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Text, Exposition, and Notes

I. THE LETTER OPENING (1:1-17)

The main body of Romans is a treatise on Paul's gospel, bracketed by an epistolary opening (1:1-17) and conclusion (15:14-16:27). These opening and concluding statements have many similarities, not the least of which is the emphasis on the *gospel*. (Eight of the 11 occurrences in Romans of *euangelion* ["gospel"] and *euangelizomai* ["to evangelize"] are in these passages.) Paul's special relationship to this gospel, a relationship that encompasses the Roman Christians, both opens and closes the strictly "epistolary" introductory material in this section (vv. 1-5, 13-15).¹

A. PRESCRIPT (1:1-7)

1Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus,² called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2which was promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3concerning his son, who came from the seed of David according to the flesh, 4who was designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness on the basis of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5through whom we received grace and apostleship for the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, 6among whom you also are called

1. Cf. Wuellner, "Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation," p. 133.

2. The order Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ is attested in only three Greek MSS, P¹⁰, the primary Alexandrian uncial B, and the secondary Alexandrian 81. All the other MSS have the order Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. But, while its external testimony is slim, the reading adopted here has strong internal support: this is the order of terms that Paul almost always uses in these kinds of context (see n. 9 below).

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of Jesus Christ, to all of you in Rome,³ beloved by God, called to be saints. Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The letters of Paul must have been greeted with considerable perplexity by their first-century recipients. To the extent that this perplexity was due to the theological complexity of the letters, contemporary readers can share the reaction of their first-century counterparts. But the very form of the letters would have been further grounds for puzzlement to the early Christians. Paul's letters are far longer than most first-century letters — so long that they make exact literary classification difficult. And Romans, with 7,114 words, is the longest of Paul's letters. Fittingly, Romans also has the longest prescript. The typical Greek letter began simply with a one-sentence identification of the sender and recipients, and a greeting: A to B, "greetings" (*chairein*; Acts 15:23; 23:26; Jas. 1:1). Paul expands this form considerably in all his letters but nowhere more than in Romans.⁴ The superscription, or identification of the sender, is particularly long, occupying the first six verses.

Paul introduces himself by stating his divine call (v. 1), the message that he has been called to proclaim (vv. 2-4), and the specific task with which he is occupied (vv. 5-6). Finally comes the address in v. 7a, followed by the usual Pauline salutation in v. 7b. The length and theological orientation of this prescript are due mainly to the fact that Paul was introducing himself to a church that he had neither founded nor visited. He wanted to establish his credentials as an apostle with a worldwide commission to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Whether this elaborate prescript had a polemical motive (as, e.g., Murray thinks) is not clear.

1 Paul⁵ introduces himself to the Roman church with three parallel designations that, respectively, identify his master, his office, and his purpose. All three lack articles, a style typical of the introductions of letters.⁶ "Slave

3. The omission of ἐν Ῥώμῃ in G, 1739^{mg}, and a few other MSS here and in 1:15 is almost certainly a later attempt to "universalize" Romans by ridding it of its specific destination. See the Introduction, pp. 5-9.

4. Michel and Käsemann, following E. Lohmeyer ("Probleme paulinischer Theologie. 1 Briefliche Grussüberschriften," ZNW 26 [1927], 158-73), suggest that the lengthier form of prescript employed by Paul may be derived from a Jewish-oriental model of letter writing (cf. 2 Macc. 1:1-6). This is, however, contested by O. Roller (*Das Formular des paulinischen Briefe. Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom antiken Briefe* [BWANT 4.6; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933], pp. 213-38) and Cranfield.

5. The name Παῦλος is likely to have been Paul's Latin *cognomen* (Cranfield; Bruce, *Paul*, p. 38) rather than a special Christian name or a name taken from his first famous convert, Sergius Paulus (cf. Acts 13:9), as Lagrange suggests.

6. BDF 252.

of Christ Jesus" is patterned on the familiar OT phrase "slave," or "servant," of Yahweh.⁷ The phrase connotes total devotion, suggesting that the servant is completely at the disposal of his or her Lord. That great honor attaches to the service of so exalted a master is of course true, and many commentators stress this side of the title in Paul's application of it to himself.⁸ But the connotations of humility, devotion, and obedience are never absent from the OT phrase and are surely primary here also. Indicative of Paul's high Christology is the fact that he replaces the "Lord" of the OT phrase with "Christ Jesus."⁹ The sequence "Christ Jesus" draws particular attention to the *Messiah* Jesus and may also suggest the corporate and universal significance of this Messiahship.

Only in the prescripts of Titus and Philippians (where Timothy is also mentioned) does Paul call himself a "slave." But the second designation in Rom. 1:1, "apostle," is used in every Pauline prescript except those in Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon. Paul occasionally uses "apostle" in a general way to mean simply "messenger" (Phil. 2:25; 2 Cor. 8:23), and more often to refer to accredited missionaries (e.g., Rom. 16:7). But here the title carries a stronger sense, marking Paul as one among that unique group appointed by Christ himself to have the salvation-historical role as the "foundation" of the church (Eph. 2:20).¹⁰ For the risen Christ appeared to him

7. This phrase, or parallels (e.g., "your servant"), is occasionally applied to Israel generally (Neh. 1:6; Isa. 43:10) and sometimes to the prophets (2 Kings 9:7; 17:23), but it more often depicts a particularly significant and outstanding "servant": Moses (e.g., Josh. 14:7; 2 Kings 18:12), Joshua (Josh. 24:29), Elijah (2 Kings 10:10), Nehemiah (Neh. 1:6), and, especially frequently, David.

8. E.g., Käsemann.

9. The order of the titles may be significant. Unlike the rest of the NT authors, who prefer Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ to Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (47 times to 7), Paul prefers the order Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (80 times to 25). This significant difference in word order suggests that — contrary to the opinion of some — Paul uses Χριστός as a title with important theological meaning: "the Messiah, Jesus." But there may be further significance to the order. Paul tends to use "Christ Jesus" — rather than "Jesus Christ" — in two contexts: in descriptions of his apostolic services (as here) and after the prepositions εἰς ("into") or ἐν ("in"), to denote his characteristic motif of incorporation into Christ. See esp. Wright, "Messiah and People of God," pp. 19-31; also Schlier, W. Kramer (*Christ, Lord, Son of God* [SBT 50; London: SCM, 1966], pp. 203-6) suggests that Paul may have put Χριστός first to indicate the grammatical case of the phrase, but more is needed to explain the variety of Paul's order. M. Hengel, on the other hand, doubts whether the order of the titles has any significance ("Erwägungen zum Sprachgebrauch von Χριστός bei Paulus und in der 'vorpaulinischen' Überlieferung," in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett* [ed. M. Hooker and S. G. Wilson; London: SPCK, 1982], p. 137).

10. Since ἀπόστολος is not used in a technical sense in the LXX or in secular Greek, many interpreters have suggested as the background for the NT titular use of the word the Jewish-rabbinic use of שְׁלֵחַ ("one sent") to describe an authorized representative

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(1 Cor. 15:8) and chose him for his special mission to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; cf. 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). This divine initiative in Paul's apostleship is made evident here by the verbal adjective "called."¹¹ What Paul intends by this is spelled out in the polemically oriented opening of Galatians: "Paul, an apostle — sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead . . ." (NIV). As is Paul's custom, then, he specifies at the very beginning of his letter that he writes not as a private individual, nor even as a gifted teacher, but as a "called apostle" whose words bear the authority of God himself. Any reading of this great theological treatise that ignores this claim to authority will fail to come to grips with the ultimate purpose of its writing.

Paul's final description of himself in v. 1, "set apart for the gospel of God," may allude to his being set aside for his great apostolic task even from "the womb of his mother" (cf. Gal. 1:15).¹² But the word order here makes it more likely that the "set apart" clause is simply a further definition of "called."¹³ The verb is used in the LXX of God's "separating" and calling of Israel from among other nations (Lev. 20:26) and in Acts 13:2 of the "setting apart" of Barnabas and Saul for missionary service. Similarly, Paul, as a "called apostle," has been set aside by God for a special purpose in God's plan for history. Paul here specifies this purpose with the words "for¹⁴ the gospel of God." "Gospel" here might denote the activity of preaching the gospel (cf. TEV: "called by God to preach the Good News"),¹⁵ or it might

or messenger (e.g., K. H. Rengstorf, *TDNT* 1, 414-20; see examples in Str-B, 3.2-4). But the late date of the sources in which the term is used, combined with the general lack of missionary emphasis in the rabbis, makes this suggestion questionable (cf. D. Müller, *NIDNTT* 1, 134; cf., however, R. W. Herron, Jr., "The Origin of the New Testament Apostolate," *WTJ* 45 [1983], 101-31). On Paul's use of ἀπόστολος, see further the note on 16:7.

11. Gk. κλητός; cf. also 1 Cor. 1:1.

12. See, e.g., Bruce, Cranfield. In the Galatians passage, Paul uses κλητός to refer to his calling on the Damascus Road and ἀφορίζω for his being "set apart" for this task even from his mother's womb (Paul here alludes to Jeremiah's famous description of his call; cf. Jer. 1:5).

13. The "effectual dedication that occurred in the actual call to apostleship" (Murray; cf. also Meyer). Some commentators (Zahn; Barrett; Nygren; Black; Fitzmyer) think the word ἀφορίζω may contain a play on the supposed root of "Pharisee," פָּרִישִׁי; while thinking himself "separated" as a Pharisee, Paul now realizes that it is only in Christ that he has become *truly* "separated." But Cranfield is right to dismiss such an interpretation as improbable. Even less probable is the implicit law/gospel contrast Nygren sees in these words.

14. Gk. εἰς, with a telic sense.

15. Godet; Wilckens.