles of Paul the question what he conceived to be the function of an apostle is of much more importance than the number of those to whom he conceived the title to be rightly applicable. Most of the evidence bearing on this point has been cited incidentally in the preceding sections, but may now be assembled and brought to bear on this phase of the subject.

In Mark 3:14, 15 we read, *καὶ ἐποίησεν δώδεκα, οὓς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν, ἵνα ᾧσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἵνα ἀποστέλλῃ αὐτοὺς κηρύσσειν καὶ ἔχειν ἐξουσίαν ἐκβάλλειν τὰ δαιμόνια.* This passage evidently took shape when it was believed that Jesus himself created the apostolate and gave to its members the name apostles. It shows that at that time it was believed that the primary purpose for which Jesus chose the twelve was that they should be his personal companions and helpers in his work. Learning from him by companionship with him, they were to share in his work by going out to announce his message and to do such things as he had himself been doing (cf. Mark 9:38). Though this gospel was written long after the death of Jesus and when the twelve had long been exercising a function largely created by conditions that arose after his death, and though the expression, "whom he also named apostles," probably shows the influence of later thought, yet with the exception of this phrase the horizon of the passage is wholly that of Jesus' lifetime, and there is in it no suggestion of any work to be done after Jesus' death.<sup>9</sup> This fact is strong evidence that the substance of the passage comes from a very early

<sup>9</sup>This is the implication of the present tenses, *ἀποστέλλῃ, κηρύσσειν, ἔχειν* and *ἐκβάλλειν*, not, of course, in that they denote present time, but continued or repeated

date, and embodies the recollection of the twelve of their original conception of their primitive function.

But though this original appointment suggested no function extending beyond the period of the personal presence of Jesus, his death resulted not in the dissolution of the group but in the taking on of a new function. Those who had been his chosen companions in his lifetime became the witnesses of his resurrection. See above on Acts 1:21-26. The insistence upon personal companionship with Jesus, as a condition of membership in the body in the new period of its history, was doubtless in part because of the relation between such companionship and ability to be a witness to the resurrection. But the inclusion of the phrase "from the baptism of John" indicates that the bearing of such testimony was not the full duty or only function of the twelve. They must also be able to testify to the deeds and words of Jesus before his death and even from the beginning of his public ministry, and carry forward his work as they only could do who knew him well. On the other hand witnessing to the resurrection was not an end in itself, but the means by which men were to be persuaded to accept him as Lord and Christ. The function of the apostle is therefore comprehensively the winning of men to faith in Jesus through the testimony to his resurrection, and building them up in such faith through the story of his life and teaching. There is thus a clear affinity between the thought of the two passages Mark 3:14 and Acts 1:21-26. The companionship with Jesus which in Mark is a part of the purpose of the choice of the twelve becomes in Acts a condition of membership in the body; and the function of the group, though new in that it includes and makes prominent the testimony to the resurrection, is in substance the same as that set forth in Mark with only such modification as the death and subsequent epiphanies of Jesus, convincing them of his resurrection and messiahship, would naturally call for. Whether at the early period in which this conception of the function of the twelve took shape they were already known as apostles, or, as suggested above,

action, naturally, therefore, thought of as continuous with the time of *ᾧσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ*. Had the thought been of a single subsequent sending out, following upon the period of the *ᾧσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ*, the aorist *ἀποστείλη* must certainly have been used.

this name was only later applied to them, the passage in Acts shows that by the time of the writing of Acts the definition of function had become attached to the term apostle, and there is no special reason to question that this took place in the process by which the term apostle was carried over to the twelve or to that larger company of which they were the major part.

Paul's conception of the function of an apostle is conveyed by implication rather than by any express statement. The important passage 1 Cor. 12:28 indicates the place of high importance which he attaches to it, and shows that he regarded apostleship rather as a commission conferred by divine endowment than an ecclesiastical office to which one was appointed or elected by men (see also Gal. 1:1). That the function was local, *τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ* referring to the church at Corinth, or generically to any local church, cannot be assumed in view of Paul's use of *ἐκκλησία* in the larger sense in Gal. 1:13; 1 Cor 15:9; Phil. 3:6; Col. 1:18, 24, and is against all other usage of the word *ἀπόστολος*. It is still more clear that in Eph. 4:11 the writer is thinking of the church at large. But neither of these passages gives a clear definition of the specific function of the apostle. The evidence that Paul regarded first-hand testimony to the resurrection as a part of the work of the apostle has already been discussed (cf. 2 above). That the preaching of the gospel was a part of it is clearly implied not only in such passages as Gal. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:17; Rom. 1:1, but in practically all his references to his apostleship. But neither of apostleship in general nor of his own apostleship in particular would this have been an adequate definition. Not every preacher of the gospel was an apostle; nor was it given to Paul by virtue of his apostleship to preach the gospel without restriction. Limiting his own efforts to Gentile lands (Gal. 1:16; 2:8, 9) and within these lands to fields not already occupied by others, he disclaimed all intention of re-proselytizing to his own conception of Christianity converts already made by others (II Cor. 10:13; Rom. 15:20), and equally denied the right of others to attempt to win his converts to their views (Gal. 1:8, 9; 5:12). We infer that according to Paul's conception the work of an apostle of Christ was that of planting Christianity. Endowed by the vision of the risen Christ with ability to testify to



the resurrection, commissioned by God, and his commission attested by the signs of an apostle, viz., ability to work miracles and success in the work of the gospel (I Cor. 9:1, 2; II Cor. 12:12), possessed of a message for which no man was his authority (Gal. 1:1, 11, 12), it belonged to the apostle not to follow in the footsteps of others, nor to build along the lines determined by other men's foundations, but himself to announce the gospel message, to found churches, and thus to fix the lines of the development of the new religion, or the new type of the Jewish religion. Disclaiming indeed lordship over the faith of his converts as against the working of the Spirit in their own hearts (II Cor. 1:24), yet in the assured conviction of his own apostleship and his own possession of the Spirit (I Cor. chap. 2), Paul did not hesitate on the one side to reprove, exhort, and even to command the churches which he had founded (I Thess. 4:2; cf. II Thess. 3:4, 6; II Cor. 13:2, 10 *et freq.*), and on the other utterly to deny the right of others, whether true or false apostles, to assume such authority over these churches. To be an apostle of Christ was in Paul's thought to be divinely commissioned to found churches of Christ and, by virtue of such commission, to be independent of human authority.<sup>10</sup> It was such a commission and the right and duty to exercise it among the Gentiles, thus practically determining the character of Gentile Christianity as far as his work and influence extended, that Paul steadfastly claimed for himself.

Lacking any correspondingly definite expression of the conception of apostleship held by the other apostles, we cannot say to what extent they would have agreed with Paul's definition of

<sup>10</sup> The work of the apostles as a whole might be defined (cf. Haupt, *Zum Verständnis des Apostolats im N.T.*, p. 135) as the founding of the church. But since this is the work of no single man, one could not from Paul's point of view give this as the definition of the function of the apostle (sing.) without the addition of a limiting phrase defining the scope and territory within which the individual apostle was divinely commissioned to act. Yet neither from Paul's point of view was the founding of the church committed to any body of men to be achieved by them as a body. Whether it be due to the difference of judgment between himself and others whose apostleship he was nevertheless unwilling to deny, or to inherent individualism, the apostle held at any rate that to him was given his task and to the others theirs, which each was to accomplish, with recognition of the others' rights and duties, but not co-operatively as a duty laid on them all jointly.

the function of an apostle. It is evident, however, that Paul's conception is closely akin to that which underlies Acts 1:21-26, but that his is more sharply defined in respect to the independence of the apostle. It is evident also that precisely by reason of this peculiarity of Paul's view, it was well adapted to give rise to controversy. A conception of a college of apostles would have called for corporate action in the achievement of a common task. But Paul's individualism, his view that each apostle—he at least—had his own commission from God, and was responsible therefore to God and not to his fellow-apostles, could scarcely fail to bring him into conflict with those who held the other conception. Paul's solution of the problem of conflicting claims that in fact arose was neither to deny the apostleship of the others and maintain his own only, nor to consent to submit mooted questions to a majority vote of a college of apostles, but to affirm the undiminished authority of each in his own field. The pillar apostles, on the other hand, without apparently denying his apostleship did not at first recognize that it required them not to interfere with his work. Later, they concede this in theory, but do not steadfastly conform to it in practice; while the more extreme members of the Jewish Christian party deny Paul's apostleship altogether.

Itinerancy was evidently an incidental rather than a cardinal feature of the apostle's work. The twelve, according to Mark 3:14, were to go out from time to time. But Acts 1:11, 12 makes no mention of itinerancy. The use of the phrase *γυναίκα περιάγειν* in I Cor. 9:5 suggests that the apostles generally and the brethren of the Lord were more or less itinerant, yet rather in the sense that they had frequent occasion to change their home than to be away from home. Paul, we know, was in "journeyings oft." Having no family he may perhaps be said to have had no home. Manifestly also the witness to the resurrection must go where they are to whom the testimony is to be borne, and the founder of churches cannot remain seated in one place. Yet prolonged residence in a given place might be necessary to the accomplishment of a given apostle's task, and no definite limit could be set to the period of such residence. Like the modern missionary bishop, the apostle must be where his work called him, yet not necessarily always journeying. James the

brother of our Lord was never, so far as our evidence shows, an itinerant preacher, nor does it seem probable that anyone who, in the discharge of his function as a founder of Christianity, should find it expedient to take up permanent residence in a certain place, would on that account have been denied the title of apostle. Still less does the evidence of the New Testament permit us to suppose that itinerancy would of itself have entitled a preacher of the gospel to be called an apostle. Nor was the expression equivalent to evangelist, or to the modern term, missionary.

#### IV. CHRISTIAN USAGE IN THE SECOND CENTURY

To the interpretation of the development of the apostolate and the usage of the word apostle hereinbefore set forth, the use of the word in the well-known passage in the *Διδαχὴ τῶν δώδεκα Ἀποστόλων*, chap. 11, seems at first sight to interpose an objection:

But concerning the prophets and apostles, so do ye according to the ordinance of the gospel. Let every apostle, when he comes to you, be received as the Lord; but he shall not abide more than a single day, or if there be need, the second; and if he abide three days he is a false prophet. And when he departs let the apostle receive nothing save bread, until he find shelter. But if he ask for money he is a false prophet.

The first injunction manifestly has reference to Matt. 10:40: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." And this reference in turn associates the apostle here spoken of with the twelve. Yet, on the other hand it is quite impossible to suppose that the following injunctions were intended to apply to the twelve or arose in a time when they could have been so understood. For surely the twelve never sank to so low a level in the esteem of the church that it was deemed necessary to prohibit their remaining more than two days at utmost in any one church, or receiving anything more than the food necessary to sustain them to their next stopping place. Apparently, therefore, the passage comes from a time when the apostles as a class were still so connected in thought with the twelve that the sentence which the gospel applies to them could be applied to the then existing class of apostles, but when the still living members of the class had so far degenerated as to be regarded with suspicion and

treated with extreme caution. Those to whom the term is here applied are itinerant prophets, living off the churches, but prohibited from receiving any money or subsisting upon any church for more than two days at a time. Violation of these rules proves them false prophets but apparently does not deprive them of the title apostles.

It should be borne in mind that this is the only extant passage in early Christian literature in which any such use of the term occurs. The term is found six times in Clem. Rom., once in so-called II Clement, 16 times in Ignatius, once in Diognetus, five times in Hermas, and once in Barnabas (see Goodspeed, *Index Patristicus*). All of these instances are in line with the usage which from the Book of Acts we should infer prevailed in the latter portion of the apostolic age, most of them very clearly so. Clement of Rome, Barnabas, and Ignatius know of no apostles save the twelve and Paul. In Clem. Rom. 47, Apollos is expressly distinguished from the apostles: "For ye were partisans of apostles and of a man approved in their sight." Equally clear is the usage of II Clem. and Mart. Pol. The usage of Hermas is less clear and may perhaps be more nearly akin to that of the middle period of the apostolic age. He speaks once of forty apostles and teachers (Sim. 9:15:4) and twice of apostles and teachers, without mentioning their number (Sim. 9:16:5; 25:2). These preached the gospel to the whole world and having fallen asleep preached also to those that had fallen asleep before them. The apostles preached to the twelve tribes (Sim. 9:17:1), in which phrase there is, perhaps, a reminiscence of the twelve apostles. Of apostles still living Hermas makes no mention. From Diogn. 11:1 ("Having become a disciple of apostles I came forward as a teacher of the Gentiles"), and the probable late date of this non-Diognetan appendix to the Letter, it might be inferred that the word is used of men of the second century. But the fact that, in the other instances in which it occurs in this fragment (11:3:6; 12:5), the word clearly has its usual reference to the great leaders of the church in the first century, makes it more likely that it has the same meaning here and that the writer intended to say that he accepted the teachings of the apostles, not that he knew them personally.

The usage of the *Διδαχή* remains therefore without parallel in the literature either of the first or of the second century. It is not, indeed, impossible that the persons here referred to were survivors of the company of five hundred witnesses of the resurrection whom Paul mentions in I Cor. 15:6, but they had certainly ceased to exercise the functions which in an earlier period were the characteristic marks of an apostle, and which afterward were regarded retrospectively as the signs of an apostle. In no strict sense can the use of the word in the *Διδαχή* be regarded as the survival of a primitive usage. Of the three ideas, preaching the gospel, founding the church, itinerancy, it was the first and second, not the first and third, which entered into the earliest use of the term as a designation of a class in the Christian community; and of these the second was what constituted the distinctive mark of an apostle; itinerancy was apparently neither a constant nor a necessary feature of apostleship.

A more probable explanation of the usage found in the *Διδαχή* is that it is an offshoot, probably local and rather temporary, from the general stream of usage in both first and second centuries arising out of the conditions of which we catch a glimpse in II Cor., a degenerate use of the term arising from the degeneracy of the class to whom it was applied. The conflict over the apostleship, reflected in the Galatian and Corinthian letters, led on the Jewish-Christian side, possibly on the Gentile-Christian also, to the designation and sending out of men as apostles, first, probably, of those only who had known Jesus in the flesh, but afterward, perhaps, when no more such remained, of others. The name apostle thus became the designation of a class of itinerant Christian prophets which, for reasons no longer known, in time so degenerated that strenuous rules were laid down to prevent their unduly annoying the churches. But this was, after all, a relatively sporadic use of the term.<sup>11</sup> The main stream of usage in Christian circles remained the same. It was still commonly used of the founders of the church, those men of the first generation, contemporaries of Jesus who put their stamp upon the new religious movement and had no successors.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the usage prevailing at about the same time in Jewish circles, mentioned under 1 above.