

APOSTLE APOLLOS?

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Did Paul see Apollos as a fellow apostle in 1 Corinthians? Surprisingly, this question has not received a full-length scholarly treatment, despite its relatively significant implications for our understanding of the apostolate. Amongst commentators on 1 Corinthians, it is frequently argued or assumed that he did, as we shall see, based on the flow and logic of chapters 1–4. Many evangelicals, on the other hand, have reasoned that since Apollos had not seen the risen Christ, and since Paul believed that an essential qualification for apostleship was to have seen the risen Christ, Paul could not have regarded Apollos as an apostle.¹

Under the surface of this discussion is another concern for conservative scholars: if someone who had not seen the risen Christ could be termed an apostle by Paul, then what implications would that have for the completion of the apostolate, and thereby the completion of the canon of Scripture? Would more apostles be possible after the first generation had died out? More books of the Bible, even? One unfortunate consequence of this is that Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 1–4, which has nothing to do with the canon of Scripture, has not always been read on its own terms, particularly with reference to the position of Apollos. In this paper, we will review the main interpretive approaches, and then attempt to answer the question through a careful study of the evidence in 1 Corinthians. We will close by suggesting some possible implications.

I. INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES

The biggest question mark over the apostleship of Apollos, oddly, arises from a passage that does not mention him at all: 1 Cor 9:1–3. In verse 1 of this chapter, Paul links together his freedom, his apostleship, and the appearance of the risen Christ to him, leading many interpreters to conclude that witnessing the resurrected Jesus is regarded by Paul as a necessary condition for apostleship. Thus, if Paul is speaking coherently on this point, which most commentators accept that he is, then he must believe one of three things. Either (1) Paul did not regard Apollos as an apostle; (2) Paul believed Apollos had witnessed the resurrected Jesus; or (3) for Paul, witnessing the risen Christ was not a necessary condition for all apostleship. The only alternative is inherent contradiction, which *prima facie* seems unlikely.

The mainstream conservative approach for the last century has been to affirm (1), the most comprehensive justification for which remains the seminal essay by

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¹ The former is a certain implication of Acts 18:24–26; the latter is regularly argued from 1 Cor 9:1 and 15:7–9, on which see below. See, e.g., Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1958) 585; John Stott, *The Message of Galatians* (BST; Leicester: InterVarsity, 1968) 13–14; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 905–11.

J. B. Lightfoot.² Lightfoot argued that having seen the risen Christ was “a necessary condition of the apostolic office” and that it is unlikely Apollos possessed this qualification on the basis of his late conversion and Alexandrian origin.³ Consequently, when it comes to 1 Corinthians 3–4, Lightfoot argues that Apollos is not an apostle at all; as evidence, he cites Clement of Rome’s distinction between the apostles (Paul and Cephas) and the “man approved by them” (Apollos), and argues that the “we” of 4:9 may refer to Paul and Silas.⁴ This approach will be considered below.

It is possible, alternatively, to affirm (2): it could be argued that Paul believed Apollos had in fact seen the risen Christ. This, of course, would mean either that the account of Acts 18 was historically unreliable on this point, or that it referred to a different Apollos (or, conceivably, that Acts 18 was accurate, but Paul knew nothing about it). However, each of these solutions seems intuitively unlikely—no plausible reason for Lukan invention, onomastic assimilation or Pauline confusion has been suggested—and none has met with any real scholarly support.⁵ It therefore seems safe to set this aside as extremely improbable: whatever else we may be able to say about his view of Apollos, Paul is unlikely to have thought he was a witness to the resurrection.

The third option is to affirm (3). Under this interpretation, in 1 Corinthians 9:1 Paul is not announcing a necessary condition for all apostles, but explaining why his own apostleship should be regarded as beyond question. Instead of supposing Paul is defining the crucial ingredient of apostleship here, in terms of witnessing the risen Jesus, this view involves seeing him as explaining why his apostolic role should not be in any doubt, to the Corinthians of all people, because of (i) his emphatic commission from the resurrected Christ, and (ii) his success in establishing the Corinthian church, among others, through proclaiming the gospel. That Paul regarded these two as sufficient conditions to justify his apostolic ministry is clear; that he regarded them as necessary conditions for all apostles is less so. So, in his important article on apostleship in Paul’s day, Rudolf Schnackenburg concludes, “Paul did not know of a uniform concept of apostleship which had clear-cut criteria.”⁶

² J. B. Lightfoot, “The Name and Office of an Apostle”, in *The Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan, 1881) 92–101.

³ Lightfoot, “Apostle” 97–98.

⁴ Clement 47:3–4; cf. Lightfoot, “Apostle” 96, n. 2.

⁵ Cf. C. K. Barrett, *Acts 15–28* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998) 886. The portrait of Apollos presented in Acts coheres well with what we know from Paul’s letters; a fascinating demonstration of the extent to which this is true, albeit in support of an unlikely theory, can be found in H. W. Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: A&C Black, 1964) 15–29.

⁶ Rudolf Schnackenburg, “Apostles before and during Paul’s time,” in W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970) 301. See also the interesting remarks of Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 397: “Can anything be said in our day about ‘apostles’? Given the two criteria expressed here, one would have to allow that apostles do not exist in the sense that Paul defines his own ministry. But it should also be noted that this might be too narrow a view, based strictly on Paul’s own personal experience. His more functional understanding of apostleship (see on 1:1) would certainly have its modern counterparts in those who found and lead churches in unevangelized areas.”

A fourth group of scholars, however, deny (1), (2), and (3), and (whether deliberately or not) present Paul as contradictory on the issue. C. K. Barrett argued that Apollos was an apostle, and that he would not have seen the risen Christ, and that Paul viewed witnessing the resurrection as “the indispensable foundation of apostleship.”⁷ Similarly, N. T. Wright accepts the Lukan account of Apollos’s Christian instruction, and refers to him as an apostle in 1 Corinthians 3–4, yet states that “the criterion” for apostleship is “whether that person had personally seen the risen Jesus.”⁸ Neither scholar explicitly attributes incoherence or contradiction to Paul, but it is hard to see how else these three affirmations can be balanced; it is possible that such scholars either have not noticed the inconsistency, or have assumed that the word ἀπόστολος has a different meaning in chapters 3–4 to the one it has in chapter 9, without explaining what this different meaning is, or why they think it is likely. Without such an explanation, however, this approach does not seem very satisfactory.

As we turn to the relevant material in 1 Corinthians 1–4, then, it appears that only two of these four interpretations represent possible solutions to the problem. Either Paul limited apostleship to those who had seen the resurrected Jesus, and did not believe Apollos was an apostle (Lightfoot, Weiss, Grudem); or, if he did think of Apollos as an apostle, then his statement in 9:1 should not be considered as a requirement for all apostles ever, but as the basis for Paul’s own distinctive apostolic vocation (Schnackenburg, Fee, Thiselton). With this in mind, we now turn to the text.

II. THE ARGUMENT OF 1 CORINTHIANS 1–4

After a fairly standard Pauline introduction (1:1–9), comprising greetings and thanksgiving, the first major section of the letter addresses the reports Paul has received about divisions and factionalism in the Corinthian church (1:10–4:21).⁹ The main aim of the section is expressed immediately: “that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you” (1:10).¹⁰ Apparently, the Christian communi-

⁷ C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC; London: Black, 1968) 95, 200–201; cf. Barrett, Acts 15–28 887–88; C. K. Barrett, *The Signs of an Apostle* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996) 72.

⁸ Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 2003) 40–51, 107–108, 241; N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003) 381.

⁹ Cf. the structural analyses of Barrett, *1 Corinthians* 28; Fee, *1 Corinthians* 21; Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) vi; Joseph Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians* (AB; New Haven: Yale, 2008) viii; Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) vi–viii.

¹⁰ It is possible that this sentence is the *propositio* of the letter as a whole, as argued by Margaret Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991); and Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1995), but on balance it is more likely to refer more specifically to the first major section (1:10–4:21), and to reflect the standard way of using παρακαλῶ clauses; see, e.g., Carl Bjerkelund, παρακαλῶ: *Form, Funktion und Sinn der παρακαλῶ Sätze in den paulinischen Briefen* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1967); Thiselton, *1 Corinthians* 113–14; David Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) 41. Either way, its role as identifying the main aim of 1:10–4:21 is clear.

ty was experiencing divisions and quarrels internally, as different factions identified with different leaders (such as Paul, Cephas, and Apollos) over and against others, as well as disagreements with Paul himself, particularly over his gospel and his apostolic authority.¹¹ This two-sided problem gives rise to a lengthy response from Paul, which moves quickly from the underlying problem, expressed in social and political terms (1:10–17), to the overarching solution, expressed in theological terms (1:18–3:4): the cross of Christ.¹²

It is the cross, and its sheer foolishness in the world of the first century, that undermines the proud claims to “wisdom” that have infected the Corinthian church and the factions within it (1:18–25). That the cross undermines worldly wisdom, the admiration of which is responsible for so much Corinthian factionalism, is further demonstrated by the make-up of the Corinthian church, comprised as it was of those who were foolish in worldly terms (1:26–31), and by the way Paul preached his saving message in the first place, without “wisdom” but with the Spirit and with power (2:1–5). When properly understood by those who are genuinely spiritual (πνευματικός), of course, it turns out that the cross of Christ truly is the wisdom of God (2:6–16). But the divisions, power struggles, and jealousy within the Corinthian church indicate that the believers there, though they would regard themselves as mature and spiritual, are actually behaving like infants, in a fleshly and human way (3:1–4). His mention of himself and Apollos in verse 4 thus serves to transition the argument, from one about the cross and true wisdom (1:18–3:4) to one that addresses divisions in the church more directly, particularly their identification with different individuals, and their misunderstanding of the nature of Christian leadership (3:5–4:21).¹³

Structurally, 3:5–4:21 begins with three images of the church (3:5–9, 10–15, 16–17), followed by a preliminary conclusion (3:18–23), and then uses the apostles, and particularly Paul himself, as examples of what true Christian leadership looks like (4:1–13), before concluding the first main section of his letter more personally

¹¹ See 1:10–17; 2:1–5; 4:1–21; 9:1–23. The reasons for the internal divisions need not concern us here, since reconstructing the specific situation is somewhat speculative and mostly irrelevant to our investigation. For a thorough summary of the issues, the history of research, the question of the “Christ party” and a balanced proposal, see Thiselton, *1 Corinthians* 111–33; see also the much briefer summary in Garland, *1 Corinthians* 42: “Several factors contributed to a party-minded spirit: social stratification, personal patronage, philosopher/student loyalty, and party loyalties fostered by urban alienation.” Cf. Bruce Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) 31–43; idem, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 149–61.

¹² On the political language in 1:10–17 and its significance for understanding the problem being addressed, see especially L. L. Welborn, *Politics and Rhetoric in the Corinthians Epistles* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997); cf. Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (4 vols.; Zurich: Benziger, 1991–2001) 1:138–39; Thiselton, *1 Corinthians* 115–18.

¹³ That 3:5–4:21 (or 3:5–4:17) is a coherent whole, addressed to the issue of how the Corinthians regard Christian leaders, is (rightly) the mainstream view in contemporary scholarship: see, for example, Barrett, *1 Corinthians*; Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*; Garland, *1 Corinthians*; Fitzmyer, *1 Corinthians*; Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*.

and pastorally (4:14–21).¹⁴ Theologically, though, 3:5–4:21 is an integrated whole, with two different levels of argument in operation. At one level, Paul is simply looking to correct the Corinthians' inflated view of the importance of individual human leaders such as Cephas, Apollos, and Paul himself. All we have done comes from God: we are merely servants, we are nothing, we are yours, we are stewards, we are fools, and our cruciform lives make us the scum of the earth (3:5–7, 21–23; 4:1, 9–13), so nobody should boast in us at all, far less disintegrate into factionalism.¹⁵

At another level, however, he is correcting the Corinthians' inflated view of *their own* importance, and particularly that of the leaders within the community. Shoddy building in the church will not survive on the Day, and the destroyer of the church will himself be destroyed, so no one in Corinth must think they are wise, but all must instead live in the light of the day when the heart's purposes are disclosed (3:10–20; 4:5). In fact, all that Paul has been saying about himself and Apollos is intended, ultimately, to teach the Corinthians “not to go beyond what is written,” which probably means that they are not to ignore Scripture's warnings against boasting in man, but rather to boast in God alone (4:6).¹⁶ Instead of imagining they are rich, royal, wise, and strong, the Corinthians are to learn from the example of the apostles, who embody the cross in their weak, shamed and foolish lives, and to imitate Paul as children imitate their fathers (4:7–17). If they do not, and remain arrogant, then they will be found out when Paul next visits (4:18–21).

III. APOSTLE APOLLOS?

When this entire section of the letter is read as an integrated whole, like this, it should become apparent why so many commentators on 1 Corinthians assume Paul thinks of Apollos as his fellow apostle.¹⁷ There are at least four good reasons to support this conclusion, three of which would not emerge from reading 4:6–9 in isolation. They are as follows:

(1) When Paul speaks of God having exhibited ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀποστόλους last of all, the wider context of 3:5–4:21 indicates that the subjects of ἡμᾶς are Paul and Apollos (and possibly Cephas as well). The subject of ἔσμεν in 3:9 is certainly Paul

¹⁴ Although see the remarks of Garland, *1 Corinthians* 122, to the effect that 4:1–5 should be seen as a recapitulation of 2:6–3:17.

¹⁵ On the links between the cross and the catalogue of afflictions in 4:8–13, see especially Wolfgang Schrage, “Leid, Kreuz und Eschaton: Die Peristasenkataloge als Merkmale paulinischer theologia crucis und Eschatologie,” *EvT* 34 (1974) 141–75.

¹⁶ This is probably the best interpretation of this notoriously difficult verse; see particularly Richard Hays, *First Corinthians* (Interpretation; Louisville: Knox, 1997) 69, who shows that the OT texts Paul has quoted so far (at 1:19, 31; 2:9, 16; 3:19, 20) would, taken cumulatively, make precisely the point that Paul makes in 4:6b: “The cumulative force of these citations is unmistakable: the witness of scripture places a strict limit on human pride and calls for trust in God alone.”

¹⁷ Thus A. T. Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914) 72; Barrett, *1 Corinthians* 95; Fee, *1 Corinthians* 174, n. 47; Thiselton, *1 Corinthians* 337; Garland, *1 Corinthians* 124; Wright, *1 Corinthians* 41; Fitzmyer, *1 Corinthians* 210.

and Apollos, and the ἡμᾶς of 4:1 clearly involves Paul and Apollos, and perhaps Cephas too (from 3:22). So it is not a question, as Lightfoot suggests, of simply linking 4:9 to 4:6; the whole section has Apollos as one of the subjects of the first person plural, and there is no indication that this has changed by the time we reach 4:9. The observation that the first person plural is used in various ways in Paul's letters, which is accurate, does not indicate sudden, unmarked transitions of that nature in this passage.¹⁸

(2) Looking at the specific paragraph in which the phrase ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀποστόλους appears—which clearly begins with the ταῦτα δὲ, ἀδελφοί at 4:6—reinforces this conclusion. The ἐν ἡμῖν of 4:6 is certainly Paul and Apollos. Moving forward to verses 7–8, having just said that the Corinthians are intended to learn from “us” not to go beyond what is written, it makes immeasurably more sense to suppose that they are still the subjects of the heavily ironic “without us you have become kings” and “would that we might rule with you” in 4:8, than to suppose that new subjects have been introduced, and old ones removed, without any indication in the text; if a different subject had been intended, it is hard to see how the Corinthians, let alone modern readers, could have been expected to know that. The same is true, but even more so, of the connection between the “us” of 4:8 and the “us the apostles” of 4:9, which undoubtedly refer to the same subjects. Lightfoot's analysis on this point is particularly unsatisfactory:

In 1 Cor 4:9, “I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last etc.,” he might seem to include Apollos, who is mentioned just before, verse 6 ... [Lightfoot then discusses Clement's testimony, on which see below] ... If therefore there is a reference in 1 Cor 4:9 to any individual besides St Paul (which seems doubtful), I suppose it to be again to Silvanus, who had assisted him in laying the foundation of the Corinthian church (2 Cor 1:19).¹⁹

Three brief comments need to be made here. Firstly, Lightfoot ignores the first person plural appearing twice in verse 8, which makes the link between verse 6 and 9 much stronger: “myself and Apollos ... so you may learn from us ... without us you have become kings ... would that we might rule with you ... God has exhibited us apostles last of all.” Second, he gives no reason at all for his slightly strange statement that it “seems doubtful” that ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀποστόλους refers to another individual besides Paul; on the basis of this phrase, and the remainder of 4:9–13 (ὡς ἐπιθανάτιους ... ἐγενήθημεν ... ἡμεῖς μωροὶ ...), it does not seem doubtful at all. Third, his tentative suggestion that Silvanus may be intended has no basis in the

¹⁸ Samuel Byrskog, “Co-senders, co-authors and Paul's use of the first person plural,” *ZNW* 87 (1996) 230–50, highlighted four ways in which the first person plural was used in Paul: (i) *pluralis sociativus* including the addressee(s); (ii) *pluralis sociativus* including a particular group of the addressees; (iii) a literary plural referring only to Paul himself; (iv) a plural referring to Paul and some who work with him or are with him as he writes the letter. The context makes it clear that we are dealing with (iv) when the first person plural is used throughout 3:5–4:21, and as such we would expect indications in the text if Apollos was suddenly to be excluded in 4:8–13.

¹⁹ Lightfoot, *Galatians* 96. For reasons he does not explain, Lightfoot regards it as “doubtful” that any other person than Paul is included in the “us” of v. 9 (even though the first person plural has been used this way throughout 3:5–4:6!), so his suggestion of Silvanus is made tentatively.

passage, or indeed the whole of 1 Corinthians, and has to be imported from outside the letter. It therefore seems safe to conclude, with Fee, that “in this context it [“apostles”] must include Apollos.”²⁰

(3) There appears to be a close overlap in rhetorical strategy between 4:6–13, in which Paul focuses on the dishonour and weakness of the apostles, and 3:5–4:5, in which he describes himself and Apollos (and, again, possibly Cephas) using humbling terminology like *διάκονοι* (3:5), *ὑπηρέται* (4:1), and even *οὔτε ὁ φυτεύων ἔστιν τι οὔτε ὁ ποτίζων* (3:8). It is hard to escape the conclusion that he has the same end in view in both cases—to debunk the Corinthians’ inflated view of human importance in Christian leadership, by showing what his and Apollos’ ministry really looks like—and that the subjects of both passages are the same. This, obviously, would involve Paul seeing Apollos as a fellow apostle.

(4) The whole purpose of 1:10–4:21 is to address the factionalism that has developed in Corinth, with various people in the community associating with Paul, Apollos, and Cephas respectively.²¹ It seems likely, given what we later discover about the Corinthians’ preoccupation with apostolic credentials (2 Corinthians 11–13), that the Corinthians regarded Apollos as a *bona fide* apostle, for the simple reason that it would be strange for the situation to have developed in this way, with Apollos rivalling Paul and Cephas in the minds of people in the congregation, if they did not. However, if Paul believed the Corinthians were mistaken in this regard—if, in his view, Apollos was not an apostle because he had not seen the risen Jesus—then Paul would probably not have reasoned the way he did, affirming the similarities between himself and Apollos throughout 1:10–4:21, and seamlessly moving from talking about the two of them to talking about “us apostles.” It therefore seems probable (a) that the Corinthians believed that Apollos was an *ἀπόστολος*, whatever they would have understood by that word; and (b) that Paul did not attempt to correct their view. The only obvious explanation for this is that he shared it.

In fact, if all we had was the text of 1 Corinthians 1–4, in which Apollos is talked about most fully, it is very unlikely that any opposition to Paul’s regarding him as an apostle would have come about. By far the most natural reading of the section sees the first person plural of 3:5–4:21 as including Apollos, which means that the word *ἀπόστολος* is applied to him. However, there are three arguments from outside these chapters that have been used to challenge this conclusion. We therefore need to consider them.

(a) Lightfoot was right, of course, that Clement of Rome spoke of Apollos, not as an apostle, but as one who was “approved by them” (1 *Clem.* 47:4). The question, though, is whether Clement accurately interpreted Paul on this point. For Lightfoot, the credibility of Clement’s testimony rested on the fact that Clement was “a contemporary” of Apollos and “probably knew him.” However, it is quite a stretch to describe Apollos, whose ministry we cannot be confident lasted beyond

²⁰ Fee, *1 Corinthians* 174, n. 47.

²¹ Thus Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth* 31–43.

the 60s, as a contemporary of Clement, of whom we know nothing before the 90s.²² To go further, and state that Clement “probably knew” Apollos, is both remarkable and completely speculative: the dates do not really match, the locations (Rome and Ephesus/Corinth) even less so, the text of 1 Clement itself provides no evidence for Clement and Apollos knowing each other, and neither does any other first century source. Consequently, to overturn the natural sense of Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 1–4, four decades after he wrote them, on the basis of Clement’s testimony alone (which may simply reflect an increasingly restricted view of the apostolate in the late first century), is surely unnecessary.

(b) More common is the argument that, in 1 Cor 9:1, Paul reasons that an appearance of the resurrected Christ is a necessary condition for someone to be an apostle. Therefore, since we can be fairly sure that Apollos had not seen the risen Jesus, we can safely assume that whatever Paul was saying in chapters 1–4, he did not think of Apollos as a fellow apostle. Again, the argument is formulated with characteristic clarity by Lightfoot:

It would appear [from 9:1–2] that the having seen Christ was a necessary condition of the apostolic office. It may be urged indeed that St Paul is here taking the ground of his Judaizing opponents, who affected to lay great stress on personal intercourse with the Lord, and argues that even on their own showing he is not wanting in the qualifications for the Apostleship. This is true. But independently of St Paul’s language here, there is every reason for assuming that this was an indispensable condition (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). An Apostle must necessarily have been an eye-witness of the resurrection. He must be able to testify from direct knowledge to this fundamental fact of the faith. The two candidates for the vacant place of Judas were selected because they possessed this qualification of personal intercourse with the Saviour, and it is directly stated that the appointment is made in order to furnish “a witness of His resurrection” (Acts 1:21–23).²³

There are two arguments here, one of which comes from Paul and the other from Luke, which need to be disentangled. The Pauline argument is that 9:1–2 presents having seen the risen Jesus as a “necessary condition of the apostolic office,” although Lightfoot is happy to concede that Paul may have talked like this simply to confirm his own apostleship in the eyes of his opponents. Lightfoot’s concession here is actually very important: the point at issue in 9:1–2 is not “what qualifies anyone to be an apostle,” but “what guarantees that Paul is an apostle,” and as such has more to do with *sufficient* conditions for apostleship than *necessary* ones.²⁴ In 9:1, for example, Paul asserts his freedom (1a) on the basis of his apostleship (1b); his apostleship is a sufficient condition for his Christian freedom, but it is not a necessary one, for (to Paul) all Christians are free, whether they are apostles or not. Simi-

²² *1 Clement* is almost universally dated to around AD 95; the last mention of Apollos in the NT is in Titus 3:13, which refers to a period in the final few years of Paul’s life (i.e. the mid-60s).

²³ Lightfoot, *Galatians* 97–98.

²⁴ Paul uses a similar approach in 2 Cor 11:7–13, where he indicates that his refusal to accept money from the Corinthians, in contrast to the super-apostles who take it happily, undermines their claim to apostleship and reinforces his. He does not, however, regard this as a necessary condition for genuine apostleship (cf. 1 Cor 9:3–14).

larly, Paul's apostleship (1b) is grounded both in his commission from the risen Jesus (1c), and in the Corinthians themselves (1d), who by their very existence as believers authenticate Paul's apostolic ministry (2). In context, Paul is not saying that either of these things are *necessary* conditions for *all* apostleship; he may or may not believe that, but it is not what he is saying here. Rather, he is saying that between them, they constitute *sufficient* conditions for *his* apostleship. In fact, in modern scholarship, it is generally agreed that Paul's point here has to do with establishing his freedom, not with providing qualifications for all apostles in all places at all times.²⁵

For Lightfoot, however, the Lukan argument is stronger: Jesus speaks of the eleven as "witnesses" (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8), and when they appoint a twelfth, they insist that he too must be a witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:21–22), which indicates that having seen the risen Christ was an "indispensable condition" of apostleship. Again, however, we have good reason to be cautious of this reasoning. First, it is very possible that Paul and Luke used the word apostle with somewhat different nuances (and that Luke himself did not always use the word in the same sense).²⁶ Second, it is not good scholarly practice to assert that Paul could not have meant something because it is reasoned (whether correctly or not) that Luke said something else. But third, and most significantly, the stipulations for apostolic ministry given in Acts 1:22–23 applied to the final member of the twelve, not to others such as Paul—and they would of course have excluded Paul himself, had they been applied. Lightfoot's summary above misses out this key detail: the last member of the twelve had to have been with the disciples "during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John," a requirement that, quite obviously, Paul did not satisfy. So to read 1 Cor 9:1 through the lenses of Acts 1:21–22, as if they are both saying more or less the same thing, is to ignore a difference between them so large that it would have excluded the author of 1 Corinthians himself. It does not, therefore, seem that the Lukan material gives us a good reason to deny that Paul regarded Apollos as an apostle, for the context of Acts 1:21–22 is substantially different to that of 1 Cor 9:1.

(c) What about 1 Cor 15:7–9? These important verses have sometimes been argued to prove that for Paul, the last ever apostle of any kind was Paul himself, and this is the argument made most fully by Peter Jones.²⁷ In a thirty-two page article, Jones spends the first twenty-five pages establishing (convincingly) that ἔσχατος

²⁵ See the commentaries, especially Thiselton, *1 Corinthians* 672: "1 Cor 9:1 and 15:7 do not provide conclusive proof that apostleship in every area at that time depended on being a witness to the resurrection"; cf. Schnackenburg, "Apostles." The opposite argument is made by Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000) 229–35, but Grudem builds his case exactly the same way as Lightfoot, with the same drawbacks.

²⁶ A number of commentators see Acts 14:4, 14 as unusual for Luke, who otherwise uses the word only for the twelve, and notice differences in the way Luke and Paul use the word; see, e.g., Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 419–20; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 271, 276.

²⁷ Peter Jones, "1 Corinthians 15:8: Paul the Last Apostle," *TynBul* 36 (1985) 3–34, quoted approvingly by Thiselton, *1 Corinthians* 1210.

in 15:8 refers to a chronological and principal “lastness”—that is, that Jesus appeared to Paul after his resurrection, and then after that appeared to nobody else—and the last seven exploring the implications of this conclusion. However, Jones spends just one sentence on the crucial link between having experienced the last appearance of the risen Christ (which Paul explicitly says), and being the last-ever apostle (which he does not, despite Jones’s surprising assertions to the contrary).²⁸ For Jones, if ἔσχατος refers to a chronological and principal lastness, then Paul must also be the last of the apostles, since “to be an apostle, according to Paul, one must have seen the risen Lord.”²⁹ But we have already shown that this is not quite what 1 Cor 9:1 establishes (see above), and it is therefore rather tenuous to insist on the definitive lastness of Paul’s apostleship on the basis of this connection, let alone to call it a “stated relationship” or a “prophetic declaration.”³⁰ Paul is emphatic that he received the last resurrection appearance of the risen Christ, but it is by no means clear that he believed he was therefore the last ever ἀπόστολος, especially since he seems to use this word somewhat more variably than we might like.³¹ It is certainly not a sufficiently compelling reason to argue that chapters 1–4 do not present Apollos as an apostle.³²

Taken together, then, the evidence from within 1 Corinthians 1–4 points strongly to the conclusion that Paul regarded Apollos as a fellow apostle, and it is over a century since the last commentary to counter this idea was written.³³ The reasons to oppose this suggestion, as articulated by Lightfoot and those who have followed him, do not, on balance, carry the weight that they have sometimes been believed to carry. We can therefore conclude, with a high degree of probability, that Paul regarded Apollos, the Alexandrian Jew who was competent in the Scriptures and subsequently went to preach and teach in Corinth, as a fellow apostle who, along with Paul and others, became a fool for the Messiah.

²⁸ Jones, “Last Apostle” 22: “the stated relationship of Paul to the apostolate as its last member”; p. 32: “the explicit statement of Paul to be the last of the apostles.” Actually, of course, Paul says he is the *least* of the apostles, but he grounds this primarily in his having persecuted the church of God (15:9b), and if the conjunctions of 15:7–9 are followed carefully, the “leastness” of his apostleship is the cause of the “lastness” of his appearance, not the other way around. Cf. Fee, *1 Corinthians* 734.

²⁹ Jones, “Last Apostle” 18. The footnote accompanying this statement cites a number of writers who agree with it to some degree, but most do not engage with the apostleship of Apollos at all, and of the three commentators who do, at least one (Barrett) believes that Apollos was an apostle anyway.

³⁰ Jones, “Last Apostle” 22.

³¹ E.g. Phil 2:25; 2 Cor 8:23; Rom 16:7; cf. the remarks of Douglas Moo, *Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 923–24: “Paul often uses the title ‘apostle’ in a ‘looser’ sense: sometimes simply to denote a ‘messenger’ or ‘emissary’ and sometimes to denote a ‘commissioned missionary’ See especially the probable distinction in 1 Cor 15 between ‘the twelve’ (v5) and ‘all the apostles’ (v7); also 1 Cor 9:5–6; Gal 2:9; Acts 14:4, 14. Even Paul’s reference to the teachers bothering the Corinthians as false ‘apostles’ (11:5; 12:11) implies a broader use of the term.”

³² Jones does not say this, but it is clearly implied in his repeated references to Paul as “last.” Perhaps surprisingly, in the light of his significance for our understanding both of apostleship and of 1 Corinthians, Apollos is not mentioned either by Jones or in Grudem, *Prophecy* 229–35.

³³ Namely, Johannes Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910). Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 88, n. 34, quotes Weiss, but does not state his own view.

IV. IMPLICATIONS

Within conservative evangelicalism, it has become commonplace to divide the apostolate into two, neat types.³⁴ There are the Apostles (capital “A”) of Jesus Christ, comprising the twelve, James, Barnabas, possibly Silas, and then finally Paul: eyewitnesses of the resurrection, officers of the church, personally commissioned by Jesus, and with the capacity to write or authorise the scriptures, pioneer into new areas, lay foundations in churches, and exercise authority over them.³⁵ Then there are the apostles (lower case “a”) of the churches, including Andronicus, Junia, Epaphroditus, the brothers of 2 Cor 8:23, and possibly Timothy: messengers that were sent out among the churches, but with no eyewitness appearances or commission from Jesus, and without the capacity to write Scripture, pioneer, lay foundations or exercise authority over churches.³⁶ On this view, although there is occasional debate (as to which category, say, Eph 4:11 should correspond to), it is theoretically possible to dig up every occurrence of the word ἀπόστολος and put it squarely into one of these two categories. *Tertium non datur*.

But Apollos makes this very neat approach somewhat less straightforward. Here we appear to have a man who did not witness the resurrection or receive a personal commission from Jesus, and who never wrote Scripture (unless Martin Luther was right about the letter to the Hebrews!), yet nonetheless had a substantial role in the establishment of the Corinthian church, and was placed in the same foolish, cruciform, scum-of-the-earth group of apostles as Paul himself. He clearly did not have the same experience or commission as Paul or the twelve, yet he does not seem to be a mere “messenger of the churches” either. Rather, his very presence in the NT, and the way in which he is spoken of, imply that the word ἀπόστολος was used in several ways in the first few generations of Christianity, which accounts both for the diversity we see in the NT—Jesus, the twelve, Paul and James, Barnabas and Silas, Apollos, Andronicus and Junia, Epaphroditus and the unnamed brothers, and the “super-apostles”—and for the otherwise inexplicable comments about testing apostles in the Didache.³⁷ It may also suggest that, according to Paul, although the appearances of the risen Jesus ceased with Paul’s encounter on the Damascus road, the ἀπόστολοι did not.³⁸

³⁴ The briefest recent summary of this view is that of Grudem, *Prophecy* 229–35.

³⁵ Barnabas is the most contentious of these, on the basis of Acts 4:34–37.

³⁶ On this functional (as opposed to official) meaning of ἀπόστολοι in Rom 16:7, see especially C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans 9–16* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979) 789; Moo, *Romans* 923–24; Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 795–97. James Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988) 894–95, regards Andronicus and Junia as “within the select group of ‘premier’ apostles (Eph 2:20),” in contrast to those described in 2 Cor 8:23 and Phil 2:25.

³⁷ Jesus (Heb 3:1); the twelve (Acts 1:21–22, etc.); James (Gal 1:19); Paul; Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14; Gal 2:9; 1 Cor 9:1–6); Silas (1 Thess 2:6); Apollos (1 Cor 4:1–13); Andronicus and Junia (Rom 16:7); Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25); the unnamed brothers (2 Cor 8:23); “super-apostles” (2 Cor 11:5); the need to test apostles (*Did.* 11:4–9).

³⁸ This is the intriguing conclusion of Fee, *1 Corinthians* 397: “Only when ‘apostle’ is used in a non-Pauline sense of ‘guarantors of the traditions’ would the usage be narrowed to the first century.”