

# AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

## PAULINE PRINCIPLES FOR APOSTOLIC RENEWAL

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**A**T LEAST for the present, a little sister of the poor is not likely to preach at the sunday morning masses in Soho's St Patrick's church. It is equally improbable that sunday afternoon will find her mounted on a soap box at Speakers' Corner to explain the teachings of catholicism. Yet her very work in the London home for the aged broadcasts God's word to a city of men and women who are stirred spiritually only by the language of deeds. More than this, within the home itself the little sister often speaks of Christ to the old people, giving joy and courage through words that bear God's life. In modern parlance, therefore, we call her an apostle, even though she never preaches in church or gives instruction from a speaker's stand in London's Hyde Park.

St Paul, however, never employs the word 'apostle' to cover this kind of witness to Christ. When this term appears in his epistles it has a technical and restricted meaning dictated by common usage in his day. At that time the Church was an island of light in a sea of surrounding darkness. The *dramatis personae* on this miniature stage were characters evoked by the unfolding drama of church life. Since the light of Christ had to spread out into the darkness, men like Paul and Barnabas, Silas and Timothy, Junias and Andronicus set out to illumine the pagan world with God's word. This mission gave them the distinctive name, 'apostles'. Like the *Sheluhim* who went out from the jewish synagogue, these 'apostles' were missionaries, sent forth by the christian community to evangelize those who lived outside the Church.

This restricted verbal usage, however, does not obscure the patent fact that within the early christian community many activities were carried on which fit neatly into our modern comprehensive concept of apostolate. Paul himself speaks of the work of Phoebe, Tychicus, Prisca and Aquila, and others too, who laboured tirelessly to make faith more vital and practical among their

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fellow-christians. The 'Prophets' expounded the mystery of the divine plan with luminous and inspired words; the 'Teachers' used their pedagogical gifts to instruct and catechize; the 'Consolers' were ever ready to help with the appeal and encouragement which touched hearts. Though St Paul never uses the word 'apostle' to describe these various church-workers, he recognized the necessity and value of their activities and spoke frequently of the 'apostles' themselves engaging in such works. What is more significant, he viewed all church-workers within the same perspective which included the 'apostles'. In the light of these facts, our modern vocabulary has widened the meaning of the word 'apostolate' to cover all the activities referred to by Paul.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this harmonization of verbal usage, there is still an obvious difference between the apostolate in the church of Paul and apostolate today. The early christian community centred its attention on the pre-eminent need to deliver the good news by word of mouth. This is not surprising. In this seedling church, first things had to come first. Men had to know the message of Christ fully and correctly before they could cope effectively with the ignorance and errors of the outside world or assimilate in a healthy way the good things God had put there.

Today things have changed. It is no longer a matter of christianity seeking to diffuse the light while all the rest of the world is plunged in darkness. The night of the human situation has now become dawn, with a pervasive dull grey along the whole horizon. Every culture and every country have been illumined in some way or other by the light of Christ. This has brought radical changes to the pauline style of apostolate. Though the Church must still devote itself wholeheartedly to many of the missionary activities of the early christians, there is now need for many new and altered forms of apostolate. The ecumenism of *Unitatis Redintegratio* is a far cry from Paul's directives on dealing with outsiders.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, he would probably see only a weak dilution in the principle which seems to emerge from *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*: that whatever a christian does in a christian way furthers the apostolic thrust of the Church's mission. I leave to your imagination what he would say to religious who conscientiously prefer the 'apostolate' of driving a taxicab to the task of teaching christian doctrine.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor 12, 4-11; 27-30; Rom 12, 6-8; Eph 4, 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Col 4, 5-6; 1 Cor 5, 9-12.

Changed circumstances, however, and resultant modification of the forms of apostolic work do not alter the nature or demands of the compelling mission which is the vital, surging impulse of Christ's body. The Church of today, as much as the Church of Paul, must actualize that dynamic thrust of its inner being which Christ himself has described clearly and precisely: 'Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you'.<sup>3</sup>

Paul and the apostolic workmen of his day fulfilled this mandate both in its letter and spirit. The missionary élan of Christ's life in the Church shaped their whole attitude to conformity with the mind of him who said, 'I am come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish that it were already blazing'.<sup>4</sup> The apostolate of these men – with its perspective, aims, and scale of values – was the work of the holy Spirit, who made these first christians not only our fathers in the faith but also the inspired models of all authentic apostleship. The ensemble of Paul's writings on the spirit and work of these men, therefore, provides a paradigmatic handbook for the renewal of apostolic life and apostolic spirituality in religious communities, where men and women, by vocation and consecration, are committed to wholehearted fulfilment of the Church's mission.

This does not mean that the pauline epistles give us a total picture of those who worked to carry out this mission. Even scholars find it difficult to resolve the many problems which surface from letters which were not written to answer the queries of church historians and theologians of church ministry.

It is not always clear, for instance, whether Paul uses the word 'apostle' of the twelve who were chosen by Christ himself or of missionaries who were sent forth by the community to harvest converts.<sup>5</sup> Paul also leaves in obscurity the relationship of dependence or independence between the 'apostles', 'teachers', 'prophets', etc., and the administrators of the local churches (*episkopoi*). He is silent, too, about any inherent right of apostles and church-workers to preside at the community service of 'breaking bread' and to take an active part in administering other sacramental rites.

The uncertainty which surrounds mooted matters like these may cause regret, but Paul's non-committal silence really serves to

<sup>3</sup> Mt 28, 19–20.

<sup>4</sup> Lk 12, 49.

<sup>5</sup> Cf 1 Cor 4, 9; 9, 2; Eph 2, 20, etc.

sharpen the profile of apostleship itself. By concentrating all his attention on its spirit and aims, he accentuates those essential and distinctive notes which must strike resonances in the character of every authentic apostle, whether he be cleric, religious or lay person.

Paul himself was singularly equipped to point up these basic elements. Though by divine call he was an 'apostle' (in the new testament sense of the word), he was also involved in every other form of church activity. Let someone try to describe Paul's multi-faceted apostolic work and he will hear his audience humming the song about quick-silver Maria in *The Sound of Music*, 'Can you hold a moonbeam in your hand?' The kaleidoscopic character of Paul's eminent apostleship enabled him to speak as a master about what is essential in the character of all those who would share actively in the Church's mission.

Life always flows from certain vital principles. Whether one be a teen-ager bubbling over with sparkling vim or a decrepit oldster wheezing away in a rocking chair, the heart must beat, the blood must flow, and the lungs must breathe. So, too, all apostleship, if it is to be a living reality, must flow from certain essential sources. What these elements are is clear from recurring motifs in Paul's letters. The principles he sets forth are at once an inspiration and a criterion. As such they must guide the process of apostolic renewal in religious communities. It may be of help, therefore, if we set forth here what we judge are three points of special stress in Paul's words about apostleship.

1. For Paul, every apostle must have God as the whole centre of gravity in his life work. Speaking of himself in the introductions to his letters, he expands the conventional form of greek address to state the fact that he is God's man, with a special commission from him to do his saving work: 'From Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ who has been called to be an apostle, and specially chosen to preach the good news'.<sup>6</sup> God not only equips him for his ministry<sup>7</sup> but also provides him with the very message of his apostolate,<sup>8</sup> and works powerfully with him for the accomplishment of its purpose.<sup>9</sup> As for the nature of this purpose, it has only one meaning: to bring men to God as the only centre of their whole life.<sup>10</sup>

Paul, therefore, finds in the God-centred rite of jewish sacrifice a fitting image for the work of his own apostleship. It is a form of

<sup>6</sup> Rom 1, 1; cf 1 Cor 1, 1; 2 Cor 1, 1; Gal 1, 1-2; Eph 1, 1.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor 3, 4-5.

<sup>8</sup> Rom 1, 1-5; 2 Cor 4, 5-7.

<sup>9</sup> Rom 15, 17-19; 2 Cor 13, 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Thes 1, 9-10; Rom 15, 16, 18, 21.

spiritual worship,<sup>11</sup> and it prompts the apostle to speak of himself as offering a priestly sacrifice: 'I am to carry out my priestly duty by bringing the good news from God to the pagans, and so make them acceptable as an offering, made holy by the holy Spirit'.<sup>12</sup> God responded to this wholehearted service by filling 'the sacrifice' of the apostolate with his own power to save. This thought aroused in Paul a thrilling sense of gratitude:

Thanks be to God, who, wherever he goes, makes us, in Christ, partners of his triumph, and through us is spreading the knowledge of himself, like a sweet smell, everywhere. We are Christ's incense to God for those who are being saved.<sup>13</sup>

Paul's apostolate, therefore, was bounded on all sides by the single horizon of God. He was at once the source and the end of Paul's ministry; his saving action among men was its content and his graces were its constant support. Paul's awareness of all this was so constant that he was ever mindful of the presence of God. In everything he did and said he kept his eyes fixed on the face of the Lord: 'It is before God that we, in Christ, are speaking'.<sup>14</sup>

Undoubtedly Paul owed the intensity of these convictions to his inaugural vision and to the many striking evidences of God's will and active assistance throughout his ministry. Though personal to Paul himself, these experiences also served to illumine for him the meaning and requirements of the apostolic vocation of all his co-workers. Time and again he couples their names with his own to point up their shared identity. Most often, in speaking of the glories and labours of the apostolate, he spontaneously introduces the plural pronoun 'We'. In Paul's estimate, the action of the holy Spirit in his life was equally the source and unique force of all work for the Church.<sup>15</sup> He emphasizes this conviction when he compares himself with Apollos, in order to teach the captious corinthians that every apostle's real worth is all of God's giving:

What is Apollos and what is Paul? They are servants who brought the faith to you. Even the different ways in which they brought it were assigned to them by the Lord. I did the planting, Apollos did the watering, but God made things grow. Neither the planter nor the waterer matters: only God, who makes things grow. . . We are fellow-workers with God.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Rom 1, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Rom 15, 16.

<sup>13</sup> 2 Cor 2, 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> 2 Cor 12, 19; Cf 1 Thess 2, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Cf 1 Cor 12, 4-11, 27-28; Rom 12, 6-8; Eph 4, 10-12.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor 3.

These words offer a piece of fundamental common sense to everyone who aspires to be an apostle. Though he may have the personal magnetism of a Pied Piper, the apostle must always be God's man first. Without a constant, living conviction of God's pre-eminent rôle as source, centre and end of all apostleship, a man runs the risk of finding himself among those whom Paul condemns: 'These people are counterfeit apostles; they are dishonest workmen disguised as apostles of Christ'.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps this *caveat* is much needed today. Present emphasis on human concern often leads men to take a short-cut to the apostle's characteristic stance by describing him as a 'man for others'. As we shall see, such human concern is an essential part of apostleship. But short-cuts often end up in devious by-paths. To escape missing the way it behoves us to remember that if an apostle is a 'man for others' he is God's man first. Whatever concern he has for people is an authentic apostolic concern only if it is a share in God's love for them. Whatever may be the human need he seeks to meet, an apostle cannot let this obscure his knowledge of man's most radical need, his yearning for God. If hungry stomachs have to be filled, an apostolic provider still keeps in mind that 'man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'.<sup>18</sup> Apostleship makes a man ingenious in using every human device to 'plant and water'; but in the midst of all this enterprise and expertise he must always remember that 'it is only God who makes things grow'.<sup>19</sup>

To put it very simply: an apostle is a man who lives constantly in God's presence. To do God's work in the way he wants requires that we stand always before the face of the Lord. He is the one who chooses us for the work he wants done. Whatever success we have will be of his making; and true success can be nothing other than bringing men nearer to him. The apostle, therefore, must be a man of prayer. (Count up all the times that Paul refers in his letters to his 'prayer without ceasing'.) It is only face to face with God that we learn how to shape the bent of our mind into the true apostolic attitude of doing all things in him, with him and for him.

2. This God-mindedness was as much characteristic of the Old Testament prophets as of the New Testament workers of whom Paul writes. Jeremiah's conviction of a divine call to be an apostle provides Paul with the very words he uses to describe his own

<sup>17</sup> 1 Cor 11, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Deut 8, 3; Mt 4, 4.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor 3, 6.

commission.<sup>20</sup> Isaiah's dedication to the word of God as cause and source of all salvation is so much the pattern of Paul's emphasis on the saving power of the word that he has been called the 'Isaiah of the New Testament'. The whole pauline psychology of seeing God as the only apostolic horizon was already anticipated in the composite motto of Elijah: 'As Yahweh lives, the God of Israel, before whose face I stand . . . I am filled with great zeal for Yahweh Sabaoth'.<sup>21</sup>

The apostle of the New Covenant, however, has something far greater than the word spoken by the prophets of the Old Law. He belongs to the age which is alight with the gift of God's consummate saving action. Through the Word made flesh, God has given the whole of himself. Apostleship in the Church, therefore, is fully illumined with 'the revelation of the glory of God shining in the face of Christ Jesus'.<sup>22</sup>

This fact provides a second life source for those who would take part in the Church's mission, and it gives to their spiritual physiognomy a distinctive feature. The life and work of an apostle are so inseparably bound up with the life and work of Christ that he has even greater reason than the ordinary christian to live always 'in Christ Jesus'. The profound intimacy of this relationship finds expression in the many appellatives Paul uses to denominate the apostolic workers. He calls them 'slaves (*douloi*) of Christ',<sup>23</sup> 'ministers (*diakonoi*) of Christ',<sup>24</sup> 'oarsmen (*hypēretai*) of Christ',<sup>25</sup> 'incense (*euōdia*) of Christ'.<sup>26</sup>

In lieu of a more apt grammatical designation we are forced to call the phrase 'of Christ' a mystical genitive. In its meaning this phrase includes all the genitival relationships which grammarians distinguish. As a subjective genitive it describes Christ as author of the apostolic vocation<sup>27</sup> and source of its life and work.<sup>28</sup> As an objective genitive it points to him as the very end and purpose of all ministry.<sup>29</sup> More than this, the phrase 'of Christ' is luminous with the whole theology of the Paul who saw Christ as the dynamic force and unflinching support of all apostolic activity.<sup>30</sup>

There is, however, one feature of Christ's rôle in the apostolate

<sup>20</sup> Gal 1, 15; cf Jer 1, 5.

<sup>22</sup> 2 Cor 4, 6.

<sup>24</sup> 2 Cor 11, 23; Col 1, 7.

<sup>26</sup> 2 Cor 2, 15.

<sup>28</sup> Cf Rom 15, 29; 1 Cor 4, 15; 15, 2.

<sup>30</sup> 2 Cor 2, 14-3, 4; 13, 3-4; Col 1, 29.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Kgs 17, 1; 19, 10.

<sup>23</sup> Rom 1, 1; Gal 1, 10; Phil 1, 1.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Cor 4, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Cf Rom 1, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Cf Col 1, 27-28.

which calls for special attention since it is emphasized by Paul more than any other. Each time he speaks of apostolic work he either states explicitly or simply implies that the total content of what the apostle gives to others is the mystery of Christ. 'Preaching the good news' is for Paul a cliché to describe the whole thrust of christian apostleship.<sup>31</sup> Early in his ministry when he learned that some were preaching the good news for unworthy motives, he surprised his informants by uttering a cry of joy: 'What does it matter? One way or another, in pretence or sincerity, Christ is proclaimed; and for that I rejoice'.<sup>32</sup> At the close of his ministry, on the eve of his death, he urges Timothy, 'Make the preaching of the good news your life's work, in thoroughgoing service'.<sup>33</sup>

Paul emphasizes this Christ-ful content of all apostolic ministry when he writes of himself and his co-workers, 'We are ambassadors for Christ'.<sup>34</sup> As a man sent by God to do God's saving work, Paul knew that it is only by sharing with men the mystery of Christ that the Church really accomplishes her God-given mission: 'There is no salvation in anyone else at all, for there is no other name under heaven granted to men, by which we may receive salvation'.<sup>35</sup> To be an apostle, therefore, meant for Paul to live and work among men as an 'ambassador' sent by Christ to deliver authentically the message which he himself utters through his life, death and resurrection.

Paul's absolute intransigence in delineating the 'trustworthiness' which this ambassadorship requires<sup>36</sup> is blinding for men and women with less faith in the world's unique need for Jesus.

The first requirement a faithful ambassador must meet is to speak the word of Christ through the example of his own life. In one of the finest autobiographical pieces in the pauline corpus, the apostle reveals his consuming desire to share intimately in the death and resurrection of Christ which the good news proclaims.<sup>37</sup> The fulness with which he realized this desire enabled him to affirm, 'Wherever we go we carry death with us in our body, the death Jesus died, that in this body also life may reveal itself, the life that Jesus lives'.<sup>38</sup> Because of this personal fidelity to the message of Christ which he preached, Paul's whole character and conduct became a living utterance of the good news. Men could see and hear in his deeds the very pattern of the life which they had to live.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Cf Rom 1, 2; 15, 16; Gal 1, 11; 1 Thess 2, 4, etc.

<sup>32</sup> Phil 1, 18.

<sup>33</sup> 2 Tim 4, 5.

<sup>34</sup> 2 Cor 5, 20.

<sup>35</sup> Acts 4, 12.

<sup>36</sup> Cf 1 Cor 4, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Cf Phil 3, 8-15.

<sup>38</sup> 2 Cor 4, 10.

<sup>39</sup> Cf 1 Cor 4, 16-17; 11, 1; Phil 3, 17.

The second requirement an apostle faces is the compelling need to deliver the word of Christ in its full integrity. An ambassador is not free to pick and choose what may suit his fancy in the message given him to propose. He must speak every word of it and must judge every situation in accord with the exigencies of that word. The most scathing rebukes in the pauline letters are found in passages where Paul tongue-lashes those apostolic workers who adulterate the message of Christ.<sup>40</sup> He insists that an apostle will have to face stern judgment if, like an incompetent builder, he fails to match the style of his work with the rich promise of its sturdy foundation, the message of Jesus.<sup>41</sup>

In a self-revealing passage Paul has proposed a model for every apostle to follow if he is to be an authentic ambassador for Christ:

Since we have by an act of mercy been entrusted with this work of administration, there is no weakening on our part. On the contrary, we will have none of the reticence of those who are ashamed, no deceitfulness or watering down the word of God; but the way we commend ourselves to every human being with a conscience is by stating the truth openly in the sight of God.<sup>42</sup>

In our own day it would be difficult to find a more perfect example of fidelity to this pattern than our holy Father, Pope Paul VI. In season and out of season he has faithfully proclaimed the full message of Christ. Never courting popularity, and in no way daunted by vocal resistance, he has fearlessly spoken to men what he, with the special apostolic graces of the pontificate, knows for certain is the full truth of the good news. The light of this message enables him not only to safeguard and foster the faith of the Church but also to approve, with wholehearted encouragement, every form of human betterment and material development which actualize Christ's cosmic rule as Lord of the universe.

Like the two Pauls, an apostle may fulfil his mission in the nooks of church life or in the crannies of the world. But everywhere he must work as the humble servant, faithful steward and loyal ambassador of the Christ who alone can save.

3. The two apostolic life-principles of which we have written are so intimately formative of the psychology of an apostle that they animate and direct all his activities. A missionary in Africa, a sister in the class-room, a Legion of Mary worker in suburbia or the city

<sup>40</sup> Gal 1, 6-9; 2, 14; 3, 1; 2 Cor 11, 4, 13.

<sup>41</sup> Cf 1 Cor 3, 10-13.

<sup>42</sup> 2 Cor 4, 1-2.

slums: all of these must constantly look to God and depend totally on his Christ if they are really to help men share in eternal life now and in the world to come. Only that man is an authentic apostle whose whole bent of mind, like Paul's, is directed to the ultimate goal of begetting children to the Father in Christ Jesus.<sup>43</sup>

We may call this 'the missionary spirit' or 'the apostolic set of mind'. In its deepest reality, however, this spiritual bent has its source in God's love living in the heart of the apostle as it lives in the heart of Christ. Because this tender, caring, saving love always impels him, the apostle will say with Paul, 'The love of Christ leaves us no choice'.<sup>44</sup> Those who, through love, seek to fulfil the mission of the Church cannot hold back from helping their fellow-men. Love so warms and illumines their every contact with people that they share Paul's strong devotedness: 'God knows how I long for you all, with the deep yearning of Christ himself'.<sup>45</sup>

This love which characterizes the truly apostolic spirit creates the third life-principle of apostleship: *diakonia* (readiness to serve). Mere mention of service to men has an aura of appeal for the generous youthful apostles of today. But one must understand the profound reason for apostolic service if it is to have perduring strength and unfailing consistency. Paul illumines this reason by showing that the apostle who serves men is, before all else, 'the servant of the Lord'.

This was a title which the early Church gave to Jesus<sup>46</sup> in recognition of the fact that he had accomplished the mission of the 'servant of Yahweh' described by the prophet Isaiah.<sup>47</sup> Throughout his earthly life Jesus faithfully followed this isaian pattern, fulfilling the Father's will by giving to men the full-hearted service which the Father asked of him. Though this service cost him tireless labour, discouraging frustration and eventual death, Jesus was always the devoted servant of men precisely because he was always the devoted 'servant of the Lord'.

It is significant that Paul never applies this title to Jesus, except on one occasion when he quotes an early liturgical hymn.<sup>48</sup> For Paul, Jesus risen from the dead had become the Lord of glory and had put off forever his rôle as 'servant'. In the post-resurrection Church it was the apostles living in this world who now assumed the rôle of 'servant' to carry on the work which Jesus had begun.

<sup>43</sup> Cf 1 Cor 4, 15; Gal 4, 19.

<sup>45</sup> Phil 1, 8.

<sup>47</sup> Isai 42, 1-9; 49, 1-6; 50, 4-11; 52, 13-53, 12.

<sup>44</sup> 2 Cor 5, 14.

<sup>46</sup> Acts 3, 13, 26; 4, 27, 30.

<sup>48</sup> Phil 2, 7.

In describing his own call to be an apostle, Paul uses the very words which Isaiah had spoken of the 'Servant of Yahweh'.<sup>49</sup> In his letter to the corinthians he affirms even more clearly the substitution of rôles which has taken place: 'It is not ourselves that we are preaching, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake'.<sup>50</sup>

In fulfilling his vocation as apostle-servant Paul gave to men everything he had. The recital of his apostolic work presents a roster of every kind of service: preaching, instructing, letter-writing, forming leaders, begging for God's poor, working so as not to burden others. His example smashes every 'Off Limits' sign which men might erect in order to confine apostolic activity within definite bounds. 'I have made myself every man's servant', he writes, 'to win over as many as possible'.<sup>51</sup>

But this is not to say that the spirit of service turned Paul into a will-o'-the-wisp. Far from being the dizzy dance of a dervish, his apostolate always had a focal point and a pattern. He meant what he said when he described himself to the corinthians as 'your servant *for Jesus' sake*'.<sup>52</sup> In serving men he always remembered that he was, first of all, 'the servant of the Lord'. In all his letters Paul makes crystal clear that his apostolic service, like the mission of Jesus, flowed from the love God had put into his heart that he might do God's work in God's way. For Paul this love, as Jesus the 'Servant' had lived it, was the life and form and rule of all apostolate. This is why he calls love 'a more excellent way' than all other apostolic activities.<sup>53</sup>

Paul had his own way of fulfilling his pledge, 'your servant for Jesus' sake'. He had to live as 'the servant of the Lord' at a given time and in given circumstances. His concern, therefore, was to minister to the men of his day with an apostolate tailored to the providential situation in which they lived. As a result, his perspectives and scale of values reflect not only the unchanging will of God to save all men but also the special needs of christianity in its origin. With the passing of time and the emergence of manifold developments, a new world has come into being with impressive assets for God's saving work and with depressing liabilities. How much mileage has been covered in man's trek from the world of Paul's epistles to the world of Vatican II!

<sup>49</sup> Acts 26, 17-18; Cf Isai 42, 7, 16.

<sup>51</sup> 1 Cor 9, 19; cf vv 20-22.

<sup>53</sup> Cf 1 Cor 13, 1-13.

<sup>50</sup> 2 Cor 4, 5.

<sup>52</sup> 2 Cor 4, 5.

Yet this change must not obscure Paul's basic apostolic principles. Many of these we have already seen. We can find others, too, in what he has written on the spirit of service. Recurring emphasis in his letters reveals perennial constants which must feature in the apostolate of all time. To be truly 'a servant of the Lord' in the task of serving men, an apostle can do nothing better than to incorporate into his own life of service the attitudes and activities which Paul regarded as necessary for every apostle.

We set forth here the principles which seem to emerge obviously from Paul's treatment of apostolic service.

- a. The apostle must pray without ceasing for those whom he serves. 'It is only God who makes things grow'. Prayer for his help is an essential part of the apostle's service to men.
- b. Opportunities for the direct apostolate of communicating knowledge of the mystery of Christ call for prime attention. The apostle who is a 'servant for Jesus' sake' cannot help but give preferential esteem to the work of illumining minds and warming hearts with the divinely empowered good news.
- c. To make Christ known to people who have scarcely heard of him (in the mission field and in the paganism of cities) should be of vital concern to every apostle. The work of human and social service advances the mission of the Church, if workers vitalize their activity with the human concern of God's love and with the virtues of the gospel.
- d. Suffering, hard work and frustration are the price which apostolic love must pay for man's salvation. They are a share in the sufferings of Christ and are alive with the power of his resurrection.
- e. The appeal of the gospel will be resonant only if apostolic workers treasure unity in faith and cooperation in charity. Teaching that distorts Christ's message, and activities that rupture charity, are a disservice to God and to man.
- f. The apostle must render to all the service of his own exemplary christian life.

All that we have written here is but a pale reflection of the light that shines in the letters of Paul. Let a man read the epistles and ponder them prayerfully; nothing can substitute for this. Paul is the apostle *par excellence*. To see things as he did is the meaning of apostolic spirituality. To follow his example is to bring the saving Christ into the world he redeemed.