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Is it right to designate the church as "my church"?

A smattering of grammar may lead one to think that the possessive case of nouns and pronouns always denotes possession, or ownership; and hence his feelings may be outraged when he hears some one say "my church" or "your church." He is likely to say, "I have no church." But as strange as it may seem to some, in common usage, it is, nevertheless, a fact that the possessive case is used more often to indicate other relationships than ownership. If you sing, 'My country 'tis of thee,' etc., you do not mean that you actually own the country. We often say "my town," "my country," "my state," etc. We do not mean that we own either. Our day, our times—no ownership here. A year's growth, a country's progress, an hour's time, a stone's cast, a Sabbath day's journey, his death, his murderer, the slave's master, the dog's owner—no ownership in these; in fact, in the last two the ownership goes the other way. Job said: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." "Our Father who art in heaven," "your heavenly Father."

If some one were to ask you, "How is your town progressing?" Would you say, "I haven't got any town?" No? Well, why be rude when some one asks you, "How is your church progressing"? The querist did not mean that you owned a church any more than the other meant you owned a town. **It is easy to be more critical than wise. We sometimes become so wise that we are really foolish.** When a person asks about "your church," you know that he does not mean that you own a church. Why be rude in answering him, as my brethren sometimes are? You do not object to saying "my brethren." Who are your brethren? Are they not the church? And have not I heard you say "our congregation"? **Yes, the church of Jesus Christ is my church,** and Texas is my adopted state, but I do not own either of them. And if you haven't a church, you are in a worse condition than the man who hasn't any country. I rejoice that I have both. And yet I know that the expression can be used in an objectionable sense, and that is what caused the brethren to shy away from its use. Pastors spoke of "my church" pretty much as one would speak of "my flock of sheep;" but when Paul in his letter to Titus spoke of "our people" he did not mean that he and Titus owned a group of people. "Our people" was the church. (REFLECTIONS, pp.268, 269)