

GOD'S AGENTS IN THIS WORLD:  
AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE SACERDOTALISTIC AND  
PLENIPOTENTIARY ROLE OF BELIEVERS  
IN THE CORINTHIAN LETTERS

by

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## **INTRODUCTION**

My parents did not appreciate my acting silly in public. They said that it embarrassed them. For the longest time I never understood why my actions would embarrass someone other than myself. I was the one being goofy. Therefore, I should be the only one who should be embarrassed. Later, my father told me it was important to be aware of my words and actions. He reminded me that I was a Combs. I have his name, I have some of his looks and even some of his traits. He said that when people see me, they do not just see Jeff. They see all of the Combs clan. Therefore, for good or for bad, my actions and words were a reflection of more than just myself. He emphasized that it was all part of being a Combs.

### The History of the Paper

The purpose of this paper is to understand what the Corinthian epistles speak about believers serving as sacerdotal and plenipotentiary agents. I have set out to understand what it means to represent God in this world according to 1 and 2 Corinthians. My research has led me to conclude that; the Corinthian letters demonstrate that believers are called to represent God in this world as his sacerdotalistic and plenipotentiary agents, that the believers' mission is to make known God's terms of peace with the world by proclaiming the gospel of Christ, that believers are empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill this task and that believers are responsible to wield their divinely appointed authority and power ethically and with God's wisdom.

This work has been a long process of study, examination, reflection, narrowing and refocusing. The birth of this paper can be traced back to a class I took under Dr. Andrew Lester at Brite Divinity School (The Ministry of Pastoral Care). We were discussing the second chapter of Wayne E. Oates' book The Christian Pastor titled "The Symbolic Power of the Pastor." Dr. Lester led us in a discussion on *pastoral presence*. We discussed the phenomenon of how a pastor has the power to usher in the presence of God in various pastoral situations. Believers in the hospital know that God loves them. They know that God is their strength and their comfort. And yet, when a pastor walks in to visit them, their attention is drawn to the presence of God in their midst. When delivering a sermon, a pastor speaks with borrowed authority. He does not just speak as the local minister, but as a representative of God. When the elders or deacons visit the shut-ins and offer Holy Communion, their words and actions are representative of themselves, their church and of the Lord. Every Christian mentor is an image of Christ in the eyes of their protégé. Every servant becomes the hands and feet of God, whether he picks up garbage, cuts lawns or pushes the record button to capture that week's sermon.

It is the same thing with every church split, every malcontent elder, every pastor who abandons his family and every believer who says one thing and does another. These actions are a representation of God as well. As disciples of Christ, we carry the name Christian. As with my own family, there are some expectations with carrying that name.

As a pastor and youth pastor, I have seen this phenomenon at work in my life and in the lives of my peers. Paul Cedar also noticed this trend in his book, Mastering the Pastoral Role. He noted the same reality and power of God's presence of being a pastor that I experienced and observed. He stated that:

I don't understand it fully, and it doesn't always accord neatly with my Protestant theology, but it's a reality I've experienced in certain situations. I've seen it happen at weddings, funerals, the commissioning of missionaries, and the ordination of ministers. I've experienced it especially during dedications, baptisms and Communion (1991:22).

Cedar then focused on the role of sacramental presence in cases of tragedy and bereavement. He recalled when a young person died in a motorcycle accident and he went to the family not knowing how to respond or what to say.

In such situations, I've sometimes said many words and sometimes few. But even more important than my words has been my pastoral presence. It's not that Paul Cedar was there; it's that a minister of the gospel was there. And it's not because I've gone as a religious professional but simply as a person publicly identified with God that people had been helped (1991:22).

These words of Cedar stayed in the back of my mind over the last few years. I added my own experiences and observations as I have served as both a pastor and youth pastor. I made a mental note that one day I would like to seriously study the subject of humans representing God in this world.

As I was completing my course work at Johnson Bible College, I began to search for a topic for my thesis. I knew that it would be grounded in New Testament studies. However, I needed to add in elements of pastoral ministry, ethics and history to include my Brite Divinity courses. The concept of human agents representing God in this world seemed to fit the bill. Originally, I had planned to develop a New Testament Theology of Sacerdotalism.

In 1997 I was talking to Richard Winson about my idea of studying the concept of human agents representing God in this world. He was a colleague of a former professor and he was starting a new ministry as the pastor of Agape Christian Church in Terre Haute, Indiana. He informed me that I was talking about was called sacerdotalism.

I struggled to know where to begin in studying this subject. I arrived at the library with my new word, sacerdotalism. I found books and journal articles about sacerdotalism that dealt with the celibacy of priests (Lea 1966:1), Christ as a sacerdotal priest in Hebrews (Stoeckhardt 1950:483) and even a priestly debate in 1595 on whether or not women were human (Fleischer 1981:107).

Looking at the commentaries and journals first was not very productive. I knew that my subject was very broad and that I needed to narrow my focus to something more specific than the idea of human beings representing God in this world. However, before I could narrow my focus, I tried to look at the big picture. I endeavored to capture a bird's-eye view of what the scriptures say about the topic of human agents representing God in this world.

I began to summarize the concept in the Old Testament. Since my thesis needed to be a New Testament work, I only reviewed how God worked through four major types of agents in the Old Testament: patriarchs, prophets, priests and kings.

Then I attacked the New Testament. I studied each line in the New Testament. I divided up the study according to genre: synoptic gospels, Johannine literature, Acts, Pauline epistles, and general epistles. After I combed through each book in its writing style, I organized the noted verses according to topic. Then I summarized each major topic according to its genre. When this work was completed, I found myself with sixty pages of summary. I realized that my topic was too broad for the detail needed in a theological study.

I pulled back and looked at the work as a whole. I decided to hone in on a more specific section. I noted that in my section on the Pauline literature, the Corinthians letters appeared on every one of the thirteen pages. However, I found references to human agents representing God in this world in every one of the books in the Pauline corpus.

The Corinthian letters contain some strong rebuke, where Paul had to assert his authority as a representative of God.<sup>1</sup> He had to defend his authority as an apostle to the original readers of these letters.<sup>2</sup> Paul taught that the spiritual gifts were given to believers, not for their own purposes, but to serve the Lord.<sup>3</sup> He reminded them that they were called to be ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors for Christ.<sup>4</sup> Paul referred to these themes in other letters as well. However, when I looked at the references of human agents representing God in this world within the Pauline corpus as a whole, the Corinthian letters consistently appeared in my notes.

As I was researching the authority given to Paul by God, I noticed that others had found the Corinthian letters to be a rich source of authority references. In his book, The Theology of Paul the Apostle, James D. G. Dunn emphasized Paul's multiple references to his apostleship and authority in the Corinthian letters. In his section titled Ministry and Authority, Dunn made a reference to the Corinthian letters or church on every page except one.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Dunn stated that:

It is certainly clear enough that Paul sought to exercise authority in reference to the Corinthians as their apostle. Having stressed his apostleship ( 1 Cor 9:1-2), he proceeds to stress this authority (exousia - 9:4-6, 12, 18). So also through the whole letter (1998:574).

The Corinthian letters were chosen for this study because of the richness of apostolic and authority references. It was also chosen because of Paul's references to believers called by God

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<sup>1</sup> See 1 Cor 5:13 for example.

<sup>2</sup> See 1 Cor 1:18-2:16- for example.

<sup>3</sup> See 1 Cor 12.

<sup>4</sup> See 2 Cor 5.

<sup>5</sup> From pages 565-598 only page 586 lacked a Corinthian reference.

to represent Him in the world. In 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, Paul made references to believers being both ministers of reconciliation as well as ambassadors for Christ. Finally, because of the problems of the Corinthian church, Paul had to exercise his authority as an apostle called by God. This reveals Paul's understanding of where his power originated in being God's representative (Crafton 1991:57).

### Definitions of Sacerdotal and Plenipotentiary

There were two terms that appeared again and again in my research. Both of them are definitions of human agents representing God in this world. The first term was “Sacerdotal” or “Sacerdotalism” and the second term was “Plenipotentiary.”

“Sacerdotal” is a term that is used to describe the call and function of priests (Sacerdotal 1989:329). This term is mostly used for one who offers sacrifices for another. It also carries the idea of one who represents God and is empowered with supernatural authority. This word is often used in the context of the Roman Catholic faith (Sacerdotalism 1989:329).

My use of the word is to identify the agency, authority and responsibility given to those called by God to represent Him and to do His work in this world. All believers are called to represent God in this world by proclaiming the gospel and serving God with the spiritual gifts allotted to them. However, those in church leadership are given a higher level of responsibility to coincide with their higher level of authority. They are reminded that their words and actions reflect more than themselves. Therefore their words and actions serve as a reflection of the church and of God himself.

The word “Plenipotentiary” was used in diplomatic circles. It is a Latin term that literally means: "invested with full power." It was a term used to describe a representative of a

government. This representative was given full power and authority. He could authorize any commercial, political or military agreement. When a plenipotentiary spoke, it was as if the person who sent him also spoke. (Plenipotentiary 2001:np)

### Intention of the Paper

As I have already stated, the purpose of this paper is to understand what the Corinthian epistles speak about believers serving as sacerdotal and plenipotentiary agents. I had considered approaching this paper chapter by chapter and verse by verse, much like a commentary. However, I soon realized that many of the word studies and background information would be repeated several times. Therefore, I opted to take a more topical approach. The subjects will be arranged topically, but consideration will be given to each verse's context.

First of all, I will deal with the reality of humans representing God. Therefore the first chapter is titled, "The Appointment of Sacerdotal Agents." Since Paul is the author of the letters and writes as one with a higher level of authority, special emphasis will be given to Paul's calling as an apostle. 1 Corinthians 1:1 and 2 Corinthians 1:1 will be reviewed as examples of Paul's apostolic claim. The word *ἀπόστολος* will be researched to gain greater understanding of the sacerdotalistic nature of the office. Paul's claim to be an apostle and representative of God affords him the authority to teach, comfort and rebuke the church. Then I will look at the ninth chapter of 1 Corinthians. This chapter dealt with Paul's defending the validity of his apostleship. The references to "Super Apostles" in 2 Corinthians 11:5 and 12:11 will be reviewed as part of the study on apostleship. This will show Paul's defense of his calling as a representative. It will also serve to remind us that claiming to be God's

representative and actually representing God is not the same thing. Paul also acknowledged that others were called to serve and represent God as well. I will study how he referred to all of the believers being called and set aside by God in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. Then I will examine Paul's use of the image of a seal to convey how all believers belonged to God and were protected. I will look at Paul's reference to him and Apollos being called to be servants of God in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9. The word's *διάκονος* and *καλέω* will be looked at in detail to better understand what it means to be a servant of God and called by God. Another term that will be scrutinized will be the idea of believers being the temple of God in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17 and 6:9. The body of Christ metaphor will also be analyzed since Paul used this term in 1 Corinthians 6:15-17 and 10:17. However, Paul's use of the term in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 will be studied in greater detail. Paul's understanding of Apollos' being a co-worker in 1 Corinthians 1:12, 2:4, 5 and 3:1-23 will be examined in the last section of the first chapter. Paul emphasized that there was no competition between him and Apollos. He saw him as a fellow worker and fellow representative from God. Paul used agricultural and construction images to show how they were working for the same Lord but in different areas and at different times. This first chapter will show that people are called by God to represent him to this world. I think that Paul understood that he was just one part of a larger body whose purpose was to proclaim the gospel to the world.

The second chapter will address the assignment of believers to do the Lord's work and is called, "The Assignment of Sacerdotal Agents." 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:10 contain some powerful examples of how believers are called to represent God in this world. In this section, this I will show how Paul referred to himself and other believers as ministers of reconciliation. He noted that it was the gospel that was the core and power of his commission. Then attention

will be brought to Paul's proclamation that they were called to be ambassadors for Christ. Paul's claim to be God's fellow workers will also be studied in this section. Next I will study Paul's acknowledgement that reception to the gospel would vary from person to person. Paul's image of the aroma of a sacrifice to illustrate the acceptance or denial of the good news to those who heard the good news in 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6 will be examined. Those who would receive it were overjoyed. Others were indignant or hostile to the message. However, Paul did not alter his presentation of the message to please people. He simply preached the words that the Lord had given him. Paul's harsh words in 2 Corinthians 13:2-3 will also be examined. This passage shows how some demanded proof of Paul's authority to speak in the name of Christ. Paul warned them that he was going to show these scoffers that he represented God. This chapter will conclude with some references to the high profile of God's representatives in this world. In 1 Corinthians 4:9, Paul spoke of being put on parade as a spectacle for all of creation to see. However, Paul also saw this high profile as having a positive side as well. This section will study 1 Corinthians 4:16 and 11:1 where he urged believers to imitate him as he imitated Christ. Even in his suffering in 2 Corinthians 1:4 and 11:23, Paul used opportunities to comfort the believers. Finally, I will explore how Paul was proud of his conduct and life in the spotlight in 2 Corinthians 1:12. Once again, I will tie these themes and gleanings together to disclose how Paul and other believers were given assignments by God for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel to the world.

The third chapter of this paper will discuss the spiritual endowment of believers. Therefore, I have given it the title, "The Allotment of Spiritual Empowerment to Sacerdotal Agents." Paul noted how blessed the Corinthians already were in 1 Corinthians 1:4-9 and 4:8. God had already seen to their physical needs. I will argue that Paul was showing them how

God was already equipping them as his agents so they could proclaim the gospel to the world. I will also study the spiritual gifts and titles listed in 1 Corinthians chapter twelve. Paul reminded them that there were a variety of gifts allotted to various people. In the end, they were all given by the Holy Spirit to glorify God. Emphasis will be placed in each of the mentioned gifts as well as the purpose of the gifts to do the work of the Lord. I believe these gifts were given to aid believers who represent God for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel to the world.

The fourth and final chapter is called, “The Authority of Sacerdotal Agents,” and will discuss the authority of believers representing God in this world. 1 Corinthians 3:6 and 10 reminded the readers that Paul was the one who worked to establish the church in the first place. According to 1 Corinthians 4:15, Paul saw himself as an elder or even a spiritual father to the Corinthian church. That is why he desired to nurture and protect them. He also exercised authority over fellow workers who were under his authority by giving his subordinates an assignment to do the work of the Lord in 2 Corinthians 8:18-24. The next part of the chapter will deal with Paul's ethical approach to the authority given to him by God. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 will be highlighted to show that Paul went out of his way to show the church that his approach and style was honest and genuine. I will look at 1 Corinthians 4:5-7 which will show how Paul did not preach his own message, but the message of Christ. Because he was preaching Christ, Paul was not concerned with defending himself against the Corinthians, but against Christ who would be his judge according to 2 Corinthians 12:19. This section will review how Paul used his authority to build up rather than tear down in 1 Corinthians 10:8 and 2 Corinthians 13:10. Next, I will examine some of the specific commands Paul gave to the Corinthians. Paul reminded them in 1 Corinthians 5:12-13 that his authority was limited to the

church. Then I will examine Paul's commands concerning marriage and divorce, dealing with unrepentant believers and worship in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5: 7:10, 11 and 14:26-40. The fields of ministry will also be studied. In 2 Corinthians 10:13 Paul made a reference to the field of work that God had assigned to him, which included the Corinthians themselves. He also taught that one should work in the field where God had put them in 1 Corinthians 7:17-24. However, in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, he gave warning of false representatives that would come in the name of God as Apostles. The final section of this chapter will address the special wisdom given to believers who represent God in this world. 1 Corinthians 2:7-13 and 4:1 will show how Paul was given the secret wisdom of God revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2:16, Paul boldly proclaims to know the mind of Christ. In this section I will show how the secret wisdom that was imparted to Paul was given so he could accomplish his task of being God's representative in this world. In 1 Corinthians 15:24, Paul acknowledged that his authority was only temporary and would someday end. By digging into these texts, I will divulge how Paul understood that his authority came from God and by those he led. I will also demonstrate that Paul was very careful in how he used his authority. He understood that in order to serve his purpose of proclaiming the gospel to the world, he would only be effective if he used his authority in an ethical way.

This paper will conclude with a summary of the reality of the sacerdotal commission of believers. It will stress the ultimate purpose for our plenipotentiary call, to make disciples. It will also discuss practical applications for modern church leaders to be biblical and ethical wielders of spiritual authority.

Paul's letters to the Corinthians offer a powerful example into his understanding of his call and authority. It also describes his understanding of how all believers have been called to

represent God in this world. The problems that he addressed in these letters help to define Paul's ethic and theology of sacerdotalism. 1 and 2 Corinthians reflect Paul's understanding of the divine appointment, spiritual allotment, assignment of ambassadorship and the ethics of authority of all believers to represent God as his plenipotentiary agents in this world.

## **1. THE APPOINTMENT OF SACERDOTAL AGENTS**

This chapter will discuss the appointment or calling of believers to represent God in this world. I will divide this chapter up into five sections. First, I will look at the apostleship of Paul. His title and calling are important in establishing the origin and authority of his words and deeds. The second part of the chapter will deal with Paul's rights as an apostle and his choice not to partake in what was afforded to him. This study will be focused on 1 Corinthians 9. This is important to study in this paper because it shows Paul's defense of his apostleship as well as his voluntary restraint of authority to benefit his audience when he proclaimed the

gospel. Thirdly, I will look at references to all believers (not just apostles) being called by God. The fact that others have been called means that Paul did not view himself as God's sole representative. The fourth section will concern Paul's use of the body of Christ image. There are many called by God, but they are all part of the same group or body. The last section will deal with the Apollos issue.

### The Apostleship of Paul

A study of what the Corinthian letters teach about human agents representing God in this world requires an examination of Paul's calling as an Apostle. Because Paul was the founder of the church and the letters were written in his name, studying Paul's understanding of his calling by God and authority as an apostle will establish a framework for understanding how other agents are called by God and have divine authority.

Paul's apostleship was crucial in establishing his authority to teach, encourage and rebuke the Corinthians. Because his authority was being called into question by false teachers and their followers, he needed to stress his call by God to be an apostle (Fee 1987:392). The identity of his attackers were not revealed in either epistle. John Chrysotom identified Jewish believers who were still holding on their power and pride. F. C. Bauer proposed that it was a Petrine group. Still others pointed to Gnostic or proto Gnostic groups (Georgi 1986:1-9). Deiter Georgi suggested that the opponents of 1 Corinthians were not the same as the ones in the second letter (1986:315). In his commentary, John Calvin offered that the opponents may not have been doctrinal enemies as much as prideful people trying to keep control and power in order to puff themselves up and appear to be important people (1981:37-38).

Paul was very clear on his being called to be an apostle. He reminded his readers of his calling at the beginning of most of his letters. 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon are the only exceptions. Both of the Thessalonian letters began with a general greeting simply that it was from Paul, Silas and Timothy. Philemon began with a reference to the servanthood of Paul rather than to his call as an apostle.

The Corinthian letters were among those that began with a reminder that Paul was called by God to be an apostle (Barrett 1968:30 and Plummer 1912:22). I see three implications to Paul's starting off his text by claiming to be an apostle. First of all, it established the authorship of the letters. Secondly, it offered authenticity to the letters. The authenticity and authorship of a book defines its credibility (Bridges 1992:1:2,3). That leads me to my final observation, the authorship and authenticity of Paul proclaims the authority of the letters as being from an apostle called by God (Blomberg 1994:37 and Martin 1986:2).

Because of these three reminders of authorship in the letter, the Corinthian church was left with no doubt that it was written by Paul. Specifically, they knew that it was written by *the* Apostle Paul. Furthermore, they became aware that by being an apostle, his words would carry more weight than if it were written by a non-apostolic church leader.

The word that Paul used for apostle, in 1 Corinthians 1:1 and 2 Corinthians 1:1, was the word *ἀπόστολος*. The word came from the verb *ἀποστέλλω* which meant to send out and had an implication of commissioning or of one being sent officially. This term was often used to describe the actions of an envoy, messenger or ambassador. It was used to denote that someone was sent out with authority and spoke for someone else. In the New Testament, it began "to be a theological word for 'sending forth to serve God with God's own authority

(Rengstorf, *apostello* 1985:68)."<sup>3</sup> Paul's role as a divinely sent messenger of the gospel was his proof and purpose in being called an apostle (1985:67-74).

The noun, *ἀπόστολος*, was an older word in the Greek. It was sometimes used to describe a boat or a group of boats that was sent out. Over time, this word carried the term envoy or messenger. The historian, Herodotus used the term twice, and it did find its way into the LXX. However, this word was more prominent in the New Testament and early church works than in secular or non-Christian writings (Barnett 1993:45).

Paul indicated that he was the least of the apostles in 1 Corinthians 15:9. In this passage he spoke about not being worthy to be called an apostle because of his past. However, since he was indeed called, whether he felt it was warranted or not, God considered him to be an apostle (Morris 1989:204). This was a passage that surveyed the post-resurrection appearances of Christ. He mentioned how Jesus had appeared to the twelve, then to five-hundred and finally to James and the larger circle of believers who would be apostles (Grosheide 1980:351-352).

Then Paul referred to his own encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road (vs. 8). It was drastically different from the others who had seen Jesus. It was a confrontation instead of the joyous reunion of the followers of Christ. Paul referred to himself as one who was abnormally born. He even used the term *ἔκτρομα*, which meant to be miscarried or even aborted, to describe his unique birth into Christ (Schneider, *ektroma* 1985:220).

In spite of being one who was from a different and unpleasant calling, Paul still was called by God. He acknowledged that his calling was by his grace. This grace was greater than his previous sin. It made his unworthy status as a former persecutor of the church futile. He was called to be an apostle (Morris 1989:204-205).

Paul also made mention of “super apostles” in 2 Corinthians 11:5 and 12:11.

Unfortunately, he did not clarify to his readers who these "super apostles" were. The Corinthian churches must have known both the references and the contexts to these mystery leaders. Some scholars have stated that Paul may have invented the title himself (Sampley 2000:149). In his book, The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians, Dieter Georgi wrote that Paul used the term “super apostles” because his adversaries thought very highly of themselves. They were regarded by some in the community. They amplified their title and spiritual power in order to add credence to their apostolic claim (1986:39, 282).

No consensus has been made on the identity of "super apostles." John Chrysostom considered this passage as more of a reference to Paul's modesty rather than the sarcastic reply seen by more modern scholars. These "super apostles" were seen as the *chiefest* of the apostles: Peter, John and James. This teaching was accepted throughout most of the church until the last couple of centuries (Hughes 1962:379).

In modern scholarship the situation has not been resolved. Commentaries have run the gamut from looking at these "super apostles" as the three highest apostles and the ones who were closest to Jesus (Peter, James and John), to the original twelve, to those like Paul who came after the twelve and, finally, the false apostles of whom Paul was referring in the passages before, between and after these verses (Martin 1986:342, 427; Sampley 2000:149; Kruse 1989:185-186 and Harris 1976:386, 398). The creative Tübingen School even devised a scenario in which Peter and Paul were engaged in an apostolic feud (Hughes 1962:380 and Georgi 1986:2).

One point has become clear on this passage. The Apostle Paul, did not consider himself to be inferior. Whether this reference was to the false apostles, to the original twelve or even the inner circle of the three closest to Jesus, Paul was confident in his own calling as an apostle.

### Paul's Freedom and Validity as an Apostle in 1 Corinthians Chapter Nine

In my study of the apostleship and calling of Paul in the Corinthian letters, I have decided to give special attention to the ninth chapter of 1 Corinthians. I will be using commentaries such as Gordon Fee's The First Epistle to the Corinthians as well as other works like Ronald Hock's The Social Context of Paul's Ministry. Hock discussed the world of tentmaking in the first century. Understanding the cultural and economic position of a tentmaker like Paul clarifies why his employment is an issue and a blessing in the ninth chapter of 1 Corinthians.

The ninth chapter of 1 Corinthians is rich with Paul's assertion and defense of his apostleship. He spoke of his freedom of being an apostle. He spoke of his desire to humbly serve them as an apostle. He gave a defense for his apostleship. However, he also clarified the way he did not exploit that position. He even noted that the fruits of his labor, the Corinthians themselves, were proof of his apostleship (Grosheide 1980:200-201).

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Gordon Fee remarked that much of the letter dealt with questions about the authority of the Apostle Paul. He mentioned how Paul addressed these questions on his authority in chapter nine (1987:393).<sup>6</sup> He asked two rhetorical questions in the first verse of the chapter: "Am I not free?" and "Am I not an Apostle?" The rest of the chapter was his defense of these two questions (394). Verses 1-18 addressed Paul's apostleship, while verses 19-23 dealt with his freedom (Blomberg 1995:175).

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<sup>6</sup> Fee cited 1 Cor 4:1-5; 5-6; and 14:36-37 as texts about this issue of authority.

Following on the heels of the eighth chapter, which dealt with the freedom of believers to be able to eat food that was formally offered to idols, Paul proclaimed his own freedom (9:1). He added that not only was he free, but he was even an apostle and an eyewitness to an appearance of the resurrected Christ. Furthermore, Paul mentioned that the spiritual life in Christ of the Corinthian believers were a direct result of his work as an apostle (Barrett 1968:201).

In the second verse of the chapter, Paul called the Corinthians themselves to testify to his apostleship. He stated that even if others did not consider him an apostle, certainly the Corinthians who knew him and could testify to his work would acknowledge his title and role as an apostle. He boldly proclaimed that the Corinthians themselves served as the seal of his apostleship.

The word for seal, *σφραγίς*, was used to describe something that was used as a proof of identity or even ownership. It was often used for important papers and items to signify authorship and authenticity. It was also used signify divine protection. If somebody had a divine seal or mark then that person belonged to that deity and was therefore protected by that deity (Woodcock 1998:146-147).

The Old Testament referred to seals as making something legal, valid or official. Paul seemed to use this word to signify the validity of his apostleship through the confirmation of the Corinthian church itself (Fitzer 1985:1127-1129). Paul's work and success in Corinth served to confirm his apostleship. He started the church and therefore, the fact that they were there validated Paul as an apostle (Woodcock 1998:144).

All of the freedoms that were given to the other apostles were also available for Paul and his companions. He effectively pointed this out through the early part of the ninth chapter. In

verse four, Paul mentioned how they had a right to eat and drink at the church's expense. Paul added in the next verse that they also had a right to bring their wives along on the missionary work just as other apostles had done.<sup>7</sup> Paul noted three secular occupations that were compensated by partaking from the fruits of their labors. In verse seven Paul referred to a soldier, a vineyard worker and shepherd. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Leon Morris noted that each of these occupations were from a different economic position. The soldier received a wage for his work, the vineyard worker probably owned the vineyard and the shepherd was more than likely a slave. However, all three received food, drink and compensation from their work (1989:131-132).

Even though Paul had every right to exercise these freedoms as an apostle and traveling speaker, he chose not to. His argument was that even though he did not enjoy some of the benefits of his apostleship, it did not lessen or negate his authority and validity as an apostle. Because of his skill and opportunities to make tents, Paul was able to come into Corinth and pay his own way. Not only was this different from the way the other apostles traveled, it was also looked down upon for philosophers that would raise their support by working a trade. Therefore, Paul had to assert his freedom and validity as an apostle against the cultural expectations of the Corinthians and not just the practice of the other Apostles who did not have the advantage of having a lucrative trade like Paul's (Hock 1980:60-61).

In his book, The Social Context of Paul's Ministry, Ronald Hock discussed the four ways that traveling religious teachers and philosophers obtained their financial support in that time: charging fees, finding wealthy patrons, begging and working at another trade. Hock relied on

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<sup>7</sup> Paul noted that he was single in 1 Corinthians 7:7.

the writings of Musonius Rufus<sup>8</sup> and other ancient Greek and Roman sources to compile his list. The first method, charging fees, was popular with the Sophists, but was used by other philosophers and teachers. However, it was often criticized as being too greedy or even deceptive. The second method was joining a household and accepting a salary from a patron. This was very popular by a variety of philosophical schools and other types of teachers and tutors. Hock noted that Aristotle was a famous example of such employment. He was under the patronage of Philip of Macedonia and tutored his son, who became Alexander the Great. This method also had its critics. The Cynics were particularly opposed to this style of employment and claimed that it led to hedonism. It is ironic that Paul found himself defending his freedom and validity because he did not accept patronage. Those who accepted patronage were often treated as servants and slaves. They had to line up with the hired help and the enslaved to receive their wage. The third method of raising support was begging. This was not as popular as charging a fee or accepting patronage. The Cynics found this to be a noble and honest means of support. It was seen as less greedy. However, it was also considered to be shameful and was often abused. Finally, Hock addressed the method of working as well as teaching and preaching. This was not very popular due to the time involved and the slavish appearance of working a trade. It was considered to be beneath the dignity of educated men. Therefore, those who worked as well as taught and preached were considered to be uneducated, undignified and a lower class of philosopher or teacher (1980:52-61).

Hock also stated that most tents were made of leather and it was very likely that Paul was a tanner as well as a stitcher. If this was true, then this placed Paul even lower in the class

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<sup>8</sup> Hock used Lutz, Cora E. "Musonius Rufus, 'the Roman Socrates.'" New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947.

system since being a tanner was considered to be a despised profession. Even though Paul was going against the cultural grain of the Greeks by working in a trade, he was acting in compatibility with the traditions of rabbis. Hock noted some strong rabbinic sayings about adopting a trade as well as preaching in the Mishnah and Tosefta (1980:20-22).

The Mishnah<sup>9</sup> has Rabbi Gamaliel<sup>10</sup> stating that, “Excellent is the study of Torah together with worldly occupation, for toil in them both puts sin out of mind. But all study of the Law without [worldly] labour comes to naught at the last and brings sin in its train (Danby 1933:447).” Likewise, the Tosefta<sup>11</sup> taught on the duties of a father to his son. The teachings of Rabbi Judah echoed the teachings of the Mishnah by stating, “Whoever does not teach his son a trade, teaches him to be a mugger (Neusner 1990:244).”

Paul chose to earn his own keep by working as a tentmaker. This was the most undesirable and uncommon style of raising funds. However, this did offer the most freedom for a speaker to teach what he wanted. The other three methods had the potential to influence a teacher to speak what the audience and paying customers wanted to hear (Blomberg 1995:173).

The critics of the Apostle Paul claimed that since he did not partake of the patronage of the local believers, he was not a valid apostle. Paul placed this chapter, that is a defense of abstaining from enjoying his rights as an apostle, on the heels of his discussion of stronger brothers not exercising their freedom in such a way as to make their weaker brothers stumble in

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<sup>9</sup> See Aboth chapter two verse two.

<sup>10</sup> Paul claimed to be a student of Gamaliel in Acts 22:3.

<sup>11</sup> See Qiddushin chapter one verse eleven.

chapter eight.<sup>12</sup> Paul was showing how he chose to be the stronger brother and not cause any to stumble (Morris 1989:129).

There was a type of freedom that Paul was able to enjoy that others could not. He was able to take care of his needs on his own with his tent-making trade. This type of financial independence offered Paul a kind of freedom that other traveling evangelists and philosophers did not have. Chapter four will deal with Paul's means of supporting himself rather than charging fees, relying on patrons or begging. However, Paul's financial independence offered a great deal of freedom. The Athenian philosopher, Socrates had also appreciated this independent approach. In words that sound very familiar to 1 Corinthians 9:1, Socrates stated that:

First, who is there in your knowledge that is less a slave to his bodily appetites than I am? Who in the world more free,--for I accept neither gifts nor pay from any one? Whom would you with reason regard as more just than the one so reconciled to his present possessions as to want nothing beside that belongs to another? And would not a person with good reason call me a wise man, who from the time when I began to understand spoken words have never left off seeking after and learning every good thing that I could (Xenophon 1979:NP)?<sup>13</sup>

### The Calling of Believers

I am writing this paper to understand what the Corinthian letters say about believers representing God in this world. I have spent the first two sections of this chapter discussing the calling and apostleship of Paul. This next portion will look at the references to other believers being called by God in the Corinthian text.

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<sup>12</sup> See verses 9-13.

<sup>13</sup> This section is referred to as verse 16.

Apostles were not the only ones who were called or chosen by God. Paul also reminded his readers that they too were called by God. They were God's chosen people just as much as the apostles were. Throughout all of the Pauline text, there were references to the readers as being called by God.<sup>14</sup> Believers were also reminded that they were chosen by God.<sup>15</sup> Paul uses images of anointing and the temple to remind believers that they, too, were called to serve God and to be His agent in this world (1 Cor 3:16,17; 16:19 and 2 Cor 1:21-22).

In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, Paul mentioned that the Corinthians were anointed by God just as he himself was anointed by God. The act of anointing, was often used in a commissioning service (Kruse 1989:76-77).

However, as Ralph Martin pointed out in his commentary on 2 Corinthians, anointing was also seen in the allotment of the gifts of the spirit (1986:28). Certainly Paul was not insinuating a physical anointing. Rather, he was using symbolic language. By invoking the image of anointing, Paul was referring to those who were set aside to do the will and work of the Lord in the past; prophets, priests, kings and apostles like himself. By including the Corinthians in this illustrative anointing, he reminded them that they, too, were set aside to do the will and the work of the Lord (Hughes 1962:40).

Paul carried the concept of being set aside one step further in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. He proclaimed that the believers were the property of God. Again he invoked the concept of a seal to the readers. He referred to the fact that the seal of ownership by God was upon them. The image of the seal did convey the ownership, but it also meant that the believers were under

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<sup>14</sup> See Rom 1:5-7; 1 Cor 1:2, 9, 26; and 2 Thess 2:14.

<sup>15</sup> See 1 Cor 1:27, 28; Eph 1:4; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; and 2 Thess 2:13.

God's protection. Because they were his property, God would extend His protection over them (Woodcock 1998:148-150).

The seal also served as a guarantee. It was a guarantee that the believer was authentic. It was also a sign that the believer was paid for. As verse 22 explained, the seal was a promise of what was still to come. Therefore, this seal was not unlike a down payment. It showed the believers that they were spoken for, but the best was yet to come (Barnett 1997:112-113).

Paul also referred to himself and fellow believers as servants of God. The term *διάκονος* originally was used to describe table workers. Eventually it was used as a lower form of servant and in the New Testament it was used for servant and deacons (Morris 1989:63). *Διάκονος* was also used to describe orderlies of generals in the battle field. These people were servants who would also represent the general as well. They would be sent as an envoy for his commander. The Cynics would also use the term, *διάκονος*, to describe their role in the world, as representative of God in this world. Georgi noted that *διάκονος* was used in the New Testament to describe people who proclaimed, rather than servants of charity work (1986:28-29).

In 1 Corinthians 3:5, Paul made a reference to both him and Apollos as being merely servants. He meant to use the same servant motif to specify the ministries of both Apollos and himself. He reminded the Corinthian church that both were merely servants of the Lord. And since they were servants of the Lord, their work was ministry (Abraham 1983:65).

Simply put, Paul wanted to clarify that he, Apollos, and all of the other workers for the kingdom were just serving. They were doing their job. They worked in their field. They worked in their area. They worked in their own time. And through it all, the Holy Spirit was

the conductor that blended together the work of each agent in perfect harmony according to God's will and timing (Collins 1999:142).

*Καλέω* was a frequently used word in the Greek New Testament. It was used extensively throughout 1 Corinthians to refer to the apostolic call of Paul as well as to the general call of every believer by God.<sup>16</sup> This word meant more than receiving a request. It also implied the appointment of a vocation or title. The LXX often used *καλέω* as a substitute for the word *καλεῖν*. In both languages this was a common word for calling someone, to name something or to summon or invite someone. However, when this term was used by God, or in reference to God, it became more significant. Whether it was Paul or the average believer, God called men for His own purpose to carry out His means (Schmidt 1965:488-489).

The Corinthians were referred to as called by *God*. The Greek word for called in 1 Corinthians 1:1 was *κλητὸς*. This was the verbal adjective form of *καλέω*. It was used as a reference to Christians (Schmidt 1965:494). Paul may have wanted to remind the Corinthians of their holy status with God by using this term. It was a term that placed them on equal footing with the Apostle Paul and the other church leaders (Barrett 1968:32-33).

Paul also suggested that the believers were set aside by God for his holy purpose by referring to believers as the temple of God. In 1 Corinthians 3:16,17 and 6:19, Paul used the temple as a picture for the believer. Paul was very specific in his use of the term temple. He could have used another term that could mean the temple and the temple complex, *ἱερόν*. However, he chose to use the term *ναός*, which was a specific word for the temple itself and

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<sup>16</sup> See 1 Cor 1:1, 2, 9, 24, 26; 7:15, 17, 18, 20-22, 24; and 15:9.

not just the temple area. He was clearly trying to invoke the image of the temple in Jerusalem, the temple of God, to remind the believers of their need to remain holy (Kistemaker 1993:116).

The temple was the dwelling place of God. Certainly God's presence was everywhere, but he dwelt in the temple. That is where the people came to him for praise and sacrifice.

Therefore, the temple was set up to be separate from all of the things that would defile it. In the same way, Paul referred to the Corinthian believers as the temple of God to remind them that they, too, were to be set aside to remain pure. They were the new dwelling place of God (Blomberg 1995:75, 127).

### The Body of Christ Metaphor

Examining the body of Christ metaphor is another important step in understanding the Corinthian letters' references to believers called to represent God in this world. In this analogy, believers are not just called by God, they are a part of a spiritual body that is headed by Christ himself. Every member is vital and serves their unique purpose while maintaining unity in following Christ.

Paul used the image of a body to describe the form and function of the church. He used the term "the body of Christ" as a metaphor of the church itself. This simile of the church was found in various places throughout the first epistle to the Corinthians. However, it was emphasized greater in the twelfth chapter than in the rest of the letter. All believers were afforded this honor and responsibility. That is why Paul used the image of the body of Christ. He was stressing that there were many different parts of the body doing different things. And yet, they were all servants of the same God (Banks, *Paul's*, 1994:58-59).

A passing reference of the church being the body of Christ was made in 1 Corinthians 6:15-17. However, this was not the main purpose of the verse. Paul was addressing the issue of believers who were patronizing prostitutes. Adding to the image of the various members of the church being united in one body, Paul referred to another image of a unified body. Genesis 2:24 was a well known verse that illustrated the unity of two people into one person in the act of sexual intimacy. Paul was using this image of the body of Christ and by combining it with the image of two people becoming one flesh, he displayed the damaging situation of allowing a member to continue in his sin. For if each member was a member of the body of Christ and if members were joined in fornication with a prostitute, then it meant that they were also joined with Christ. Paul commanded that they stay away from such sins; otherwise they would defile the whole body of Christ (Blomberg 1995:126-127).

Paul also invoked the image of the body of Christ to represent the church in 1 Corinthians 10:17. While he was addressing the issue of sharing the Lord's Supper together in 10:17, he tied in the oneness of the loaf with the oneness of the body. Because they were taking the same bread together, they were affirming that they were indeed unified in Christ. Also, they were commanded to abstain from feasting in pagan rituals because they were joined in the body of Christ (Kistemaker 1993:342-343).

Paul gave greater attention to the metaphor of the church as the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. He went into greater detail conveying both the diversity and the unity of the body of Christ. Scholars have found an ABBA structure in Paul's description of the body's being both unified and diversified (Fee 1987:601). Verse twelve had an ABBA structure on its own. He began by stating that:

"The body is a unit (A),

though it is made up of many parts (B);  
and though all its parts are many (B),  
they form one body (A).  
So it is with Christ (12:12)."

An ABBA pattern was laid out in a larger form in the rest of the passage. Verse 13 stressed the unity of all baptized believers (A). Then verse 14 emphasized in general terms that the body was made up of many parts (B). Verses 15-21 offered some examples of the diversity of each component of the body (B). Finally, verses 22-26 reminded the reader that each part was also part of the unified and therefore re-emphasized unity (A). The 27<sup>th</sup> verse summarized the teaching that they were unique and yet part of one larger body and closed the bracket that was opened with the similar statement in verse twelve (Blomberg 1995:245-246).

Certainly the body of Christ metaphor was found elsewhere in Paul's writing.<sup>17</sup> It has been speculated that Paul used this body image to contrast another popular body image that was found in the Greco-Roman world. There was a viable cult to the god Asclepius. He was a minor Greek deity who was adopted fairly late by the Romans.<sup>18</sup> He was a god of healing. There was a sanctuary, or Asclepeion, to this god and his daughter Hygieia in Corinth. People who were healed by this shrine would make a terracotta reproduction of the part of the body that was healed. Archeologists have found a plethora of such items in Corinth (Ferguson 1993:210-211).

Some scholars believe that Paul wanted to compare the body pieces that were prominent at the Asclepeion to the body of Christ. In the Asclepeion, the body parts were solitary pieces. They did not belong to a single body. In fact, they were mismatched collections of useless

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<sup>17</sup> See Rom 12:4-5; Eph 1:22-23; 4:15-16, 25; 5:23 and Col 1:15-20, 24; 2:19; 3:15

<sup>18</sup> Around the third century BC.

pieces of pottery. The body of Christ, on the other hand, was together as one body. It was viable. It functioned and served its purpose. Therefore, it was much greater than the so-called healed body parts of the Asclepeion (Carson 1987:42-43).

In his book, Paul's Idea of Community, Paul Banks noted five observations about the church as a body in 1 Corinthians 12. First of all, he noted how the body was referring primarily to the local body of believers in Corinth. Certainly what Paul had to say about the Corinthian Church being a body is applicable to all churches. However, Banks reminds us that this passage was written to a specific church body. His second observation was that all of the members were to be engaged in ministry to a different part of the body. Everybody had a vital part and was also dependent upon each other to accomplish their mission. Thirdly, he noted that very often those who seemed to be doing lower profile work were often doing the greatest work. Next, he pointed out how the work and attitude of one would affect the whole body. Therefore, it was imperative that they work in a sense of harmony and not to hurt other parts of the body. Finally, he hinted that the relationship of a member and its community was related to that person's relationship with Christ and vice versa (1994:58-60).

To this day, the image of the body of Christ as the church plays a vital role in understanding the plenipotentiary call and nature of the church. If the church is indeed the body of Christ and if each part is a vital part of the body, then each part of the body is also a vital part of the work and representation of the Lord. Each individual part is also a reflection of the whole.

The metaphor of the body of Christ is more than just an image. In a way, it is also a literal understanding of how the church should carry out its mission in this world. God has chosen to use human hands, our hands, to touch other human beings. God has chosen to use our feet to

go to the field to work. God even uses our mouths to share the good news and edify and encourage one another. Therefore, not only are we the body of Christ as a metaphor of unity in diversity, we are also the physical hands and feet of God.

### Apollos as a Co-worker

My last section of this chapter deals with another traveling preacher and teacher, Apollos. I have dedicated this section of the chapter to emphasize Paul's acknowledgement that even though he founded the church and was called by God to serve them, that others were called by God to serve as well. Paul's response to the Apollos debate teaches us more than just Paul's thoughts about one teacher. It shows us Paul's understanding that others are called by God to represent Him in this world.

Paul understood the need for the body of Christ to work together. He knew that he was not the only agent of the Lord. In I Corinthians 1:11-17 and 3:1-15, Paul wrote about groups that had aligned themselves to either Apollos, Cephas or himself. He knew that God had sent Apollos to minister to them and would send others in the future. If others were obedient in spreading the gospel of Christ, then they were not competitors. They were fellow agents striving for the same goal (Oster 1995:91).

After Paul started the church in Corinth, another teacher came from Alexandria. Apollos first appeared in the New Testament in Acts 18:24-28. He was an Alexandrian Jew who was baptized by John. He was not yet familiar with Jesus' baptism, although he was an eloquent speaker and had a special gift for quoting scripture. In spite of this, Priscilla and Aquila took in Apollos to fully impart the gospel of Jesus. After he was encouraged by them, he began to use

his powerful gift of speaking and his knowledge of the Old Testament to offer up an overwhelming apology for the cause of Christ to the Jewish communities (Blue 1993:37-39).

Apparently the contention between Apollos and Paul was not with the speakers themselves but with the Corinthians. A major influence in the area were the Sophists. These were the teachers and speakers who were known for their gifts of persuasion. They were studied rhetoricians. Their eloquent speech and ability to reason and debate made them quite popular. Apparently the style of Apollos was closer to the style of the Sophists. Certain believers raised Apollos' status higher than Paul's because he preached more like their beloved sophists. The culture of the day would often align itself with one teacher over another in schools (Blue 1993:38-39). The Corinthians could have been doing what their people had done for years. They split up into the followers of Paul, the followers of Apollos, followers of Peter and so on. There is no evidence that Apollos encouraged this. Considering that he was trained by Priscilla and Aquila, allies of Paul, it is doubtful that he sought to compete against Paul.

In spite of this, the reality was that the Corinthians decided to divide themselves among the various teachers. This was why Paul was emphatic in proclaiming the unity of purpose of Apollos and himself. He proclaimed that they were both serving the same side. Much of the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians dealt with this explosive issue.

Paul wanted to emphasize the foolishness of the divisions (1:12; 3:1-15). He also pointed out that they were different from the teachers of the world. He reminded them that he did not come as a sophist. He did not come to preach using the wisdom of man. Nor did he come in eloquence in his speech. He simply came to preach Christ (2:4-5).

Although Paul did use the body of Christ image in these first four chapters, the concept that there were distinct parts of the church working together in unity was quite clear. He used an

agriculture metaphor to describe the diversity and unity of the other teachers as well as himself. He referred to himself as the one who planted. Apollos was the next crucial step, the water giver. But ultimately the one behind the total work was indeed God, He was the one who really made them grow. Paul and Apollos were merely servants and representatives of God, the real gardener and power behind the growth (3:6-9).

To further illustrate his point, Paul switched metaphors. Starting in verse 10, he moved from farming to building. Both of these were popular images in the parables of Jesus. He considered himself as the one who laid down the foundation. He even added that he did this as an expert. Then he highlighted that someone else was continuing to build on the structure. The important thing was that the foundation that was laid by Paul was the foundation of Christ as savior. On that foundation the building would stand no matter what happened to it (Fee 1987:128-129).

By the time Paul wrapped up the chapter in verses 21-23, he arrived at the same conclusion that he started with. If all were serving Christ, then they would all be on the same side. He proclaimed that they were in Christ and that Christ was in God. This left the ultimate conclusion unsaid: that if all were serving Christ, then all would also be together in God.

God's dwelling and calling of believers was very different from the way that the mystery cults and pagans viewed their callings. In the other faiths, power came through mystery and the hope was to be fused with their deity. Paul showed that God would choose a person and fill that person with his Holy Spirit. This was God's dwelling in that person, but the Holy Spirit did not engulf the believer into a larger consciousness. Instead the Holy Spirit would work with each person through his individuality. Each person maintained his unique personality and identity but was still part of a larger body (Banks, *Paul's*, 1994:23).

Paul, who was an apostle and called by God, was clearly a representative and worker for God in this world. He did not consider himself to be inferior of other apostles even if he did not partake all of the benefits that an apostle could claim. He was just as valid as any apostle. He also acknowledged that he was not the only representative for God. There was obviously enough room for a myriad of servants and workers for the kingdom. Even if they were working in a different *field* than Paul, they still could be working for the same team as Paul. The authority given to Paul to be a sacerdotal in this world did not originate from Paul, but from God. Therefore, that same authority could be given to whomever God would choose.

## 2. THE ASSIGNMENT OF SACERDOTAL AGENTS

The previous chapter dealt with establishing the reality of all believers being called to represent God in this world. This chapter will discuss what we have been specifically called to do. Throughout this paper, we have been discussing what it means called to be representatives of God in the Corinthian letters. As I have studied the Corinthian letters, I have seen that the mission of presenting the gospel to the world is emphasized as the preeminent activity of believers. In this chapter, we will see that we are not just representatives in calling, but we are given a charge to act as ministers of reconciliation. What that means is that our major objective as God's agents in this world is to go and offer peace between God and man. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify how our calling by God to represent him in this world is given to so that we can proclaim the gospel.

To better understand this mission we will be evaluating a few key areas in the Corinthian letters. We will be examining what it means to be an ambassador for Christ and a minister of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. We will also study Paul's commitment to revealing God through him whether the message was received as a sweet aroma or as a foul stench as seen in 2 Corinthians 2:14-17. We will discuss the ramifications of being God's plenipotentiary agent, which is one who speaks for someone as if the sending agent was speaking. Once it is known that we are believers, all of our actions represent more than ourselves. For good and for bad, we are always reflecting God and the church in our words and deeds.

## The Concept of Ambassadorship

While the first chapter dealt mostly with the calling of believers in representing God, this second chapter will deal with the mission of representing God in this world. The concept of being ambassadors of Christ, ministers of reconciliation and fellow workers with God will be analyzed in this part of the chapter.

Paul spoke of his appointment as the ambassador of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:12-6:2. This section was the middle part of a three-fold structure identified by Crafton in his book The Agency and the Apostle, which he discussed Paul's purpose of being an ambassador of reconciliation. Since this reconciliation was to connect people back to God and not to himself, Paul was connecting the Corinthian's loyalty to him to their loyalty to God (1991:94).

5:11-17 spoke of how Paul was compelled by Christ to preach the ministry of reconciliation.
5:18-6:2 revealed the source of Paul's apostleship and authority – God's commission.
6:3-10 highlighted that hardships would come and they would not stop Paul from carrying out his commissioned task.

In the beginning of the fifth chapter, Paul needed to address to the Corinthians the issue of the resurrection of the dead. Paul referred to the material body as a tent and the resurrected body as being a heavenly temple. These two examples contrast the seen the unseen, the temporary with eternal and the earthly with the heavenly (Plummer 1912:83-84). According to John Polhill, Paul did not write this passage to describe the stages of existence in death; rather it was to emphasize the glory of the resurrection that believers should look toward in eagerness (1989:348).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Joseph Osei-Bonsu's article "Does 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 Teach the Reception of the Resurrection Body at the Moment of Death?" for the debate on when believers received their new bodies.

Some of the people in Corinth were beginning to doubt if there would be a resurrection. They believed that the life on this earth was all that was given to man. Paul emphasized that if there would be no resurrection then there could not have been a resurrection of Christ. Finally, if there were not resurrection of Christ then everything he had taught and said would be null. However, he and the other Apostles were witnesses to the resurrected Christ. Since Christ was resurrected and scripture was fulfilled, therefore scripture would be further fulfilled with the resurrection of the dead in the last days (Vaughan 1983:154-155).

The message of the resurrection was also the main focus of Paul and his associates. Much of their emphasis was on explaining the opportunity of salvation that all peoples could participate in if they would place their faith in Christ and adopt his righteousness. In 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, Paul addressed this issue of reconciliation. Not only were Paul and the other believers reconciled to God, the very ministry of reconciliation was handed to Paul and the other believers. Verses 18 and 19 clearly referred to Paul and his peer's having the ministry of reconciliation placed upon them. In his commentary, David Garland believed that Paul was saying that believers now had the "privilege and responsibility to share in this great divine enterprise" and that they were to "call others to be reconciled to God (1999:289)."

Certainly the power to forgive sins and to restore people in a right relationship with God has always been in the realm of the divine. Paul did not propose that he could reconcile people by his own power. Rather, he acknowledged that the responsibility to convey the *message* of reconciliation was given to reconciled believers (Barnett 1997:308-309).

In her commentary on 2 Corinthians, Linda Belleville has pointed out two specific things that God did for Paul. She emphasized that Paul was reconciled to God through Christ. Then she noted that all he was given the ministry of reconciliation for others. In this model, the

reconciled became the reconcilers. This showed a drastic contrast to the Hellenistic approach to divine intervention. In the early Greek culture, it was always humanity that had to initiate communication and restoring relationships with the divine. Much of Greek mythology has been the plight of humans trying to reach the God's or at least to get their attention. And yet, in the Christian model, it was God who has always initiated contact. He has sent agents to men to reconcile them to him where they were instead of waiting for man to do some deed that would be worthy enough to get his attention (Belleville 1996:155).

Paul embraced this theme of agency. He taught that believers were called to be more than ministers of reconciliation. Paul stated quite plainly that human believers were in fact agents for God. The believer was charged with representing God in this world. Paul made this very clear to the Corinthian Church: "We are therefore Christ's *ambassadors*, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20)."

Believers have been commissioned as ambassadors for God. However they were not "deputized" to make people feel better about themselves. Believers were called to be ambassadors of peace. The type of representatives referred to in this context were not that different from the modern concept of political ambassadorship. The words and the actions of the ambassadors would represent not just the person, but also the sending power of that agent. Ambassadors were usually sent to initiate and maintain peace. In the modern world, ambassadors have been sent from a government to another government to allow for trade and peace negotiations. The words of an ambassador have been seen on equal with that of the leader of their sent government (Garland 1999:295).

However, in the Roman Empire, the emperor would not send ambassadors to speak for him. He ruled most of the known world. He would send governors to carry out his laws. If a province or vassal kingdom desired to petition the emperor, they sent their ambassadors to Rome. These ambassadors were sent from the most wealthy and influential families. This was a necessity since the ambassador was responsible for his own costs. He would have to secure passage to Rome and obtain adequate housing for himself and his staff as they waited to be heard. This was considered part of the responsibility of belonging to a noble family. Some relished the idea of going to Rome and looked to the duty with fondness. Others despised the duty as an annoyance and did not desire such tasks. The desire of the representative to serve seemed to have no bearing on the reality of the assignment to journey. Once, assigned, they went (Garland 1999:296-297).

This verse contained the word *πρεσβεύω*. This term was a variation of the word for “old” or “elder.” It literally meant to be older or eldest. It was a term for the honorable elders of a people. The idea of a religious envoy was intended in its non-biblical use. It was also used for angels, older leaders of God like Moses and the traveling stoic teachers. It clearly meant an honorable human who spoke for God as his representative in this world. This form of the word was only used in the New Testament in this passage and Ephesians 6:20 (Bornkamm 1985: 931-935).

Anthony Bash wrote about the *πρεσβ-* word group and the understanding of ambassadorial language and setting in his monograph, Ambassadors for Christ. His argument was that biblical scholars have imposed Roman or western empire understanding of ambassadorial language rather than a Greek or eastern empire understanding (1997:1).

Rather than have people come to the emperor as in Rome, the eastern empire and the ancient Greeks would send an envoy. This ambassador was often sent on a specific mission rather than maintaining a perpetual embassy. The one sent would represent the interest of the sender rather than himself. And when the mission was complete, the ambassador would return to the sender. Bash argued that since this was written in Greek and to a Greek audience, it would have been unlikely that it would imply the Latin understanding of sending ambassadors (1997:4,14-5).

Bash also remarked that noted scholar Ernst Käsemann was surprised to find that Paul claimed to be an ambassador for Christ rather than in Christ. Paul would use the term in Christ abundantly. This clarified that Paul was acting in God's interest to compel them to be reconciled to God. This was in contrast to the ministry of Moses whom Paul would compare himself to in the next chapter.<sup>20</sup> Moses was a mediator between God and his people. Paul, however, was not called to intercede for the Corinthians. His task was to serve as a messenger of reconciliation (1997:88,101-102).

Paul saw himself and fellow believers as ambassadors. They were sent by God to go and offer peace. Ultimately, their needs would be met by their sending agent, the Holy Spirit. However, often they had to be directly involved in taking care of their physical needs as well as serve as spiritual envoys of peace. Some would be responsible for all of their physical needs. To this day there have been a myriad of "tentmaking"<sup>21</sup> missionaries and ministers. Those, who have adopted the model of Paul of going and working and ministering as they worked where they were sent. Others have been blessed to be sent by a ministry or church.

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<sup>20</sup> See 2 Cor 3:7-18

<sup>21</sup> See the first chapter for Paul's work in making tents.

Missionaries, teachers and chaplains have been sent by missionary societies, individual churches and as outreaches of various ministries for generations.

Regardless of the style of sending these agents, one thing has remained constant. That is their role as ambassadors of peace. As Paul emphasized just a few verses earlier, believers have been called to be ministers of reconciliation. As ambassadors for God, we have been called to offer the peace of the gospel to the world so that all may partake of this ministry of reconciliation.

Paul went out of his way include others in his duties and responsibilities. In 2 Corinthians he urged the Corinthians not to have God's grace to them received in vain. He urged them as God's fellow workers. The phrase *συνεπεργοῦντες δὲ καὶ* is translated in the NIV with the words "As God's Fellow Worker." There is no genitive form of God in this part of the sentence. There is one later in the sentence that describes his grace. However, that is in a separate phrase. Other translations have also added in similar references to God such as "with him."<sup>22</sup> English needs a compliment to complete this sentence for our understanding (Martin 1986:164).

The supplied compliment must therefore come from the context. Some have suggested that the attachment should be to "other teachers" (Martin 1986:164). Others have suggested that it was a reference to the Corinthians themselves as co-workers. John Chrysostom was one of the proponents of this exegesis (Hughes 1962:216).<sup>23</sup>

However, the context lent itself to translate this participle as God's fellow workers. Paul was just referring to himself as working for God as his ambassador and servant (Martin

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<sup>22</sup> See the NAS and the NRSV for example.

<sup>23</sup> Hughes also cited Theodoret, Bengel, Olshausen, Bachmann and Allo.

1986:165). Therefore the idea that he was working for God is not a stretch. Timothy should also be included as a fellow worker, since he too was listed as an author in this book and the participle was first person plural.

Not only did Paul see himself as a representative of God, he acknowledged that it extended to others. Both the references of Paul being given the ministry of reconciliation and the reference to being God's worker were both plural.<sup>24</sup> Certainly Paul did not see himself as God's only worker in this world.

### The Reception of the Representative

This next part of the chapter will deal with the role of the sacerdotalistic representative in the reception of the message. We have looked at our calling as ambassadors of peace. We will reflect on how the reception of the terms of peace is out of our hands once we present it. However, we should do everything that we can to present the terms of peace in such a way that our listeners would want to accept it.

The apostle Paul spoke of some of the hardships and the changes of his plans in the beginning chapters of 2 Corinthians. Paul took all of this in stride. He considered it a victory rather than a defeat. He proclaimed that God was leading him and his companions in a victory parade in 2 Corinthians 2:14. The concept of being led in triumph had two diverse connotations. First of all it brought to mind the image of a conquering general. And yet it also indicated a parade of lowly captives. This dual image helped to capture the overall theme of power in weakness in 2 Corinthians (Barnett 1997:150).

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<sup>24</sup> See 2 Cor 5:18, 20.

In verses 14-16, Paul invoked the sense of smell to describe the affect of Christ's work of redemption in the world. It was through the believer that the smell of Christ would be spread to the whole world. Paul proclaimed that it would be through us that the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ would spread everywhere. He added that we are the aroma of Christ in God's eyes. However, to those who would reject the message of the gospel, this aroma would be the repugnant smell of death. On the other hand to those who would choose to believe, the smell would be the sweet smell of life. It was common for formal processions to carry incense and other aromatic induced items. This was seen as a tribute to pagan deities such as Dionysus or Isis (Sampley 2000:58).

Paul used two terms in this passage for aroma and fragrance. The term *ὄσμη* has been translated as "fragrance" in the NIV. *ὄσμη* meant smell in general. It could be pleasant, putrid or plain, but it was a smell. Scents were a powerful sensation in the ancient world. Some believed that it was the scent of water that gave it its life-giving properties. In the Old Testament, the smell of sacrifice was associated with its acceptance or rejection. It has been suggested that some of the pagans believed that the aroma of sacrifice gave power to their gods. Elsewhere in Paul's letters, he associated the smell of sacrifice with its acceptance (Delling, *osme*, 1985:735-736).<sup>25</sup>

The other scented term that Paul used was the word *εὐωδία*. Contrary to *ὄσμη*, this word for "aroma" was used to describe scents that were positively received. This word was also used to describe the sweet and pleasant smell of sacrifice (Stumpff 1985:285).

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<sup>25</sup> See Eph 5:2 and Phil 4:18.

Paul used these terms for the acceptance or refusal of sacrifice. Its aroma was a revelation of the acceptance or denial of the gospel of Christ by believers. Therefore it was not the messenger who was perceived in the smelling, but the acceptance of the message. For those who accepted the sacrifice of Christ to cover their sins the aroma was pleasant for they had done what was required to please God. On the other hand, those who have rejected Christ have also rejected his sacrifice and they have not met the required sacrifice to please God. Therefore the smell of death was their rejection by God by rejecting the sacrifice of Christ. By doing this, they have chosen spiritual death over spiritual life.

The believers who would be so bold as to spread the message of the sacrifice of Christ, also spread the potential of the sweet fragrance of an accepted sacrifice. This smell would be one that would be sufficient to please God. In this colorful passage, there is one small word in verse fourteen that amplifies the plenipotentiary task of Paul and other believers. That small word is *διὰ*, which is translated in the NIV as “through.” When this preposition is associated with a genitive noun, it is translated as: “by means of,” “with,” or “through.” The genitive noun is the plural pronoun *ἡμῶν* meaning “our (Oepke, *dia*, 1985:149-150).” William Baker noted that Paul’s use of “through us” was as if the gospel was going out “through the very pores of their lives.” He highlighted that work of believers living the gospel and not just telling it was what caused this pleasant odor (1999:122). Clearly Paul was stating that the work of spreading the gospel was happening through and because of faithful believers.

The mission of spreading the gospel is done through the messenger. The work of salvation has already been done by the sacrifice of Christ. However, He also has overseen the spreading of the message of salvation. He has empowered believers to spread the word. He has led

people to be at the right place and at the right time to present the good news. He has prepared the hearer to listen and receive the message. And yet, God has chosen to work through a human agent to offer reconciliation to those who would believe.

Paul was overwhelmed by the responsibility of such a bold assignment. In verse sixteen he asked the question: “and who is equal to such a task?” Paul answered his own question in 3:4-6. Paul humbly acknowledged that he and other believers were capable of carrying out the work that God called them to perform. He knew that they were gifted in a variety of areas. However, it was the Holy Spirit that made them good enough to be Christ’s voice, feet, and presence in this world.

Emphasis on the representative nature of Paul and his message from God to the readers was also made in this paragraph. Paul accentuated the genuine nature of his message by reminding the readers that they did not “peddle for profit” the word of God, unlike other teachers of the day. Paul used an unusual word to describe activities of the many. The word *καπηλεύω* insinuated business practices that were questionable. In its only New Testament usage, Paul used a word that was used to describe salesmen who would get their patrons drunk or sell them less than standard goods for a profit. This was a despicable action from Paul was trying to distance himself by showing a contrast (Martin 1986:49).

Instead of deceiving people for personal gain, Paul insisted that he and his companions spoke with sincerity. He made this declaration with the term *εἰλικρίνεια*. According to F. Büchsel’s entry in The Theological Wordbook of the New Testament, this word literally meant to be tested by sunlight (1985:206). Paul used this word earlier in the first chapter of the letter. Paul emphasized his sincerity in being someone who was sent by God in the twelfth verse.

Ralph Martin suggested that Paul chose this word to highlight that he was tested and proved to be genuine by God (1986:20).

In 2 Corinthians 2:17, he stated that they spoke with a sincerity as men sent from God. Paul and his comrade's were sincere in their presentation of the gospel. Paul made the very bold statement that they were men sent from God. This was a clear reference to the plenipotentiary task and authority of Paul.

Linda Belleville, in her commentary on 2 Corinthians, liked this statement to the "prophets of old" who received their commission straight from God the father. However, Paul's commission was even more powerful. He also spoke as one who was in Christ. This strong sacerdotal imagery added to the validity of the purity and sincerity of Paul's work among the Corinthians (1996:85).

The actions and words of Paul and his companions were not only done in the name of God and in Christ. They were also done before God. Ultimately, Paul would be accountable for what he said and did in his role as an agent sent by God. Humans would judge him whether or not to accept his message. In the end, it was only the approval of God as his agent that would really matter to Paul (Kruse 1989:88).

Paul understood his role as God's mouthpiece and goodwill ambassador to the world (Crafton 1991:63). He knew that by being sent by God he would be responsible to convey God's message of hope to the people. He was also responsible to conveying it in a way that people would listen. However, he was not willing to compromise on the message for the sake of the reception.

In spite of attacks against his style and authority, the apostle Paul remained confident in his abilities and authority. In 2 Corinthians 3:4-6, he answered his rhetorical question in 2:16,

"and who is equal to such a task?" Paul and his companions were equal to such a task. Paul makes this proclamation as a statement of faith and not merely a self-acknowledgement. He showed confidence in the abilities of himself and of himself. The underlying reason for such faith was that his competency was rooted in God. He boldly proclaimed that God would make him and his cohorts competent enough for the task. Paul knew this because it was God who sent him and empowered him (Barnett 1997:173-174).

By the end of the letter Paul was firmly rebuking the Corinthian church. Paul ended the letter with a stern warning in the thirteenth chapter. Throughout both letters, as well as his previous visit, plenty of evidence was given to support his apostleship and divine plenipotentiary call. In spite of this, there were still those who questioned Paul's authority. The upcoming visit that he was planning did not appear to be enjoyable to neither Paul nor the church. He gave a stern warning against the guilty that they would not be spared. In verse three, he mentioned that he was prepared to show the proof that Christ was speaking through him. They kept asking for proof that Christ was speaking through him. His rebuking was going to serve as his final evidence of his authority in representing Christ (Plummer 1912:221-222 and Martin 1986:470-475).

Paul was being snubbed as an ineffectual and powerless teacher. He was not like the vibrant speakers of Corinth who drew great crowds with their oratory. They commanded wonderful prizes for their gifts. They graciously accepted the things that the people lavished on them. They considered this evidence of their power. Paul on the other hand offered different evidence. When he would arrive for his third visit, the people would see his power. It would not be the power of persuasion, but the power of the Spirit. It would be the power of the gospel of Christ. For the redeemed it would be delightful. For the scoffers, it would be terrible

to behold. Therefore, Paul embraced their test and was willing to show that his authority was truly from God (Martin 1986:473).

The Apostle Paul had confidence in who he was and in what he was called to do. He did not seem to enjoy asserting his authority in such a stern tone. However, it was another piece of clear evidence of the authority of Paul to represent God in this world. The reality of his calling to represent God would be made clear by those who would accept the message. To those who would not receive good news of Christ, he would not be accepted. In the end, Paul's power as a representative of Christ and minister of reconciliation was tied in with their acceptance or denial of Christ. If they rejected Christ it would not matter if they rejected Paul as well.

#### The High Profile of Representatives

This last part of the chapter will address the profile of the sacerdotal agent. As we have seen ambassadors represent more than just themselves, they represent their sending power. Being on display has advantages when we offer ourselves as examples of God's servants. However, setting yourself apart can also make you an easier target. Messengers are more likely to be scrutinized than those who keep to themselves.

The Apostle Paul took the responsibility of being an apostle very seriously. He knew that his actions and the actions of his peers represented more than themselves. They represented the entire church as well as God. With this in mind, Paul constantly reminded the church that their actions were being observed as they were on display to the world.

In the fourth chapter of the first letter, Paul made a reference to being put on display. In verse nine, he stated how he felt like the other apostles as well as himself were being paraded at the end of a procession. It was those who were doomed to die at the hand of gladiators and

while beasts that were at the end of the procession. He expressed the feeling that all of creation was witnessing this spectacle.

This verse followed a proclamation on how the Corinthians were rich in verse eight. He was stating how they had all they ever wanted and they were in fact like kings. Then he stated how he wished they really were kings and that Paul and his companions would be kings ruling with them. Instead Paul pictured them as being the opposite of kings. He described captive and condemned men sent to die at a public display.

King and conquering heroes would find themselves at the front of the procession. The lowliest, the condemned would be at the end. Those at the end would be considered the spoils of war or booty of the conqueror who was leading the procession (Fee 1987:174).

Leon Morris found special meaning in the small word "put." He noted how Paul and the other apostles were put at the end by God. This would stress how this was their position by divine decree. The conqueror may have displayed them, but they were only there because God had sent them there (1985:77)

Such processions often came before the Roman circus. These brutal events were popular forms of public executions. Those at the end of the processions would be executed either by gladiators or by wild beasts. In either case, the odds were stacked against them since they were doomed to die. To add insult to injury, these circuses were offered to amuse the crowd as much as it was intended to execute their prisoners. They became part of the show. Paul used the term spectacle to refer to how he and his fellow apostles felt. Paul used the word *θέατρον*. Luke used the same word in the nineteenth chapter of the book of Acts.<sup>26</sup> During the Riot in

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<sup>26</sup> See verses 29 and 31.

Ephesus, two of Paul's companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, were seized and brought to the theatre to be punished for preaching the gospel and affecting the idolatry trade. Paul used the same word for spectacle as Luke used for theater. In fact, Paul was stating that they were being led to their demise for the theater or amusement of the crowd. He added that this was not just being done in the presence of the crowd. The whole of creation including the angels were witnesses to this humiliation (Kistemaker 1993:140).

Paul also knew the benefits of living a life on display. He offered himself and his faith as a model to the Corinthian believers. He urged them in 1 Corinthians 4:16 to imitate him. Following his reference to him being like a spiritual father to them, he called on them to imitate him as child would imitate their own father.<sup>27</sup> A son would watch and learn a trade from their father. The father would show his talent and teach while demonstrating. As a spiritual father, Paul was imparting his trade of making disciples to his spiritual sons and daughters (Blomberg 1995:91).

Paul revisited this idea in 1 Corinthians 11:1. While summarizing his instructions on not causing others to stumble by abstaining from things that are allowed, Paul offered himself as an example again. He added in this verse that he was himself imitating Christ. Paul was not claiming the perfection of Christ, but he could claim that he was striving for Christ-like perfection. Therefore, he could offer himself as a positive example to follow (Blomberg 1995:204-205).

In his second letter, Paul continued to offer himself as an example. In the fourth verse of the opening chapter, he stated that God had comforted him in his times of trials so he could

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<sup>27</sup> The reference to Paul being like a spiritual father will be studied in further detail in the fourth chapter.

comfort others in their trials. In his commentary, Paul Barnett, identified the wording of the God who comforts as belonging to a hymn. He cited the praise of the God who forgives, redeems and satisfies in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.<sup>28</sup> Barnett also noted a rough chiasmic form in the verse. References to being comforted by God bracket the references to sufferings of Paul and then the Corinthians. Although Paul's affliction would become a main theme in this second letter, at this point of the letter, Paul offered it as a comfort (1997:71-73). A. Plummer saw this comfort as the divine purpose so that it could be passed on as a comfort to others (1912:26). Colin Kruse noted that Paul received comfort by being delivered out of the affliction. Paul also received comfort in encouraging and sharing the affliction with others (1989:60-61).

Finally, Paul offered his life in the spotlight as a testimony to defend his apostleship. In verse twelve of the same chapter, Paul began his apology of his ministry. He claimed that his life and work would stand the scrutiny that it was under. He attested quite firmly, that he had conducted his work for the glory of God alone. It is with this testimony that Paul boasted a clear conscience. No matter what men would say, he knew in his conscience that he did what he could to please God and not man (Martin 1986:19-20).

The Apostle Paul understood his assignment to be one of Christ's ambassadors. His message was the resurrection of Christ and his reconciliation. He knew that not all would accept this message. However, his task was simply to convey the message the best he could where God would lead him. He understood that every action and word that he would utter would represent more than himself. He was a witness and example of Christ in everything he did. Therefore, Paul accepted that challenge to be a good ambassador by imitating Christ

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<sup>28</sup> See verses 2-5.

himself. Because of this, he could with a clear conscious offer up his own example for other believers to follow. Leon Morris wondered if modern preachers could make the same statements that Paul made. He wondered if we could ask our parishioners to follow us as we follow Christ (1989:80-81).

As today's church attempts to be relevant in our communities and effective in sharing the gospel, we need to take Leon Morris' observation to heart. As believer's we are called to represent God in this world. As we have seen in this chapter, the preeminent message that God wishes to convey through us is the offer of salvation in Christ. After studying the Corinthian letters, I am convinced that the more the believer shows God's presence, love and power in his actions as well as his words, then the more effective the believer will be in communicating that message. I think that Morris' comment applies to pastors and church leaders, but also to the whole church.

### **3. THE ALLOTMENT OF SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT TO SACERDOTAL AGENTS**

My first chapter dealt with the issues of calling and appointment of human agents to represent God in this world. We discussed how Paul was called to represent God as an apostle and how all believers were called by God to represent Him. The second chapter examined the ambassadorial role of believers to proclaim the gospel to the world. It is because of this evangelistic and ambassadorial role that believers have been called to represent God in this world.

This chapter builds on the foundation established in the first two chapters. The progression of this paper has been to establish the reality of humans called by God to represent him (chapter one). The next step was to identify the reason for the calling, which is to proclaim the gospel (chapter two). This third step will discuss the assistance given to God's representatives in carrying out their mission of spreading the gospel. In particular this chapter will discuss the equipping of the agents with spiritual gifts. The gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to enable the church to proclaim the works of Christ and the offer of peace with God.

This chapter will analyze the empowerment of believers by the Holy Spirit through the spiritual gifts. The purpose of this empowerment is to aid the believer in representing God in this world by giving supernatural gifts as well as a reminder of the presence of God. The theme of diversity in unity that was introduced in the first chapter in the discussion on the body of Christ will be further addressed in light of the various ways that believers are given spiritual abilities or *gifts* to do the task of ministry. Finally, the various gifts will be reviewed as tools to spread the gospel. This study on the spiritual gifts will be seen in light of the overall study of human agents representing God in this world. Although various gifts will be studied, the

reason for inclusion of this chapter is not a specific gift; rather it is the empowerment and endorsement of the representative so that believer can proclaim the gospel with more efficiency.

### The Purpose of Allotting the Gifts

Although this paper is about what the Corinthian letters say about human agents representing God in this world, the book of Acts offers some insight to the nature of the spiritual empowerment and the task representing God in this world by proclaiming his message.<sup>29</sup> Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he comforted his disciples by proclaiming that the Holy Spirit would come and give them power.<sup>30</sup> In that same sentence Jesus linked the coming of the Holy Spirit with a reminder to his followers that they were to carry his message to the people all over the world. In his commentary on the book of Acts, Dennis Gaertner stated: “Without the Spirit there could be no witness for Jesus. Yet without the focus of witnessing for Jesus the power of the Spirit has no purpose. Wherever disciples of Jesus become distracted from their witness for him the power is drained away (1995:57).”

The connection of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to the mission of believers to proclaim the gospel was also observed by Wolfhart Pannenberg. In the third volume of his Systematic Theology, he stated:

Acts depicts Pentecost as the basis of the church’s existence, yet is so not merely as an act of collective enthusiasm but as the starting point of proclamation of the resurrection of the Crucified and of his installation to a position of eschatological power as Son of God and Kyrios. Corresponding to the eschatological character of this event on the side of believers is the assurance that in them the outpouring of the Spirit that is

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<sup>29</sup> Although the same Holy Spirit was at work in the book Acts and in the Corinthian letters, the specific way that believers were enabled was not necessarily the same (Gaertner 1995:70).

<sup>30</sup> See Acts 1:8.

promised for the eschatological consummation has occurred already and given them power to proclaim the gospel of the resurrection of the Crucified as God's act of deliverance for his people and for all humanity (1998:27-28).

David Dorman also saw the purpose of the spiritual gifts tied with representing God in this world as his witnesses in his article "The Purpose of Empowerment in the Christian Life." He saw that the call of being Christ's witness was a result of "receiving power" from the Holy Spirit. The spiritual gifts were given to show the immediacy of God in the life of the believer in order to show the world the presence of God (1985:148-149).

Paul referred to the blessings of the Corinthians in the beginning of his letter. In 1 Corinthians 1:4, Paul was thankful because of the grace given to them. In the next verse he stated that they had been enriched in every way in the word and in knowledge. The verb used for enriched was *πλουτίζω*. It was not a common word in the New Testament. The only other occurrences were in 2 Corinthians 6:10 and 9:11, where it was translated as making rich and made rich respectively. This verb came from the noun *πλοῦτος* (wealth or riches), which was much more commonly used. Originally its morpheme meant to flow or to fill. It carried with it the understanding of being filled with goods, to be well to do and eventually to be rich or, in its variant *πλουτίζω*, to make rich. These riches could be either physical or spiritual (Hauck 1985:873-876).

In context with this passage this word clearly had spiritual intentions. It was also meant as a positive enrichment. In 1 Corinthians 4:8 Paul used another variant of this verb. He proclaimed that they, the Corinthians, already had all that they wanted. He proclaimed that they had already become rich. In this usage of the word, Paul used a sarcastic tone to convey how they really were not spiritually rich. He was highlighting their lack of spiritual maturity.

However, in 1:5 Paul gave a genuine proclamation on how God had indeed made them rich in word and in knowledge (Blomberg 1995:38).

Paul also introduced two other images that were later found all through the Corinthian texts. These words were *λόγος* and *γνώσις*. These were both key spiritual concepts to the Hellenistic world. Paul's reference to Christ enriching people in these two key elements was probably not a coincidence. He was showing them that they were becoming rich in what really mattered. That, of course, was the spiritual graces of the word and of knowledge (Fee 1987:39).

### Unity and Diversity of Gifts in 1 Corinthians Chapter Twelve

As we dig through the Corinthian text to see what it tells us about human agents representing God in this world, we stop for a moment at the famous twelfth chapter of the first letter. We have looked generally at the way that Paul wrote on the empowerment of believers so they could represent God in this world. In the twelfth chapter, Paul spent more time detailing the various gifts and reminded his readers that these spiritual gifts were given in diverse forms and diverse numbers to a diverse people with diverse roles in representing God in this world. However, they were also given by the same Holy Spirit to the benefit of the same church who was called to fulfill the same mission of representing God in this world.

Paul's greatest attention to the allotment and nature of spiritual gifts was seen in the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians. The majority of the chapter was devoted to this subject. This chapter is part of a multi-chapter theme concerning the major issues of worship and ecclesiastical organization.

Paul began the chapter by stating that he would deal with the issue, because he did not want the Corinthian believers to be ignorant about this crucial issue. This phrase was common in Paul's writings. He used it in Romans 1:13, 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2 Corinthians 1:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:13 as well as here in 1 Corinthians 12:1. In their commentary on 1 Corinthians, Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer noted that this was a formula by Paul to signify that an important subject was being introduced (1994:259). Paul's use of the term could also have implied that there were believers who were not understanding why the spiritual gifts were given and needed to be educated (Oster 1995:277-278).

Glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, was given special attention in this section. Certainly Paul referred to several types of gifts, and it was not implied that this list was to be seen as a complete list of the only gifts of the Holy Spirit (Fee 1987:585). However, the gift of tongues was given additional emphasis. It has been suggested that the Corinthian church was having difficulty keeping a balance on these gifts. Some wanted to elevate certain gifts and the recipients and de-value other gifts and recipients. Paul knew that he needed to reinforce the purpose and nature of the gifts (Carson 1987:26).

Glossolalia was seen in the pagan world of the Greeks. After seeing a snake, some claimed to be swept up in an emotional unintelligible tongue. The origin of these Pythonic spirits was considered to be the god Apollo. Whereas, the concept of unintelligible speech during an emotional spiritual moment was not unheard of in Corinthian society, there is no evidence that Paul was trying to imply that the New Testament gift of glossolalia was in any way related to the tongues of the pagans (Carson 1987:25).

Paul emphasized the variety of gifts and, at the same time, he acknowledged unity in the giver and in the purpose of the gifts. Verses four to six have a structure of parallelism that

highlighted the theme of diversity in unity. Each sentence contained a genitive plural noun to point out diversity and a singular nominative to denote the unity of the origin of each gift. He stated that there were different types of gifts, service and working. However, it was all from the same Spirit, Lord and God.<sup>31</sup>

There are different kinds of *gifts*, but the same *Spirit*.  
There are different kinds of *service*, but the same *Lord*.  
There are different kinds of *working*, but the same *God* works all of them in all men.

Paul used the term *χάρισμα* to describe these gifts. This verbal noun was not very common and was of later origin. It came from the verb *χαρίζομαι* (to give freely) which itself was derived as *χάρις* (grace), put into action. It was used in one LXX manuscript for □□□□□ or love in Psalm 32:21. The only non-Pauline reference in the New Testament was in

1 Peter 4:10, where Peter charged his readers to use whatever gift they had to serve others and to faithfully administer God's grace. All of the Pauline usages of the word implied that the origin of these gifts were the Holy Spirit. Paul reminded his protégé, Timothy, to use his gift.<sup>32</sup> The word was used in the opening sections of Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians. Paul desired to see the Roman church to impart spiritual gifts to them (1:11). He reminded the Corinthian church that they did not lack any spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 1:7) and to join Paul and his companions in a prayer of thanksgiving for the *gracious favor granted* which used this same word, *χάρισμα* (2 Corinthians 1:11). It was used throughout the Romans and 1 Corinthians<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The reference to the Spirit, Lord and God could also be a reinforcement of the unity of God in the trinity (Kistemaker 1993:417).

<sup>32</sup> See 1 Tim 4:14 and 2 Tim 1:6.

<sup>33</sup> See Rom 5:15, 16; 6:23; 11:29 and 12:6 and 1 Cor 7:17; 12:4, 9, 28, 30-31.

to denote supernatural abilities given by the Holy Spirit to empower believers to do the work of the Lord (Conzelmann 1985:1306).

The second genitive noun in the 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 parallel was *διακονία* or service. This word was derived from the verb *διακονέω*, which meant “to serve” and was related to the title *διάκονος* or servant. This word was not found in the LXX but was used frequently throughout Acts and the Epistles. The root word originally meant “to wait on tables,” “to take care of physical needs” and “to perform the lowest form of labor.” However, in the New Testament this term was seen as acts of care and love.<sup>34</sup> This word was seen as compassion or grace in physical action (Beyer, *diakoneo*, 1985:154).<sup>35</sup>

The final genitive noun in the parallel patterned phrase was *ἐνέργημα*, which the NIV translated as “working.” This noun was derived from the verb *ἐνεργέω*, which was often translated as “to act” or “to be at work.” These terms were used in the Hellenistic world to describe the actions of either cosmic or physical beings. However, in the LXX and New Testament it generally was used to describe the actions of spiritual forces, both divine and demonic. The form of the word that Paul used, *ἐνέργημα* was not very common. This verse and verse ten in the same chapter were the only occurrences of this word (Bertram, *ergon*, 1985:254-525).

The pattern of verses four to six emphasized two things. First and foremost, it highlighted an apparent theme of unity. All of the gifts were from the same source, the Holy Spirit. The second and subtler feature was that these gifts or abilities were also given with service and

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<sup>34</sup> See Luke 10:40; Acts 6:1, 4; 11:29-30; Rom 11:13; 12:4; 15:31; 1 Cor 12:28; 16:5; 2 Cor 3:7ff; 4:1; 5:18-19; 8:1ff; Col 4:17; 2 Tim 4:5, 11; Heb 1:14 and Rev 2:19.

<sup>35</sup> See notes on “*δίακονος*” in first chapter of this paper under the heading The Calling of Believers.

working. These were action words. The gift receiver needed to act upon his gift. He needed to serve with his gift.

Paul clarified the purpose of the giving of the gifts in verse seven. They were given to everyone. They were given for the common good. They were also given at the discretion of the Holy Spirit. Having firmly established the unity of the gifts, Paul now emphasized the diversity of the manifestations in each believer (Kistemaker 1993:420).

The word for manifestation, *φανερώσις*, was very rare in scripture. The only other occurrence was in 2 Corinthians 4:2. In that reference, Paul spoke of setting forth the truth or illuminating the truth of God's word rather than distorting it as others were doing. This word had a general understanding of revelation or shining through what it was. It could also mean “appearance” (Bultmann, *phaino*, 1985:1245).

These appearances or shining through of the spirit in each individual was seen in a variety of ways. The purpose for these manifestations or gifts was not primarily for personal edification. To the contrary, the purpose for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit was to benefit the common good of believers (Fee 1987:588-589).

“Common good” could have meant the Corinthian community, the church at large or world in general. By reading this verse in its context, the church would be the likeliest candidate. This would help to highlight once again the recurring theme of unity in diversity (Mare 1976:262).

## The Specific Gifts of the Spirit

There were a variety of spiritual gifts mentioned by Paul. By looking at them in detail, we can better understand how they were used to assist the receivers in representing God in this world.

Nine specific gifts were listed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. He did not indicate that this list should be seen as a complete list. Other lists of spiritual gifts and titles were seen in Paul's writings. Later in the chapter Paul focused on some of the same gifts and included a few more (28). Similar passages were found in Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:11.

The list of gifts have varied in their order in all of these scriptures. Attempts have been made to categorize the nine found in verses eight to ten. Kistemaker's threefold outline was intriguing:

1. Pedagogical: wisdom and knowledge
2. Supernatural: faith, healings and miracles
3. Communicative: prophecy, discernment, tongues and interpretation of tongues

All nine of these gifts were attributed as having their origin from the Holy Spirit. Each individual gift was noted as being given, through or by the very same Holy Spirit. This was added to add to the unity in diversity theme. Also, this helped to remind the readers that the gifts were from the Lord and not from man (Kistemaker 1993:420-421).

The first gift that Paul listed was the message of wisdom. This gift was not found in any other list of spiritual gifts. However, the role of the message of wisdom was already seen in the first part of the letter. In 1:17-2:16, Paul contrasted the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of the cross. He emphasized that the wisdom of the gospel was rooted in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. This was seen as foolish to the world, but was, in fact, the source of redemption (Fee 1987:591-592). The wisdom that Paul held onto was not the

wisdom of the world, but the wisdom of the spirit of God. Paul used this spiritual wisdom, rather than worldly and rhetorical wisdom to proclaim the gospel to the Corinthians (Barrett 1993:49,74).

The words used for the message of wisdom were common words. *Λόγος* and *σοφία* were also important philosophical and theological words in the Greek culture. The word *σοφία* was originally used to designate a skill, then it stretched out to include intellectual knowledge. Finally it was used to define the mastery of the skill rather than the skill itself. Eventually *σοφία* was seen as a divine attribute. The early Greeks saw this attribute being bestowed on mortals as a divine gift (Wilkins 1985:1056).

The second gift on the list also had deep theological and philosophical meaning to the Greek world. The noun *γνώσις* and its verb form *γινώσκω* were used to describe intelligent comprehension. It emphasized understanding and not simply what was perceived by the senses. It was also tied in with the Greek concept of reality. To know the *real* would be to fully comprehend. Likewise, the key to grasping the true reality was first to understand it as it is and not just as it is perceived (Bultmann, *ginosko*, 1985:119).

Once again Paul used the term *λόγος* in combination with his favorite philosophical terms. However, unlike words of wisdom, words of knowledge occur again in other lists of spiritual gifts. These references were limited to 1 Corinthians.<sup>36</sup> The nature of the gift has been in some dispute. Some have contended that this is a gift of understanding what God has already revealed to us in scripture (Bittlinger 1967:30). Others have attested to a special knowledge that could only come from the Spirit (Dunn, *Jesus*, 1975:221). Paul did not specify

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<sup>36</sup> See 1 Cor 13:2, 8; and 14:6.

the exact role of this gift. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Gordon Fee suggested that these words of knowledge and the earlier mentioned words of wisdom were probably mentioned together and in a similar pattern to suggest a parallel. Furthermore, Fee considered its position in a later list of this letter. It was situated between prophecy and tongues in 13:8 and then between revelation and prophesy in 14:6. To Fee this suggested that both words of wisdom and of knowledge were somehow forms of spiritual utterances. However, the exact details of how words of knowledge and wisdom functioned as gifts and their relationship with each other, would remain hidden to modern scholars (1987:592-593).

Paul's list of gifts moved on to the supernatural gifts. He listed the gift of faith. Paul considered faith as a major component that led to salvation. This gift was revisited in verse two of the next chapter. It was referred to as the type that could move mountains. This type of faith was the type that would work miracles (Fee 1987:593-594).

The Greek word for faith, *πίστις*, was seen as trustworthy or reliable in the Classical period. This word was used in pledging oaths and asserting confidence in what was to come to pass. However, it was not really a religious word. It was used in religious writings, but it did not have the same concept of trusting in a personal relationship with God as it did in the Judeo-Christian world. To the Jews, faith was seen more in a corporate sense than as a personal relationship. Faith was not only belief that someone was going to do something or that their words were trustworthy, it also implied that obedience would be required. In Paul's writing, faith in the salvation of humanity by Christ was emphasized. He also acknowledged that not every person has the same measure of faith (Bultmann, *pisteuo*, 1985: 849-857).

Gifts of healing were then listed. This gift has been easy to understand. All through the New Testament miracles of healing took place. This was a pretty straightforward reference to

a spiritual gift. There was a general expectation that this gift would be given. The manifestation of this gift was bestowed on the healer himself and not the one who was healed. Since this gift was referred to in the plural tense, it has been suggested that each specific healing was a unique gift (Fee 1987:594).

The concept of spiritually originated healing was an old one. Paul used the term, *ἴαμα*, to mention this miraculous gift in the list. However, most early references to physical ailments were wounds in battle. Although both the early Egyptians and Greeks began impressive studies into health and medicine, physical ailments were mostly seen as punishments from the gods. Whereas, the Hebrew people did see a connection of sickness with sin, they also understood the virtues of cleanliness. There were examples of sickness being attributed to demonic powers or retribution to sin. However, the New Testament also portrayed some people as simply being sick. Healing was common occurrence by Jesus and his disciples and it continued to be common with the early church (Oepke, *iaomai*, 1985:344-348).

Similar to the gifts of healing were the miraculous powers. Gifts of healing were considered a part of miraculous powers. Therefore, this reference was intended to cover all non-healing miracles. Each occurrence was in itself a special gift. This type of gift was found in the list in verses 28-30 of the same chapter. Generally speaking, this was a broad term that emphasized God's power working through a human agent (Fee 1987:594).

Paul used two words to describe the gifts of miraculous powers, *ἐνέργημα δύναμις*. These words literally meant workings of powers. Paul used the term workings in verse six of this chapter as he prepared to talk about the different kinds of workings of God. Carson noted the importance of the plurals of each word. He suggested that it implied diversity and the

fluidity of the gift. Miracles could mean a variety of things and they even overlapped into some of the other gifts mentioned in this text (1987:40).

The word for work or workings was the common term *ἐνέργημα*. It was used to describe a variety of works, physical or social and ethical tasks. It was an active word that could also mean the result of labor. It was important in the LXX to describe service done for spiritual and ethical purposes. It was used to describe both labors of the divine and of humanity. Certain works were even regarded as divinely commissioned acts. In the New Testament this word also conveyed the power of God working through human individuals.<sup>37</sup> In a spiritual context, God was seen as the originator of this work (Bertram, *ergon*, 1985:251-255).

The Greek word *δύναμις* was used to describe being capable or able in a general way. It also began to mean the attitude of the one who performed an action as well to describe the action of doing. For the Greeks, this was a cosmic term. Numbers were attributed force and Plato referred to this term as "the absolute mark of being." The word became synonymous with the divine force and with the force of nature. Healings and miracles that were attributed to having a divine origin were called acts of power. The LXX maintained the divine concept of the word. However, its use was focused on the power and majesty of God, rather than nature and magic. It was even used to describe God as majestic and powerful. The term was used to describe God as the Lord of Hosts. The power that Jesus displayed was seen as confirmation of his being the messiah. He and his disciples relied on the power of God. Ultimately this power was seen as the agent of the resurrection, the paramount event of Christology. Eventually, the power of God was seen in the life of the apostles and believers in the New

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<sup>37</sup> Bertram cited Gal 2:8 and 3:5 as examples.

Testament. The power of God became available to those whose faith was placed in him (Grundmann 1985:186-191).

Paul's list of spiritual gifts then focused on the spoken gifts. Prophecy was found all throughout the ancient world. However, unlike the prophesies of the pagans, the Judeo-Christian prophets were not merely predictors or future seers. Paul used the term *προφητεία*, which was a common term for prophecy. The root word originally meant either one who proclaims or one who predicts. Eventually it meant one who declared the divine will. The oracles and prophecies of the ancient Greeks tended to be riddled in mystery and ecstasy (Krämer 1985:952-953).

The role of the prophets in scripture was much more straightforward. They simply spoke the word or words that God gave them.<sup>38</sup> Only on rare occasions would He have them perform mysterious or frenzied acts.<sup>39</sup> The people with this gift maintain control of themselves rather than enter an ecstatic trance like the pagan prophets did. This gift was spirit led and was spontaneous. However, it was intelligible to both the speaker and the listeners. It was delivered in an orderly manner, was used to encourage the church and would come to pass. There was an understanding that the people in the day of Paul believed that they lived in the time that the prophet Joel had spoken of in 2:28-30 of his book. Potentially, this gift could have been given to all. Therefore, there was a distinction between someone who was called to be a prophet and someone who had been given a prophecy (Fee 1987:595).

The next gift that was mentioned was the gift of distinguishing between spirits, or as it has sometimes been referred to, discernment. There has been some debate as to what kind of

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<sup>38</sup> See Deut 18:14-22.

<sup>39</sup> The Prophet Jeremiah would be an exception.

spiritual discernment that Paul was mentioning. 1 John 4:1 referred to testing types of spirits to see whether they originated from God or not. However, Paul taught that believers were to weigh carefully between words of two or more prophets in 1 Corinthians 14:29-32. Since this gift is sandwiched in between vocal gifts and is just two chapters ahead of the weighing between words of prophecies, it is likely this gift is the one referred to in chapter fourteen. In that reference, Paul was emphasizing the order and unity of the gifts to edify the body, much as he taught about the gifts in the twelfth chapter as well. However, even if discerning words of prophecy was foremost on his mind, this gift could still be understood to mean both varieties of discernment (Fee 1987:596).

Paul's word for discernment, *διάκρισις*, was a derivative of the word *κρίνω*, or to judge. It was used in the LXX to define legal judgment and freedom for the oppressed. However, it took a more personal and spiritual role in the New Testament. The specific term that Paul used, *διάκρισις*, was also used to describe separation, appraisal or even distinction in the Greek language. It was used in Romans 14:1 to encourage believers to accept someone without judging them. It was also used in Hebrews 5:14 which spoke about the mature person being able to distinguish from good and evil (Büchsel, *krino*, 1985:469,474).

The next gift that Paul tackled was one that appeared to be a favorite among the Corinthians, tongues or glossolalia. This gift was also controversial. This gift was reviewed earlier in this chapter. Paul's understanding of tongues was different than the Pythonic trances of the pagans. True tongues originated from the Holy Spirit and not from emotion ecstasy. This manifestation was unintelligible to both the speakers and the hearers. This was seen as speech directed to God and spoke of His mysteries. There has been some debate on the nature

of tongues. Were these occurrences of tongues real languages as in the Pentecost miracle of Acts 2? Were they non-earthly languages or angelic utterances that seem to be alluded to in 13:1? Perhaps the answer came in chapter fourteen. Until the tongue is translated, they are words of gibberish to the speaker and the hearer. It only has meaning to the believer and to the church if it has been translated (Fee 1987:597-598).

The word *γλῶσσα* literally meant the physical organ of the tongue in its original use. Over time it also meant speech or language. Eventually it would mean a strange or obscure expression. This term was used throughout the New Testament. It usually meant the physical tongue. However, it was also used figuratively for speech and for the need of purity of speech. Pentecost showed tongues of fire to show the coming of the Holy Spirit. It was also at that event that the speaking in foreign utterance, tongues in this context, appeared in scripture (Behm, *glossa*, 1985:123-124).

The last gift in Paul's list was interpretation of tongues. This implied translating the previously spoken tongue. This gift went hand in hand with the previously mentioned gift of speaking in tongues. Much like tongues or prophecy, the words of interpretation were also spirit-inspired utterances. The words of interpretation could be given to the speaker of tongues or to one or more of the hearers (Fee 1987:598-599).

The word *ἑρμηνεία* meant more than just the interpretation of tongues. It meant to explain, expound and to translate. The Greeks used the term to describe the interpretation of various forms of art. The interpretation of the art became an art unto itself. It was used in the LXX to explain dreams and visions. It was not simply saying what someone else said or did. It was understanding it and building upon it. It was knowing what they did or said in their

being. The words of tongues were not edifying until they were breathed life by interpretation (Behm, *hermeneuo*, 1985:256-257).

Verse eleven summarized the unity of purpose of the gifts. It also reminded the reader of origin and control of the gifts. In the end, the spiritual gifts were not merely a gift from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit also maintained control in its allotment. The gifts were given to believers, but they still belonged to the Holy Spirit. In the debate on the “charismatic” gifts over the centuries, one thing would be clear. These gifts would belong to the Holy Spirit as he saw fit (Fee 1987:599-600).

Later in the twelfth chapter, Paul made a similar list of spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit. Paul was nurturing the theme of unity in diversity in the Holy Spirit by applying the image of the body.<sup>40</sup> He made the point that just as there were many parts to a physical body, so there were many parts in the spiritual body of Christ. He listed several spiritual appointments that overlapped with his list of gifts in verses eight to ten. Verse twenty-eight cataloged the roles and titles of: apostle, prophet, teacher, worker of miracles, healer, helper, administrator and speaker of tongues. The following two verses highlighted the differences and vitality of each role. He emphasized that not all have the same gifts or functions. In pointing out that no one was "omni-competent," Nigel Watson noted in his commentary how Paul contrasted compelling and spectacular gifts side by side with seemingly mundane gifts. Therefore, all gifts, no matter how uncommon or compelling they may or may not be, were from the Holy Spirit (1992:137).

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<sup>40</sup> This was covered in greater detail in chapter two of this paper.

The office of the apostle was covered in greater detail in the first chapter of this paper. Likewise the roles and gifts of prophets, workers of miracles, healings and kinds of tongues were highlighted in this chapter. The appointment of teachers will be studied in the fourth and final chapter of this paper. Therefore, helps and administration will be clarified in the remainder of this chapter.

Paul's word for "helps" was *ἀντίλημψις*. This was not a common word. This was the only time it appeared in the New Testament. It was the noun form of the verb *ἀντιλημβάνομαι*. This term originally meant to take up or to grasp. Over time it began to mean importing as well as helping. It was also used to describe help by God as well as man (Delling, *antilambanomai*, 1985:62).

*Κυβέρνησις*, the word for "administration" was also found just once in the New Testament. It was related to the word, *κυβέρνητης*, which meant a sea captain or pilot.<sup>41</sup> It originated from a word that meant to steer and to guide. Eventually, it also took on the concept of ruling and governing. The early church would often use the illustration of the church as a boat and Christ as its pilot or *κυβέρνητης* (Beyer, *kubernesis*, 1985: 486).

The gift of administration has been tied in with the role of the modern pastor. Sam Stone has compared the role of a sea pilot with that of an average pulpit minister. Both have needed to know the heavens (stars or divinity), the waters (place of pastorate), crew and the storms (1991:171).

In the books of Romans and Ephesians, Paul had other lists like these two in chapter twelve. In Romans 12:6-8, Paul proclaimed that every set of gifts given to a person was

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<sup>41</sup> See Acts 27:11 and Rev. 18:17.

different. He mentioned the gifts of prophesy, service, teaching, exhorting, giving, leadership and showing mercy. Ephesians 4:11 also had a similar list of gifts/roles that emphasized the unity of the body of Christ. He cited the following titles: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Carson 1987:36).

In chapter twelve, Paul spent a great deal of time emphasizing the unity of the spirit and importance of each part in the diversity of the body of Christ and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. However, Paul contrasted the gift of tongues with the gift of prophecy in chapter fourteen. In the first nineteen verses of the chapter, prophecy was considered a more desirable gift to Paul than tongues.

Carson has pointed out that this clarification may have been needed due to a lack of distinction between the two gifts. Paul highlighted that tongues needed the companion gift of interpretation to be viable for worship. Therefore, un-interpreted tongues were only edifying for the speaker and not the hearers of the tongue. However, the gift of prophecy was for all to hear. Paul saw the gift of prophecy as more practical and more edifying to more people than tongues (1987:100).

David Dorman emphasized the purpose of the spiritual gifts in his article “The Purpose of Empowerment in the Christian Life.” He taught that the gifts of the spirit were given so that the believers and the world would know the immediacy of God. He referred to 1 Corinthians 14:25 as an example when someone would see the gifts in action and proclaim, “God is really among you! (1985:148,150-151)”

Just as Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come so we could proclaim his message of reconciliation,<sup>42</sup> the abilities that the Spirit endows on the believer are given so that believer could be better able to proclaim that message. These gifts give us useful talents and abilities for representing God in this world, such as wisdom, knowledge, healing or prophesying. As Dorman has pointed out, these gifts also help people realize that God is in their midst (1985:148). That realization further empowers the sacerdotal agent and adds to his validity. Not only can the believer declare to represent God by proclaiming the gospel, the power of the spiritual gifts adds validity to that assertion.

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<sup>42</sup> See Acts 1:8.

#### 4. THE AUTHORITY OF SACERDOTAL AGENTS

This final chapter will deal with the power and authority given to human representatives of God in this world and the response of the representative to their plenipotentiary role. When a human being speaks in the name of God; it invokes tremendous power. This is a power that Paul took very seriously. He understood that he was responsible in wielding his God-given authority with care and caution.

This final chapter applies the topics of the three previous chapters. In this chapter, we will discuss how Paul wielded the title given to him as God's representative. Then we will see how he exercised the authority bestowed upon him. Finally, we will study how Paul used the powers given to him by the Holy Spirit to carry out his mission of the ministry of reconciliation as a divine ambassador.

##### Spiritual Fatherhood

Jackson Carroll has written a book on the authority of modern clergy called As One With Authority. Carroll described two areas of authority for clergy. The first was the authority to represent the divine. The second area of authority cited was the authority of being an expert in being a clergy that comes from having studied theology, biblical studies, bible languages, counseling and pastoral administration. Carroll has also noted that there were two sources for the authority recognized with the clergy. The first sources came from the title of being a minister, pastor or reverend. He referred to this as official authority. After a young minister graduates from a Bible college or seminary and enters into the vocational ministry, this official authority is received at their ordination or installation. Carroll spoke of a "second ordination," which could only be earned by time and having a relationship with the people in the

congregation. Carroll referred to this as personal authority. This second source of authority has its strengths in relationships. Not only does a minister have authority to represent God because of a given title or office, his authority is also shown by the minister's piety and personal relationship with both God and the parishioners. Likewise, the authority as an expert may be impressive with a diploma, but it is much more powerful when the people see the minister using his knowledge with competence in demonstrating that knowledge (1991:56-57).

Paul's realization of himself, his position and his relationship with the Corinthians had an effect on his approach to ministry. So far in this paper we have focused on Paul's call as an apostle.<sup>43</sup> We have also seen how Paul referred to himself and other believers as ambassadors and ministers of reconciliation.<sup>44</sup> Paul could also display signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit. All of these attributes would have caused most people to take notice of what he had to say. However, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he also relied on the strength of his relationship with them. He was not just the Apostle Paul; he was the founder of the church in Corinth. This section will discuss Paul's use of his position as founder as an effective means of representing God to people of Corinth.

The first chapter of this paper discussed Paul's call as an apostle. The last section of that chapter addressed the issue of Apollos being a co-worker of Paul and the situation of the Corinthian believers choosing to side with one over the other.<sup>45</sup> What I want to address in this chapter is how Paul saw his role and relationship to the Corinthians as the founder of the church. In the third chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul used illustrations of gardening and building

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<sup>43</sup> See pages 14-17.

<sup>44</sup> See pages 36-41.

<sup>45</sup> See section entitled Apollos as a Co-worker starting on page 31.

to describe how he laid the groundwork and how Apollos built on what Paul did, but it was God who was doing the work. (Watson 1992:30-31).<sup>46</sup>

In these illustrations, Paul was seen as the one who started the work. He planted the seed. He laid the foundation as an expert builder. Paul was not writing this to gloat as his marvelous work. However, he was showing that he was there from the beginning. He was the founder of the church. This only added to Paul's impressive authority. Not only did he have authority as a believer, as a witness of the resurrected Christ, as a learned student of scripture and as an apostle, he also had authority as the founder of the Corinthian Church.

In the 1 Corinthians 4:15, Paul calls himself their father through the gospel. In verse fourteen, he called them his dear children. Then he proclaims himself to be their father in the next verse. Gordon Fee, in his commentary that child and father language was common in mentoring relationships among Jewish teachers. He suggested that Paul used this term in his writings to address the church because they were his converts and then he could give them encouragement and exhortation (1987:184). Richard Oster suggested that this claim to being their father did not stem from his role as a teacher or church leader; rather it was due to his status as the founder of the church in Corinth (1995:116-117). Likewise C. K. Barrett noted that although Herod the Great used the father and children imagery to speak to his subjects, Paul's use of father and children was due to the fact that they were his converts in Christ (1993:115).

In the following verse, Paul stated that they could have many guardians. He offered the number of ten thousand as an example. However, they would have just one father. The word

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<sup>46</sup> See 1 Cor 3:6 and 10.

that the NIV translated as “guardian” was the word *παιδαγωγός*. This noun derived from the verb *παιδεύω* which meant “to teach” and “to train.” This word specifically meant the rigid discipline of raising up children. These tutors were rigid taskmasters and Paul referred to this term when he spoke of living under law in Galatians 3:24-25 (Bertram, *paideuo*, 1985:753-758). In their commentary, Robertson and Plummer noted that the *παιδαγωγός* could also be less strict and loving than the actual father (1994:89-90). In contrast, Leon Morris and Craig Blomberg view Paul’s contrasting image of father versus tutor as more tender and affectionate (Blomberg 1994:91 and Morris 1985:79-80). I believe that Richard Oster’s approach is more useful. In his commentary of 1 Corinthians, he stressed that the comparisons of father imagery to *παιδαγωγός* has more to do with authority than affection. Paul was asserting his right and permanent place as their spiritual father to teach them with authority (1995:116-117)

Paul chose this word to illustrate how several people could be involved in the upbringing of children. However important these teachers were, in the end a child has just one biological father. Only one man was responsible for conceiving the child. Spiritually speaking, Paul fulfilled that role for the Corinthians. Therefore when he urged them to imitate him, he did so as a father would to instruct his son to learn his trade. Paul's purpose in writing to the Corinthians was revealed in verse fourteen. He wanted to warn them as a father would warn his children. He desired the best for them. Paul was concerned for their spiritual safety, just as any father would be concerned for their child (Grosheide 1980:112).

In his book, Paul’s Idea of Community, Robert Banks noted the differences and similarities between Paul’s ministry and the ministry of the church. Certainly Paul was busy planting churches, however, his ministry was not a church in and of itself. Paul had authority as an

apostle and as the founder of the church. However, Paul had a different authority within the confines of his own ministry entourage. Banks noted that Paul was able to speak with a higher level of authority with his ministry group such as Timothy and Titus than he did with the churches themselves. Therefore, he was able to send out workers to work in churches in a similar way that God had sent him out to start churches (1994:159-163).

Paul chose to exercise his authority as an apostle vicariously through his protégés. The so-called Pastoral Epistles were written to two of his more prominent protégés, Timothy and Titus. Paul had many traveling companions, and with the exception of Barnabas, Paul was always seen as the leader. Paul was following Jesus' example of raising up leaders by mentoring them (Anderson 1997:52-53). This means that Paul made use of his ambassadorial role in his relationships with his co-workers and subordinates. He afforded them authority and responsibility in a variety of ways. It appears that some of his workers would serve as an amanuensis to help him write his letters. Other workers would carry the message. And he sent them as ambassadors to speak for him when he could not be present (Bash 1997:3).

In chapters eight and nine of his second letter, Paul spoke of the offering being collected to benefit the church in Jerusalem. Paul commissioned Titus to carry out the task of collecting for the church. He informed the church that he was sending Titus to them and that he would be accompanied by two unnamed but highly regarded workers. 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5 was in fact a recommendation of Titus and his cohorts to the Corinthians. Paul extended to them plenipotentiary privilege. Therefore Paul was able to commission in a similar manner in which he was commissioned (Wan 2000:114-115).

## Ethics of Authority

This middle part of the chapter will address several ways that Paul wielded his authority as God's representative in an ethical manner. He took extra measures not to hinder anyone from hearing the gospel. And yet, if needed, he was still prepared to cast judgment upon the church as God's spokesperson.

Throughout the Corinthian letters, the Apostle Paul took great care to underscore the ethical approach of his relationship with them. He knew that his authority as an apostle and as a representative of God was being questioned. Paul responded to these accusations in the ninth chapter of 1 Corinthians, as well as the other passages that will be reviewed in this section. In these sections Paul reminded the Corinthian church that he came in meekness and with a servants heart. He did not come to rule them, but to minister to them (Oster 1995:195-197).

In the first five verses of the second chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul reminded the readers of his honest style in presenting the message of Christ. He did not use the flamboyant and persuasive speech of the orators of the day (Kistemaker 1993:73). His style was more humble and simple. He simply told them the truth. Rather than abuse wisdom and speech for personal means, Paul shared words that were easily understood. Paul spoke in this way so that he would distinguish the message and not himself (Fee 1987:90-91).

Chapter Two of this thesis examined 2 Corinthians 2:17, where Paul stated that he and his companions did not peddle the gospel for profit.<sup>47</sup> This paper explained how Paul was emphatic that he and his coworkers spoke with sincerity like the prophets of old. Chapter three

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<sup>47</sup> See pages 45-46.

examined this passage in light of Paul being sent by God. Paul's honest and ethical approach was also seen in this text.

In the fourth chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul used clear language to emphasize the honesty of his presentation of the gospel. In verse 2, he stated: “Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God.” He spoke against any dishonest presentation of the gospel. Paul was aware that he was being accused of exploiting his authority. He was leveling this accusation against his accusers who were guilty of making deceptive secret plans (Martin 1986:77). The word that Paul used for “use,” *περιπατέω*, meant “to walk.” Paul and his companions stressed how they did not walk the way of deception, but chose the path of honesty (Baker 1999:173-4).

Paul emphasized in verse five that they were preaching Christ rather than themselves. As he was defending his authority as being from God, Paul reminded the readers that they did not bully their own message on the Corinthians. He added how he did this as the servants of the Corinthians (Baker 1999:180).

In defending himself against claims of exploiting his authority, Paul describes himself as one compelled to serve the Corinthians (Baker 1999:181). Rather than use the term *διάκονος*, he used the term *δοῦλος*. This word was often used to describe slaves. Both slaves and servants worked for someone else. However, a slave was compelled to work where a non-slave servant worked for his pay. The First-Century world of slavery was different from the slavery in the Southern United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries. Yet, it was

still slavery and it was not pleasant. However, slaves of the rulers or important people could have a greater standing than some people who were free (Louw 1988:np).<sup>48</sup>

It was common for Christians to claim to be servants or slaves to Christ in the New Testament. Claiming to be servants or slaves to God was much more rare. In this passage, Paul was claiming to be their servants or slaves in Christ. Such a claim showed commitment to both Christ and to the readers (Rengstorf, *doulos*, 1985:184-185).

In the next verse Paul spoke of the light of knowledge that was the glory of God that they had. He then stated in verse seven that this knowledge was a treasure that was stored in “jars of clay.” This was a common term in the ancient near east for the human body and for human weakness (Hafemann 2000:182).

In his commentary on 2 Corinthians David Garland cited 3 images that were underscored with Paul's use of the term "jars of clay" in 4:7. The first was the image of Paul's own physical weakness to magnify the power of God. The second was lowliness of Paul's status to magnify the greatness of God. Finally it highlighted the expendability of Paul compared to the eternity of God. When a jar of clay was broken, it was discarded. It was not mended, melted or remade. It was disposable, but the content of the vessel was saved because it was more valuable than the container itself. Garland also noted the comments of the rabbinic tradition of keeping the Torah in clay pots instead of vessels of silver or gold. Good wine was not kept in jars of gold or silver, but rather in clay pots that preserved it better. In the same way, they felt that the humbleness of a clay pot was more befitting of the Holy Torah, lest one would consider the vessel rather than the contents (1999:220-221).

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<sup>48</sup> Bibleworks™ for Windows™ cited sections 87.76 and 37.3 in their database for Louw-Nida.

Paul used this image to fortify his case of using a humble approach to usher in the message and power of God. As he also stated in verse seven that this was "to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." Therefore, Paul's approach of not elevating himself was evidence that he was a representative of God and not just himself (Martin 1986:85).

An example of Paul's ethical approach to his apostleship was in the ninth chapter of 1 Corinthians. That section was discussed in the first chapter under the section titled, "Paul's Freedom and Validity as an Apostle in 1 Corinthians Nine."<sup>49</sup> In that section we noticed that Paul went out of his way not to exploit his authority that he decided to support himself when he was among them. Even though this put him in a non-flattering position in the eyes of the culture, Paul did not want to burden them in any way.

Paul clarified that he was not making a defense to them in 2 Corinthians 12:19. He stated that he did not have to defend himself against them, but just to God. Paul's opponents considered him to be something of a "paper tiger" that looked powerful far away but really had no power when he was there (Martin 1986:458-459).

He was clarifying that he was not like a prisoner being forced to plead his case against them. Only God would be his judge on whether or not he was a divinely appointed representative. He knew that trying to make a defense would only add credence to the claim that he had no real authority. He was not speaking as some weak fool, but as God's appointed representative to them (Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 1999:535-536).

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<sup>49</sup> See page 18.

Instead, Paul focused on the fact that he had been called by God to build them up. He was acting on their behalf (Martin, 1986:460). Everything that he said was for their “strengthening” or *οἰκοδομή*. This was a general term that could mean to construct a building. However, it could also mean to edify a person. Paul used this word to describe the process of making someone more able, or to add to someone and make them better than what they were (Louw 1988:np).<sup>50</sup>

The edifying and improving of the church was seen as the main function of those in the church. Paul understood that is why God had sent him to them. Building them up was the main reason for him to going, establishing the church and continuing to minister to the Corinthians from a distance (Baker 1999:449)

Paul invoked the imagery of building up and not tearing down in other passages of 2 Corinthians as well. In 2 Corinthians 10:8, Paul spoke about being able to boast about the authority given to him to build them up and not tear them down. He would talk about boasting seventeen times from this verse until 12:9. In this context, Paul was reluctant to boast about his authority. However, he would not feel ashamed to boast about his use of power because he was not excessive in using it (Baker 1999:357).

Paul did not view his authority as just a title or office. Nor did he seek authority for the status that it would provide. For Paul, his authority that was given to him by God enabled him to be a better servant to the Lord and His church. He favored the function of the role over the esteem of the potential status (Banks, *Church*, 1993:132-133). In his commentary on 2 Corinthians, Scott Haffemann observed that Paul was not on some “ego-trip.” He saw Paul’s

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<sup>50</sup> Bibleworks™ for Windows™ cited sections 7.1, 42.34 and 47.15 in their database for Louw-Nida.

use of authority as well as his defense of authority focused more on proclaiming the gospel and ministering to the Corinthians than on his own interests (2000:56).

In 2 Corinthians 1:12<sup>51</sup>, Paul was confident in boasting about his sincerity and integrity in his relationship with the Corinthians. Alfred Plummer noted that the Corinthians had plenty of time to observe Paul's sincere and pure work with them (1912:32). Paul used this a reminder to the Corinthians of his relationship with them. His honesty served to strengthen his apostolic claim rather than hinder it (Haffemann 2000:82).

His results were also a testimony to his influence over them. He nurtured the church for 18 months. He built up the church body. The church was born under his charge. His accusers could not make that same claim. They were not with Paul to help to build up. Rather they were only tearing down the church (Baker 1999:357).

As Paul was closing this letter, he reminded them of his ultimate purpose of building them up. Paul explained that he wrote these things so that he would not have to be harsh with them when he would be in their presence. Ralph Martin noted that "these things" were referring to chapters 10-13. He summarized that the main point of this section dealt with repentance and restoring people to God. If they did these things before Paul arrived, then his visit would be pleasant and not harsh (Martin 1986:485).

He highlighted the positive as much as he could, even in this warning. Paul was writing in hopes that they would remedy the situation on their own. However, Paul was willing and able to deal with their situation if they would not. Paul knew that God gave him his authority to build them up. He also knew that laying down the law would build them up in the big picture,

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<sup>51</sup> This text was also studied in the second chapter, see page 51.

though it would hurt. Even in the possibility of an unpleasant confrontation, Paul chose to highlight the positive of building up rather than tearing down (Baker 1999:464).

Paul understood that his authority was limited to the church. He claimed no authority over non-believers. It was not their role to judge who would enter into heaven. He confessed that the authority to judge those outside of the church was clearly God's. However, he did feel comfortable with judging within the church. In 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, Paul clarified a misconception from a previous letter. He spoke about not having fellowship with worldly believers. Some Corinthians interpreted this as a prohibition in having intimate relations with worldly believers. Paul meant that they should not have any fellowship with believers who were flaunting their sinful lifestyles. They had intentionally misinterpreted Paul's message to fit their agenda (Blomberg 1995:106).

Paul clarified his teaching further by explaining that this prohibition extended only to believers. If they avoided all sinful non-believers, they would not be able to talk to any of them. The practice of avoiding unbelievers was common in the Jewish world. Therefore, it would be very easy for Jewish Christians to contort Paul's message to preach a message of disassociation with non-believers (Oster 1985:128).<sup>52</sup>

In verse twelve, Paul asked, "What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church?" In his commentary, Gordon Fee commented that the "mine" in the verse was not emphatic and therefore highlighted how Paul was not just speaking for himself. Instead he was speaking as a representative of the Christian community. As a representative of the Church, Paul could not speak about those outside the church (1987:226-227).

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<sup>52</sup> If Paul did not want believers to associate to non-believers then he would have broken his own rule by coming to them in the first place.

Paul understood that it was God's business to judge the world. The church needed to judge its own. With that said, Paul commanded the church to expel the brother who was sleeping with his father's wife. By expelling him from the church, he would be thrown back into the world. By doing this, the church would be leaving the unrepentant brother to be judged by God (Morris 1985:89-90).

However, the Apostle Paul felt very comfortable giving instructions and commands to the church. In 1 Corinthians 7:1-40,<sup>53</sup> Paul gave commands concerning marriage and remarriage. He spoke in the name of Jesus rather than in his own name. His own authority would have been sufficient for teaching this command, but Paul was stressing Jesus as the ultimate authority (Fee 1987:291).

Paul gave similar commands to the church concerning the order of worship in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40. He spoke with authority about their order of worship and who was allowed to lead worship. Paul exercised his power as an apostle to instruct the church how to offer up appropriate worship to God (Oster 1995:332-333).

In 2 Corinthians 11:21b-33 Paul compared himself directly to his accusers. Any boast they could make, he could equal and even surpass. They were Hebrews, so was Paul. They were Israelites, so was Paul. They were descendents of Abraham, so was Paul. They claimed to be servants of Christ. In verse 23, Paul said that he was much more of a servant than they were. He was more or a hyper servant. Paul used the word *ὑπέρ* to describe how he was "more." This common word described how things were superior or greater. This type of greatness would have been on the top of a scale or even beyond the measurements of a scale (Louw

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<sup>53</sup> See verse 10 in particular.

1988:np).<sup>54</sup> Therefore, Paul was stating that in terms of being a servant, he was on the top of the scale or off of the scale (Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 1999:495).

A catalogue of Paul's suffering for the gospel was listed in verses 24-33 of chapter eleven. He outdid his accusers by laboring more and enduring more than any other for Christ. He detailed examples of: imprisonment; beatings by flogging and rods; being exposed to death; stoning; shipwrecks and hardships at sea; being on the run from enemies all sides; laboring and toiling more than others; going with out sleep and food; being left naked and cold; and his early escape from Damascus by basket. Paul was able to boast of his suffering to show his weakness and therefore magnify the greatness of Christ. This was his mark of being a true Apostle, to be willing to suffer as a representative of the gospel of Christ (Hafemann 2000:442).

Paul noted that he and his companions did not boast and compare themselves to others as his opponents did in 2 Corinthians 10:12. Paul and his companions wished to avoid such practices. He states that they would only boast in the limits of the field where God had put them in verse thirteen. Paul used the phrase *μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος* to describe “the field” or “area of influence.” This phrase for standard of measurement contained two words used to gauge things. The word *μέτρον* was a general term used to describe the “measurement,” “evaluation” and “proportions” of a variety of things. It could be used for literal or figurative determining. It was used through out the New Testament to describe judging and measuring (Deissner 1985:590-591).

The word *κανών* originally meant a “reed” or a “straight rod.” Later it was used to describe the ideal or standard. It was also used to mean a table or list of things. This word was

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<sup>54</sup> Bibleworks™ for Windows™ cited sections 78.29 and 87.30 in their database for Louw-Nida.

also used by the early church to define what was normal and accepted. It was a very rare word in the New Testament and LXX. Paul used to describe the moral standard by which one measures himself in Galatians 6:16 and Philippians 3:16. In the early church, writings that were deemed to be scripture from God were considered part of the canon (Beyer, *kanon*, 1985:414).

In this segment, Paul was distancing himself from his opponents. They were bragging well beyond their means. On the other hand, Paul could boast about the Corinthians because they were in the field that was assigned to him. This probably was not a reference to geographical boundaries for each apostle.<sup>55</sup> Instead, he was probably referring to a sphere of influence. Paul stated that this sphere of influence extended to the Gentiles. That could have been because God called him to serve there, because he was commissioned to preach the good news the Gentiles or because he founded the church. In any of these scenarios, Paul's influence and authority would certainly reach the Corinthian church (Baker 1999:362-363).

Paul also instructed the Corinthians to stay in the field where God had placed them. In 1 Corinthians 7:17-24, he spoke of continuing where God had assigned them.<sup>56</sup> In this passage, Paul used the term called several times to remind the church that they were called by God to be saved. Therefore, Paul was not teaching them to stay in a vocational calling. Instead he reminded them to stay in their place in life where they were when God called them (Morris 1985:109).

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<sup>55</sup> Colin Kruse noted that evidence for geographic boundaries for apostles was found in the following work: Horsley, G. H. R. "New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri published in 1976. North Ryde, N.S.W., Australia : Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University, 1981.

<sup>56</sup> This was part of the marriage instructions section reviewed on the previous page.

Where they were when they were called was also their assignment by God to minister. The word for “assigned” was a version of the word *μερίζω*. The word also meant “to divide” and “to separate as an inheritance.” In this context it was used to describe an assignment given to the Corinthians by God. Paul also used this term in 2 Corinthians 10:13 to describe the field that God had assigned to him (Louw 1988:np).<sup>57</sup>

In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Paul warned his readers about the accusers. They were false apostles. This seemed to be a term that Paul coined just for this occasion (Baker 1999:390). They were making themselves appear to look like Apostles and servants, but it was just a façade. He stated that Satan would use such tactics as appearing as an angel of light. Therefore, it did not surprise Paul that these men do the same since they were servants of Satan. Paul was not just attacking the message of these false teachers; he was attacking their intention and character. He considered their motives to be sinister and destructive (391).

Paul Barnett noted how the word, *μετασχηματίζω*, tied in these three passage in his commentary on 2 Corinthians. It was translated as “masquerade” in the NIV and “disguise” in the NAS. Barnett translated this term as fashion. He noted that, "(verse 13) such men fashioned themselves as apostles, (verse 14) Satan fashions himself into an angel of light, (verse 15) and that Satan's minister's fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness (1997:523)." This word was used to describe something changing appearance or altering. Paul used it in a positive context to describe the transformation of our earthly bodies to glorious ones in Philippians 3:21 (Schneider, *schema*, 1985:1130).

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<sup>57</sup> Bibleworks™ for Windows™ cited section 37.100 in their database for Louw-Nida.

## The Wisdom of God

The third chapter discussed the empowerment of believers in order to better equipped to represent God in this world. Paul listed the gift of words of wisdom in 1 Corinthians 12:8. Earlier in that letter, Paul spoke at length about the wisdom and his reliance on divine wisdom to proclaim God's message of reconciliation to the world.

Paul spoke about knowing the wisdom of God in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. He claimed to have spiritual insight to the mind of Christ and to know the mysteries of God that others did not know. The mysteries of God were not a puzzle that had to be worked out or a secret guarded by a hierarchy of wise men. Without, God's assistance in showing humanity, His way would be inconceivable to mere mortals (Morris 1985:54).

Paul instructed the Corinthians that he and other believers knew the secret wisdom of God. This did not come about through human philosophy, by following an ancient rite or by accomplishing a great feat to get the attention of God. Paul was given this insight by having the Holy Spirit dwell within him (Oster 1995:85). Paul was comparing unbelievers to believers in this section. The unspiritual man could not even comprehend the mysteries of God that had been revealed as the Gospel of Jesus (Blomberg 1995:63).

Some scholars have asserted that Paul was not addressing believers and unbelievers, but actually two different levels of believers.<sup>58</sup> Others have asserted that this section was referring to early gnosticism with believers attaining a level of mystery and wisdom that others did not possess.<sup>59</sup> The mind of Christ was given to pneumatic or spirit-filled Christians. This was not given as a reward for finding special wisdom or having an ecstatic experience. Instead, it was

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<sup>58</sup> See Hans Conzelmann's 1 Corinthians. Philadelphia: Hermeneia, 1975.

<sup>59</sup> Willis noted Wilckens, Bultmann and Reitzenstein as holding this view.

dependent on being a part of the Christian community. Therefore, all Christians should have the Holy Spirit and hence would have the mind of Christ through the Holy Spirit (Willis 1989:110-122).

Paul noted in verse eleven that no earthly person could know the mind of someone, because only his spirit would know what was in his mind. As believers, we have been given the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and be our guide. Therefore, those who have the Holy Spirit would also know the mind of Christ (Fee 1987:87).

In 1 Corinthians 4:1, Paul spoke of being entrusted with the secret things of God. After he reminded the church that both he and Apollos were servants of the same Lord in the third chapter, he stated that they should be regarded as servants and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Although Paul continued in the servant theme, he used different words for servant in this verse than he did in the previous chapter. In 3:5, Paul used the common term *διάκονος* to describe the call of servanthood. However, in 4:1 he used the term *ὑπηρέτας* for “servant.” This word was not very common in the New Testament. It was used just twenty times in the New Testament and only once by Paul. It was usually translated in the NIV as guard (and temple guard), official and servant (Bibleworks 1999:np). There has been some debate on the origin on the word. Some scholars have attached it to the word *ερέτης* and defined it as an “underrower” and later was used to describe an “underling” or subordinate (Robertson 1994:74 and Morris 1985:71). K. H. Rengstorf has disputed this origin of the word claiming that historically there was only one level of rowers at that time. It was attached to the heraldic work of Hermes for Zeus in ancient works. Over time it was used to describe someone who carried out the will of someone who was in higher authority. These types of

servants also had the authority of their sender to aid them in their tasks (Rengstorf, *hyperetes*, 1985:1231-1232).

Paul used a second word that built on the servant theme. He referred to himself and his companions as ones entrusted with the things of God. He used the word *οἰκονόμοις* for “entrusted.” It was a term that used to describe stewards or managers of households and cities. Paul used this word to define a city official in Romans 16:23 and a trustee in Galatians 4:2 (Louw 1988:np).<sup>60</sup> This word had the understanding of a servant, very often a slave, who was entrusted with a major responsibility such as managing a household or even civic duties. By choosing this word, Paul was highlighting the trust that God had in him by endowing him with his secrets (Fee 1987:159).

The Apostle Paul was entrusted with a lot of authority. He was an Apostle, the founder of the church, the ambassador of Christ and showed wisdom in his judgments. Paul was willing to offer himself as a model for believers to follow in 1 Corinthians 4:16.<sup>61</sup> He has given us an example of how to utilize our authority as representatives of God. We would be wise to imitate him when we are representing God in this world.

## CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this paper has been to understand what the Corinthian epistles speak about believers serving as sacerdotal and plenipotentiary agents. My

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<sup>60</sup> Bibleworks™ for Windows™ cited sections 37.39, 46.4, and 57.231 in their database for Louw-Nida.

<sup>61</sup> The background of this verse was covered in the second chapter on page 50.

answer to that questions is that; the Corinthian letters demonstrate that believers are called to represent God in this world as his sacerdotalistic and plenipotentiary agents, that the believers' mission is to make known God's terms of peace with the world by proclaiming the gospel of Christ, that believers are empowered by the Holy Sprit to fulfill this task and that believers are responsible to wield their divinely appointed authority and power ethically and with God's wisdom.

The first chapter addressed the issue of believers being called to serve and represent God in this world. I started with calling of Paul as a representative and as an apostle. Although it was very common for Paul to start his letters addressing himself as an apostle,<sup>62</sup> the Corinthian letters also have Paul defending his apostleship.<sup>63</sup> The title apostle implies representation in meaning sent one.<sup>64</sup>

Even though we can apply Paul's teaching and understanding of his calling to ourselves who are called to represent God and lead the church, we cannot make the same claims that Paul could as an apostle. We may be people who are still sent out into this world to proclaim the gospel, but we have not seen Christ with our eyes as Paul did on the Damascus road.<sup>65</sup> Even if we cannot put our selves on Paul's level in terms of authority, we need to remember that source of Paul's power and authority was not himself, but the agency that sent him. It is that same agency that has sent us out to the world to proclaim the gospel of peace. Therefore, understanding how Paul viewed his authority and power as a sacerdotalistic agent aids us in understanding how we should view our authority and power as sacerdotalistic agents.

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<sup>62</sup> See page 15.

<sup>63</sup> See pages 14, 15, 17-23 and 31-34.

<sup>64</sup> See page 16.

<sup>65</sup> See page 17.

I gave special attention to the ninth chapter of 1 Corinthians where Paul gave a defense of his apostleship even though he did not partake of all of the benefits that were offered to him.<sup>66</sup> Part of the attack on Paul's validity as an apostle stemmed from his opportunity to be a working evangelist/teacher. We saw that that was not an esteemed lifestyle to the Hellenistic world, although it was apropos for Rabbis.<sup>67</sup> We noted how Paul viewed this slavish-appearing method as offering more freedom (which sounded very similar to a statement by the famous Socrates).<sup>68</sup>

In the next section, I addressed how Paul viewed how all believers were called by God. I looked at varying words used by Paul to describe how believers were also sacerdotalistic agents. We looked at believers being chosen by God,<sup>69</sup> anointed,<sup>70</sup> belonging to God by having an owner's seal as proof<sup>71</sup> and referred to as servants,<sup>72</sup> ones called<sup>73</sup> and even the temple of God.<sup>74</sup> Another reference used by Paul was the image of the body of Christ. This image showed how believers were connected with each other and Christ in their calling to do the work assigned to them.<sup>75</sup> The final section of the chapter dealt with the issue of Apollos.<sup>76</sup> Paul saw Apollos as a fellow teacher and preacher and not as a competition. However, he had

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<sup>66</sup> See page 18.

<sup>67</sup> See pages 21-22.

<sup>68</sup> See page 23.

<sup>69</sup> See page 24.

<sup>70</sup> See page 24.

<sup>71</sup> See pages 24-25.

<sup>72</sup> See page 25.

<sup>73</sup> See page 26.

<sup>74</sup> See pages 26-27.

<sup>75</sup> See pages 27-30.

<sup>76</sup> See pages 31-34.

to spend much of the first four chapters of the first letter emphasizing unity and common purpose because the congregation was dividing themselves up according to teacher.

The second chapter focused on the mission of the sacerdotal agent. Since the first chapter clearly identified that believers have been called by God to represent Him in this world, this chapter set out to define what the agent was supposed to say and do as a representative. I began this chapter by looking at Paul's understanding of his mission as being a minister of reconciliation. Paul could not forgive people's sins, but he could proclaim the message of reconciliation from Christ.<sup>77</sup> Then I looked at Paul's use of ambassadorial language in 2 Corinthians 5:20.<sup>78</sup> We discussed the term *πρεσβεύω* and the root word group *πρεσβ* and compared the idea in both Greek and Roman worlds with Paul's use of the term. From studying such texts as Anthony Bash's Ambassadors for Christ, we observed how believers served in the role of ambassadors by offering God's terms for peace (the gospel of Christ).<sup>79</sup> We briefly looked at Paul's reference to himself and peers being God's fellow workers in 2 Corinthians 6:1.<sup>80</sup>

The next section of the chapter dealt with the reception of the message. We saw how Paul had considered his work a victory whether the message was well received or not. He used the image of a victory parade to illustrate his point in 2 Corinthians 2:14.<sup>81</sup> Then the use of aromatic imagery used in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 was examined. We saw that whether the listener received the message as a sweet aroma (like the aroma of a sacrifice that has been

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<sup>77</sup> See page 37.

<sup>78</sup> See pages 38-41.

<sup>79</sup> See pages 40-41.

<sup>80</sup> See pages 41-42.

<sup>81</sup> See page 42.

accepted) or rejected the words like a foul smell, the messenger must proclaim the terms of peace no matter the outcome.<sup>82</sup> Paul reminded believers that they must proclaim the gospel with sincerity because they are not just speaking for God; they are also speaking in the presence of God.

The last section of the second chapter dealt with the high profile of believers. Paul expressed how he was put on display in 1 Corinthians 4.<sup>83</sup> To illustrate this he described being a spectacle at the end of processional for the doomed that were going to die at the hands of gladiators.<sup>84</sup> In comparison he likened the Corinthians as kings.<sup>85</sup> The section ended with Paul's urge for the Corinthians to imitate him. In 1 Corinthians 4:16,<sup>86</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:1,<sup>87</sup> and 2 Corinthians 1:4.<sup>88</sup> In the end, Paul could boast a clear conscience because of the work that he did for the Lord as expressed in 2 Corinthians 1:12.<sup>89</sup>

The third chapter built on the foundation of the previous two chapters. After we established that God has called us, that our calling was to represent him in this world by presenting the gospel (or God's terms for peace), we then focused in the way that the Holy Spirit has enabled believers to carry out their mission by allotting various spiritual gifts.<sup>90</sup> In the first section we reviewed the purpose of the gifts. I referred to Acts 1:8 to enforce the

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<sup>82</sup> See pages 42-44.

<sup>83</sup> See page 48.

<sup>84</sup> A similar procession was also seen in 2 Corinthians 2:14.

<sup>85</sup> See page 49.

<sup>86</sup> See page 50.

<sup>87</sup> See page 50.

<sup>88</sup> See page 50.

<sup>89</sup> See page 51.

<sup>90</sup> See page 53.

biblical idea of the gifts of the Holy Spirit being tied in with the mission of the church.<sup>91</sup> In 1 Corinthians 1:5 Paul spoke how God enriched the Corinthians in their knowledge and speaking.<sup>92</sup>

Special attention was given to 1 Corinthians 12 in reference to understanding the concept of unity in the diversity of the spiritual gifts.<sup>93</sup> Certain gifts, such as tongues, were seen as more important than others. Paul emphasized that the same gifts, service and workings came from the same Spirit, Lord and God. To better understand the text, we examined the words *χάρισμα*,<sup>94</sup> *διακονία*,<sup>95</sup> and *ἐνέργημα*.<sup>96</sup> Paul emphasized that these gifts were given so believers could fulfill the common good of serving God.<sup>97</sup>

The final section of the chapter studied each of the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12.<sup>98</sup> The gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 were; wisdom,<sup>99</sup> knowledge,<sup>100</sup> faith,<sup>101</sup> healings,<sup>102</sup> miracles,<sup>103</sup> prophecy,<sup>104</sup> discernment,<sup>105</sup> tongues<sup>106</sup> and the

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<sup>91</sup> See page 54.

<sup>92</sup> See page 55.

<sup>93</sup> See pages 56-60.

<sup>94</sup> See page 58.

<sup>95</sup> See page 59.

<sup>96</sup> See page 59.

<sup>97</sup> See page 60.

<sup>98</sup> See pages 60-71.

<sup>99</sup> See pages 61-62.

<sup>100</sup> See page 62.

<sup>101</sup> See page 63.

<sup>102</sup> See pages 63-64.

<sup>103</sup> See pages 64-65.

<sup>104</sup> See pages 65-66.

<sup>105</sup> See pages 66-67.

<sup>106</sup> See pages 67-68.

discernment of tongues.<sup>107</sup> Word studies were also conducted on two of the spiritual gifts mentioned in

1 Corinthians 12:28 that were not previously studied in the paper: helps<sup>108</sup> and administration.<sup>109</sup>

The fourth chapter was concerned with the way the believer used their power and authority. This chapter described how Paul wielded his authority ethically and effectively. In referring to Jackson Carroll's book, As One With Authority, we identified that spiritual leaders held authority by being called by God and by being recognized by the recipients as being competent and legitimate.<sup>110</sup> Paul's authority was from his relationship with the Corinthians as well as from his calling by God and his title of Apostle.<sup>111</sup> Paul highlighted his relational role with them in quelling the Apollos debate in 1 Corinthians 3.<sup>112</sup> Paul would always be the one who started the work in Corinth. Therefore, he was able to invoke father and child imagery in 1 Corinthians 4:14,15.<sup>113</sup> I mentioned how Robert Banks noted that there was a difference between Paul's own ministry and the ministry of the church in his book, Paul's Idea of Community.<sup>114</sup> In his own ministry, Paul served as the leader who had the authority to send his own representatives such as Timothy and Titus.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> See page 68.

<sup>108</sup> See page 69.

<sup>109</sup> See page 70.

<sup>110</sup> See pages 72-73.

<sup>111</sup> See page 73.

<sup>112</sup> See page 73-74.

<sup>113</sup> See pages 74-75.

<sup>114</sup> See page 75.

<sup>115</sup> See page 76.

The next section of the chapter addressed Paul's reminders to the Corinthians how he was responsible and ethical with his power as a sacerdotal agent. We revisited 1 Corinthians chapter nine<sup>116</sup> to point out how Paul chose not to partake of all of the benefits afforded to him so that the gospel would not be hindered.<sup>117</sup> Then we reviewed 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 and 2 Corinthians 2:17, where Paul revealed that he was not flamboyantly persuasive or a peddler for profit, but humble in honesty.<sup>118</sup> We continued to study Paul's humble and spiritual approach by referring to his jars of clay terminology in 2 Corinthians 4.<sup>119</sup> We saw how Paul was not defending himself against the Corinthians since he was trying to build them up with integrity.<sup>120</sup> I spent some time dealing with the limits of Paul's authority. Paul did not have authority over non-believers; they were to be judged by God alone.<sup>121</sup> However, he did have authority to teach and rebuke believers in a variety of issues such as dealing with the man who was have a relationship with his step-mother,<sup>122</sup> teaching on marriage and remarriage<sup>123</sup> and teaching on worship.<sup>124</sup>

He did compare himself to his accusers in 2 Corinthians 11:21b-33. Any boast they could make, Paul was able to meet or surpass. In this section he boasted about his suffering. This was an honor for Paul to magnify Christ by showing his weakness.<sup>125</sup> We did note that Paul

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<sup>116</sup> This passage was studied in greater detail in the first chapter on pages 18-23.

<sup>117</sup> See pages 77 and 80.

<sup>118</sup> See pages 77-78.

<sup>119</sup> See pages 78-80.

<sup>120</sup> See pages 80-82.

<sup>121</sup> See pages 82-83.

<sup>122</sup> See page 83.

<sup>123</sup> See page 84.

<sup>124</sup> See page 84.

<sup>125</sup> See pages 84-85.

was careful not to compare himself to others who were in different fields or areas of influences as his opponents were boating beyond their means.<sup>126</sup> We also reviewed Paul's charge for people to stay in the field or place where God had placed them.<sup>127</sup> I wound up this section by looking at Paul's charge that his opponents were false apostles masquerading as legitimate.<sup>128</sup>

The last section of the fourth chapter dealt with Paul's use of the spiritual gift of wisdom. Because he was filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul was given special insight into the mind of Christ and was able to see the mysteries of God.<sup>129</sup> He saw himself as a lowly servant who as entrusted with this great gift of wisdom so he could manage the ministry God had given him.<sup>130</sup>

H. H. "Bud" Beverly, my former Senior Minister at my first full-time ministry in Texas, would often remind me that God would use human hands, human feet and human mouths to reach other humans. This study has reinforced and clarified what I have already observed as a pastor. We are called to represent God in this world. It is to the church universal that the task of proclaiming God's terms for peace is to be completed.

This study has given me a deeper knowledge of the Corinthian text and of the study of sacerdoaltism. It has also left me with some very practical reminders on how to apply these findings to the modern church. First of all, we need to remind the church who they are. They are called by God to follow him, to be his servant and to be his representatives in this world. The next, reminder for the church is what it is called to do. The body of Christ is called to the ministry of reconciliation. The mission of the church is to make disciples and to be disciples.

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<sup>126</sup> See pages 85-86.

<sup>127</sup> See page 86.

<sup>128</sup> See pages 86-87.

<sup>129</sup> See page 87-89.

<sup>130</sup> See pages 89-90.

Thirdly, the church should be reminded how they are to accomplish this task. The church has been empowered by the Holy Spirit with a variety of gifts that work in harmony with a variety of people in the church. The final reminder for the church is which way we are to accomplish our task of offering reconciliation to the world. We are to proclaim that gospel so that it would not hinder the recipients. We are also to use God's wisdom to judge ourselves to keep ourselves a suitable example for the world.

As I worked on this paper, I realized that there were several areas that I desired to study at a deeper level, but because this paper need to stay focused on what the Corinthian letters said about human agents called to represent God in this world, I did not have the time and resources to properly examine all of them. One day, I hope to complete my original quest of compiling a New Testament theology of sacerdotalism. My next logical step would be to expand this current study to the whole of the Pauline corpus and then examine the general letters, the synoptic gospels and the Johannine works.

I would have liked to spend more time connecting the ministry of reconciliation with the ambassadorial image in 1 Corinthians 5. The identification of Paul's opponents in each of the letters was also another area that I wished I could have spent more time developing. I also would have liked to examine Paul's use of smells and aromas in greater detail.

This paper did not discuss the time limit for accomplishing its task as God's representative agents in this world. However, the Apostle Paul made a reference to authority ending in 1 Corinthians 15:24. He stated that when the end would come all dominion, authority and power be destroyed. This passage does not appear to be a reference to the authority of Paul or a human agent representing God. It was a reference to the earthly powers of this world being destroyed (Morris, 1985:211). Of course, in the eschaton there would be no need for a

sacerdotal agent. All believers would be in the presence of God and the role of an ambassador would be meaningless.

At the present, there is a need for believers to represent God in this world. There are those who have not heard the gospel of Jesus. There are those who have not believed because the church has not shown them God's presence and power in this world. The church has not completed its task of offering God's terms of peace.

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<sup>131</sup> Work found on the Peruses Digital Library of Tufts University at <http://hydra.perseus.tufts.edu/>. Because this was an electronic version, no page numbers were used.

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