

the matter of this publication. Anyway and anyhow relations between the Southern Presbyterian Church and the said Council have been severed. But do not forget that the arduous task of renewing the said relations by the Assemblies of the past, were always near explosions. In the face of 175 to 79 votes against such relations, some prophesied that the severed relations in a year or two would be patched. However that may be, there was an audible sigh of relief, if not even applause, when the vote on this much and heatedly debated question was counted.

And lastly in regard to Union with other Presbyterian and Reformed Churches: This pressing question has been to forefront for years. There have been Ad Interim Committees and Ad Interim Committees. There have been Overtures pro and con, but mostly con, to Assembly after Assembly. There has been proposed Organic Union with the United Presbyterian Church. Committees have met and endeavored in the best sense of the word to bring about Union, but without avail. There have been exchanges of Fraternal Delegates with them, but they decided on no union for a while at least.

It has been almost the same with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and their delegate told this Assembly that they loved us, but as to Union, not now, may be in the coming years. And with the U. S. A. Presbyterian Church, it has been the same story over a longer period, with a gradual forgetting of the past. With the above historical setting, the Ad Interim Committee of the last Assembly brought in an interesting but impractical report. There were ten overtures. Nine of the ten asked that negotiations in regard to Organic Union cease. One asked for a continuance. The Assembly placed the report and the overtures in the hands of a Special Committee, composed of one Minister and one Ruling Elder from each of the seventeen Synods. After hours of consideration, in the most Christian spirit, with many prayers, 26 out of 34 agreed to the Majority Report, which provided for the ending of negotiations for Organic Union, the appointing of an Ad Interim Committee to draft a complete and definite plan of Federal Union with all Presbyterian and Reformed bodies, either jointly with all, or with any that were willing. The Committee to place emphasis on the

historic interpretation of our faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of Mankind, rather than the mechanics of Church Government and operation; that in the meantime our Church concern itself mightily in prayerful, Christian stewardship of its possessions, time, talents and opportunities. In the opinion of your writer this was a polite way of stopping agitation of the Organic Union because the Assembly knew that it was impossible now. Insofar as the U. S. A. Church was concerned, both in Committee and on the floor of the Assembly, it was argued that that Church itself did not have Organic Union, that it existed under Administrative Union. So with the United Presbyterian Church not wanting us alone, and the Associate Reformed not wanting us with others, and the U. S. A. wanting us and everybody else, we compromised on the Majority Report, which was adopted 148 to 97.

Thus ended an interesting, strenuous, almost radical but at the same time a kindly Christian meeting of the Seventy-First Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

## Notes on Biblical Exposition

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### VII. HOW PAUL RECEIVED THE GOSPEL

*"For I make known to you, brethren, the gospel that was preached by me, that it is not according to man. For no more did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism, how that excessively I persecuted the Church of God and laid it waste and advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my race, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when He who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through His grace was pleased to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, nor did I*

*go up into Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia and again I returned into Damascus" (Gal. 1:11-17, in a literal translation).*

#### Paul and Paul's Gospel

IN the last number of CHRISTIANITY TODAY we discussed the first verse of this passage in connection with what precedes. "You are turning away from the gospel," Paul says (if we may summarize and paraphrase his words), "to another teaching. That other teaching purports to be a gospel, but it is really only a perversion of the one true gospel. These Judaizers have laid violent hands on a gospel that belongs only to Christ. Even

we who preached that gospel to you have no right to do that, and even the angels in heaven may not do it. If anyone is doing it, let him be anathema! I said that when I was with you, and I am saying exactly the same thing now. Surely that does not look like the vacillation and inconsistency with which I have been charged; surely it does not look as though I were seeking to please men. Nay, if I were still pleasing men, I should be no true servant of Christ at all; for the gospel with which I have been entrusted by Christ conforms to no human norm, and a man who has been entrusted with such a gospel must put all thought of human favor aside."

In verse 12, Paul passes from the gospel itself to his own connection with the

gospel. "I make known to you, brethren, *the gospel* which was preached by me, that it is not according to man (verse 11); for no more did I receive it from man" (verse 12). The pronoun "I" in this last clause is emphatic; for if it were not emphatic, it would not be expressed separately in Greek at all, but would be regarded as expressed sufficiently by the ending of the verb form.

Emphasis is nearly always a matter of contrast, either expressed or implied. If I say, "I did not do it" (with the emphasis on the "I"), that implies that someone else did do it or may have done it. The contrast is here between *me* and someone else. If, on the other hand, I say, "I did not do it" (with the emphasis on the "do"), that implies that whereas I did not do it I may have *thought* it or *said* it. The contrast is here between *doing* and some other action of mine.

What, then, in our passage, is the contrast that is implied by the emphasis on the "I"? The commentators have held various views about this question. Does Paul mean: "I did not receive the gospel from men, though the Judaizers did so receive it," or does he mean: "I did not receive it from men, though the ordinary Christian who is not an apostle does so receive it," or does he mean: "I did not receive it from men any more than the original apostles did?" These various views—with the exception of the first—yield a good enough sense. But in point of fact we think that the emphasis on the "I" is to be explained in a very much simpler way. It is due, we think, to the simple contrast between the gospel that Paul preached and Paul himself in his connection with that gospel. "The gospel that I have preached," says Paul, "is not according to man; for, what is more, I, the preacher of that gospel, did not receive it from man. It might have been a divine gospel and yet have been handed over to me by a purely human agent. But as a matter of fact that was not the case. Not only was the gospel that I was to preach divine, but I received it in a divine manner—namely by direct revelation from Jesus Christ."

#### Revelation of Jesus Christ

Paul says that he received the gospel "by revelation of Jesus Christ." That

might mean one of two things. It might mean (1) that he received the gospel by having Jesus Christ revealed to him, or it might mean (2) that he received the gospel by having Jesus Christ reveal the gospel to him. In the former case, the Greek genitive case of the noun "Jesus Christ" (translated into English by the preposition "of") would be an "objective genitive;" "Jesus Christ" would be the *object* of the verb, "reveal," underlying the verbal noun "revelation." In the latter case, the genitive would be a "subjective genitive;" "Jesus Christ" would be the *subject* of the verb underlying the verbal noun.

Both usages are perfectly grammatical in English just as they are in Greek. When we speak of the revelation "of holy mysteries" to us by God in His Word, the preposition "of" indicates that the mysteries are the things that *are revealed*. That corresponds to the Greek objective genitive. But when we say of some piece of knowledge that we possess that it was no product of our own research but came to us by revelation "of God," the preposition "of" indicates that God was the One who *revealed* the thing to us. That corresponds to the Greek subjective genitive.

In our passage, it is perfectly clear from the context that the genitive "of Jesus Christ" is subjective genitive and not objective genitive. Paul means that he received the gospel by a revelation which Jesus Christ gave him, not that he received it by the fact that God revealed Jesus Christ to him. The objective genitive would, indeed, in itself yield a perfectly good sense; it is perfectly true that Paul received the gospel through the fact that God revealed Jesus Christ to him, and indeed he says practically that just below, in verse 16, when he says that God revealed His Son in him. But here the point plainly is concerned not with the content of the revelation but with the source of it. "I received the gospel," Paul says, "not from man but from Jesus Christ." Plainly the same contrast between Jesus Christ and ordinary humanity is intended as that which appears in the first verse of the Epistle—"not through a man but through Jesus Christ." Light-foot admirably paraphrases as follows: "I received it not by *instruction* from man but by *revelation* from Christ."

#### Paul's Apostolic Independence

In this verse Paul is enunciating the thesis which he proceeds to prove in the first great division of the Epistle, running through to the end of the second chapter. His proof of the thesis may be divided into three parts. "In the first place," he says, "before my conversion I certainly did not receive my gospel from the original apostles, because I was then an active persecutor of the Church; and even after I was converted (suddenly and without human intermediation, by a sovereign act of God) I had in the early period no extensive contact with the apostles and so could not have become their disciple (Gal. 1:13-24). In the second place, when I did finally hold a conference with the pillars of the Jerusalem Church, they themselves recognized that the gospel had already been given to me by God and that they had nothing to add (Gal. 2:1-10). In the third place, so independent was I of the original apostles that on one occasion I could even withstand the chief of them to his face, though my objection was altogether to his practice and not at all to his gospel, which was the same gospel of divine grace as that which I myself preached" (Gal. 2:11-21).

"Ye have heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism," says Paul, as he begins his defence of his apostolic independence, "how that excessively I persecuted the Church of God and laid it waste, and advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my race, being more exceedingly zealous (than those contemporaries were) for the traditions of my fathers."

#### The Church of God

It is interesting to observe that Paul here calls the whole body of the disciples "the Church of God." The Greek word *ecclesia*, which is translated "church" in our English Bible, is derived from the Greek word for "call" and the preposition *ek* which means "out." An *ecclesia*, therefore, is a company of those who are called out from their homes to a common meeting-place.

So the word designates, first of all, any ordinary assembly, or an assembly in civil or political life. It is used in this way, for example, in Acts 19:32, where, with reference to the mob in the theatre at

Ephesus, it is said that the "assembly" (*ecclesia*) was confused. So also in verse 39 of the same chapter the town clerk is represented as saying: "And if ye seek anything further, it will be attended to in the lawful assembly (*ecclesia*)." In both of these passages the word appears in its ordinary secular use.

But in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, which was the Bible of the Greek-speaking Jews in the first century and was also the Greek Bible of the New Testament writers, the word *ecclesia* is used to translate a Hebrew word that designates the solemn assembly of God's covenant people. This solemn, religious sense of the word was taken over by the writers of the New Testament books.

In the New Testament, at least three special uses of the word may be distinguished. The word designates (1) the little company of disciples meeting in an

individual house, as in I Cor. 16:19, where Paul speaks of Aquila and Priscilla and the "church" (*ecclesia*) which is in their house. It also designates (2) the whole company of Christians living in any city, as in I Cor. 1:2, where "the Church (*ecclesia*) of God which is at Corinth" includes, presumably, not only the "church" in Aquila and Priscilla's house but also other house-churches in Corinth. Finally, it designates (3) the whole body of Christians throughout the world, as in our passage.

We cannot say that this third usage came as any mere later development from the other two uses of the word. At any rate, it appears plainly in the apostolic age, in the universally accepted Epistles of Paul. With our passage is to be compared particularly I Cor. 15:9, where Paul says: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the

Church of God." In both places, Paul is speaking of his guilt as a persecutor, and in both places, as though to enhance his guilt, he calls the Church that he persecuted by its full title. What a terrible thing it was to lay violent hands upon a company of disciples which, though despised by the world, was in reality nothing less than "the Church of God!"

Certainly it required faith to designate those little groups of humble people, insignificant in numbers, insignificant in the judgment of men, by any such title as that. But Paul was right in so designating them. The future really belonged to those little groups. God does not judge as man judges; He does not look upon the outward appearance but upon the heart, and in His sight those humble little companies were His Church, forever under His care and keeping, not to be separated from Him by principalities or powers or things present or things to come.

# The Philosophy of Paul's Calling

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**W**HERE it mine to choose the model for the Ministers of Christ in all lands, and in all ages, I would unhesitatingly name the apostle Paul. By race, a Jew; by culture, a Greek; by citizenship, a Roman, and subsequently, by grace, a Christian, he combined in his personality elements which, by their completeness, made him preeminently the model for Ministers in all subsequent ages.

The philosophy of his calling is stated in his letter to the Romans:

"I am a debtor, both to the Greeks and the barbarians, the wise and the unwise, and so much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also; for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth; for therein is revealed God's righteousness, from faith unto faith; for the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven."

"I am a debtor!" The language is commercial, but not the obligation which it acknowledges. Paul was not, in any such way, indebted to the Gentiles; he had never bought anything in their market without

paying its price; no human being had any pecuniary claim on Paul.

Nor was he in debt in a non-commercial sense to any Gentile city of the world. From them he had received no favours. Rather he had laboured hard, encountered suffering and persecution in almost every city of the Greeks and barbarians where he labored, thereby placing them in debt to him.

Therefore, it was not on the ground of anything obtained from the Gentiles that Paul acknowledged himself to be their debtor. But he was a debtor in another sense. He had been made the depository of a trust. Being approved of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, he was under sacred obligation to carry out the trust according to its terms.

In Paul three civilizations met: the Hebrew, the Roman and the Christian. Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee. But it was not Paul the Pharisee that said, "I am a debtor." The Pharisee had no sense of obligation to the world. The world in its need, its sin and its bondage had no claim on him which he would admit.

Neither was it Paul the Roman that said, "I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians." Rome had no sense of owing anything to the world. She had built her roads to its rim, but over them she sent no Ministers to bless or to give, but oppressors to get and to hold. Rome was busy collecting her debt from the world, not paying a debt to the world.

It was Paul the Pharisee, who on a Roman road, met the risen Lord. And there a new civilization entered his heart and changed him from a persecutor to a preacher of glad tidings. Instead of going out to make men prisoners, he turned about and traveled to the ends of the earth in his day, to give men the word of freedom. He set his face toward Spain, where upon great Gibraltar the ancients had written the words "Ne plus ultra," (nothing beyond). He went preaching a pardon for all men, sealed and ratified by the blood of Christ, through the acceptance of which all men might be free.

Paul was distinctly and divinely commissioned by Christ to be the apostle to the Gentiles; yet he was a specific instance of a generic principle, and that principle holds