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THE CASE ABSOLUTE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

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THE careful student of New Testament Greek cannot fail to notice a multitude of peculiar constructions, idiomatic expressions, forms, and uses of words, etc., which bear an unmistakable foreign flavor.   He feels that foreigners are trying to express themselves in Greek.   Allowing for those analytic processes to which the language had been subject since the days of Demosthenes, and for the new words which science, discovery, and foreign contact and commerce would naturally engraft upon the old Hellenic stock; and eliminating, moreover, words and expressions grown obsolete by time and change of usage, there yet remains much not to be accounted for by any, nor by all, of these causes; much, indeed, not to be paralleled in the writings of any genuine Greek who was contemporary with the Apostles.

Nor is this to be wondered at, when we consider the radical differences between Greek and Hebrew thought.   A preliminary foundation must have been grounded in the thought of either people, before the religious edifice of the other could be reared among them.   The flora and fauna of the one could not readily become acclimated to the strange soil and alien skies of the other.   Words are only the signs—the expressions—for ideas.   But what if the germinal, the fundamental, ideas are wanting?   For what will the words then stand?   Can mere words transplant and implant ideas?   Other elements besides simple sounds

enter into the composition of language.   Ideas must be *felt*
to be realized at all.   Thought, feeling, and imagery—to
say nothing of other mental operations—are all in the sub-
structure of this invisible, yet most real, edifice of language.
What had the Greek to match the ideas of spiritual mono-
theism, the Incarnation, a divine decalogue, the Fall, the
Redemption, the Shekinah, and the Visible Presence?   To
him all this was "foolishness."   What canvas had the He-
brew to receive the shadow of Greek polytheism with its
symbolism of the whole material universe?   How could
his proverbs and aphorisms translate the depth, the subtlety,
the system, and the fullness of Greek philosophy?   What
priest ministering at the great altar on Moriah could un-
derstand the mysteries of Platonic idealism, or the metemp-
sychosis?   *His* Heaven was somewhere in the blue vault
above, while the Greek Elysium bloomed deep down below.

Not less antipodal were the respective systems and stand-
ards of faith, of worship, of mutual duties, of home life, of
art, of beauty.   As well compare the two massive pillars—
the Boaz and Joachin—in the temple portico overlooking
the Kidron, with the graceful Corinthian columns of a
Greek temple, as attempt to parallel Hebrew with Greek
thought.   Too little common ground lay between them.
Much in the thought of either could not be borne across to
the realm of the other.   It was untranslatable, and the ef-
fort to amalgamate the two naturally resulted in those doc-
trinal cross-breeds—those hybrids—which teemed through
the early centuries of the church.   What monstrosities of
faith and practice were born of this ill-assorted union!
Their marriage was unnatural.

To adequately translate Greek thought into Hebrew
would have been impossible; it was never attempted.   A
new Hebrew tongue must needs have been first created.
On the other hand, the Hebrew thought struggling to ex-
press itself in terms of the Greek, naturally retained much

of the impress of its old mold.   It was unlike anything else
in Greek literature.   It was Hebrew thought, however it
might be clothed upon; though the hands and outward ap-
pearance might be Esau's, yet the speech was ever unmis-
takably Jacob's.   Hence was born that host of peculiar
words, figures, phrases, etc., to which in the New Testa-
ment is given the common family name of "Hebraisms."
With a certain class of these constructions it is the purpose
of this article more specifically to deal.

No grammatical construction is more familiar to the stu-
dent of Greek than that of the *Genitive Absolute.*   The
many relations of time, cause, manner, means, purpose,
condition, opposition, or limitation, and other attendant
circumstances which it is used to express, every Greek
scholar knows well.   How did the Hebrew writers of New
Testament Greek handle this, to them, strange form of ex-
pression?   Let us remember that Hebrew has no participle
case absolute.   Its two participles—past and future—con-
cern themselves with the idea of time.   They express the
"since," "when," "already," etc., of our tongue.   Apart
from this temporal relation there is scarce another for which
they are used.   Let us review those cases of the *Genitive
Absolute* found in the New Testament, and observe how
the Hebrew mind grappled with, and employed, this for-
eign construction.   Some conclusions arrived at, and some
historical notes, will be deferred until this examination has
been made.

There are about three hundred instances of the *Genitive
Absolute* construction in the New Testament.   We will
take these in their order:—

MATTHEW.

Chap. I. 18, 20.—Ver. 18.   "When his mother Mary was
espoused (μνηστευθείσης γὰρ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ) to Joseph, she
was found," etc.   Here we have the *temporal* relation

given by the Genitive Absolute.   Ver. 20.   "While he [Joseph] thought on these things (ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐνθυμη- θέντος, κ. τ. λ.), the angel appeared" (temporal).

Chap. II. 1, 13, 19.—Ver. 1.   "When Jesus was born" (Τοῦ δὲ 'Ιησοῦ γεννηθέντος).   Ver. 13.   "When they [the wise men] had departed (ἀναχωρησάντων δὲ αὐτῶν), the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph."   Ver. 19.   "When Herod was dead" (τελευτήσαντος δὲ τοῦ 'Ηρώδου).

Chap. V. 1.—"When he was set (καθίσταντος αὐτοῦ) his disciples came."

Chap. VI. 3.—"When thou doest thine alms (σοῦ δὲ ποιοῦντος ἐλεημοσύνην) let not thy left hand know."

Chap. VIII. 16.—"When the evening was come (ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης), they brought many."   This genitive phrase is very frequent;   e. g., Matt. xiv. 23; xvi. 2; xx. 8; xxvi. 20; xxvii. 57;   Mark i. 32; iv. 35; vi. 47; xi. 11 (partici- ple οὔσης); xiv. 17; xv. 42; John xx. 19; all temporal in meaning, and giving time to the leading verb.

Chap. IX. 10, 18, 32, 33.—Ver. 10. "As Jesus sat at meat (αὐτοῦ ἀνακειμένου) many sinners came."   Ver. 18.   "While he was saying these things (ταῦτα αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος) there came a certain ruler," etc.   See also ix. 18; xi. 46; xvii. 5; xx. 8; xxvi. 20, 47; xxvii. 57; Mark i. 36; iv. 35; vi. 47; xi. 11; xiv. 43; xv. 42; Luke viii. 49; xxii. 47, 60; xxiv. 36; John viii. 30; xx. 19; Acts iv. 1; x. 44; xxiii. 7; Heb. ix. 19.   In all these passages, the Genitive Abso- lute expresses simultaneousness with the act of the leading verbs with which it is joined.   Ver. 32. "As they went out (αὐτῶν δὲ ἐξερχομένων) they brought to him," etc.   See, also, Luke xi. 14.   Ver. 33. "When the devil had been cast out (ἐκβληθέντος τοῦ δαιμονίου), the dumb spake."

Chap. XI. 7.—"When these were going (τούτων δὲ πο- ρευομένων), Jesus began to say," etc.   See, also, xx. 29; xxviii. 11; Mark x. 17, 46; xi. 12; xiii. 1; Luke viii. 4; ix. 57; xix. 36; Acts i. 10; xvi. 16.   The "going"

(πορευόμενος) gives time to the principal verbs. The compounds of πορεύομαι are frequent in the case absolute; e.g., Mark x. 17: "When he was gone forth into the way (ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ εἰς ὁδόν), there came"; see, also, ver. 46: "As he went out [of Jericho] (ἐκπορευομένου), blind Bartimæus sat by the wayside"; xiii. 1: "As he went out (ἐκπορευομένου) of the temple"; so Luke viii. 4, of συνιόντος ὄχλου πολλοῦ: "When much people were gathered together," "and came" (ἐπιπορευομένων) to him out of every city, he spake unto them." (The Genitive Absolute still marks the time.)

Chap. XIII. 6, 19, 21.—Ver. 6. "When the sun was up (ἡλίου ἀνατείλαντος), they [the seeds] were scorched," etc. Here the temporal is clearly the leading idea, the causal being at most only inferential. In other parts of the sower parable the consequent clauses come in as direct and independent statements; e.g., "Some fell by the way-side, *and the fowls came and devoured them up*"; "Some fell among thorns, *and the thorns sprung up and choked them*," etc. Here the apodoses are independent, though secondary predicates. This same time-marking (ἡλίου ἀνατείλαντος) is found in Mark's version (iv. 6) of this same parable, and the construction is essentially the same as Matthew's. See also Mark xvi. 2, where the Genitive Absolute denotes the time when the Marys came to the sepulcher, i.e., "at the rising of the sun." But the temporal Genitive Absolute marks time as well by the "setting" as by the "rising" sun. Witness Luke iv. 40, "When the sun was setting (δύνοντος τοῦ ἡλίου), they that had any sick brought them unto him," etc. Ver. 19. "*When* any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not (παντὸς ἀκούοντος τὸν λόγον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ μὴ συνιέντος), *then* cometh the wicked one," etc. So also Luke xix. 11; xx. 45: "While all the people heard (ἀκούοντος δὲ παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ), he said to his disciples." Ver. 21. "When trib-

ulation or persecution ariseth (γενομένης δὲ θλίψεως ἢ διωγ-μοῦ), he is offended."

The participle of γίγνομαι is very frequent in this con-struction; e.g., Matt. xxvi. 6: "When Jesus was in Beth-any (τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γενομένου ἐν Βηθανίᾳ), there came," etc.; also Mark vi. 2: "When it was Sabbath" (γενομένου σαβ-βάτου). *Ibid.* 35. "When the day was far spent (ὥρας πολλῆς γενομένης), the disciples came," etc.; also xvi. 1, where we have διαγενομένου; Luke vi. 48: "When the flood came" (πλημμύρας γενομένης); Acts xxi. 17: "When we were in [were come to] Jerusalem (γενομένων δὲ ἡμῶν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα) they received us gladly" (the same in Acts xxv. 15); Acts xxv. 7, 13. But Paul uses the Genitive Absolute of γίγνομαι in a causal, as well as a temporal, sig-nification; as, in Acts xxiii. 10: "When there arose a great dissension (πολλῆς δὲ γενομένης στάσεως), the chief captain commanded," etc.; also xxviii. 9; while in Acts xxv. 26, there is *purpose* in the subsequent clause, thus: "That, after examination had (ὅπως τῆς ἀνακρίσεως γενο-γένης) I might have somewhat to write," etc. We shall have further occasion to remark upon Paul's use of this construction.

Chap. XIV. 6, 32.—Ver. 6. "When Herod's birthday was kept (γενεσίων δὲ ἀγομένων τοῦ Ἡρώδου), the daughter of Herodias danced," etc.; see also, Mark vi. 21 for the same story. Ver. 32. "When they [Jesus and Peter] were come into the boat (ἐμβάντων αὐτῶν εἰς τὸ πλοῖον) the wind ceased," etc. For additional examples of βαίνω and its compounds in the absolute case, see Matt. xvii. 9: "While they were descending (καταβαινόντων αὐτῶν) from the mount, Jesus charged them," etc.; also, Mark ix. 9; John iv. 51; also Luke ii. 42: ἀναβάντων αὐτῶν ("they [Jesus' parents] went up to Jerusalem," etc.); also 1 Peter iv. 12: "Think it not strange as when [though] some strange thing happens unto you" (ὡς ξένου ὑμῖν συμβαίνοντος).

Chap. XVII. 22, 24.—Ver. 22. "While they abode [in Galilee] (ἀναστρεφομένων δὲ αὐτῶν) Jesus said unto them." Ver. 24. "When they were come to Capernaum (ἐλθόντων δὲ αὐτῶν εἰς Καπερναούμ) they that received tribute money came to Peter and said."

The participles of ἔρχομαι and its compounds are of frequent use in the Case Absolute; e. g., Matt. xvii. 14; xxi. 10; xxv. 10; xxvi. 60; Mark vi. 22, 54; xi. 12; Luke vii. 24; ix. 37, 42; xi. 14; xii. 36; xvii. 12; xxi. 10; 3 John 3. Paul uses these participles often, and sometimes with other ideas included with that of time; e. g., Acts i. 8: "When the Holy Ghost is come upon you (ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἐφ' ὑμᾶς) ye shall receive power"; also xxv. 23 (1 Cor. iv. 18 with 2 Cor. v. 20); Gal. iii. 25; 1 Thess. iii. 6. On the other hand, we often meet with the simple temporal usage of Paul; e. g., Acts vii. 31: "While he [Moses] drew near to behold it (προσερχομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ κατανοῆσαι) the voice of the Lord came unto him"; so, also, xxv. 17; xxviii. 17; 1 Cor. xi. 18, 20; 2 Cor. vii. 5.

As to Rom. vii. 9: ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς ("when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died"); it would certainly seem poor theology to treat the "coming of the commandment" as the *cause* of sin's revivification; or to suppose that sin had no place among men before the Decalogue on Sinai. It seems best, therefore, to consider this Genitive Absolute as a simple time marker, i. e., as used in its usual temporal signification.

The same observation seems applicable to the Genitive in Gal. iii. 25: "But after that faith is come (ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως), we are no longer under a schoolmaster," etc. Is justification by faith either the *effect* (or result) of the schoolmaster Law, or is it the *cause* of the Law? Paul most emphatically repudiates such a conclusion—apparently before it was urged. The pedagogue Law leads us to the Door (Christ); but cannot enter within the portal. At the

very *Door* we *may* turn back, refusing to enter, and conse-
quently fail of the justification by faith.   But, having en-
tered, the justification is made through Christ, and the
ascending ladder of Law may be cast from under us, so far
as relates to its obligations and sacrifices.   The relation is
one of sequence (not of consequence) in time.   It is *when*
the law has performed its office of guide, that we may stand
at the Door (Christ), ready to receive faith's justification.

Again in 1 Thess. iii. 6: "When Timotheus came from
you unto us (ἐλθόντος Τιμοθέου πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀφ' ὑμῶν), and
brought us good tidings (καὶ εὐαγγελισαμένου ἡμῖν) of your
faith and love, . . . we were comforted by *your faith*," not
by Timothy's coming.   The temporal is here the predom-
inant idea.

The same observations apply also to 3 John 3.

But to continue our review in order :—

Chap. XVIII. 24, 25.—Ver. 24. " When he had begun to
reckon (ἀρξαμένου δὲ αὐτοῦ συναίρειν), one was brought
which owed him," etc.   Ver. 25. "When he did not have
wherewith to pay (μὴ ἔχοντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀποδοῦναι), his lord
commanded him to be sold," etc.   See the similar thought
and construction in Luke vii. 42.

Chap. XXII. 42.—"While the Pharisees were gathered
together (συνηγμένων δὲ τῶν Φαρισαίων), Jesus asked them";
so, also, xxvii. 17; Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. v. 4.   In the first
three of these passages, the perfect passive participle is
used, and the "gathered together" is assumed as a state, or
condition, rather of the adjective or descriptive kind; while
in the example from Corinthians, the *"coming together"*
in the Aorist (συναχθέντων) claims specific attention as a
preliminary act to the "committing of such an one to
Satan" for the destruction of the flesh.

Chap. XXIV. 3.—The same state, or condition, may be
thought of in connection with the *Perfect* Present (καθημέ-
νου): "As he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples

came," so of Pilate "sitting" upon the judgment seat (xxvii. 19); see also Mark xiii. 3. In all these instances, however, the simple relation of present or contemporaneous time for the action of the leading verb would be sufficient to account for the use of the Absolute.

Chap. XXV. 5, 6.—Ver. 5. "While the bridegroom tarried (χρονίζοντος δὲ τοῦ νυμφίου), they all slumbered and slept." Ver. 6. "When it was midnight (μέσης δὲ νυκτὸς [οὔσης]), a cry was made," etc. Under this head may be classed similar genitives of time: e.g., σκοτίας ἔτι οὔσης (John xx. i), "While it was yet dark"; πρωΐας δὲ γενομένης ("when the morning was come"); and the incomplete expression πρωΐ of Mark xvi. 2; and the full form in John xxi. 4: "When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore." So of ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης (or οὔσης), "when it was late," or "when it was even," which gives the time to the main action; as in Matt. xxvii. 57: "*When it was evening*, a rich man named Joseph, from Arimathea, came," etc.; so Mark i. 32; iv. 35; vi. 47; xi. 11; xiv. 17; xv. 42; John xx. 19.

Analogous is the construction γενομένης δὲ ἡμέρας ("when it was [become] day"). Luke iv. 42: "At dawn he went forth into the desert." So also Acts xii. 18; xvi. 35; xxiii. 12. See, also, Acts xxv. 13: "When some days had passed" (ἡμερῶν δὲ διαγενομένων τινῶν); also Mark xv. 33: "When it was the sixth hour (γενομένης δὲ ὥρας ἕκτης), there was [became] darkness over the whole earth."

Chap. XXVI. 21.—"And as they did eat (ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν), he said." See likewise the same form in verse 26: "And as they did eat Jesus took bread and blessed it"; also Mark xiv. 18, 22.

Chap. XXVIII. 13.—"They stole him away *while we slept* (ἡμῶν κοιμωμένων, κ. τ. λ.)."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]