

Tears dimmed the eyes of most people present because they realized what that man had meant to and sacrificed for the Truth of God. The question arises as to why that attitude, which is representative of all of the faculty of Westminster, is needful. I do not care to state anything just now about the Princeton situation, but I do about the condition in the Church as a whole. That the majority of our denomination and of other churches have turned away from historical and Biblical Christianity is no longer debatable. It is an acknowledged fact. The reason for this lies in the fact that our schools, especially seminaries, have been taken over by these religious pacifists and dwellers-on-the-fence. The negative mind has pervaded our Church; many of our

young preachers know not what to believe; the note of authority has been lost from their message, each constructs his own theology, and everyone can believe what he will. The nerve of evangelism has been cut and the Church is going backward. In evidence, last year we lost over 20,000 members.

Now God says, "when the enemy shall come in like a flood I will raise up a standard against him." Such a standard has been raised in Westminster Theological Seminary. Men trained in firm scholarship and unquestioned loyalty to the Word of God can alone be fitted to stand in the gap. These men Westminster faculty is attempting to equip. It is a challenge flung out by men of God to the Church of today to cling to the old paths. And it is now time to face this

issue. If those now in authority in the Church fail to do so, never think that the rising generation shall fail. The issue is clear, the lines are drawn, the banners are up, and the fight is on. May God vindicate His Word by raising up people in this congregation who will align themselves to this cause.

One of the great preachers of another denomination said, "This is the first movement in open rebellion against modernism in the Church and I count it the greatest thing in this generation." That man was influential in sending a dozen students to Westminster. And I count a year's fellowship with that group of doctrinally conscious and consecrated youth the greatest privilege that God ever allowed me to enjoy.

# Notes on Biblical Exposition

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## I. A MAN WHO COULD SAY "NO"

*"Paul an Apostle, not from men nor through a man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead, and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatin. . . ." (Gal. 1: 1, 2, in a literal translation).*

### Letters, Ancient and Modern

THE words just quoted, with the three verses that follow, constitute the opening, or the "address," of the Epistle to the Galatians. We know more about the openings of ancient letters than we did thirty years ago; for within the last thirty years there have been turning up in Egypt, where the dry air has happened to preserve the perishable papyrus on which they were written, great numbers of private letters written on all sorts of occasions and by all sorts of people during the very age and in the very language in which this Epistle was written.

These papyrus letters differ widely among themselves. Some of them are written by educated people; some, by uneducated: some concern business affairs; some, the most intimate matters of family life. But widely though they differ in many particulars, they all *begin*, at least, in practically the same way. We discover when we examine them that there was a fixed epistolary form for the opening of Greek letters in that age.

We too, in our day, have an epistolary form for the opening of letters. We begin our letters with "Dear Sir," even when we are tempted to think that some other adjective would be far more in place than that adjective "dear." It is a mere form, and

we follow it with great uniformity, no matter what the particular occasion of our letters may be.

So in Paul's day there was a regular form for the opening of letters. The Greek papyrus letters that have been discovered in Egypt begin, with only slight variations, according to the form: "So-and-so to so-and-so, greeting."

### The Originality of Paul

How interesting that is—so we may be tempted to exclaim—for our understanding of the Epistles of Paul! How interesting it is to discover that these Epistles, which we have been accustomed to regard as so stiff and sacred, are just "letters" after all, and that Paul begins them in the way in which ordinary letters were begun at that time! How near that brings them to us, how very "human" it shows these Biblical Epistles to be!

Well, it is all very interesting, no doubt. The only trouble with it is that it is not true. As a matter of fact, no matter what we may think about it, Paul does *not* begin his letters according to the customary epistolary form.

Even the grammatical skeleton of Paul's openings is different from that which appears in the papyrus letters that have been discovered in Egypt. Those letters begin with one sentence: "So-and-so to so-and-so (says) greeting." Paul's letters, on the other hand, begin with the form: "So-and-so to so-and-so," then a pause, then: "Grace be with you and peace." But what is far more important is that Paul, in the openings of his Epistles, is not a slave to

any form, not even his own form. He follows this latter form for the most part, but into it he sometimes pours the most distinctive things that in each Epistle he has to say.

So the opening of this Epistle to the Galatians, far from being merely formal or stereotyped, as one might expect the opening of a letter to be, is one of the most characteristic passages in all the Epistles of Paul; it contains in summary all that the writer has to say in the glorious Epistle that follows.

In general, an examination of the papyrus letters of which we have just spoken, instead of impressing us with the similarity between Paul's letters and other letters of that day, impresses us rather with the profound difference. As has well been observed, we have still to find, among these Egyptian letters, anything that compares even for a moment with the Epistle to Philemon, the briefest and most informal of the Epistles of Paul.

### The Meaning of the Word "Apostle"

This distinctive quality of Paul's letters is connected, no doubt, with the second word that appears in this Epistle to the Galatians, the word "apostle." It is not merely "Paul," who is designated as the writer, but "Paul an apostle." "Apostle," as we all learned in Sunday School, means "one who is sent," and not merely "one who is sent," but "one who is sent with a commission." So the word could be used in the ordinary affairs of life to designate a "delegate" or a "commissioner." It is used in this way in II

Cor. 8: 23 to designate "delegates of the churches"—men, that is, who were commissioned by the Gentile churches to carry the proceeds of the collection to the Jerusalem Church. But where, in the New Testament, the word is used without anything corresponding to the phrase "of the churches," where, in other words, it is not expressly said from whom the commission comes, the understanding is that it comes from Christ, and that it is a commission of a very special and very lofty kind.

So when Paul calls himself at the beginning of this Epistle an "apostle," he plainly is using the word in its highly specialized, extremely lofty and sacred, meaning. He means that the Lord Jesus has given to him, as to the original Twelve, a very special authority to speak, in Christ's name, for the guidance of the Church.

#### "Letters" or "Epistles"?

Professor Deissmann has asked, indeed, whether these Pauline Epistles are really "epistles" and are not rather "letters," and he has decided in favor of the latter alternative. An "epistle," he says, is intended for the general public; a "letter" is addressed to local and temporary needs. According to this distinction, he says, the Pauline Epistles are "letters" and not "epistles;" they were not intended for publication, but dealt with special needs as those needs arose among persons whom Paul knew.

This observation has an element of truth in it, and also as an element of error; but the error far over-balances the truth.

It is true that the Epistles of Paul are addressed to special needs and show intimate knowledge of local and temporary conditions. They are not treatises merely put by a literary fiction into an epistolary form, but were intended to answer the questions and deal with the difficulties that had actually arisen in the churches of Paul's day. In so far, they can be called "letters" in Deissmann's sense of the word.

#### Paul's Epistles Not Ordinary Letters

On the other hand, however, although they are letters, they are certainly not ordinary letters; they are not letters that were intended, like the letters that have recently turned up on the rubbish-heaps and in the mummy-cases of Egypt, to be read once and then thrown away. Despite their individual occasions, they are not private letters, but were intended from the beginning to be read in the meetings of the Church. Even the Epistle to Philemon, which is the most informal of them all, is addressed not only to Philemon but to the "church" that was in his house; and the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, though they are addressed to individuals, are addressed to them not merely as individuals but as leaders of the Church, and were plainly intended from the first to be read in the congregations over which Timothy and

Titus had charge. If, therefore, the Epistles of Paul are "letters," they are not private letters but at least pastoral letters—letters written by a leader of the Church for the edification of those over whom God had made him an overseer. Hence they partake, to some extent at least, of the nature of what Deissmann calls "epistles;" they are letters intended, to say the very least, to be read publicly—and, we may add, certainly not just once but again and again—in the churches to which they are addressed.

#### The Authority With Which Paul Writes

But there is something else that differentiates them even more sharply from the private "letters" with which Deissmann is inclined to bring them into connection. It is found in the peculiar character of the commission which gave Paul his right to speak to the Church. Paul did not think of himself merely as an ordinary "bishop" or "overseer," but he thought of himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, a man who, however unworthy in himself, had been invested by the Lord Jesus with supernatural authority and supernatural power.

We may approve of Paul's thinking of himself thus, or we may not approve of it; but at least we cannot deny that he did so think. A consciousness of divine authority runs all through the Epistles of Paul.

The Epistles deal sometimes, it is true, with very intimate and individual matters. We can rejoice in that fact. It gives to these writings much of their power to move the heart. They are not cold, theoretical treatises, but are written by a man whose heart was stirred by the actual needs of his spiritual children, and who, because his own heart was thus stirred, can stir the hearts of others from that day to this. But despite this individual and intimate character of parts of the Epistles, Paul never forgets that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ. There is a loftiness of tone in these letters, a dignity, a profound consciousness of authority, that differentiates them sharply from merely private or casual or temporary communications. Despite their special occasions, and the intimate details into which they sometimes enter, they are written throughout by an apostle of Jesus Christ, in the conscious plenitude of apostolic authority, for the upbuilding of the Church of God.

If we forget that fact, as so many readers do today, we may understand some details in these Epistles; we may learn how to construe the sentences grammatically; we may obtain a superficial and piecemeal knowledge of what is said: but the real heart of the writer will remain forever hidden from us. Unless we recognize the consciousness of authority which runs through these Epistles from beginning to end, all the detailed learning in the world will give us nothing but a superficial knowledge of Paul.

#### The Duty of Saying "No"

So far we have dealt with only two words of this Epistle to the Galatians, the word "Paul" and the word "apostle." What is the next word after these?

It is a word that is now regarded as highly objectionable, a word that Paul, if he had been what modern men would have desired him to be, never would have used. It is the small but weighty word "not." "Paul an apostle," he says, "not from men nor through a man, but....."

That word "not," we are today constantly being told, ought to be put out of the Christian's vocabulary. Our preaching, we are told, ought to be positive and not negative; we ought to present the truth, but ought not to attack error; we ought to avoid controversy and always seek peace.

With regard to such a program, it may be said at least that if we hold to it we might just as well close up our New Testaments; for the New Testament is a controversial book almost from beginning to end. That is of course true with regard to the Epistles of Paul. They, at least, are full of argument and controversy—no question, certainly, can be raised about that. Even the hymn to Christian love in the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians is an integral part of a great controversial passage with regard to a false use of the spiritual gifts. That glorious hymn never would have been written if Paul had been averse to controversy and had sought peace at any price. But the same thing is true also of the words of Jesus. They too—I think we can say it reverently—are full of controversy. He presented His righteousness sharply over against the other righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

That is simply in accordance with a fundamental law of the human mind. All definition is by way of exclusion. You cannot possibly say clearly what a thing is without contrasting it with what it is not.

When that fundamental law is violated, we find nothing but a fog. Have you ever listened to this boasted non-controversial preaching, this preaching that is positive and not negative, this teaching that tries to present truth without attacking error? What impression does it make upon your mind? We will tell you what impression it makes upon ours. It makes the impression of utter inanity. We are simply unable to make head or tail of it. It consists for the most part of words and nothing more. Certainly it is as far as possible removed from the sharp, clear warnings, and the clear and glorious promises, of Holy Writ.

No, there is one word which every true Christian must learn to use. It is the word "not!" or the word "No." A Christian must certainly learn to say "No" in the field of conduct; there are some things that the

world does, which he cannot do. But he must also learn to say "No" in the field of conviction. The world regards as foolishness the gospel upon which the Christian life is based, and the Christian who does not speak out against the denial of the gospel is certainly not faithful to his Lord. That is true with respect to the denials in the world at large, but it is even more obviously true of the denials within the visible Church. There the obligation of bearing testimony, negatively as well as positively, is particularly strong. A Christian testimony that makes common cause with men in the same church who, like the thirteen hundred "Auburn Affirmationists" in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., cast despite upon the holiest things of the Faith, is hardly worthy of being called Christian testimony at all. The Church of our day needs above all else men who can say "No;" for it is only men who can say "No," men who are brave enough to take a stand against the sin and error in the Church—it is only such men who can really

say "Yea and amen" to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know not in detail what will take place when the great revival comes, the great revival for which we long, when the Spirit of God will sweep over the Church like a mighty flood. But one thing we do know—when that great day comes, the present feeble aversion to "controversy," the present cowardly unwillingness to take sides in the age-long issue between faith and unbelief in the Church—will at once be swept aside. There is not a trace of such an attitude in God's holy Word. That attitude is just Satan's way of trying to deceive the people of God; peace and indifferentist church-unionism and aversion to controversy, as they are found in the modern Church, are just the fine garments that cover the ancient enemy, unbelief.

May God send us men who are not deceived, men who will respond to the forces of unbelief and compromise now so largely dominant in the visible Church with a brave and unqualified "No"! Paul was such a man

in his day. He said "No" in the very first word of this Epistle, after the bare name and title of the author; and that word gives the key to the whole Epistle that follows. The Epistle to the Galatians is a polemic, a fighting Epistle from beginning to end. What a fire it kindled at the time of the Reformation! May it kindle another fire in our day—not a fire that will destroy any fine or noble or Christian thing, but a fire of Christian love in hearts grown cold!

#### Next Month

We have covered just three words of the Bible, and yet here we are at the end of two pages of CHRISTIANITY TODAY. It may seem like slow progress, but we make no apologies for it. It is worth while, we think, to linger over these words of Paul. Next month, however, we hope to cover more ground than that, if our readers have patience to follow us as we examine further this wonderful Epistle to see what word of God it contains for the Church of our day and for our own minds and hearts.

## Books of Religious Significance

*CALVINISM AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE: The Stone Lectures Delivered at Princeton in 1930 by Valentine Hepp, Th.D. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 223 pages. \$1.50.*

THE author of this book is the Professor of Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam and as such the successor of those great Calvinistic theologians, Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. Though small in compass—the type is large and the margins wide—it is a highly significant book and one that should be provocative of much thinking in Christian circles. Dr. Hepp's discussion of the important subject to which he has addressed himself is suggestive rather than exhaustive—many important phases of the matter are not even touched upon—but he has both outlined a task that has been too long neglected and made an important contribution to its performance. We commend the book to the attention of all thoughtful Christians.

Dr. Hepp believes that one of the great weaknesses of Christianity in the past has been its lack of a Christian philosophy of nature and that this lack must be supplied if Christianity is to preserve its purity and fulfill its calling. If he speaks as a rule of a *Calvinistic* philosophy of nature rather than of a *Christian* philosophy of nature, it finds its explanation in the fact that he looks up Calvinism alone as consistent Christianity. But while his terminology at this point is fitted to frighten away the non-Calvinist yet it would seem that some such mode of speech is imperative in order to

avoid vagueness and indefiniteness. The word "Christianity" as employed today has no definite meaning. The same is true of the word "Protestantism"—either it is a purely negative word without content or a word that deniers of the God-man use as a self-designation. The word "Calvinism," however, still has a definite meaning so that Dr. Hepp's terminology is justified—in as far as he is right in supposing that Calvinism is a synonym for "consistent Christianity."

Dr. Hepp holds that there can be no philosophy of any sort, and so no philosophy of nature, without presuppositions; and hence that it is impossible to get along without a world-view: World-views, he maintains, can be sub-sumed under three heads: "The unbelieving, the accommodation-Christian, and the consistent Christian or Calvinistic." The trouble in the past has been that Christians while drawing their swords against the unbelieving philosophy of nature have neglected to build up a believing philosophy of nature. Moreover in as far as they have set forth a world-view of their own it has been for the most part of the accommodation-Christian type with its sacrifice of what is essential to a consistent Christian view. What is needed is a consistent Christian world-view; and this Calvinism alone is capable of supplying. "It (Calvinism) puts all rationalism under the ban. Human reason is not considered an autonomous power, but a gift of God which must always remain subject to the revelation of God. Knowledge is not cut off from

faith, neither has it the right to exercise dominion over faith, but it must be guided by faith. Nature is a product of the Creator, and whoever wishes to be taught concerning the origin, the purpose, the essence of nature, must sit down at the feet of the Creator as an un-knowing child. Only in Calvinism do you find the correct appreciation of nature. It has an eye for all the disharmony in the world through its unsparing doctrine of sin, while the doctrine of common grace helps it to see everywhere traces of the original harmony. It confesses that God is infinitely transcendent above nature, but that at the same time He is imminent and that He works in the smallest particle of matter and the most minute cell. Calvinism casts no furtive glances at the unbelieving science; it does not beg; it does not dicker with it; it does not accommodate itself to it; it lives exclusively out of the Father-hand of God" (pp. 51-52).

Scripture, according to Dr. Hepp, supplies the principles for a philosophy of nature, of which Calvinism avails itself. Calvinists do not play fast and loose with the matter of the infallibility of Scripture. They "persevere in the confession that the Spirit of Christ so laid hold of the holy men, that they wrote down nothing but the truth, truth about re-creation, to be sure, but also truth concerning creation; truth about grace, but no less truth about nature. The Scripture is not truth and error, not 'Yes' and 'No,' but truth, and again truth, yea and amen!" (Pp. 149-150). Dr. Hepp does not indeed maintain that the Scriptures contain