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of Bible and Theology
in Defence of the Historic Christian Faith

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Ronald Y. K. Fung

Revelation and Tradition: the Origins of Paul's Gospel

Mr. Fung has already placed readers of THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY *in his debt with a series of articles on Pauline themes. In this essay he returns to Paul and investigates a problem arising out of his studies in Galatians; readers of our sister-journal* HARVESTER *will have noted with appreciation his expository comments on that epistle.*

How does Gal. 1:12, in which Paul emphatically claims direct revelation for his gospel, square with 1 Cor. 15:3, where he apparently refers to the gospel as something he had received by tradition? In addressing ourselves to this issue, we shall first examine Paul's claim in Gal. 1:11f. as to the divine origin of his gospel; we shall then look into Paul's description of his conversion and call in Gal. 1:15-17 and elsewhere for the light that it throws on the origin of his gospel; and finally we shall discuss a number of views regarding the relationship of the two conflicting passages before proposing our own solution.

1. The Divine Origin of Paul's Gospel

In Gal. 1:11f., Paul is reminding the readers of the nature and origin of the gospel which he had preached to them (v.11a). An assertion of the non-human character of his gospel (v.11b) is supported by a twofold reference to both its source and the manner of its communication to him: whether the negative statement (v.12a) is regarded as comprising two clauses — 'For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it' (RSV),[1] or treated as a single unit — 'It was not from men that I received it or learned it',[2] its essential import remains that of a strong denial that his

[1] *Cf.* AV, RV, NASB, UBS Gk text; and see E. D. Burton, *Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh, 1968), 40f.

[2] F. F. Bruce, *An Expanded Paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul* (Exeter, 1965), 21. *Cf.* NEB, Phillips, and BFBS Gk text.

Since this article was submitted, some of the materials it contains have appeared in simplified form in the author's commentary on 'The Epistle to the Galatians' featuring in monthly instalments in THE HARVESTER (HARVESTER since January 1984); anything here which now appears to be quoted verbatim is reproduced with permission. *Cf.* especially Vol.62, No.4 (April 1983), 26f.; No.5 (May 1983), 34f.; and No.6 (June 1983), 44f.

gospel had any connection with man; while in the positive statement (v.12b) this gospel is said to have come by revelation of Jesus Christ. The *apokalypsis* here spoken of is 'an obvious reference to Christ's appearing on the road to Damascus';[3] in the light of v.16 where Christ is unambiguously the object of God's revelation to Paul, the phrase 'of Jesus Christ' in v.12 is probably to be understood not as subjective genitive (= 'from Jesus Christ': NIV, Phillips),[4] but as objective genitive, the meaning being that the gospel came to him as a result of Jesus Christ being revealed to him.[5]

The use of the present *estin* after the aorist *euangelisthen* in v.11 shows that, according to Paul, the gospel which came to him as a result of God's revelation of Christ, which he had preached to the Galatians in the beginning, is the same as that which he was still preaching at the time of writing and to which he is now in his letter calling the readers to return (*cf.* 1:6; 3:1); and this, as the content of the entire letter (esp. 2:15-21; 3:1-4:11; 5:2-12; 6:12-16) attests, is none other than the gospel of justification by faith. In other words, according to our text (1:11f.), the gospel of justification by faith came to Paul as the result of a direct revelation of Jesus Christ.

This, one may well believe, is the explanation for the remarkable harmony between Paul and Jesus in their insistence on the great truth that salvation is by the grace of God alone and that faith is the means of appropriation. This twin emphasis on grace and faith (or reliance on God's mercy) underlies all of Jesus' teaching as a basic presupposition and comes to clear expression in some of his parables, notably those recorded in Matt. 20:1-16; Lk. 15:11-32; 18:9-14.[6] This teaching is in essence the same as Paul's doctrine of justification by faith alone, although Jesus and Paul express it in different terms. In this connection, J. Jeremias has written:

> It was Paul's greatness that he understood the message of Jesus as no other New Testament writer did. He was the faithful interpreter of Jesus. This is especially true of his doctrine of justification. It is not of his own making but in its substance conveys the central message of Jesus.[7]

[3] O. Cullmann, *The Early Church*, E.T. (London, 1967), 60.

[4] *Cf. e.g.* C. J. Ellicott, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London, 1867), 13.

[5] So *e.g.* G. S. Duncan, *Galatians* (MNTC; London, 1934), 23; *cf.* H. D. Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, 1979), 63a. This view is also preferable to taking 'of Jesus Christ' to be both subjective and objective genitive, as held *e.g.* by H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 47.

[6] *Cf. e.g.* A. T. Hanson, *Paul's Understanding of Jesus* (Hull, 1963) 13ff.

But if Paul has thus unerringly discerned the heart of his Master's message and there is a 'complete lack of evidence in Paul's letters that he knew the parables of Jesus, . . . we may suspect that this discernment was implicit in the "revelation of Jesus Christ" which, according to him, was the essence of his conversion experience'.[8] We must now take a closer look at this experience.

2. Paul's Conversion and Call as an Apostle

(a). Paul was called to be an apostle by revelation

According to Paul's narration in Gal. 1:15-17, a complete break in his life occurred when God called him to be an apostle. By describing himself as having been set apart by God from the moment of his birth, Paul implicitly aligns himself with the prophet Jeremiah and the Servant of Yahweh as figures in redemptive history.[9] The call came by way of God revealing his Son to Paul.[10] The phrase *en emoi* (v.16a) has been variously understood as: (i) equivalent to the simple dative = 'to me' (RSV), (ii) 'through me', *i.e.* to others, (iii) 'to me and through me' (NEB), (iv) 'in my soul' or 'within me' (Phillips), (v) 'in my case'.[11] Meaning (ii) would render the following *hina*-clause somewhat tautologous, whereas (i) faces the objection that elsewhere the preposition *en* is lacking with *apokalyptein* with a personal object.[12] Meaning (iii) is obviously a combination of (i) and (ii) and is open to the same objections. Meaning (v) might appear a likely interpretation, since the phrase bears this sense several times elsewhere in Paul (*cf.* v.24; 2 Cor. 13:3; Phil. 1:30; 1 Tim. 1:16), and it would have

[7] J. Jeremias, *The Central Message of the New Testament* (London, 1965), 70.

[8] F. F. Bruce, 'Galatian Problems. 5. Galatians and Christian Origins', *BJRL* 55 (1972-73), 264-284 (esp. 274).

[9] *Cf. e.g.* J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, E.T. (Richmond, Virginia, 1959), 26.

[10] *Kalesas* (v.15b) is thus to be understood as coincident with *apokalypsai*; *cf.* Schlier, *op. cit.*, 54. Though it is closely connected with *aphorisas*, it does not indicate a time prior to *the apokalypsai* (as in Duncan, *op. cit.*, 27), since it is simply part of the substantive *ho aphorisas kai kalesas me*.

[11] *Cf.*, respectively, *e.g.* (i) M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, E.T. (Rome, 1963), §120; (ii) J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1963), 82f.; (iii) C. H. Pinnock, *Truth on Fire* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972), 24; (iv) J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York, n.d.), 210, *s.v. en* (I, 2); (v) A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, n.d.), IV, 279.

[12] On the last point, *cf.* Schlier, *op. cit.*, 55, who lists 1 Cor. 2:10; Eph. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:12. On (ii), see M. J. Harris, *NIDNTT*, III, 1191, for a fourfold criticism.

the further advantage of being capable of including the ideas of (i) and (iv), 'to me' referring to the vision of God's Son who was revealed and 'within me' to the spiritual apprehension of its meaning which immediately followed. Nevertheless, (iv) represents the simplest and most natural translation and probably also gives the most apposite meaning — Paul stressing by the phrase 'the inward and intensely personal character of God's revelation to him of the risen Jesus'.[12a] The phrase should not, however, be taken to suggest the idea of a *merely* inward revelation without a corresponding external object, for there is little doubt that the reference in the preceding phrase (*apokalypsai ton huion autou*) is to Paul's vision of the risen Christ (also attested in 1 Cor. 9:1 and 15:8) on the road to Damascus (*cf.* v.12), with *apokalypsai* connoting a disclosure which involves perception and understanding on the part of the recipient.[13] That vision and revelation are thus closely linked together is indicated also in 1 Cor. 15:8, where the word *ōphthē*, used of Christ's appearance to the apostle, carries beyond the idea of vision the force of a revelation;[14] while in 1 Cor. 9:1 the objectivity of the vision is adduced as a guarantee of his vocation.

In our text (Gal. 1:16a), then, God is said to have revealed to and within Paul, Jesus as his Son. In view of Paul's consistent use of the designation 'Son of God' elsewhere to refer to Christ's divine Sonship in the unique (ontological) sense,[15] it is probable that even in the present passage which pertains to the earliest stage of Paul's Christian experience, that same sense is intended.[16] Paul's claim may then be interpreted to mean that he received insight into the unique nature of Jesus' Sonship in a moment of illumination.[17] Taking into consideration also the Corinthian texts referred to above, we may say that the vision and revelation granted to Paul meant his realization that the crucified and risen Jesus was indeed the Messiah (1 Cor. 15:8, *cf.* v.3), that he was the

[12a] M. J. Harris, *ibid.*

[13] *Cf.* K. Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte. II. Der Osten* (Tübingen, 1928), 23, who stresses that an adequate explanation of Paul's conversion must refer both to his vision of the Lord (1 Cor. 9:1) and the revelation of God's Son in him (Gal. 1:16). Paul's inner, spiritual apprehension of the Christ who appeared to him most probably was experienced during the three days after his encounter with the risen Christ and before his baptism; *cf.* F. Rendall, *EGT*, III, 154.

[14] *Cf. e.g.* W. Michaelis, *TDNT*, V, 358. *Pace* Betz, *op. cit.*, 71a.

[15] *Cf.* W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh, 1962), 8f.

[16] *Cf.* S. Lyonnet, 'Pauline Soteriology', in A. Robert and A. Feuillet (eds), *Introduction to the New Testament*, E.T. (New York, 1965), 820-865 (821).

[17] *Cf.* 2 Cor. 4:6; Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, 79 ('It [sc. the gospel] flashed upon me . . .').

exalted Lord (1 Cor. 9:1, *Iēsoun ton kyrion*),[18] and that he was also Son of God in the unique sense.[19]

(b). The gospel of justification by faith was implicit in the revelation given to Paul

Now if Gal. 1:16 (aided by the Corinthian passages) indicates that by God's revelation Paul was led to the recognition that Jesus was Messiah, Lord, Son of God, and Gal. 1:12 states that Paul's gospel of justification by faith came to him as a result of God's revelation of his Son, it seems a fair inference that the principles of grace and faith (which represent the *positive* aspect of the doctrine of justification are inherently involved in the recognition of Jesus in his threefold capacity, though the recognition of this logical connection was due to revelation no less than was the recognition of Jesus in his true person. But since the positive aspect of the doctrine of justification implies its opposite, the *negative* aspect, viz. that justification is not attainable by legal works, must also have been part of the gospel revealed to Paul. While the apostle does not here define the revelation with regard to how exactly it was communicated and received, yet, if divine revelation also made use of human intellect, some such account as the following may perhaps not be entirely mistaken.

The revelation of Jesus as Messiah, Lord, Son of God brought about a radical reorientation in Paul's thinking. On the *negative* side, one of the very first lessons which the Damascus experience would have taught Paul is the futility of legal righteousness. In his perfect condition as a Pharisee, at the very zenith of success along the lines of legalism, it was revealed to him that he was persecuting the Messiah in the persons of his followers,[20] and therefore in rebellion against God; Paul's mistaken zeal for the law was exposed as issuing in the sin of persecution against God's Anointed.[21] The Damascus-road experience thus brought about a demolition of the entire structure of legal righteousness — the

[18] Since the early Christians believed that God had made Jesus both Lord and Messiah (*cf.* Acts 2:36), it is reasonable to assume that with the recognition of Jesus' messiahship there came also the recognition of his being the Lord. This understanding agrees with the fact that 'for St. Paul Christ attained to the exercise of Lordship at His resurrection' (D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul* [Oxford, 1964], 108).

[19] *Cf.* F. F. Bruce 'Jesus is Lord', in J. M. Richards (ed.), *Soli Deo Gloria* (Richmond, Virginia, 1963), 23-36 (24): 'Lord, Christ, Son of God — these are near synonyms: to believe that Jesus is one of these is to believe that he is all of these, and all of them are given to him as the risen and exalted one'.

[20] The reference here is to Acts 9:4b; 22:7b; 26:14b. *Cf.* Gal. 1:13, 23; Phil. 3:6; 1 Cor. 15:9.

[21] *Cf.* W. Grundmann, *TDNT*, IV, 573; I, 308f.

demolition being rendered complete precisely by Paul's pre-conversion perfection in observing the law.[22]

Acknowledging Jesus as Messiah may have involved for Paul, in another way, repudiation of the law as a logical consequence. While the common rabbinic belief seems to have been that the law would not only be in force in the messianic age but would be better studied and observed than ever before, and that in the study of the law in the age to come God himself will be the teacher,[23] there was also one strand of rabbinic teaching to the effect that the age of the Torah would be replaced by the messianic age, so that 'if the "Days of the Messiah" have commenced, those of the Torah came to their close'.[24] Although A. Schweitzer overstates the case when he says, 'That the law comes to an end when the Messianic reign begins is for Jewish thought self-evident',[25] it is not intrinsically impossible that Paul had held this belief before his conversion. If he did,[26] his recognition of Jesus as the Messiah would immediately indicate for him that the age of the Torah had been superseded and the law had lost its validity; and this would adequately explain the conviction which finds such clear expression in Rom. 10:4, *viz.* that Christ is the *telos* of the law.

Even if this was not the case, Paul's conversion would still mean the replacing of the law by Christ. For — here we move to the *positive* side — together with the repudiation of the law as a means of righteousness and justification, Paul would recognize at the same time that righteousness was now to be had in Christ. Since his thought, by force of habit and training, would be moving within the categories of law and righteousness, it would be an inevitable question for him to ask: 'If righteousness is not to be had by law-works, by what way is it to be attained?' And as inevitably the answer must have been that it was now available through believing dependence on Christ, the Lord and Son of

[22] *Cf.* E. D. Burton, 'Saul's Experience on the Way to Damascus', *The Biblical World* (1893), 9-23 (esp. 18). A. Schlatter, *Der Glaube im Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart, 1963), 399-402, gives an interpretation of the effect of Jesus' appearance on Paul which, particularly in its negative aspect, is very similar to our own.

[23] *Cf., e.g.*, G. F. Moore, *Judaism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1946), I, 271, 273.

[24] L. Baeck, 'The Faith of Paul', *JJS* 3 (1952), 93-110 (esp. 106).

[25] A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, E.T. (London, 1967), 69, *cf.* 189.

[26] This possibility is recognized by K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I: The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. K. Lake and H. J. Cadbury (London, 1933), V, 216, and more definitely entertained by F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (London, 1971), 210 (*cf.* 229).

God, alone.[27] Thus both the negative and positive aspects of the gospel of justification by faith are implicitly involved in God's revelation of his Son to Paul.

This understanding of the matter is corroborated by Gal. 2:16 and Phil. 3:7-9, in both of which passages Paul describes and interprets his own conversion-experience in terms of justification by faith. In Gal. 2:16, Paul states that when he trusted in Christ, it was with the express purpose of being justified through faith in Christ.[28] In the Philippians passage, having referred to his natural advantages and legal achievements as a Pharisee, Paul goes on to record his radical renunciation of these separate items which had been of the highest religious value to him (v.7a, *moi kerdē*) as one single loss (v.7b, *zēmian*) on account of Christ. The perfect *hēgēmai* implies that there was a definite occasion when the new estimate — which remained his ever since — was formed (*cf.* AV, RV), and this is most naturally understood of Paul's encounter with Christ at his conversion and call. The twofold *hēgoumai* in the present tense (v.8a, c) introduces in the one case an expansion of *tauta* to *panta* and, in the other case, ushers in the substitution of *zēmia* with *skybala*; the threefold use of *hēgeisthai* thus forming 'a crescendo' which emphasizes the intensity and totality of the renunciation.[29] The purpose for which Paul continues in this attitude of reckoning all things as loss and refuse is described in vv.8c-11, and the continuity of attitude indicated by the threefold *hēgeisthai* permits us to interpret *dia ton Iēsoun* in v.7b in the light of *hina Christon kērdesō* etc. in vv.8c-9, or, in other words, to understand the purpose indicated by *hina* as being already present at the time when that great renunciation took place.[30]

That purpose was that he might 'gain Christ and be found in him . . .' Whether or not 'gaining Christ' denotes the specific idea of having Christ 'as one's all-prevailing merit' and the ground of one's righteousness,[31] the idea is in any case clearly present in

[27] *Cf. e.g.* F. F. Bruce, *The Message of the New Testament* (Exeter, 1972), 32.

[28] The participle *eidotes*, being in the perfect tense, does not refer to a time prior to that of *episteusamen*, but simply introduces an adjectival clause loosely dependent on the subject (*cf.* RSV, NEB, Phillips — all making *eidotes* refer to the time of Paul's speaking or writing).

[29] F. Lang, *TDNT*, VII, 447.

[30] *Cf.* F. F. Bruce, 'Galatian Problems. 4. The Date of the Epistle', *BJRL* 54 (1971-72), 250-267 (esp. 262), where it is said of vv.8f.: 'There was never a time, *from his conversion onwards*, when he could not have used the same words' (our italics).

[31] So taken by R. P. Martin, *Philippians* (TNTC; London, 1959), 148, 147.

v.9, where being found in Christ is seen to involve, if not be exactly equivalent to, having 'the righteousness which comes from faith in Christ, given by God in response to faith' (NEB). Thus in Phil. 3:7-9 also, Paul describes his conversion-experience as being at least partially an experience of justification by faith apart from legal observance, and this strengthens our conclusion, based on Gal. 1:12 and 16, that the Pauline gospel of justification by faith was implicitly involved in the revelation of Christ vouchsafed to Paul.[32]

(c). Paul's call to apostleship was coincident with his conversion

The call of God to Paul, which came by way of the revelation of his Son, was a call to the Gentiles. This, already implied by analogy with the OT figures of Jeremiah and the Servant of Yahweh, is explicitly stated in Gal. 1:16b. By themselves, the two verses (vv.15f.) might be taken to reflect only Paul's thinking at the time of writing, but read (as they must be) in connection with v.17 they confirm the fact that Paul's call came to him at conversion. According to this verse, as soon as God had revealed his Son so that he might preach him among the Gentiles, Paul went away into Arabia,[33] and then returned to Damascus. 'Arabia' is generally taken to be a reference to the Nabataean kingdom, which extended to the walls of Damascus. One view of Paul's visit there is that it was 'for the sake of solitary communion with God', 'to rethink his whole position in the light of the new revelation', 'to attain greater clarity in regard to his new insights'.[34] But it is preferable to regard this visit as undertaken mainly for the purpose of missionary activity, for the following reasons: (i) The most natural reading of Gal. 1:16f. is that Paul went to Arabia in response to the purpose for which the revelation had been vouchsafed, *viz.* that he might preach Christ among the Gentiles;

[32] This truth is recognized by *e.g.* R. A. Cole, *Galatians* (TNTC; London, 1965), 47; G. Bornkamm, *Paul*, E.T. (London, 1971), 85; G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975), 369.

[33] Paul's visit to Arabia is not mentioned in Acts 9:19b-20, which pictures him as remaining with the disciples in Damascus for several days after his baptism and then 'immediately' preaching Jesus in the synagogue. It is our considered opinion that the most satisfactory view is to take Paul's words in Gal. 1:16f. seriously and literally, and to regard Luke as having omitted, for some reason, mention of Paul's Arabian visit between Acts 9:19a and b.

[34] So, respectively, F. Rendall, *EGT*, III, 155a; Cole, *op. cit.*, 53; R. Bring, *Commentary on Galatians*, E.T. (Philadelphia, 1961), 51.

(ii) such a prompt response[35] would be thoroughly in keeping with Paul's Jewish awareness that revelation entailed mission, and particularly with his character as a man of deep sincerity and intense activity (*cf.* his erstwhile persecution of the church); (iii) the fact that Paul later had to escape from Damascus from the hands of the ethnarch under the Nabataean king Aretas (2 Cor. 11:32f.) suggests that he had incurred the hostility of the king by his activity of preaching to his subjects in Arabia.[36]

Against this view of Paul's visit to Arabia, E. D. Burton has adduced the following arguments: (i) Paul's words in v.16c exclude 'not only the receiving of instruction, but the imparting of it'; (ii) 'the replacement of the ruined structure with a new one . . . could not have been the work of an hour or a day'; (iii) 'particularly improbable is the selection of Arabia . . . as a place of preaching'; (iv) were there Jews in Arabia, and did Paul seek a Gentile field of effort straightaway?[37] We may note in reply: (i) The truth of the first statement is by no means self-evident. While *prosanatithēmi* in the middle can mean either 'consult' or 'add, communicate or impart',[38] the unmistakably polemical context requires us to understand that Paul is concerned to make clear that he did not *receive* instruction from anyone immediately after his conversion, not that he did not impart information to anyone. And if the verb can mean 'consult' (implying the receiving of instruction), there is no reason why Paul must write some such expression as *ouk ezētēse* [sic] *didaskalian* to make his point, as Burton maintains. (ii) Paul did not need to have had an elaborate theological system all worked out before he could commence preaching, and to insist that Paul's gospel must evolve through a long process of intellectual thought and study is not to take with sufficient seriousness his own description of it as having come by direct revelation (Gal. 1:12; *cf.* v.16). Paul could surely begin preaching as soon as the basic outlines of the gospel

[35] K. H. Rengstorf suggests that in Paul's 'encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road . . . and in his *immediate response* to it, lies the uniqueness of his apostolate as compared with the other apostles' (*TDNT*, I, 438, our italics).

[36] On the last point, *cf. e.g.* E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, E.T. (Oxford, 1971), 334.

[37] Burton, *Galatians*, 55ff. A fifth argument is that 'the silence of Acts about this Arabian visit is more intelligible if Paul withdrew for meditation than if it were his first evangelistic campaign, since the latter would have had considerable interest for the historian' (D. Guthrie, *Galatians* [NCB; London, 1969], 72). But the silence might be due to Luke's ignorance of this particular event in Paul's early Christian experience, or it may have been due to its lack of success (Haenchen, *loc. cit.*).

[38] *Cf.* Thayer, *op. cit.*, 544a, *s.v.* (2. b, c); BAG, 718b, *s.v.* (2, 1).

were clear to him, and whatever intellectual processes of reasoning may have been involved in that revelation could well have been completed during the brief three days in Damascus (Acts 9:9) before he went off to Arabia, particularly in view of his keen and disciplined intellect.[39] (iii) Arabia was not so improbable a place for preaching as Burton makes out. 'Recent excavations have brought to light a prosperous civilization in that territory, which was at its peak by the time of Paul's visit.'[40] (iv) There is no *a priori* reason why Paul should have preached only to Jews first, and if Gal. 1:17 is most naturally understood as indicating that Paul went to Arabia in response to the commission to preach to the Gentiles, that sense should be allowed to stand.

In view of the above considerations, we may affirm as our conviction that Paul's call to be an apostle to the Gentiles was coincident with his conversion.[41] The revelation of the exalted Jesus meant for Paul at once his conversion and his call to be an apostle to the Gentiles. But if immediately after his conversion and call he began preaching to Gentiles in Arabia, this means that he already had a gospel for the Gentiles; and it seems a fair inference that he preached to the Gentiles immediately after his call that same gospel of justification by faith which had come to him by revelation at his conversion. 'It must be a mistake,' writes B. Rigaux, 'to envisage Paul as if he were, so to speak, a parachutist with complete equipment in infallibly working condition';[42] it would indeed, if by 'complete equipment' is meant the totality of Paul's theology as contained in his letters. But it would not be a mistake to think of Paul as equipped, before his preaching ministry, with a gospel complete in its essential features — Jesus as Christ, Lord, Son of God; justification by grace through faith, apart from works of the law; the applicability of

[39] *Cf.* A. B. Bruce, *St. Paul's Conception of Christianity* (New York, 1894), 37; F. F. Bruce, 'Galatian Problems. 1. Autobiographical Data', *BJRL* 51 (1968-69), 292-309 (esp. 298).

[40] Betz, *op. cit.*, 73b. We might also note the observation of A. D. Nock, *St. Paul* (London, 1938), 85, that 'the objection that he could not make himself understood to Arabs who did not speak Greek is invalid; the difference between Palestinian Aramaic and Nabatean was not more than one of dialect'. *Cf.* J. C. Swaim, *IDB*, I, 217b.

[41] We cannot digress here to deal with objections based on Acts to this position; reference may perhaps be allowed to R. Y. K. Fung, 'The Relationship between Righteousness and Faith in the Thought of Paul' (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1980), I, 584-587; II, 589f. For a similar position *cf.* S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Tübingen, 1981), *passim* (*e.g.*, 55ff.).

[42] Rigaux, *Letters of St. Paul*, E.T. (Chicago, 1968), 62 (with reference to P. Gächter).

these principles to Jew and Gentile alike. The last feature may be regarded as the corollary of the other two, just as the second is derived from the first; in this connection the title 'Son of God' appears particularly important, since it transcends 'all the particularistic limitations of Jewish messianism' and implies a salvation now open to all, Jew and Gentile alike.[43]

(d). Conclusion

If we have devoted rather a lot of space to discussing Paul's conversion and call (sections a, b, c above), it is because of the vital importance of this experience for an appreciation of his thought. Recognition of this truth is — notwithstanding R. Bultmann's dictum that 'it is a popular error to try to derive Paul's theology from his conversion experience'[44] — reflected in the following representative statement:

> That the meeting of Paul with the glorified Christ upon the Damascus road is essential to the understanding of the Apostle's very personal conception of Christianity, of what he loves to call 'my Gospel,' is today an accepted theorem among students of Pauline theology.[45]

In line with this acknowledgment, our study in the foregoing pages has shown that Paul's conversion may be understood as involving (i) a recognition of the risen Jesus as Messiah, Lord, Son of God, (ii) the experience of being justified by faith apart from legal works, (iii) the revelation of the basic principles of the

[43] Bornkamm, *op. cit.*, 94, *cf.* 21f. *Cf.* also Betz, *op. cit.*, 70b-71a.

[44] *Existence and Faith. Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, E.T. (London, 1961), 121; the quotation continues: 'for this experience . . . can only be reconstructed by having first understood what he says. Thus the question about the actual content of his conversion is a question about his theology itself' (121f.). Bultmann's description of Paul's conversion as, *e.g.*, obedient submission to the judgment of God, made known in the cross of Christ, upon all human accomplishment and boasting' (*Theology of the New Testament*, E.T. [London, 1971], I, 187f.) is rightly criticized by H. G. Wood, 'The Conversion of St. Paul: Its Nature, Antecedents and Consequences', *NTS* 1 (1954-55), 276-282 (esp. 281), for having merged 'the actual conversion-experience too simply with its immediate and most important consequences for Paul's faith and theology'. With regard to our own reconstruction: (i) *vis-à-vis* Bultmann's strictures, we believe that the attempt has been made *on the basis of* Paul's own statements, and that the result shows that 'the actual content of his conversion' is in harmony with his theology itself; (ii) apropos of Wood's criticism of Bultmann, we may point out that our concern has been with 'the actual content of his conversion' and not simply with 'the faith-content of the actual conversion experience' as narrowly defined by Wood (=consisting in the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ and Son of God).

[45] D. M. Stanley, 'Paul's Conversion in Acts: Why the Three Accounts?', *CBQ* 15 (1953), 315-338 (esp. 336).

gospel, as well as (iv) the call to be an apostle to the Gentiles. This conclusion harmonizes with the purpose and purport of what Paul is saying in Gal. 1:11-17: (i) his gospel is not a human thing: it had no connection with man, but came to him as a revelation of Jesus Christ (vv.11f., 15-16b); (ii) this is supported by his life before conversion, inasmuch as the very direction and principles of that life were diametrically opposite to those of Christianity, thus precluding the possibility of his coming under early Christian influence (vv.13f.); (iii) it is also supported by his conduct immediately after his conversion (v.17), since he did not confer with flesh and blood or go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before him, but went off to Arabia to preach the gospel to Gentiles, and afterwards returned to Damascus, not Jerusalem. Thus no human influence on the origin of Paul's gospel — or, for that matter — human derivation of Paul's commission — was possible either prior to or immediately after his conversion and call.

3. Revelation and Tradition

We are now ready to take up the question of the relationship between Gal. 1:12 and 1 Cor. 15:3. In this connection a number of views may be sampled first.

(a). J. T. Sanders sees in the two passages 'an absolute contradiction', which he explains by regarding Paul's statements as only ways of implementing in the different situations (in Galatia and Corinth) his basic understanding that his gospel brought both freedom (independence of tradition) and responsibility (acceptance of tradition). He regards as 'historically relative' both Paul's statement in Gal. 1:12 and the account given in its support (1:13-2:10); the latter is not 'an *historical* but rather an *historic*, *i.e.* significant account of his early life as a Christian. The historical sequence may be recoverable in broad outline, but not in detail'.[46] But this view fails in general to take Paul's statements, especially in Gal. 1:11f., with sufficient seriousness; and to subjugate facts to theory, using personal past events as historic rather than historical to underscore a theological point, would have been a highly unlikely procedure for Paul in the Galatian church situation.[47]

(b). A. Fridrichsen has proposed that we are to 'reckon with a

[46] J. T. Sanders, 'Paul's "Autobiographical" Statements in Galatians 1-2', *JBL* 85 (1966), 335-343 (esp. 337, 339f., 343).

[47] For the last point, *cf.* D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (London, 1970), 480.

special Pauline message to the Gentiles on the basis of the common *parádosis*': the same primitive tradition concerning Christ's death and resurrection formed the basis for both the Petrine and the Pauline gospel, but the latter 'contained an interpretation of Christ's death and resurrection which was essential to the Gentiles'. Thus, while a typical 'gospel of the circumcision' is found in the belief that Christ was the Jewish Messiah, such as is presented in the speeches of Paul in Acts (*e.g.* 2:36; 3:19f.; 3:26; 5:30f.), the Pauline gospel declares Christ as the exalted Lord of all peoples and not of the Jews only. Fridrichsen further claims that in the domain of the Gentiles the Petrine gospel 'could not but end with the demand that the Gentiles should become Jews if they wanted to partake in the New Covenant and enjoy its blessings', and hence 'it would, in spite of the common basic *parádosis*, mean a flat denial of the Pauline gospel'.[48] The supposition of such a sharp antithesis between a Petrine and a Pauline gospel is, however, difficult to sustain, for the following reasons:

(i) There are absolutely no grounds for the dogmatic assertion that the Petrine gospel, if preached to Gentiles, would inevitably end with the demand for circumcision;[49] on the contrary, Paul's deprecation of Peter's behaviour in the Antioch incident as *hypokrisis* (Gal. 2:12) — the assumption of conduct which masked and belied his genuine convictions[50] — clearly implies that Peter and Paul were at one in their general attitude toward the incorporation of Gentile believers into the church. (ii) Neither is there any justification for the tacit assumption that the Pauline 'interpretation of Christ's death and resurrection which was essential to the Gentiles' would not be shared by Peter or not have figured in the 'Petrine gospel'; on the contrary, the same passage shows that, his play-acting apart, Peter's inner convictions regarding the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection were fully in

[48] A. Fridrichsen, 'The Apostle and His Message', *Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift* 1947:3, 1-23 (esp. 9-11).

[49] Fridrichsen appeals in this connection to 2 Cor. 11:4, which leads him to conclude: 'We see, then, that what in the Jewish Church is a true gospel giving to the believers the Spirit of God, is in the church of the Gentiles entirely false!' (*ibid.*, 22, n. 21). But (i) 2 Cor. 11:4 reflects a situation later than and different from that of Galatians and 1 Corinthians, and (ii) the preachers of 'another Jesus' etc. are probably to be identified not with Peter and his Jerusalem colleagues, but with the *pseudapostoloi* of 11:13 = Paul's Jewish-Christian opponents in Corinth; so C. K. Barrett, 'Cephas and Corinth', in O. Betz, M. Hengel and P. Schmidt (eds), *Abraham unser Vater: Festschrift für Otto Michel* (Leiden, 1963), 1-12 (esp. 12), and *idem*, *The Signs of an Apostle* (London, 1970), 36, respectively.

[50] *Cf.* Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, 113; Burton, *op. cit.*, 109.

harmony with Paul's own (Gal. 2:13f., 15f.). (iii) Appeal to Gal. 2:7-9 in support of the theory of two gospels is vain. The text itself certainly makes no suggestion that Paul and the Jerusalem authorities preached two different gospels,[51] for 'the point at issue was not the content of the message, but the mutual acknowledgement of the respective spheres of activity of the two parties';[52] on the contrary, the context gives every indication that the gospel which Paul (and Barnabas) preached was in all essentials the same as that which Peter, James and John understood the gospel to be: this is implied by the very fact that the question of circumcision was not even raised even in the obvious case of Titus (2:3);[53] it is suggested by the description of Paul's preaching as identical with the preaching of the primitive church (1:23); it is demanded by Paul's plain assertion, augmented and emphasized with solemn imprecations, that there is one gospel and one only (1:7, 8f.); and it is confirmed by Paul's ascribing to Peter the same knowledge of the way of salvation as he himself possessed (2:16). Whilst, therefore, our text does distinguish two separate constituencies and two separate missionary tasks involving perhaps different approaches and emphases appropriate to Jewish and Gentile audiences respectively, there can be no question of there being two distinct versions of the gospel that are incompatible with each other and involve differences in the substance of the message.[54] (iv) To the same effect is the evidence provided by the Corinthians passage itself: Paul's claim that he and the other apostles habitually preached the same *kerygma* (1 Cor. 15:11), referring as it does to the essential matters of vv.1-5, especially to the fact of the resurrection, could not be taken seriously if there were such a difference between the 'Pauline gospel' and the 'Petrine gospel' as is supposed by Fridrichsen; and since, on his own admission, the *logos tou euangeliou* of 1 Cor. 15:2 is 'the very essence of the gospel',[55] it may be asked with the more justifi-

[51] *Tēs akrobystias* (like *tēs peritomēs*) is simply genitive of indirect object: '(good news) for the uncircumcised'; *cf.* N. Turner, *Syntax* = vol.III of J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh, 1963), 211.

[52] F. F. Bruce, 'When is a Gospel not a Gospel?', *BJRL* 45 (1962-63), 319-339 (esp. 330).

[53] For this interpretation of Gal. 2:3, *cf.* T. W. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, ed. by M. Black (Manchester, 1962), 176; B. Orchard, 'The Problem of Acts and Galatians', *CBQ* 7 (1945), 377-397 (esp. 381); A. S. Geyser, 'Paul, the Apostolic Decree and the Liberals in Corinth', in J. N. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik (eds), *Studia Paulina in Honorem J. de Zwaan* (Haarlem, 1953), 124-138 (esp. 132-134); F. F. Bruce, 'Galatian Problems. 1. Autobiographical Data', 306.

[54] *Cf. e.g.* G. Friedrich, *TDNT*, II, 734; W. Gutbrod, *TDNT*, IV, 1065f.

[55] *Art. cit.*, 20, n. 20.

cation: why does Paul not include that interpretation of Christ's death and resurrection which (according to Fridrichsen) was essential to the Gentiles in those elements of the gospel which he delivered to the Gentile Corinthians 'as of first importance' (1 Cor. 15:3a, RSV, NASB, NIV)?

In the light of the above considerations, we are bound to say that to posit two gospels in the way Fridrichsen proposes to do is to fly in the face of clear evidence to the contrary.

(c). According to O. Cullmann, the resolution of the difference between Paul's two statements in Gal. 1:12 and 1 Cor. 15:3 lies

> in the belief that the exalted Christ himself stands as transmitter behind the apostles who transmit his words and works. Paul can place on the same level the revelation on the road to Damascus and the apostolic tradition he has received, because in both Christ is directly at work.

This conclusion is based on the insight that

> the designation *Kyrios* [1 Cor. 11:23] can be understood as not only pointing to the historical Jesus as the chronological beginning and the first link of the chain of tradition, but to the exalted Lord as the real author of the whole tradition developing itself within the apostolic church;
>
> in virtue of a real sense of community created by the function of an apostle as witness to Christ, *all tradition passed on by apostles could be regarded as directly revealed by Christ.* Thus Paul can say that he has received 'from the Lord' a tradition which in reality he has received by way of other apostles. *Transmission by the apostles is not effected by men, but by Christ the Lord himself who thereby imparts this revelation.*[56]

In other words, operating in and through and with the apostolic tradition was the authority of the *Kyrios* who not only (as the earthly Jesus) originated the chain of tradition but who also (as the exalted Lord) maintains and validates the tradition — through his Spirit in the apostles, thus imparting revelation through tradition.

One may wonder whether the statements underlined by us do not practically identify tradition and revelation to an unwarrantable degree; in any case Cullmann's exposition of the relation between divine revelation and apostolic tradition does not really solve our problem. For the difficulty posed by the two Pauline texts is not, as Cullmann apparently takes it to be, how Paul can 'place on the same level the revelation on the road to Damascus

[56] Cullmann, *op. cit.*, 69, 62 (*cf.* 67f.), 73 (italics ours).

and the apostolic tradition he has received', to which it might have been enough to answer, with Cullmann, 'because in both Christ is directly at work'. The question is rather, 'How can Paul, with reference to the same gospel, categorically deny in Gal. 1:12 what he openly asserts in 1 Cor. 15:3?' It is not as though, as Cullmann's solution would require us to understand, in 1 Cor. 15 Paul was describing the biographical fact that he received the gospel as apostolic tradition, and in Gal. 1:12 he was stating the theological truth that ultimately it was the exalted Lord who revealed it, since in that case Paul's emphatic denial of any human intermediary being involved would be difficult to explain. Evidently in Gal. 1:12 Paul is stating a biographical fact, not merely a theological truth or the theological interpretation of that fact. We cannot, therefore, regard Cullmann's explanation as a satisfactory solution to our particular problem.[57]

(d). W. Baird's solution to this problem rests on the recognition of different emphases in the two passages: '1 Cor. 15:3-8 stresses the form by which Paul proclaimed his gospel, while Gal. 1:11-17 refers to its essential dynamic character';

> *in its form* his kerygma was essentially the same as the tradition of the Jerusalem church . . . Yet *in its essential* dynamic *nature*, his gospel could not be transmitted by men, but was communicated by divine revelation.

A little later on, the antithesis is expressed in a slightly different way, thus:

> in both these texts, Paul appears to imply a distinction between the *form* in which he proclaimed the gospel, and its *essential content* — the living Christ. . . . The *form* of the proclamation Paul received from man; the *essence* of the gospel he received from God.[58]

This solution has been criticized as unsatisfactory on the ground that 'it contradicts the kerygmatic nature of the tradition and views it as though it were only a human tradition'.[59] Nevertheless, Baird seems to us undoubtedly correct in recognizing both that Gal. 1:11f. has to do with the essence of the gospel (*cf.* our discussion in section 2 above), and that 1 Cor. 15:3-8 has to do with a particular *form* of the gospel; for, whether the difficult phrase *tini logōi euēngelisamēn humin* (v.2) be (i) regarded as an indirect question forming the object of *gnōrizō* = 'I ask you to note *with what form of words* I preached the Gospel to you', or (ii) subordinated to *ei katechete* as preceding the latter clause by an inversion of the normal order = 'if you hold fast (in mind) *in what language* I told you the good news', or (iii) made into a direct question = '*In what words* (I ask) did I preach (it) to you?',[60] it is difficult to escape the impression that the gospel is here conceived as having assumed a particular form. At the same time, form and substance are inseparably linked together here so that the gospel in the language, the words, the form of words in which Paul preached it means the gospel with the same content and substance as he preached it — 'the gospel,' as the NEB puts it, '*as* I preached it to you' (our italics).

Addressing himself to the problem under discussion, F. F. Bruce writes:

> He [sc. Paul] must have distinguished in his own mind the sense in which the gospel came to him by direct revelation from that in which it came to him by tradition. . . . His explanation might be that the essence of the gospel, 'Jesus is the risen Lord', was communicated to him from heaven on the Damascus road: it was no human testimony that moves him to accept it. . . . But the historical details of the teaching of Jesus, the events of Holy Week, the resurrection appearances and so forth were related to him by those who had first-hand experience of them.[61]

Following the line of approach suggested by this explanation, we may now offer our own solution to the present question as follows:

(i). Both Gal. 1:12 and 1 Cor. 15:3 were equally true to Paul's experience, and neither must be interpreted to the detriment of the other.

(ii). Different purposes are involved in the two passages: in the one Paul is concerned to argue his independence of earlier Christians, particularly those who were apostles before him, for both his apostolic authority and his authentic gospel; in the other, he

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[57] The possible argument that in 1 Cor. 15:3a Paul means 'what I received by revelation of Jesus Christ' is rightly regarded by F. F. Bruce as being 'difficult to sustain, because it would imply that it was by revelation that Paul learned about the resurrection appearances to Peter, James and the others, and few, if any, will go as far as this' (*Tradition Old and New* [Exeter, 1970], 31).

[58] W. Baird, 'What is the Kerygma? A Study of 1 Cor. 15:3-8 and Gal. 1:11-17', *JBL* 76 (1957), 181-191 (esp. 190f.).

[59] *Cf.* G. E. Ladd, 'Revelation and Tradition in Paul', in W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin (eds), *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, F. F. Bruce *Festschrift* (Exeter, 1970), 223-230 (esp. 229f.). Ladd's criticism is based on his understanding of the true character of tradition as being '*both* historical tradition *and* kerygmatic-pneumatic tradition at one and the same time' (226).

[60] The views, respectively, of C. K. Barrett, *First Corinthians* (HNTC; New York, 1968), 336; F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (NCB; London, 1971), 138; and G. G. Findlay, *EGT*, II, 919a (all italics ours).

[61] Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 138.

is eager to show that the doctrine of resurrection is a part of the common gospel preached by both him and them. The different purposes led to different emphases in the two passages.

(iii). While both passages deal with the one and the same gospel, nevertheless the gospel appears under a slightly different aspect in each: in the Galatians passage, it appears in the form of the revealed truth that Jesus is Messiah, Lord, Son of God, and its corollary that salvation/justification is by grace through faith, for Jew and Gentile alike;[62] in the Corinthians passage, on the other hand, the gospel appears in the form of the kerygmatic tradition which embodied *both* 'the facts' (*cf.* NEB) of Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and appearances *and* their interpretation ('for our sins', 'according to the scriptures').[63]

(iv) It is perhaps not without significance that even in the Corinthians passage Paul does not actually use *parelabon* of the gospel in a general sense, but speaks only of 'the gospel that I *preached* to you; the gospel which you received [*ho kai parelabete*, sc. 'from me']' (1 Cor. 15:1, NEB); when in v.3 he does speak of what he had received, the content of the tradition is specifically noted. This would seem to lend support to the view that Paul's basic understanding of the gospel came to him immediately through revelation at his conversion, while a particular form or expression (*logos*, v.2) of the gospel he received by tradition subsequently.[64]

(v) In some respects, what Paul received by tradition only served to confirm what he already understood by revelation: *e.g.*, he received the primitive tradition implied in 1 Cor. 15:3f. — 'Jesus is the Christ' — only after he had learned it by revelation at his conversion; the information that Jesus appeared to the early disciples and apostles, thus proving his resurrection, Paul received as a piece of tradition only after Jesus had appeared to him on the Damascus road, thus proving to him that he was risen. That revelation and tradition are in complete harmony one

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62 *Cf.* J. G. Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (London, 1921), 146.

63 The inseparability of facts and their kerygmatic interpretation is rightly emphasized by Cullmann, *op. cit.*, 66ff., and G. E. Ladd, *art. cit.*, 224.

64 That it was during his first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem that Paul received this particular tradition appears probable from two considerations: (a) Peter and James, who figure in Gal. 1:18f. as the only persons Paul met with during his first Jerusalem visit, are the very same persons mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:1ff. in connection with what Paul had received and in turn transmitted to the Corinthians; (b) there the appearances seem to fall into two series, linked respectively with the names of Peter and James. *Cf. e.g.* F. F. Bruce, 'Paul and Jerusalem', *Tyn Bull* 19 (1968), 3-25 (esp. 8).

with the other may be seen from the consideration that the principles of the gospel and its universalism as revealed to Paul are logically involved in the fact of the Messiah's death 'for our sins' as announced in the kerygmatic tradition which Paul also received.

To conclude, we would not disagree with the judgment of P. H. Menoud, considered as a general statement, that

> revelation and tradition are . . . intimately united in Paul's thought. . . . He understood that the gospel is all both revelation and tradition by the very nature of things. Its profound meaning is revealed by the Spirit of God, but it is built on historical happenings.[65]

Only we would wish to emphasize that, as regards the basic understanding of the gospel, revelation (Gal. 1:12) came first, tradition (1 Cor. 15:3) followed after.

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65 P. H. Menoud, 'Revelation and Tradition. The Influence of Paul's Conversion on His Theology', *Interpretation* 7 (1953), 131-141 (esp. 140f.).