

Exegetical Notes for Galatians 1:11-12

KEY

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Parsing Verbs and Declining Nouns

Verbs:

ποιμάνετε (ποιμαινῶ = to tend, shepherd || Verb: Aorist Active Imperative, Second Person Plural).

ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι (ἀποκαλύπτω = to reveal, disclose || Verb: Present Passive Infinitive).

Nouns (gender before case):

παθημάτων, (παθημά = suffering || Noun: Neuter Genitive Plural).

Participles (gender before case):

μελλούσης (μελλῶ = to be about to || Participle: Feminine Genitive Singular Present Active).

Adjectives (gender before case):

(ἐπιεικής = gentle, kind || Adjective: Masculine Dative Plural).

Independent Personal Pronouns:

ἡμῖν (ἐγώ = I || First Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Dative Plural).

ὑμῖν (σύ = you || Second Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Dative Plural).

αὐτῷ (αὐτός = He, Him || Third Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Masculine Dative Singular).

Demonstrative Pronouns (gender before case):

(τοῦτο = this || Near Demonstrative Pronoun: Neuter Nominative Singular).

Reflexive Pronouns (only masculine and feminine - the genitive is the lexical form as there is no nominative case):

(ἐμαυτοῦ = myself || First Person Reflexive Pronoun: Masculine Genitive).

(σεαυτοῦ = yourself || Second Person Reflexive Pronoun: Masculine Genitive).

(ἐαυτοῦ = himself, herself, oneself || Third Person Reflexive Pronoun: Masculine Genitive).

Sentence Structure

[Sentence]

11 Γνωρίζω γὰρ ὑμῖν,
I make known for to you

Vocative Phrase

ἀδελφοί,
brothers

[Sentence (continued)]

τὸ εὐαγγέλιον
the gospel

Relative Clause

τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν
that has been proclaimed

Prepositional Phrase

ὑπ' ἐμοῦ
by me

Subordinate Clause

ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν
that not it is

Prepositional Phrase

κατὰ ἄνθρωπον·
according to man

Segment Clause

12 οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐγὼ
neither for I

Prepositional Phrase

παρὰ ἀνθρώπου
from man

[Segment Clause (continued)]

παρέλαβον αὐτό,
receive it

Segment Clause

οὔτε ἐδιδάχθην,
nor was I taught it

[Sentence (continued)]

ἀλλὰ
but

Prepositional Phrase

δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.¹
through a revelation of Jesus Christ

1 Albert L. Lukaszewski, Mark Dubis, and J. Ted Blakley, *The Lexham Syntactic Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Lexham Press, 2011), Ga 1:11–12.

TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

GREEK TEXT:

11 Γνωρίζω γὰρ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον· 12 οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου παρέλαβον αὐτὸ οὔτε ἐδιδάχθην, ἀλλὰ δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Galatians 1:11–12 (NA27)

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

11 For I would have you to know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but [I received it] through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what's the passage talking about): Paul's Gospel wasn't from man

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what's the passage saying about what it's talking about): but from the revelation of Jesus Christ.

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text): The origin of Paul's message was the Person of the message.

CENTRAL PROPOSITION OF THE SERMON: Paul's Gospel came directly from Christ who is the Gospel

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE: "What's the Point?"

SERMON OUTLINE:

I. Paul's Thesis Introduced (11)

A. Paul's Message Was Not "According to Man" (three questions)

1. How Does This Fit the Context? ("for")
2. Why Is This Important? ("I would have you to know")
3. What is the Central Focus? ("the gospel preached")

II. Paul's Thesis Illuminated (12)

A. Paul's Message Was the "Revelation of Jesus Christ" (three statements)

1. Negative Assertion #1:
2. Negative Assertion #2:
3. The Positive Assertion:

III. Life Application: Christ is the Gospel

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

Having set forth the issues and alternatives that would dominate his Letter to the Galatians, Paul now began in earnest to develop the first major section of the epistle, a historical overview of his conversion, call, and ministry prior to his evangelistic work in Galatia. This long autobiographical account runs from 1:11 through 2:21 and is itself divided into three discrete subsections: Paul's early Christian experience and his first encounter with church leaders in Jerusalem (1:11–24), the summit meeting between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders over the scope and sphere of his missionary work (2:1–10), and the confrontation with Peter at Antioch leading to the central pronouncement of justification by faith (2:11–21).

These verses contain the longest and richest autobiographical material we have from the pen of Paul. They supplement in significant ways what Luke said about Paul's background, conversion, and early missionary activity. This entire section and the prominence it holds in the structure of Galatians, occupying as it does nearly one-fourth of the book, underscore the fact that Christianity is a historical faith. It is based upon certain specific, irreversible, and irreducible historical events. Jesus was born during the imperial reign of Caesar Augustus. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he rose again on the third day, and was taken up into heaven forty days later. Christianity is not a philosophy of life, or yet a set of moral precepts, or a secret code for mystical union with the divine. At its core Christianity is the record of what God has once and for all done in the person and work of his Son, Jesus Christ. Among these mighty acts of God, we must include the calling of the apostle Paul, for it too belongs among the foundational events of salvation history.

What this means and why it was such a hot issue in Galatia we will seek to uncover in our study of the verses that follow. Suffice it to say here that nowhere in this long historical section does Paul tell us how he felt about the events that happened to him. We can certainly speculate about this matter, imagining, for example, that he must have been greatly surprised at the appearance of the risen Christ near Damascus, or greatly angered by the false brothers who were trying to subvert the principle of Christian freedom, or deeply hurt and betrayed by Peter, who in a tense situation compromised what Paul knew were his real convictions. But the point of the narrative is not to focus on Paul's personal experience or subjective feelings, however interesting such a disclosure would be to us. Rather it is to set forth the objectively given revelation of God in and through Paul, the expressed purpose of which was to serve the furtherance of the gospel (Gal 1:16).

Galatians 1–2, then, establishes a historical context for the expressly theological content of Gal 3–4, which issues in turn in the ethical outcome of Gal 5–6. From the beginning, however, the theological issue is paramount, as we have seen already in the introductory verses. In the historical narrative also Paul was concerned not merely to recount the story of his life but to relate how "the truth of the gospel" (2:14) had manifested itself in his life story.

Paul was not quoting in these verses from his personal spiritual diary; unlike Augustine, he was not given to reminiscence and left behind no "Confessions of St. Paul." Rather he surveyed his

life and selectively recounted certain incidents in order to make a theological point. The theological thrust of his presentation is seen in the fact that the historical narrative flows almost imperceptibly into his theological exposition. Thus it is unclear whether 2:15–21 constitutes the conclusion of his declaration to Peter (as the NIV has it with quotation marks around the entire passage) or the commencement of his special address to the Galatians on the theme of justification.

In any event, the entire historical narrative is evidently intended as a prolegomenon to the central thesis that “a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ” (2:16). The polemical tone we have encountered in the early verses of chap. 1 continues to dominate Paul’s rehearsal of his life and ministry here. Clearly he was responding to a certain representation of his career that his opponents had disseminated among the Galatian churches. If, as seems likely, these agitators had close ties to Jerusalem Christianity, they may well have represented themselves as the true ambassadors of the mother church there while depicting Paul as a renegade evangelist, one whose authority was wholly derived and subordinate to the Jerusalem apostles. Paul, they perhaps claimed, had totally distorted the message of these great church leaders while they, on the other hand, offered a pure replication of it.

Thus Paul was concerned to clarify his relationship to the church at Jerusalem, and especially to Peter and James. Each of these leaders is mentioned three times in the first two chapters. First, just a few years after his conversion Paul paid a “get acquainted” visit to Peter and James in Jerusalem (1:18–19). Then, well over a decade later, he encountered them again at Jerusalem in a strategic conference related to his missionary work among the Gentiles. And, finally, he confronted Peter at Antioch in a crisis over table fellowship prompted by certain individuals affiliated with James. We will have to examine more closely what these verses tell us about Paul’s relationship to the church at Jerusalem and its leaders. It is clear, however, that Paul wanted to assert his apostolic independence over against Peter, James, and all other human intermediaries. [Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 105–107.]

It has been suggested that the criticisms of Paul’s gospel, to which he makes reference in vv 11–12, have controlled the structure of most of the letter. In v 11 his gospel is accused of being *κατὰ ἄνθρωπον*, while in v 12 it is said to be derived *παρὰ ἀνθρώπων*. Both these criticisms, it is suggested, are now to receive detailed rebuttal, but in reverse order: in 1:13–2:21 Paul shows that his gospel was not derived *παρὰ ἀνθρώπων*, and in 3:1–6:10 he argues that it is not *κατὰ ἄνθρωπον*. The bulk of the letter could then be viewed as an elaborate chiasmus (see BDF 477 [2] summarizing J. Jeremias, ‘Chiasmus in den Paulusbriefen’, *ZNW* 49 [1958], 145–156, especially 152f.). [F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), 89.]

Paul's thesis statement for this entire section is found in 1:11-12:

11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it

through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Of course, that ties into v. 10 as well:

For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

What follows is Paul's defense of his thesis:

Verse 13 – Paul's life as an unregenerate Jew

Verse 14 – His accomplishments as a Pharisee

Verses 15-16 – His conversion to Christ and his calling to preach the gospel to the Gentiles

All of that by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ (Damascus Rd. and following).

Paul is establishing his apostolic credentials.

16b I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

Paul's defends his thesis (13-17) by first est. that his conversion was dramatic and miraculous. It was independent of the Jerusalem Apostles; it came by direct revelation from Christ. After he was converted, he didn't rush to Jerusalem to consult with the Apostles there.

He's addressing the Judaizers' contention that he was 2d rate to those in Jerusalem or was under their authority. Cf. 2:1-2.

Review . . .

Vv. 11-12 – Thesis

Vv. 13-17 – First Defense of His Thesis

Vv. 18-24 – Second Defense (“then”).

2:1-10 (“then”) - marks Paul's 3d defense.

Theme of this section:

2:6 But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.

2:11 “but” - here begins Paul's 4th defense.

This section ends either at v. 14 or it continues to the end of the chapter.

Paul's overall purpose in 1:13-2:14 is to assure the Galatians that they have indeed "received" (see 1:9) the true gospel. "Gospel" language is, of course, central in the rebuke passage of verses 6-9; but it is also central in verses 11-12, which set forth the thesis that Paul argues in 1:13-2:14, and it crops up repeatedly in the subsequent argument (1:16,23; 2:2,5,7,14). "The truth of the gospel" (2:5,14) is Paul's focus in this section. But the Galatians received this gospel from Paul; and so, to have confidence in the gospel, they must also have confidence in the messenger who proclaimed that gospel to them. The truth of the gospel and Paul's credentials as an authoritative messenger of that gospel are therefore woven together in this part of the letter. [Moo]

It can be shown that the thesis stated in vss. 11-12 is the main one underlying the narratio, as Matera does with the following outline: (1) 1:11-12 the theme announced—the Gospel is not of human origin; (2) 1:13-17—first proof that Paul received the Gospel through a revelation of Christ; (3) 1:18-20—second proof—that the Jerusalem church didn't commission Paul; (4) 1:21-24—third proof—that those in Judea glorified God because of Paul; (5) 2:1-10—fourth proof—Paul defended his Gospel at Jerusalem; (6) 2:11-14—Paul defended his Gospel at Antioch. All this is meant to show Paul's consistency and the divine character and origin of his message. His life has been a public demonstration of the Gospel of grace. [Witherington, 90-91]

1:11 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

Γνωρίζω γὰρ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον·

Γνωρίζω γὰρ (Γνωρίζω = to make known || Verb: Present Active Indicative, 1S). Descriptive Present.
ὑμῖν (σὺ || Second Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Dative Plural).

ἀδελφοί (Noun: Masculine Vocative Plural).

τὸ εὐαγγέλιον (Noun: Neuter Accusative Singular).

τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν (εὐαγγελίζω = to proclaim the gospel || Participle: Neuter Accusative Singular Aorist Passive).

ὑπ' ἐμοῦ (εγώ || First Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Genitive Singular). Emphatic.

ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν (εἰμι || Verb: Present Active Indicative, 3S).

κατὰ ἄνθρωπον· (Noun: Masculine Accusative Singular).

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

For I would have you to know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

For I would have you to know, brethren, (Γνωρίζω γὰρ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί,)

There is some debate as to whether the connecting particle γὰρ or δὲ is the original reading in vs. 11. P46, 8, A and others read the latter, while B, D, G and others read the former. Clearly enough the connective preferred in both the preceding and the following clauses is γὰρ, which might favor the suggestion that scribes were more likely to change a δὲ here to a γὰρ.³ Also tipping the scales in favor of δὲ here are the parallels we find in 1 Cor 15:1, 2 and 2 Cor. 8:1 where there is the same combination of δὲ and the verb γνωρίζω.⁴ The significance of accepting the reading δὲ is that it is a mildly disjunctive connecting word, suggesting a new beginning or section at 1:11. [Witherington, 90]

This expression, along with its negative counterpart, “I do not wish you to be ignorant,” occurs many times in Paul (cf. Rom 1:13; 1 Cor 12:3; 15:1; 2 Cor 1:8; Eph 1:9; 1 Thess 4:13). It underscores Paul's desire that he not be misunderstood. E.g. “Let me be perfectly clear.”

“brethren” same word he had used earlier (1:2) to designate those who joined him in addressing the churches. A conciliatory note here in light of vv. 1-9. A word recurs several times in Paul's direct address to his readers throughout the book (e.g., 2:15; 4:12, 28; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 18). The use reinforces the optimism he expresses in 5:10.

ἀδελφοί is a family word with rich significance. It's imitated by various groups – even cults – but it's depth is only seen within the context of true Christianity. Paul speaks as an Apostle, but also as a “brother in Christ.”

While it is certainly true that Jews spoke of those of their ethnic group as brothers (Lev. 19:17; Deut. 1:16; 2 Macc. 1:1 cf. Acts 7:2; Rom. 9:3), it is likely that this is not the origin of the Pauline usage. More probable is the suggestion that it ultimately goes back to Jesus' own remarks about the basis and character of God's family—namely that it is constituted by faith (Mk. 3:31–35 and par. Mt. 23:8), though Paul himself probably first picked it up from the early Christians with whom he himself first came into contact after his conversion.⁶ It is also crucial to bear in mind the social function of this language. It is boundary-defining language, suggesting who is and is not family, and furthermore it suggests that Paul sees some relationship between the norms and values of the family and the family of faith.⁷ [Witherington, 91]

that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον·)

For ‘gospel’ see on 1:6, ‘preach’ see on 1:8, and ‘preached by me’ see 2:7.

11 occurrences of Gospel in Galatians:

* 7 using the noun εὐαγγέλιον –

1:6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

1:7 which is {really} not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

1:11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

2:2 And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but {I did so} in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.

2:5 But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

2:7 But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter {had been} to the circumcised

2:14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how {is it that} you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

* 3 using the verb εὐαγγελίζω –

1:8 But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

1:9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

4:13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;

* 1 using the verb προεὐαγγελίζομαι –

3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, {saying}, "\All the nations shall be blessed in you."

Paul is not dealing with a matter of secondary importance.

“He was defending the very heart of the Christian faith against a sinister and subversive attack upon it. On this issue—the nature of the gospel—there is not room for equivocation or doubt. Nothing less than the reality of the salvation secured by Jesus Christ is at stake in this unyielding assertion.” [Timothy George, 108]

Had Paul proclaimed a gospel that was according to man, it would have been permeated by works righteousness, as is every humanly devised system of religion. Man’s sinful pride is offended by the idea that only God’s mercy and grace can save him from sin, and he therefore insists on having a part in his own salvation. The very fact that Paul preached a message of salvation in which works play absolutely no part was itself evidence that his message was from God and not ... man. [MacArthur, 23]

NIV = “not something that man made up” is misleading.

J. Bligh paraphrases the verse: “My gospel (and my preaching of the gospel) do not belong to the purely human level of existence: the gospel message did not come to me through human channels—it was not mediated to me through any man; and my preaching of the gospel has not been guided by human motives and ambitions.” [cited in Timothy George, 108]

οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον connects back to 2 negatives in v. 1

Paul’s apostleship and gospel was neither from (apo) nor by (dia) any human source.

Relevance of 2 Peter 1:20-21?

The second clause of vs. 11 provides us with the disclosure itself. The Gospel that Paul gospeled (noting the deliberate redundancy here in the Greek) was not κατὰ ἄνθρωπον. The basic meaning of κατὰ is ‘according to’ and the point being made is that Paul’s Gospel does not stem from a human source or mere human ideas or customs. This will be made more clear in vs. 12. [Witherington, 91–92]

1:12 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου παρέλαβον αὐτὸ οὔτε ἐδιδάχθην, ἀλλὰ δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

οὐδὲ (conjunction = neither).

γὰρ ἐγὼ (εγὼ || First Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Nominative Singular).

παρὰ ἀνθρώπου (Noun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

παρέλαβον (παραλαμβάνω = to receive || Verb: Aorist Active Indicative, 1S).

αὐτὸ (αὐτὸς || Third Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Neuter Accusative Singular).

οὔτε (conjunction = nor).

ἐδιδάχθην, (διδάσκω || Verb: Aorist Passive Indicative, 1S).

ἀλλὰ δι' ἀποκαλύψεως (ἀποκαλύπτω || Noun: Feminine Genitive Singular).

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. – Objective Genitive. “ἀλλὰ δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. That Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ here is an objective genitive is rendered most probable by the wording of vv 15f.: God ‘was pleased to reveal his Son (ἀποκαλύπτει τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ) in me’. That is to say, God the Father was the revealer; it was Jesus Christ who was revealed, and in that revelation Paul received his gospel, together with the command to make it known in the Gentile world. The gospel and the risen Christ were inseparable; both were revealed to Paul in the same moment. To preach the gospel (v 11) was to preach Christ (v 16).” [Bruce, 89]

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but [I received it] through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Paul gives a fuller treatment of what he said in verse 11 by adding 2 more neg. qualifications: It wasn't received via tradition or by instruction. According to George: “‘I did not receive it from any man’ refers to the initial reception of the gospel, while ‘nor did anyone teach it to me’ refers to his growing understanding of its contents.”

For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου παρέλαβον αὐτὸ οὔτε ἐδιδάχθην.)

Directed against the Judaizers, who received their instruction primarily from rabbinic tradition by means of rote memorization. The Jews “invalidated the word of God for the sake of [their] tradition” (Matt. 15:6). Cf. MacArthur, pp. 23–24.

His use of the word ‘received’ so soon after he used it in verse 9 would help make Paul’s point: whereas they had ‘received’ the gospel as a tradition conveyed to them by Paul himself (see on 1:9), Paul himself had not so received it. It did not come to him as human tradition, on human

authority. Corresponding to the ‘by me’ of verse 11, the ‘I’ is emphatic—‘I also’, like the first apostles, or, more likely, ‘I’ in contrast to the other missionaries in Galatia, who are more probably in view. By adding ‘nor was I taught it’ Paul was not simply being tautologous; nor was he denigrating the idea of teaching. Rather he was seeking to cover all loopholes: he had neither been converted by human agency (cf. 1:9), nor had he been taught the gospel in the basic catechesis in which no doubt already all new converts to the new faith were instructed (cf. Rom. 6:17; 12:7; 16:17; 1 Cor. 4:17; Col. 2:7; 2 Thess. 2:15; Acts 2:42). It is precisely this basic denial which he will fill out and defend in the following verses (see on 1:16 and 1:18). [James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1993), 53]

Paul clearly was contrasting the way he received the gospel from the normal pattern of catechetical instruction commonly practiced in rabbinic Judaism. In that system the citation of venerable sources and the piling up of numerous “footnotes” were integral to the learning process: Rabbi so-and-so says this, but Rabbi so-and-so says that, and so forth. Paul here claimed an unmediated divine authority for the gospel he proclaimed, an assertion that would be utterly preposterous were it not true. Just as Jesus confronted the scribal traditions of his day with his univocal “but-I-say-unto-you” pronouncements, so Paul confounded his opponents by stressing the unilateral and vertical character of the revelation he received from the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

But was Paul really as independent as he claimed in this text? J. T. Sanders, among others, claims to have found “an absolute contradiction” in what Paul claimed in Gal 1:11–12 and his statement in 1 Cor 15:3, where he said that he passed on to the Corinthians the gospel that he too had received.⁴⁶ Both verses employ the same Greek word for “receive” (*paralambanein*), a technical term for the transmission of religious tradition. In the early church the Gnostic exegetes had a field day with Paul’s claim in Gal 1:12 that his gospel was independent of the teaching and tradition of the other apostles. Earlier, they said, Paul had indeed preached “what I also received” (1 Cor 15:3) in common with the other apostles; but in Galatians he disclosed that the true gospel (i.e., the Gnostic one) had been secretly revealed to him alone. For this reason the Gnostics frequently cited Paul as the progenitor of their own interpretation of the Christian faith while rejecting the other apostles and writings of the New Testament as defective and tainted with Judaism.⁴⁷

However, what Paul was arguing in Galatians was not that his gospel was different from that of the other apostles but rather that he had received it independently of them. Indeed, as we will see, he went to great lengths to demonstrate the basic consistency of his message and theirs. Even when he confronted Peter in Antioch (2:11–14), it was not because Peter was preaching a different gospel from Paul but rather that he had acted inconsistently with the one gospel they both accepted and proclaimed. What, then, was the basic meaning of Paul’s claim to absolute independence of all prior teaching and tradition?

It is certain that Paul knew a great deal about the Christian faith even before his conversion. It is inconceivable that he would have invested so much energy in trying to stamp out a movement

he knew nothing about. No doubt the very Christians he persecuted witnessed to him of their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, God's anointed one who had been cruelly crucified but then raised from the dead by the power of the Father. Only the appearance of Christ on the road to Damascus convinced Paul that their testimony was true. He received the gospel through this firsthand encounter with the risen Christ and not from anyone else. It does not follow, however, that Paul remained ignorant or aloof from the teaching tradition of the early church. Through his contacts with Ananias and other believers in Damascus, not to mention his later visit to Peter and James in Jerusalem, Paul would have had ample opportunity to absorb the early Christian tradition as it was crystallizing in confessional statements (1 Cor 15:1–3), liturgical formulas (1 Cor 11:23–26), and hymns of praise to Christ (Phil 2:5–11). Paul's point in Galatians is not that he was opposed to or ignorant of this developing Christian tradition, but simply that he was not dependent upon it for his knowledge of Christ. The Jesus traditions which he later learned, incorporated into his letters, and passed on to his churches only served to confirm what he already knew by direct revelation to be true. [Timothy George, 109-11]

Cf. F. F. Bruce's statement footnoted above: "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 moved 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 firsthand experience of them" (quoted in R. Y. K. Fung, "Revelation and Tradition: The Origins of Paul's Gospel," *EvQ* 57 [1985]: 39). In addition to Fung's excellent study, see also G. E. Ladd, "Revelation and Tradition in Paul," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), 223–30, and P. H. Menoud, "Revelation and Tradition: The Influence of Paul's Conversion on His Theology," *Int* 7 (1953): 131–41.

Again, on the proposed contradiction between Paul's statement here and what we read in 1 Cor. 15:3 (and parallels), Bruce writes:

1:12 οὐδέ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου παρέλαβον αὐτό. There may seem to be a formal contradiction between this assertion and other statements in which Paul uses *παραλαμβάνω* and *παραδίδωμι* of himself according to the usual terminology of transmission—receiving (from predecessors) and delivering (to successors), as in 1 Cor. 11:23 (with regard to the actions and words of Jesus at the Last Supper) and 15:3 (with regard to the saving events of Christ's death, burial, resurrection and subsequent appearances). But there is no material contradiction. Paul was indebted for his gospel to no human being—not even to those who were 'in Christ' before him. His language (cf. 1) should not be pressed to imply that he denied ἀνθρωπότης to the risen Christ; his readers knew quite well what he meant in denying all human origin or basis to his gospel. Paul's gospel—Jesus Christ is the Son of God; Jesus Christ is the risen Lord—was revealed to him on the Damascus road. No doubt he had heard such claims made for Jesus in the days of his persecuting zeal, but it was not the witness of the persecuted disciples that

convinced him. He rejected their witness as blasphemous until he learned the truth by unmediated disclosure from heaven. On the other hand, facts about the life and teaching of Jesus, about his death, burial and resurrection appearances, were imparted to him after his conversion by those who had prior knowledge of them (see on vv 18f.). [Bruce, 88]

Another commentator adds:

We may suppose “the gospel” to be regarded, in the one case, as a kind of objective creed or form of doctrine, “received” by a man on its being put before him, in consideration of the authority with which it comes invested, as a whole and so to speak en bloc, before ever its details have been definitely grasped by him. But in addition to this, and subsequently to this, this same gospel may be regarded as brought within the range of the recipient’s distinguishing consciousness, by means of a “teacher” from without, whether Divine or human, instilling into his mind successively the various several truths which compose it. Now, it was conceivable that the apostle may, in the sense above supposed, have “received” the gospel direct from God or from Christ, while, however, man may to a large extent have been the “teaching” instrument, through which its truths were brought home to his understanding. But in the present passage St. Paul affirms that in actual fact man had no more to do with his reception of the gospel in the latter sense than in the former. And this affirmation tallies closely with what we read in the sixteenth verse of this chapter, and again with the sixth verse of the next chapter, both of which passages were written, no doubt, with an eye to the very notion respecting the source of his knowledge of the gospel which he is here concerned to negate. [Spence-Jones, 18–19]

but [I received it] through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (ἀλλὰ δι’ ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.)

ἀποκαλύψις (cf. apocalypse) is a predominantly Pauline word (13 out of 18 occurrences). Generally divine revelation of things that would not otherwise be known through human means (1 Cor. 14:6, 26; 2 Cor. 12:1, 7; Gal. 2:2). Regularly with eschatological significance (Rom. 2:5; 8:19; 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7).

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. – Objective Genitive. “ἀλλὰ δι’ ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. That Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ here is an objective genitive is rendered most probable by the wording of vv 15f.: God ‘was pleased to reveal his Son (ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ) in me’. That is to say, God the Father was the revealer; it was Jesus Christ who was revealed, and in that revelation Paul received his gospel, together with the command to make it known in the Gentile world. The gospel and the risen Christ were inseparable; both were revealed to Paul in the same moment. To preach the gospel (v 11) was to preach Christ (v 16).” [Bruce, 89]

The forward reference to 1:15–16 also indicates that ‘Jesus Christ’ is not thought of as the source of the revelation (GNB, NIV), but as its content (see particularly Burton 41–3); the point is important, as we shall see (see on 1:16); the only feature common to the Acts accounts of Paul’s conversion and Paul’s own allusions to it is that it centred on an appearance of Christ to Paul (Acts 9; 22; 26; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; 2 Cor. 4:4–6). This also is what makes the difference with verse 8, and explains why Paul can speak dismissively of an angelic revelation (see on 1:8), while basing his own claim on ‘a revelation of Jesus Christ’: the gospel is not simply ‘from Christ’ but is Christ. [Dunn, 53–54]

Cf. Romans 1:1–3:

1 PAUL, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for **the gospel of God**, 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 **concerning His Son**, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh.

But we have to observe that in every other passage in which the Apostle Paul uses a genitive with the noun “revelation” (ἀποκάλυψις), the genitive denotes the object which is revealed. These are Rom. 2:5, “Revelation of the righteous judgment of God;” 8:19, “Revelation of the sons of God;” 16:25, “Revelation of the mystery;” and the passages in which he designates our Lord’s second coming as “his revelation;” 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; with which comp. 1 Pet. 1:7, 13; 4:13. That in these five last passages the genitive is objective and not subjective, if it could otherwise be called in question, is indicated by the circumstance that in 1 Tim. 6:14, 15. [Spence-Jones, 20]

Cf. also 2 Cor. 4:6:

For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

The word for “revelation” (apokalypsis) literally means “unveiling, a laying bare, the removal of that which conceals or obscures, a disclosure.” It is used only once in the Greek Old Testament (1 Sam 20:30) but occurs frequently in the New Testament, where it carries at least three nuances: (1) the coming or manifestation of a person, especially the coming of Christ (1 Cor 1:7; 2 Thess 1:7); (2) the disclosure of the true character of a person or truth (Luke 2:32; Rom 2:5); (3) the content of that which is unveiled or manifested (1 Cor 14:6; Eph 1:17).

Which of these three meanings is meant in Gal 1:12 depends on whether we read the phrase “from Jesus Christ” as an objective or subjective genitive. If it is subjective, then it means the revelation Jesus Christ himself disclosed, the revelation by Christ; if objective, then it means the revelation whose content is Jesus Christ, that is, the disclosure about Christ. Neither reading does grammatical or theological violence to the text, and some have taken it as both subjective and objective, the ambiguity perhaps being intended by Paul himself.⁴⁹ Clearly both are true. On the Damascus Road, Jesus Christ himself appeared to Paul as the revealing one; what he disclosed was the true nature of the gospel, the content of the message Paul was commissioned to preach.

Two other texts in the New Testament help to illumine this passage. The first is Jesus’ comment about Peter’s surprising confession at Caesarea Philippi, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” to which Jesus replied, “This was not revealed to you by men, but by my Father in Heaven” (Matt 16:16–17). Obviously Peter was well acquainted with Jesus before receiving this great insight. He knew well the bare facts of his earthly ministry. He had heard Jesus teach and had seen him do great miracles. None of this sufficed, however, to bring him to a true awareness of who Jesus really was until the veil was lifted in the moment of divine disclosure. From this we learn that only God can truly reveal himself. We may preach, teach, and share the good news of Christ with others; but only God can soften a hardened heart and bring the light of divine

truth to a darkened mind.

The second passage is Paul's own description of how "the mystery of Christ," unknown in earlier generations, was "now being revealed (apekalyphthē) to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph 3:5, RSV). Though Paul considered himself the very least of all the saints, he could not deny that this great mystery had been unveiled to him by Jesus Christ. Thus what had been hidden in ages past was now being displayed, publicly and universally, for all peoples to hear and receive.

Before leaving this verse, we must ask about the exact content of the mystery of Christ supernaturally revealed to Paul in such a way that he could claim and proclaim it as "my gospel." We will have to return to this theme as Paul develops his argument throughout Galatians, but let us note here five essential elements of the gospel made known to Paul. (1) God has raised from the dead Jesus, the crucified Messiah, vindicating his claim to be one with the Father. (2) Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father but is still vitally connected to his people on earth. The shattering insight Paul saw on the Damascus Road was this: in persecuting the Christians, he was in reality torturing Christ himself. Paul's doctrine of the church as the body of Christ undoubtedly grew out of this profound insight. (3) The risen Christ will come again in power and glory to fulfill all the messianic prophecies of the old covenant, bringing history to a climactic closure in a display of divine judgment and wrath. (4) In the meantime, God has opened the door of salvation for Gentiles as well as Jews. Paul himself had been commissioned to herald this good news to all persons, but especially to the Gentiles. (5) The basis for acceptance with God, for Jews and Gentiles alike, is justification by faith apart from the works of the law. The futility of legal righteousness is seen in a true appreciation of Christ's atoning death on the cross. The revelation of Jesus as Messiah requires a radical reorientation in how the law is seen and applied in this "dispensation of the fullness of times." Was this gospel unique to Paul? No, for it was simply the full elaboration of the one and only gospel Jesus himself proclaimed. Paul was no neoapostle who preached "another Jesus" or a "different gospel" (2 Cor 11:4). Much of the content of Paul's message was already implied in the kerygma of the primitive church, which is why he could endorse and transmit it with such confidence and enthusiasm. Even the insight about the inclusion of the Gentiles was not originally Pauline, for God had also revealed this to Peter in his mission to Cornelius (Acts 10:9–48). Yet the full implications of Paul's message, especially the doctrine of justification by faith and its practical outworking in the missionary context of the early church, remained for Paul and him alone to pioneer. Undoubtedly this is why in the providence of God Paul's life and writings figured so prominently in the formation of the New Testament canon. [Timothy George, Galatians, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 111–112]

Is it an example of the use of an objective genitive or a subjective genitive? Is Christ seen as the mediator of this revelation or the content of it? The first denial involves the semi-technical term 'received' often used for the transmission of sacred tradition in early Jewish and Jewish Christian circles (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3). What follows this verse in Gal. 1–2, make quite clear that Paul is not denying that he had received some information about Jesus from other human beings. Things could perhaps be clarified somewhat if we could decide whether the final clause involves an objective or subjective genitive. On the one hand, Gal. 1:1 might be thought to favor the suggestion that the phrase refers to a revelation that came from or through Christ, but there the issue is Paul's apostleship, not his Gospel. On the other hand, 1:16 speaks of a

revelation of which Christ is the content. On the whole it seems likely that Paul in vs. 12 is referring to a revelation about Christ.⁸ If this is correct then Paul must have something specific in mind about Christ or his ministry, an insight or idea he had not received from other Christians. In view of the subject matter of what precedes and follows 1:12, the most reasonable suggestion is that Paul is referring to his Law-free Gospel for the Gentiles which focuses on and is based on faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross which provides one with right standing before God. This distinctive Gospel message about Christ Paul admits is not the sort of thing human beings could come up with on their own. It had to be revealed by God for it to be known at all. [Witherington, 92]

Spurgeon:

We also have received the gospel in a way beyond the power of man to convey it to us: Men brought it to our ear, but the Lord Himself applied it to our heart. The best of the saints could not have brought it home to our hearts so as to regenerate, convert, and sanctify us by it. There was a distinct act of God the Holy Ghost by which the instrumentality was made effectual and the truth was rendered operative upon our souls. [Spurgeon, Ga 1:12]

Application Point:

Paul will present his life and actions as a paradigm of his Gospel of grace. This is not because his Christian life and experiences or his apostleship were being questioned but because his Gospel was being challenged or at least supplemented by the agitators. Lyons sums up matters well:

That Paul offers his autobiographical narrative in 1:13–2:21 as substantiation of his claim in 1:11–12 concerning the nature and origin of his Gospel suggests he considers himself in some sense a representative or even an embodiment of that gospel. As in the ancient philosophical lives, the consistency between his ... ‘conduct’, and ... ‘deeds’, and his ... words demonstrates the truth of his philosophy, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is a paradigm of the Gospel he preaches to the Gentiles. The formulation of Paul’s autobiographical remarks in terms of ‘formerly-now’ and ‘[hu] man-God’ serves the paradigmatic function of contrasting Paul’s conversion from Judaism to Christianity with the Galatians inverted conversion, which is really nothing other than a desertion of the one who called [them] in the grace of Christ (1:6) and a surrender of Christian freedom for the slavery of the law (see 2:4; 3:28; 4:1–9, 22–31; 5:1, 3:13).² [Cited in Witherington, 89–90]