

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament · 2. Reihe 92

Anthony Bash

Ambassadors for Christ



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Herausgegeben von
Martin Hengel und Otfried Hofius

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Ambassadors for Christ

An Exploration of Ambassadorial Language
in the New Testament

by

Anthony Bash



J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen

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FOREWORD

The Archbishop of York
The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Dr David Hope, K.C.V.O.

It is some years since I was intrigued by Gerd Theissen's *The Gospels in Context*. In unpacking the social and political world where our Lord was incarnate and in which the Gospels were forged, he gave familiar Gospel passages a new insight and depth for which I was profoundly grateful.

Anthony Bash's original work on ambassadorial practices and their influence on New Testament imagery bears a similar promise. For it too enriches one's understanding of Gospel passages, providing a key to unfold further significance. But in addition, it also penetrates the mind of Paul, a troubled mind torn between being an ambassador for Christ in the truest sense of the word, but needing to wield necessary power to prevent his Gospel of divine power and human powerlessness from being perverted.

Paul's dilemma, so well expounded, does much to inform and judge how power is handled today, within and without the Church. In my mind, the book is given added edge in that it is written by one whom I recently ordained deacon. Anthony's grappling with his own vocation to be an ambassador for Christ prevents the book from being an abstract work and enables it to be one grounded in diaconal reality.

My own ordination may be less recent than Anthony's, and yet I immensely value his work, not least because it reminded an Archbishop where power truly lies.

Anthony's meticulous New Testament scholarship unfolding minute detail of life in a world of two thousand years ago provides a searing challenge as to how we practise our faith in the world of today. To that end, the book has my heartiest commendation.

† David Ebor :

PREFACE

This monograph is a slightly revised version of my dissertation submitted to Cambridge University in July 1995 for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

I gratefully acknowledge the advice, support and encouragement of my doctoral supervisor, Professor Morna Hooker DD. I also thank Miss Joyce Reynolds who has taught me to read and to interpret inscriptions. I am grateful to Dr Loveday Alexander and Revd. John Sweet for their comments at my doctoral examination. Lack of time and opportunity alone are why I have not been able to pursue all their suggestions.

Many people have contributed to my academic and personal development and this book is in part a product of their influence. I especially owe to my parents, Hilary and Leonard Bash, more, I suspect, than I shall ever adequately appreciate. I also gratefully acknowledge the trenchant - and, at the time, unwelcome - advice from the Bishop of Hull, the Rt. Revd. James Jones, to pursue doctoral research.

I thank Professor Martin Hengel and Professor Otfried Hofius for accepting this work for publication in the WUNT 2 series. I also thank Matthias Spitzner of the Production Department at J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) for his efficiency and courtesy. I am grateful to Revd. Clive Gardner and Mark Daddy for advice on how to produce text which complied with the publisher's specifications.

The Archbishop of York has kindly written a Foreword to this monograph. I am grateful to him for doing so and for his generous commendation of my work.

Finally, I thank my wife, Dr Melanie Bash. Melanie's friendship has sustained me and her love and support have been unflinching. I dedicate this book to Melanie in gratitude and with admiration.

Συνηρμόσθη δ' αὐτῷ καὶ γυνή, ... αἰσίοις γάμοις
συνκερασθεῖσα· ἐξεύγνυντο γὰρ βίοι βίοις καὶ σώμασιν
ψυχὰὶ καὶ παρ' ἀμφοτέροις ἀμέριστος ὁμόνοια
IG V.2 268, ll. 31-34 = AGI 1, pp. 167f., infra.

Anthony Bash
Kingston upon Hull
November 1996

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ABBREVIATIONS

Books and articles cited below also appear in the Bibliography (pp. 265ff., *infra*). Abbreviations are as set out in *OED*, *OCD* and 'Instructions for Contributors', *JBL* 107 (1988) 579-596, except as follows:

Abbott & Johnson	F. F. Abbott, and A. C. Johnson, <i>Municipal Administration in the Roman Empire</i> , Princeton: Princeton University Press (1926).
AD	' <i>Ἀρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον</i> (Athens).
AGI	Appendix of Greek Inscriptions (pp. 165-263, <i>infra</i>).
Anat St	<i>Anatolian Studies</i> (London).
Anatomy	J. H. Schütz, <i>Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority</i> , Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1975).
ASAA	<i>Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente</i> (Bergamo).
Ath Mitt	<i>Mitteilungen des deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung</i> (Athens & Berlin).
B-A	K. and B. Aland (eds), <i>Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur von Walter Bauer</i> , Berlin: de Gruyter (1988).
'Background'	G. K. Beale, 'The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5-7 and its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Corinthians 6.14 - 7.1', <i>NTS</i> 35 (1989) 550-581.
BTNT	P. Stuhlmacher, <i>Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments</i> , Vol. 1, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (1992).
Charlesworth	M. R. Charlesworth, <i>Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Claudius and Nero</i> , Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1939).
Cos	W. R. Paton and E. L. Hicks (eds), <i>The Inscriptions of Cos</i> , Oxford: The Clarendon Press (1891).
Cracks	J. T. Fitzgerald, <i>Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogs of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence</i> , Atlanta: SBL (1988), SBLDS 99.
Crisis	G. Howard, <i>Crisis in Galatia: A Study in Early Christian Theology</i> , Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1990).
DC	Dio Chrysostom.
DH	Dionysius of Halicarnassus.
	<i>Amm.</i> <i>The Letter to Ammaeus</i>
	<i>AR</i> <i>The Roman Antiquities</i>
	<i>Ars Rh.</i> <i>Ars Rhetorica</i>
	<i>De Comp. Verb.</i> <i>De Compositione Verborum</i>
<i>De Fals. Leg.</i>	Demosthenes, <i>De Falsa Legatione</i> .
<i>Diakonia</i>	J. N. Collins, <i>Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources</i> , Oxford: Oxford University Press (1990).

- DS Diodorus Siculus.
Hist. The Library of History
- EDNT H. Balz and G. Schneider (eds), *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, (1990 -).
- 'Envoys' M. M. Mitchell, 'New Testament Envoys in the Context of Greco-Roman Diplomatic and Epistolary Conventions: the Example of Timothy and Titus', *JBL* 111 (1992) 641-662.
- EpGal F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Exeter: Paternoster (1982).
- Emperor F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC - AD 337)*, London: Duckworth (1977).
- F. Delphes G. Colin, *Fouilles de Delphes: Tome III - Epigraphie*, Paris: École Française d'Athènes (1929).
- F. Xanthos A. Balland (ed.), *Fouilles de Xanthos - Tome VII (Inscriptions d'époque impérial du Létôon)*, Paris (1981).
- FE E. Reisch *et al.* (eds), *Forschungen in Ephesos veröffentlicht vom Oesterreichischen Archaeologischen Institute*, Vienna: Holder (1906 -).
- Frag. Pseud. Gr. A.-M. Denis, *Fragmenta Presudepigraphorum quae Supersunt Graeca*, Leiden: E. J. Brill (1970).
- Fraser-Matthews P. M. Fraser and E. Matthews, *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names (Vol. I - The Aegean Islands, Cyprus, Cyrenaica)*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press (1987).
- GC J. H. Oliver, *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri*, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society (1989).
- Geog. Strabo, *The Geography*.
- HE Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*.
- Hellenists C. C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division in the Earliest Church*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press (1992).
- IL Afr R. Cagnat and A. Merlin (eds), *Inscriptions Latines d'Afrique - Tripolitaine, Tunisie, Maroc*, Paris: Leroux (1923).
- IL Alg S. Gsell (ed.), *Inscriptions Latines de l'Algérie*, Paris: Champion (1922 -).
- I. Didyma R. Harder (ed.), *Didyma: Die Inschriften*, Berlin: Mann (1958).
- I. Magnesia O. Kern (ed.), *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Meander*, Berlin: Spemann (1900).
- IGLS L. Jalabert and R. Mouterde (eds), *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, Paris: Guethner (1929 - 1967).
- IGR R. Cagnat *et al.* (eds), *Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas Pertinentes*, Paris: Leroux (1911 - 1927).
- IGUR L. Moretti (ed.), *Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romae*, Rome: Studi Pubblici dell' Instituto Italiano per la Storia Antica (1968 - 1990).
- IK H. Engelmann and R. Merkelbach, *et al.* (eds), *Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien*, Bonn: Habelt (1972 -).
- ILM L. Chatelain (ed.), *Inscriptions Latins du Maroc*, Paris (1942).
- ILS H. Dessau (ed.), *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, Berlin: Weidmann (1892 - 1916).
- Inst. Gai J. B. Moyle (ed.), *The Institutes of Gaius*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press (1913).

- Inst. Just. J. A. C. Thomas (ed.), *The Institutes of Justinian: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Oxford: North & Holland (1975).
- IosPE V. Latyshev (ed.), *Inscriptiones antiquae orae Septentrionalis Ponti Euxini Graecae et Latinae*, Hildesheim: Olms (1965).
- JBTh *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* (Neukirchen-Vluyn).
- Jos. Josephus.
- Καταλλάσσω S. E. Porter, *Καταλλάσσω in Ancient Greek Literature, With Reference to the Pauline Writings*, Cordoba, Spain: Ediciones el Almendro (1994), (Estudios de Filología Neotestamentaria, 5).
- Lindos II C. Blinkenberg (ed.), *Lindos: Fouilles et Recherches (1902-14): Vol II (Inscriptions)*, Berlin: de Gruyter (1941).
- MAAR *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* (Bergamo).
- MAMA *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* (London).
- Milet T. Wiegand (ed.), *Milet: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen seit dem Jahre 1899*, Berlin: Reimer (1908).
- Nestle-Aland B. and K. Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft (1993), 27th ed.
- New Docs *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri*, (North Ryde, NSW, Australia).
- NRSV *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, New Revised Standard Version* (1989).
- Nuova Silloge A. Maiuri (ed.), *Nuova Silloge Epigrafica di Rodi e Cos*, Florence: Le Monnier (1925).
- OED J. A. H. Murray et al., *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (1933).
- OGIS W. Dittenberger (ed.), *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*, Leipzig: Hirzel (1903-1905).
- Opponents D. Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark (1987).
- PAJ N. Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity*, Sheffield: JSOT Press (1992).
- Philo
 Philo Judaeus
 Abr. *De Abrahamo*
 Conf. *De Confusione Linguarum*
 Cong. *De Congressu Eruditionis Gratia*
 Flac. *In Flaccum*
 Gig. *De Gigantibus*
 Heres *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres*
 Ios. *De Iosepho*
 Leg. *De Legatio ad Gaium*
 Mos. *De Vita Mosis*
 Plant. *De Plantatione*
 Spec. *De Specialibus*
 Virt. *De Virtutibus*
- PJG F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1986).
- P. Lond. F. G. Kenyon and H. I. Bell, et al. (eds), *Greek Papyri in the British Museum*, London: Trustees of the British Museum (1893-1917), 5 Volumes.

- PME* H. Devijver, *Prosopographia Militarium Equestrum quae Fuerunt ab Augusto ad Gallienum*, Leuven: Universitaire Presse (1976-1980).
- Power* B. Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles*, Lund: CWK Gleerup (1978).
- RDGE* R. K. Sherck, *Roman Documents from the Greek East*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press (1969).
- RE* G. Wissowa and E. Kroll, *et al.* (eds), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Stuttgart: Metzlerscher (1893 -).
- REAH* R. K. Sherck, *The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1988).
- REB* *The Revised English Bible*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1989).
- REG* *Revue des études grecques* (Paris).
- RGEA* R. K. Sherck, *The Roman and Greek East to the Death of Augustus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1984).
- Rhetoric* S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht (eds), *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, Sheffield: JSOT Press (1993).
- Role* J. T. Greene, *The Role of the Messenger and the Message in the Ancient Near East*, Atlanta: Scholars Press (1989).
- RRAM* D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor to the end of the Third Century after Christ*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1966).
- Sardis* W. H. Buckler and D. M. Robinson (eds), *Sardis*, Leiden: Publications of the American Society for the Excavations of Sardis (1932).
- SB* F. Preisigke *et al.* (eds), *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten*, Berlin: de Gruyter (1915 -).
- Second Epistle* A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, (1915).
- Second Letter* P. E. Hughes, *St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians*, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott (1962).
- Seconde Épître* E.-B. Allo, *Saint Paul: Seconde Épître aux Corinthiens*, Paris: Libraire Lecoffre (1956).
- SIG³* W. Dittenberger *et al.* (eds), *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, (3rd ed.) Leipzig: Hirzel (1915 - 1924).
- 'Study' H. St J. Thackeray, 'A Study in the Parable of the Two Kings', *JTS* 14 (1913) 389-399.
- TAM* *Tituli Asiae Minoris* (Vienna).
- Thasos* C. Dunant and J. Pouilloux, *Recherches sur l'Histoire et les Cultes de Thasos - Tome II*, Paris: École Française d'Athènes (1958).
- TLG* L. Berkowitz and K. A. Squitier, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: Canon of Greek Authors and Works*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1990).
- Versöhnung* C. Breytenbach, *Versöhnung. Eine Studie zur paulinischen Soteriologie*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag (1989).
- 'VSS' C. Breytenbach, 'Versöhnung, Stellvertretung und Sühne. Semantische und Traditionsgeschichtliche Bemerkungen am Beispiel der Paulinischen Briefe', *NTS* 39 (1993) 59-79.
- W. Chrest* U. Wilcken, *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyruskunde*, Leipzig: Teubner (1912).

'ΩΣ'

T. Muraoka, 'The Use of ΩΣ in the Greek Bible', *NovT* 7 (1964) 51-72.

ZPE

Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik (Bonn).

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

A. The Aims of the Study

In this monograph, I examine the practice of sending ambassadors and embassies in the Greek east of the Roman empire in the first century. My argument is that the practice has not previously been fully understood by writers on the New Testament. The result has been inadequate exegesis of parts of the New Testament.

My approach is as follows. In chapters One and Two, I survey and comment upon the work of writers on the New Testament about ambassadors, embassies and related forms of communication. I compare this work with some of the work of classicists on the same subjects. In chapters Three to Five, I explore ambassadorial communication in the Graeco-Roman world. In particular:

(i) In chapter Three, I define an embassy and present a social, cultural and historical analysis of embassies from about 60 BC to AD 150.

(ii) In chapter Four, I present an analysis of the epigraphic record of ambassadors and embassies from the Greek east of the Roman empire in the period 27 BC to AD 119. I identify the language which was typically used of such embassies and the nature of the interests which ambassadors commonly promoted. I refer extensively to the Appendix of Greek Inscriptions (pp. 165-263, *infra*).¹

(iii) In chapter Five, I examine the literary record of embassies from about 60 BC to AD 150. I compare the record with what inscriptions disclose, examine the language which was characteristically used of embassies and determine whether ambassadorial communication can be inferred in places where explicit ambassadorial language has not been used.²

¹ Citation of the inscriptions is by the abbreviation "AGI" followed by the number of the inscription.

² It remains disputed to what extent the New Testament writers were familiar with or influenced by literary writings. See F. G. Downing, 'A Bas les Aristos', *NovT* 30 (1988) 212-230 and E. A. Judge, *Antike und Judentum: Towards a Definition of the Field*, *ANRW* 23.1 3-58, p. 21. I follow the widely held view that some familiarity was possible. On Paul's likely familiarity with the Greek linguistic and literary heritage, see J. M. G. Barclay, 'Paul Among Diaspora Jews', *JSNT* 60 (1995) 89-120, pp. 95f. and 104-107.

By adopting this approach in chapters Three to Five, I hope to avoid what B. Holmberg has described as "the idealistic fallacy", that is, an interpretation of the New Testament based on "ideas and nothing else" and in ignorance of the historical context and social forces of the period in which the New Testament was written.³ I also wish to avoid what E. A. Judge has described as "the sociological fallacy", namely, "the importation of social models that have been defined in terms of other cultures".⁴ In addition, by confining the range of literature and inscriptions I have examined to those from a limited period, I hope to avoid the pitfall of drawing on material which cannot be regarded as reliable evidence because it is possibly either too early to be appropriate or too late to be relevant.⁵ This pitfall may be termed "the chronological fallacy".

In the remaining chapters I seek to apply these findings and offer (i) a re-interpretation of parts of the New Testament along ambassadorial lines in the context of related forms of communication; and (ii) an exegesis of New Testament passages which explicitly or implicitly refer to ambassadors or embassies.

B. Communication in the Ancient World

1. Communication

A basic definition of communication is that it is the transmission of data (such as facts, messages, information, feelings) between people (a "Sender" and a "Receiver").⁶ In addition, a method (such as a letter or word of mouth), means (for example, a packhorse or a boat), an agent (a messenger, a letter-carrier and so on) and a route (a road, for example) are also involved.⁷

³ Power (1978), p. 205.

⁴ 'The Social Identity of the First Christians', *JRH* 11 (1980) 201-217, p. 210.

⁵ See on this, P. Cotterell and M. Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (1989), p. 178 and M. Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning* (1983), p. 38.

⁶ In the twentieth century, data can also be communicated between machines. On models of communication in the field of linguistics, see J. Lyons, *Semantics*, Vol. 1 (1977), pp. 36-39.

⁷ J. D. Stevens and H. D. Garcia, *Communication History*, Vol. 2 (1980), noted the lack of conceptual models for describing methods of communication (pp. 8f.). Diagrams of models they suggested are given on pp. 10, 72, *ibid.* The model outlined here is based on their suggestions. On models of communication generally, see L. C. Hawes, *Pragmatics of Analoguing* (1975). For a discussion of the modes of communication used by the Romans, see G. Achard, *La Communication à Rome* (1991). On communication in the ancient Near East in the three millennia before Christ, see J. T. Greene, *Role* (1989), pp. 133f., 232 and G. W. Buchanan, *Biblical and Theological Insights from Ancient and Modern Civil Law* (1992), pp. 113-116, 119-127. On travel, see L. Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (1994 ed.).

Thus Paul communicated with the churches when absent from them by letters and by those whom he sent to represent him.⁸ At least some of his letters were written at his dictation by an amanuensis⁹ and we can infer that his letters were carried by people on his behalf to the addressees. We also know that the letters were carried - sometimes long distances - by land and by sea and at some risk to the carriers. In other words, *data* (the contents of what Paul wanted the churches to receive) were transmitted through *agents*, the amanuenses and Paul's representatives, by the *method* of letters or the word of mouth of representatives. The *means* were travel on foot, boats and probably also animals and the *route* was by land and sea.

2. Communication in the Graeco-Roman World

(a) *Ambassadors in the Greek East of the Roman Empire*

Communication by ambassadors and embassies was a long-established practice in the areas comprising the Greek east of the Roman empire.¹⁰ The nouns *πρέσβεις*, *πρεσβευταί* (both meaning "ambassadors"),¹¹ *πρεσβεία* (meaning "embassy" and referring to both the concept of sending ambassadors, the message sent and the persons who took it)¹² and the verb *πρεσβεύειν* (meaning "to go on an embassy") described such people and functions.¹³

In everyday speech, the word "ambassador" normally connotes a diplomatic representative of one country stationed in another country who represents the interests of the sending country. "Embassy" may connote both the place of residence and the place of day-to-day work of an ambassador.¹⁴

⁸ As suggested by R. W. Funk in 'The Apostolic *Parousia*' in *Christian History and Interpretation*, ed. W. R. Farmer *et al.* (1967) pp. 249-269.

⁹ E.g., Romans 16:22. Secretarial assistance is known to have been used by Paul in other places (e.g., I Corinthians 16:21, Galatians 6:11 and Philemon 19). The rôle of the secretary is discussed by E. R. Richards in *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (1991). On the possibility of co-authorship, see J. Murphy-O'Connor, 'Co-Authorship in the Corinthian Correspondence', *RB* 100 (1993) 562-579.

¹⁰ E.g., F. Adcock and D. J. Mosley, *Diplomacy in Ancient Greece* (1975) and D. J. Mosley, 'Envoys and Diplomacy in Ancient Greece', *Historia Einzelschriften*, 22, 1973.

¹¹ Besides these, two other nouns are found very occasionally: *πρέσβευμα* (ambassador, embassy) (e.g., Plut., *Vit.: Tim.* ix.7 and *Mor.* 541F) and Thucydides' neologism *πρέσβευσις* (quoted by DH, *Amm.* II.3). See G. Iacopi, s.v. 'Legatus', *Diz. Epigr.* IV (1948), 500-526, D. Kienast, s.v. 'Presbeia', *RE* (Supp. XIII) (1973), 499-628, H. C. Avery, 'The Meaning of ΠΡΕΣΒΕΥΕΣΘΑΙ', *CQ* ns 40 (1990) 545-546; J. L. G. Ramón in 'Griego πρέσβυς y Variantes Dialectales', *Emerita* 53 (1985) 51-80 on the etymology of the *πρεσβ-* group of words. See also J. C. Matthews, s.v. 'Gesandtschaft', *RAC* 10 (1978) 653-685.

¹² Cf. W. R. Schoedel in his introduction to Athenagoras' *Legatio* and *De Resurrectione*, p. xiii and 'Apologetic Literature and Ambassadorial Activities', *HTR* 82 (1989) 55-78, p. 55.

¹³ What an ambassador did could be achieved by other means on some occasions: e.g., Agrippa wrote a letter because he was too ill to undertake an embassy (Philo, *Leg.* 276ff.).

¹⁴ Cf. *OED* where the word "embassy" is said to denote "the function or office of an ambassador; also, the sending of ambassadors".

Those referred to by the *πρεσβ-* word-group in the period of the Roman empire include those who were appointed to undertake international (that is, inter-state) diplomatic duties but such people acted in an *ad hoc* capacity and were not permanently appointed to a diplomatic post.

The idea of ambassadors and of ambassadorial endeavour is, however, more extensive than the modern description and definition of the words suggest. At the most general, the nouns *πρέσβεις* and *πρεσβευταί* described those who, in the Greek east of the Roman empire,

(i) Were appointed to carry out a particular task - not necessarily one which involved international diplomacy - which involved communication on behalf of another;¹⁵

(ii) Travelled to another place in order to discharge the terms of the appointment;

(iii) Promoted the interests of those who sent them;¹⁶ and

(iv) On completion of their task, returned to the place of departure.

Πρεσβεία is the abstract noun which denoted the function of such people and *πρεσβεύειν* the verb which described their activity.¹⁷

More specifically, besides referring to those who undertook *ad hoc* international diplomatic duties, the *πρεσβ-* word-group commonly described a person who was appointed by a community (for example, a city, *koinon* or synod in the colonies or provinces of the Roman empire) or by an individual for political, administrative or religious duties on behalf of that community or individual.

The importance of ambassadors in the Graeco-Roman world has long been recognised. G. A. Kennedy referred to a collection of ambassadorial speeches

¹⁵ Agency is not central to the idea of ambassadorial communication; agency has been introduced as a result of confusion with *legati*. See pp. 9f., *infra*. Although some writers on the New Testament have identified agency in John's gospel (e.g., P. Borgen, 'God's Agent in the Fourth Gospel', in *The Interpretation of John*, ed. J. Ashton [1986], pp. 67-78, J.-A. Bühner, *Der Gesandte und sein Weg im 4. Evangelium* [1977], A. E. Harvey, 'Christ as Agent' in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament*, ed. L. D. Hurst and A. E. Harvey [1987], pp. 239-250) I do not regard this as evidence of ambassadorial communication.

¹⁶ New Testament commentators tend to think of ambassadors and embassies primarily in relation to representation and principles of agency (e.g., G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* VI, s.v. 'πρεσβεύω' [1968], p. 681 and M. M. Mitchell, 'Envoys' *JBL* 111 [1992] 641-662, pp. 645ff.) and have not recognised that an important aspect of ambassadorial endeavour was to promote the Sender's interests.

¹⁷ It is, of course, the case that persons could undertake ambassadorial duties without being called "ambassadors". E.g., in an inscription of a letter from Tiberius to the *gerousia* of Ephesus, no specific reference is made to ambassadors. Reference is, however, made to a certain Κουρτίος Πρόκλος who delivered a copy of a decree passed by the *gerousia* ('Neue Inschriften aus Ephesos XII', D. Knibbe *et al.*, *Jahresheften des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts* 62 [1993] 113-150, no. 3. See also no. 8 and no. 9.) It is known from numerous other inscriptions (e.g., AGI 30 [decree of *polis*], 64 [decree of *demos*], 23, 49, 69, 80 [decrees of *boule* and *demos*]) that decrees were often delivered by an embassy and there is no reason to think that this is not so in this example.

from historians of antiquity which was edited in its present form in the tenth century.¹⁸ As early as 1585 the jurist Alberico Gentili published *De Legationibus Libri Tres* (based on Greek and Roman literary sources) and, in the first of the three books, undertook an analysis and classification of the different types of embassy in the ancient world. He used his findings to set out what he considered should be the rights of ambassadors in the sixteenth century. Gentili's work is the first systematic treatise on ambassadors in public international law.¹⁹

In the field of classical studies, interest in ambassadors developed in the nineteenth century. A Geneva thesis of 1840²⁰ and a Göttingen thesis of 1882²¹ (each using Greek literary sources) considered Athenian ambassadors; a thesis of 1876²² used mainly Latin literary sources to analyse embassies sent to Rome. In 1885, F. Poland wrote his Leipzig doctoral dissertation²³ on ambassadors and attempted a definition and description of the different types of embassies and an analysis of the social and political conventions relating to ambassadors. One of the significant features of his dissertation is that it referred to inscriptions: Poland cited the *CIG* and the two volumes of inscriptions of P. Le Bas.²⁴

In general, however, until this century, interest in embassies in the Greek east was usually in the context of international diplomacy, particularly in relation to the Greek city-states and Roman military endeavour.

Recent work by Roman historians and political scientists, especially F. Millar, has resulted in a realisation that there were other important aspects of ambassadorial endeavour.²⁵ In particular, it has been appreciated that

¹⁸ *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* (1983), p. 21, n. 16 referring to *Excerpta de Legationibus*, ed. C. de Boor (1903).

¹⁹ From the introduction by E. Nys in 'The Classics of International Law', ed. J. B. Scott (no. 12, Vol II) (1924). Another early work on ambassadors (in Latin) which considered the Greek and Latin sources is *Legatus* by C. Paschal (or Pasquale) (Rouen, 1598).

²⁰ *De Legationibus Publicis apud Athenienses*, A. E. Turretini.

²¹ *De Legationibus Atticis*, M. Heyse.

²² *De Legationibus Reipublicae Liberae Temporibus Romam Missis*, T. Buettner-Wobst (Leipzig).

²³ *De Legationibus Graecorum Publicis*.

²⁴ *Voyage Archéologique en Grèce et en Asie Mineure fait pendant les années 1843 et 1844* (1870).

²⁵ This came about partly by a change in the way in which the government of the Roman empire has been understood. Formerly, political scientists described the government of the empire in terms of the task, functions and inter-relationship of the different central organs of imperial and senatorial government and their effects and influence on the provinces. New study, particularly of epigraphic evidence, has resulted in the recognition that, in general, the early imperial period of the empire and beyond "can only be understood by starting from the provinces and looking inward [to Rome]" (F. Millar, 'The Emperor, the Senate and the Provinces', *JRS* 56 [1966] 156-166, p. 166). F. Millar's *Emperor* (1977) is especially associated with this development, although he was not the first to make these observations. M. K. Hopkins' review of the book (*JRS* 68 [1978] 178-186) found Millar's view "exaggerated" but "a valuable corrective to the modernistic assumptions often made, that emperors thought out sophisticated policies, and executed those policies with the help of an efficient bureaucratic administration" (p. 180).

communication with the emperor and provincial governors was primarily - and vigorously - by way of embassies. Embassies were "an essential aspect of the life of the empire". Their importance "is impossible to over-emphasise", for it was by embassies that relations between the provinces and the emperor were usually regulated. Embassies were, in effect, "the essential means by which the cities and other groups communicated" with the emperor.²⁶

(b) *Other Agents of Communication in the Greek East*

The word "messenger" (ἄγγελος or, sometimes, διάκονος)²⁷ was a general term for any kind of agent (such as a messenger, servant or military official) whose task was to carry oral or written forms of communication to another party. A messenger usually delivered a message verbatim and did not have authority except to undertake specific and previously prescribed tasks of a limited nature. Most messages were to inform or to require a particular course of action in circumstances where the Sender believed the Receiver had a right or the authority to require that action. The work of a messenger was usually menial (for example, undertaken by a slave or servant) and permitted little freedom of action or the right to engage with the Receiver except to relay the message. Moreover, in contrast to embassies, the practice of sending and receiving messengers was not part of a recognised social institution in the first century Graeco-Roman world.

An ambassador was, occasionally, regarded as a type of ἄγγελος²⁸ although, in general, ambassadors were not called ἄγγελοι but were referred to as πρέσβεις or πρεσβευταί. Ambassadors were not διάκονοι.²⁹

It is possible to identify discrete categories of person who were not ambassadors and who could have been called ἄγγελοι or διάκονοι but in general were not.³⁰ They include the following:

(i) Βιβλιαφόροι³¹ (or βυβλιαφόροι)³² and γραμματοφόροι:³³ These were letter-carriers. In the period of the New Testament, there was no public postal system.³⁴ Augustus introduced a system of relay stations for governmental

²⁶ F. Millar, *Emperor* (1977), p. 385.

²⁷ E.g., LSJ s.v. διάκονος.

²⁸ E.g., DS, *Hist.* xi.2.5f. and xiv.25.1,7. The examples are few.

²⁹ See J. N. Collins, *Diakonia* (1990), pp. 170f., 317 n. 3 and in 'Georgi's *Envoys* in 2 Cor. 11:23' *JBL* 93 (1974) 88-96. Cf. D. Georgi, *Opponents* (1987), p. 28 and in the Epilogue, p. 352, n. 2, from Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.22.69, 3.24.64ff., Thucydides I.133 and Pollux, *Onomasticon* 8.137f. For further discussion, see pp. 25ff., *infra*.

³⁰ There are exceptions, of which examples are given in the footnotes.

³¹ E.g., DS, *Hist.* ii.26.8, xi.21.4, xi.28.5, xiii.54.3, xiv.101.2, xix.11.1 and xx.18.1.

³² E.g., DS, *Hist.* xix.13.5, 13.7, 14.4, 57.5, 85.5 and 100.3.

³³ E.g., Plut., *Vit.: Caes.* xxvi.4 and *Pel.* x.4; Jos., *BJ* ii.203.

³⁴ The emperor, public officials and some business companies owned slaves and these may have been used to deliver correspondence on occasions. There were also certain private arrangements from time to time. See also L. Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (1994 ed.),

purposes, known as the *cursus publicus*, the use of which was strictly limited even by officials.³⁵ Sometimes ordinary travellers would carry official mail.³⁶ Ambassadors (properly so described) also carried letters.³⁷ In that case, an ambassador would, unlike other letter carriers, also have a representative and explanatory rôle, in addition to the task of delivery. They might enlarge on what was said in the letter, explain points of detail, undertake certain ritual actions, such as to offer a sacrifice, and make diplomatic speeches.

(ii) Θεοπρόποι: Those sent as public messengers to enquire of an oracle might be designated θεοπρόποι.³⁸

(iii) Θεωροί:³⁹ This word has four meanings. Most commonly it means spectators at games.⁴⁰ It can also refer to envoys sent on religious business to a god (such as to consult an oracle, as in the sense of (ii) above,⁴¹ or to present an offering to an oracle) or to envoys sent on religious business by a god.⁴² Thirdly, it can mean those invited to participate in sacred festivals as state representatives. Finally, the word also describes those who went from a city or country to announce an imminent festival and to invite participation by those from other cities or countries.⁴³

(iv) Ἱεροπομποί:⁴⁴ These were people who conveyed sacred taxes to Jerusalem for the Jews.⁴⁵

(v) Κήρυκες:⁴⁶ Κήρυκες were heralds, a special form of public messenger, who at times could be engaged in aspects of international diplomacy as well as local politics and administration.

pp. 219ff. and S. R. Llewellyn 'Sending Letters in the Ancient World: Paul and the Philippians' *TynBul* 46 (1995) 337-356, pp. 339ff., on postal systems.

³⁵ *Diplomata* were licences to use the *cursus publicus*. See AGI 63, J. H. Oliver, 'Texts A and B of the *Horothesia* Dossier at Istros', *GRBS* 6 (1965) 143-156, especially p. 152 and Pliny, *Ep.* CXX. On the postal system, see J. L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (1986), pp. 214f. and 'The Greek Documentary Letter Tradition', *Semeia* 22 (1981) 89-106, pp. 102-104.

³⁶ Philo, *Leg.* 254.

³⁷ Plut., *Vit.: Publ.* ii.3 and DS, *Hist.* xvii.39.1f.

³⁸ Plut., *Vit.: Nic.* xiii.1 and *Cim.* xviii.7.

³⁹ Plut., *Vit.: Arist.* xxi.1, *Cam.* viii.4; *Mor.* 235D, 338A, 773B, 846A; DS, *Hist.* iv.53.5, viii.21.3, viii.24.1, ix.33.2, xiv.109.4, xv.49.1,3, xix.2.3 and xx.100.3; DH, *Lys.* 29; Arr., *Anab.* vii.23.2. The noun θεωρία is found in Plut., *Vit.: Nic.* iii.5. See also AGI 36, 74, 76 and 78.

⁴⁰ E.g., Jos., *AJ* xix.142f.

⁴¹ DH used πρεσβεύειν (*AR* iv.61.3) and Plut. used πέμπειν instead (*Vit.: Cam.* iv.4).

⁴² A. Erskine, 'Rhodes and Augustus', *ZPE* 88 (1991) 271-275, p. 273.

⁴³ According to S. R. F. Price in *Rituals and Power* (1984), p. 223 (but disagreed with by A. Erskine, *supra*), in some literature (outside the period considered in this book), the word may have sometimes referred to an ambassador to a king.

⁴⁴ On this word, see the note on Philo, *Leg.* 156 in E. M. Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrii 'Legatio ad Gaium'* (1961), pp. 238f.

⁴⁵ Philo, *Leg.* 216, 312; *Spec.* i.78. Cf. *Leg.* 156 where a periphrasis is used.

⁴⁶ On heralds generally, see G. Friedrich, *TDNT*, III, s.v. 'κήρυξ' (1965), pp. 683-696, *OCD* (2nd ed.) p. 501 and F. Adcock and D. J. Mosley, *Diplomacy in Ancient Greece* (1975), pp. 152-154. The discussion in the text is taken from writings in the period 60 BC - AD 150.

The most important rôle of the herald - and the rôle with which most people in the first century would have been familiar - was to declare the official decrees, proclamations, honours and announcements passed, for example, by a *boule* or *demos*. A herald also had the task of opening the festivals and reading out the citations of lists of persons officially honoured in the community. For these tasks, a herald was expected to have a powerful voice.

Heralds also had a diplomatic rôle. From Plutarch's writings, heralds were the agents through which a country or city sometimes declared war, proposed a truce and terms of peace, made announcements or formal proclamations.⁴⁷ Herald, who had a distinctive cry,⁴⁸ are also referred to in the context of war: their task was to act as messengers between combatants.⁴⁹ They were regarded as inviolable because under the special protection of the god Hermes and so they usually travelled alone.⁵⁰

The powers of a herald were limited. In contexts apart from war, they were sent to take messages,⁵¹ to make formal pronouncements or to precede an embassy to enquire whether safe conduct would be granted to ambassadors. Their position was privileged and they were regarded as having the protection of the gods. In effect, this "provided them with what amounted to a form of diplomatic immunity, which was not automatically extended to envoys in general".⁵²

(vi) Φητιάλοι:⁵³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus described the "sacred institution" of the *fetiales*⁵⁴ in AR ii.72ff.⁵⁵ *Fetiales* held a Roman priestly office. The duties of the *fetiales* included the responsibility to regulate the circumstances in which the Romans would enter into war: for example, they acted as ambassadors to make a formal demand for justice before war was declared. They also investigated crimes against ambassadors.

⁴⁷ Vit.: Arat. xxxix.3, Ti. Gra. v.3, Thes. xxii.1, Nic. xiv.5 and Flam. x.3-5. In Mor. 784C, heralds are said to proclaim laws in the public assemblies.

⁴⁸ Plut. Vit.: Thes. xiii.3 and Cor. xxv.2.

⁴⁹ E.g., DS, Hist. xiv.47.1f.

⁵⁰ See, generally, Philo, Leg. 99-102. Herald, according to Philo, associated with peace and reconciliation.

⁵¹ DC referred to people who were obviously acting as heralds (they "go unarmed into an armed camp as envoys to sue for peace", [Or. 38.18]) with the phrase πρεσβεύουσιν υπέρ ειρήνης and then referred to them as ἀγγέλους υπέρ φιλίας.

⁵² F. Adcock and D. J. Mosley, *Diplomacy in Ancient Greece* (1975), p. 153.

⁵³ For a discussion of *fetiales*, see J. M. Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome* (1982), Document 8, notes to line 85 (pp. 89f.).

⁵⁴ He described them as "arbiters of peace" or ειρηνοδίκαι.

⁵⁵ See also Plut., Vit.: Num. xii.3-5.

(c) *Legati in the Latin West*

In the Latin west of the Roman empire, those who were ambassadors from the Greek east were called *legati* and their embassy was called *legatio*.⁵⁶

During the republican period, *legati* were those whom the senate had entrusted with governmental diplomatic functions as inter-state ambassadors, including those who were appointed - usually in a commission of ten⁵⁷ - to settle the affairs of a defeated or surrendered power. However, far more than ambassadorial activity is denoted by *legati* and *legatio*. The word was also used to refer to particular types of agents to whom specific governmental functions and powers had been delegated⁵⁸ or those who had been appointed by a magistrate to undertake delegated duties, whether military or civilian, for a period of office in a province.⁵⁹

These uses continued in the early imperial period and, in addition, the word *legatus* became the characteristic title both of a governor of an imperial province⁶⁰ and of a commander of a legion.⁶¹ By far the most frequent use of the word *legati* was to refer to republican - and subsequently to imperial - agents who were acting in a military, political or administrative rôle.

Confusion or ambiguity can arise for the modern reader when the word *legati* is expressed in Greek because this one Latin word refers to a medley of discrete agents with distinguishable tasks. An example of ambiguity occurs in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' writings. Marcus Valerius is called πρεσβευτής in AR v.50.3 and from the text it is clear that he was sent by the Romans as sole ambassador. His task was to go to cities neighbouring Rome and to ask them not to begin a revolt by reneging on a treaty of friendship.⁶² In AR vi.12.1 Marcus Valerius is

⁵⁶ There is no Latin verb corresponding to πρεσβεύειν. The particular form of communication which I am describing ante-dates the Roman empire and probably originates from the practices of the Greek city states.

⁵⁷ E.g., DS, *Hist.* xxviii.15.2; Plut., *Vit.: Aem.* xxviii.3, *Phil.* xxi.6.

⁵⁸ Thus, the underlying idea of the word *legatus* has to do with delegation whereas one of the principal underlying ideas of the πρεσβ- word-group is, as I argue, the promotion of the interests of the Sender.

⁵⁹ It was not appropriate to describe as *legatus* anyone of less than senatorial status.

⁶⁰ Such a person was known as *legatus Augusti pro praetore* or in Greek πρεσβευτής καὶ ἀντιστράτηγος. See *Dig.* 18.1. In an inscription in Greek (c. AD 73-74) concerning the digging of a canal in Antioch, Syria, the *legatus* of the emperor (referred to as πρεσβευτής) was the governor of Syria and the father of the future emperor Trajan (*SEG XXXV* [1985] no. 1483 = *AE* [1986] 694). For further examples, see R. K. Sherck, *The Legates of Galatia from Augustus to Diocletian* (1951), who listed all the *legati Augusti pro praetore* and other *legati* in Galatia from 25 BC and his 'Roman Galatia', *ANRW II* 7.2 (1980) 954-1052. On *legati* generally, see A. Lintott, *Imperium Romanum* (1993), pp. 121ff.

⁶¹ The commander of a legion in an imperial province was also the provincial governor if there was only one legion in the province. If there were several legions in a province, the governor, the *legatus Augusti pro praetore*, was supreme commander and the commanders of the individual legions (the *legati*) served under him.

⁶² The language used is typical of embassies from the Greek east: the verb is ἀποστέλλειν + ὑπό + εἰς, together with a typical verb of supplication (αἰτεῖν).

again called *πρεσβευτής*: in that place, he was a formally appointed Roman official who had taken over the command of the Master of the Horse and attacked Rome's enemies. In that context, he was not an ambassador.

In addition, *legati* and *legatio* are not exactly verbally equivalent to *πρέσβεις* (or *πρεσβευταί*) and *πρεσβεία* respectively. It is, in general, true that *legati* who undertook ambassadorial duties were called *πρέσβεις* or *πρεσβευταί* and their activity is described by the verb *πρεσβεύειν* or by the noun *πρεσβεία*. On the other hand, those who were government officials or delegates were usually called *πρεσβευταί* but not *πρέσβεις*.⁶³ Thus, the *πρεσβ-* group of words refers to an indigenous practice of the Greek east (the sending of embassies whether for public or personal purposes) and one word from that word-group, *πρεσβευτής*, was typically used of a diverse group of Roman officials.

3. Communication in the Ancient Near East

Different practices and traditions of communication existed in the ancient Near East.⁶⁴ J. T. Greene, in *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East* (1989), has identified a general class of agent whose task was to deliver "verbatim messages either orally or in writing, or both".⁶⁵ Such people included ambassadors, emissaries, couriers, envoys, harbingers and heralds and were generally (without distinction) called מלאכים.⁶⁶

From Greene's work and my own survey of Jewish inscriptions and ostraca,⁶⁷ I can say that there was not a technical language relating to messengers and messages in the ancient Near East. Various words were used to describe the same basic functions carried out by discrete categories of person. For example, the verb שלח⁶⁸ was used to refer to the dispatch of a messenger (with an oral or written message)⁶⁹ and sometimes to (a) the carrying of letters;⁷⁰ and (b) the

⁶³ For clear examples, see AGI 61, 62 and see also p. 9, n. 60, *supra*. On rare occasions, other words from the *πρεσβ-* group of words were used to refer to government officials or delegates: e.g., in Jos., *BJ* i.538, *πρέσβεις* means "legates" and in Plutarch's writings (*Vit.: Cat. Mai.* xii.1, *Comp. Phil. & Ti.* iii.1 and *Sull.* iv.1) the participle *πρεσβεύων* sometimes means "legate".

⁶⁴ In the following pages, I confine my discussion to what was written in Hebrew or discussed by J. T. Greene in *Role* (1989).

⁶⁵ P. 133.

⁶⁶ Greene detected no changes of practice 3000 BC - 30 BC, the period of his study.

⁶⁷ P. J.-P. Frey's *CII* contains in its index no Greek, Latin or Hebrew words referring to ambassadors or embassies; likewise the collections published after Greene's book: G. I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions* (1991), W. Horbury, D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions* (1992) and D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe*, I (1993).

⁶⁸ On the verb and letters, see B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine* (1968), p. 312, n. 3.

⁶⁹ E.g., G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents* (1957), no. 4, line 1.

⁷⁰ E.g., A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri* (1923), no. 30 (line 70), no. 31 (line 6) and no. 40 (line 3).

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