

the *one bread* could be Christ himself who is sufficient nourishment for the Christian journey along the way.

Finally, Paul himself seems to have thought of the Eucharist as the sustaining food for the new Exodus. He writes, 'all were baptised in Moses, in the cloud and in the sea. And all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them and the rock was Christ' (1 Cor. 10:2-4). This prepares for the specific mention he makes of the Eucharist a few verses further on (1 Cor. 10:14-22). So if Paul is thinking of the Eucharist in connection with the journey to the promised land, which is a type (10, 11) of the Church, it would be likely that he thought of the Eucharist as food for the journey of the new Exodus. 'The true nourishment and the true spiritual drink, the body and blood of Christ, are now given to God's new people who are marching towards the true Promised Land.'¹

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PAUL AND TRADITION IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

The recent decades have made known to us much of the process that governed the formation of our gospels and we have been able to see something of the life and belief of the primitive Church at work in transmitting the gospel material. But whereas the gospels give us the final form, as it were, of transmitted material on the life and teaching of Christ, throughout the whole of the New Testament we can discern various fugitive fragments of material in transmission: a tradition was being established. In the last two decades in particular a fair number of both Catholic and non-Catholic scholars have been investigating these elements of primitive Christian tradition.² They have asked questions about the use of such elements in the early Church, questions about the importance of such traditional material for the individual New Testament writers, questions about their place in

¹ F. Amiot, *The Key Concepts of St Paul* (Herder, Freiburg: Nelson, Edinburgh, 1962), p. 203

² I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness here to A. M. Hunter, *Paul and his predecessors*, SCM 1961; Klaus Wegenast, *Das Verständnis der Tradition von Paulus und in den Deuteropaulinen*, 1962.

the life and liturgy of the Church. For answers to these questions we have to go back to those years which were decisive for the transmission of Christ's message before our gospels crystallised, a period which stretched, we might say, from the middle thirties to the middle fifties of the first century and which is marked most especially by the letters of St Paul.

From these letters we are able to isolate an imposing number of fragments of teaching which were pre-Pauline and which represent material in transmission. We are able also to see something of the forms this transmission took. An important question which must follow these investigations has yet to be answered: what was the conception of transmission, what was the conception of tradition in the primitive Church? However, it is our concern here to try to define Paul's use of traditional material. While the Catholic Epistles also offer similar material, the numerous letters of Paul offer a clearer sketch of just what this material comprised, and of how one man used it.

The theology of the primitive Church was first and foremost a Christology—everything centred around the risen and exalted Lord. From the Acts of the Apostles we can draw up a *schema* of this Christology in its earliest form:

- Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works (2:22)
- Crucified and raised from the dead, God has made him both Lord and Christ (2:33ff.)
- He has now poured forth the Holy Spirit who was promised (2:33)
- In the power of his name are wrought miracles (3:6, 16)
- He is the Servant of God (3:13, 26; 4:27)
 - the holy and just One (3:14)
 - the prince of life (3:15; 5:31)
 - the promised Messiah who is to restore all things (3:20, 21)
 - the prophet like unto Moses (3:22; 7:37), spoken of by all the prophets from Samuel onwards (3:24)
 - the stone rejected by the builders, but now the corner-stone (4:11)

This primitive Palestinian Christology, thoroughly Old Testament in flavour, centred around two ideas: Jesus as Messiah and Jesus as exalted Lord. Now the importance of this Christology is that, if as yet there was no complete understanding of what was involved in the appreciation of Jesus as exalted Messiah and Lord, still all the data for a more developed Christology to come later are there. The churches on Hellenistic soil, under the influence of Paul, will contribute the necessary reflection. Here, the idea of Jesus as *Kyrios* took precedence over Jesus as Messiah, and indeed, supplanted it. But Paul's Christology of the exalted Lord Jesus came not from Paul nor from the churches in the Hellenistic world; it came from that transmission of

belief from Jerusalem itself. One has also to bear in mind in this connection the important invocation of the Aramaic-speaking church of Jerusalem : ‘ *Marana tha* ’, ‘ Come, Lord.’ It is not improbable that this is an invocation made during the celebration of the Eucharist : a prayer to the exalted Lord Jesus. Even the name of Jesus was invoked with an unmistakable sense of religious veneration. Emil Brunner has stated that ‘ Once the assertion has been made “ Christ is the exalted Lord,” the Christology of the primitive Church is present in the main features of the doctrine both of his person and his work ’ (*The Mediator*, p. 179). We shall note later how various other aspects of Pauline Christology represent pre-Pauline belief, but the principal lines of his teaching antedated him.

The theology of the primitive Church was primarily a Christology, we have said, and this Christology was transmitted in various forms. We may distinguish four principal forms in the Pauline letters : credal formulas, early Christian hymns, collections of ‘ sayings of the Lord ’ and catechetical instruction.

In Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians we find two clear examples of credal formulas which are specifically presented as *paradosis* or tradition. There is first of all 1 Cor. 15:3ff. which has been described as the most precious fragment we possess of doctrinal tradition preceding Paul :

For I *delivered* to you as of first importance what I also *received*,
that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,
that he was buried
that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and
that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more
 than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive,
 though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all
 the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

The verbs here in italics are tantamount to the technical Jewish terms for the reception and transmission of tradition, and the fourfold ‘ that ’ is equivalent to quotation marks and postulates a formula of which our fragment is only a piece of a larger whole. It is interesting to note that v. 11 of the same chapter expressly states that what has been recited is the preaching of all the Apostles and not only of Paul : ‘ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.’ Did Paul receive this tradition from Ananias before his baptism, so that we have here the baptismal creed of the Damascus church, or did he receive it when he went up to Jerusalem to confer with Peter ? We may note how the two Apostles mentioned in it were in fact the two Paul met in Jerusalem during his visit there (Gal. 1:18). It would

seem in this case that this tradition stemmed from the Jerusalem community.

In the same Epistle we have another example of what Professor Hunter has called 'guarded tradition': 1 Cor. 11:23-5:

For I *received* from the Lord what I also *delivered* to you, *that* the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Here, once more, we may observe the same technical words of 'receiving' and 'transmitting.' If we compare this passage (so full of un-Pauline words) with the account of the Last Supper in Mk. 14:22-5 (a more primitive account than Matthew's or Luke's), we find that whereas Mark's is starkly Semitic in cast, Paul's seems to stem from the tradition in a Hellenistic church (Antioch or Damascus), even if both derive ultimately from a common Aramaic source.

Besides these technically presented traditions, we can also, although with not the same certainty, uncover in Paul's letters further evidence of credal formulas, perhaps five in all, of which four are in the Epistle to the Romans and one in Paul's hymn to charity in 1 Cor. 13.

In Rom. 1:3-5 we read:

(Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God)
 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son,
 who was descended from David according to the flesh
 and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The whole passage, after Paul's introducing himself, has the cast of a creed about it, and of a creed which preceded Paul. Paul, in Rom. 8:3, 1 Cor. 10:4, 2 Cor. 8:9, Gal. 4:4, is more clearly concerned with Christ's divinity at the Incarnation and with his pre-existence. Here, however, the emphasis is surely on Christ's divinity as manifested in the resurrection, the more primitive Christology discoverable in the Acts of the Apostles.

There is a second passage in Romans where we may detect something older than Paul:

They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins (Rom. 3:24-5).

In this latter formula, the New Covenant is viewed primarily as the fulfilment of God's faithfulness to His Covenant of old, but Paul

has given it a certain twist by the addition of favourite ideas of his : 'by his grace as a gift' and 'by faith.' Further, in v. 26 which follows : 'It was to prove at the present time that He Himself is righteous and that He justifies him who has faith in Jesus,' Paul has included God's present activity (not only, then, His attribute of faithfulness) of setting things right for His people.

The third pre-Pauline tradition we can discern in Romans is in 4:24-5 :

(It will be reckoned to us) who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,
who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

It should come as no surprise to find that the primitive Church enshrined its awareness of the expiatory death of Christ in a formula. 'Who was put to death for our trespasses' echoes Is. 53:12 (LXX), and it was also prophesied that 'by his knowledge shall my righteous servant *justify* many' ; Rom. 4:25 includes 'and raised for our justification.' Is it too much to say that the reflection of the primitive Church on the death of Christ for our sins translated its thought into Isaian terms which then found a niche in the confessions of faith? And we have already noted how the Acts of the Apostles included the notion of the Servant in its Christology.

Finally in Rom. 10:8-9 we have :

The word of faith which we preach ; because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Once more we can see here the remains of a creed : the 'word of faith,' a formula of confession with a twofold content—'Jesus is Lord' and 'God raised him from the dead.' When we look at other texts where Paul affirms that 'Jesus is Lord' (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3 ; Phil. 2:11 ; 2 Cor. 4:5, 6 ; Ac. 19:5) we can assume that he is citing what must be one of the oldest Christian confessions, most probably a baptismal formula, since baptism was first in the name of Jesus. The second arm of the confession, 'God raised him from the dead,' was from the earliest days a dominant theme in the primitive Christian preaching. Is it too much to expect that a belief which was basic in that preaching should be formularised in credal phrases ?

The last formula we have to consider is that primitive Christian triad : faith, hope and charity. Paul's hymn to charity in 1 Cor. concludes with the juxtaposition of these three virtues and it has been an easy assumption to see here an original contribution of Paul. Professor Hunter has shown that the triad is found eleven times in the New Testament, four of which occur outside Paul's letters.

- 1 Thess. 1:3 : your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope
 1 Thess. 5:8 : the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet the hope of salvation
 Gal. 5:5-6 : the hope of righteousness . . . faith working through love
 1 Cor. 13:13 : and so faith, hope and love abide, these three
 Rom. 5:1-5 : justified by faith . . . our hope of sharing the glory of God . . .
 God's love has been poured into our hearts
 Col. 1:4-5 : your faith in Christ Jesus . . . the love which you have for all the
 saints, because of the hope laid up for you
 Eph. 4:2-5 : forbearing one another in love . . . called to the one hope . . . one
 Lord, one faith, one baptism.
 Heb. 6:10-12 : the love which you showed . . . the full assurance of hope . . .
 through faith.
 Heb. 10:22-4 : in full assurance of faith . . . the confession of our hope . . .
 stir up one another to love
 1 Pet. 1:3-8 : living hope . . . guarded through faith . . . you love him
 1 Pet. 1:21-2 : your faith and hope are in God . . . a sincere love.

All this suggests that Paul was not the creator of the triad, but rather that it was something current in the primitive Church, a slogan, perhaps, for the Christian life.

Pliny, writing to Trajan about the Christians in the year A.D. 111, informed the emperor that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing antiphonally a hymn to Christ as to a god. But half a century or more earlier Paul had written to the Corinthians : 'When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation,' and to the Colossians : 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly . . . as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.' Are we able to find in Paul's letters examples of hymns sung in the primitive Church? We can, with some certainty, isolate three hymns in the letters to the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians.

In Eph. 5:14, we read :

Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,
 and Christ shall give you light

It would seem that this is a pre-Pauline baptismal hymn, sung when the convert rises from the baptismal waters, the symbol of his death and burial with Christ. The context indicates that the verse is a call to awake from the pagan state of sin suggested by the double metaphor of sleep and death, with the promise that Christ's light of truth will shine upon the sinner.

In Phil. 2:6-11 we have another pre-Pauline Jewish-Christian hymn on the theme of Jesus as the new Adam. The first Adam

sought to be like God, but Christ hid his divinity, choosing the role of the Suffering Servant ; for his obedience unto death he was exalted by God and made Lord over the cosmos.

Who, though he was in the form of God,
did not count equality with God
a thing to be grasped.

But emptied himself,
Taking the form of a servant,
being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form
he humbled himself
and became obedient unto death
(even death on a cross !)

Therefore God has highly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name
which is above every name

That at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow
in heaven and on earth and under the earth

And every tongue confess that
Jesus Christ is Lord
to the glory of God the Father

If this hymn is pre-Pauline, it is interesting to note how the doctrine of Christ as the new Adam preceded Paul in the primitive Church. And, indeed, Paul himself presupposes a knowledge of this among his readers in Rome (which was not evangelised by Paul) and his readers in Corinth (cf. Rom. 5:12-21 ; 1 Cor. 15:20-8, 45-9 ; 2 Cor. 4:4-6). We have already noted how the primitive Church, following the lead of Christ himself, saw Christ's role explained in the Isaian concept of the Suffering Servant. It is interesting and illuminating to compare Is. 45:23 ; 52:13-14 ; 53:12.

Finally, there is Col. 1:15-20 :

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation
for in him were all things created, in heaven and on earth,
visible and invisible
whether thrones or dominions
or principalities or authorities—
all things were created through him and for him.
He is before all things
and in him all things hold together.
He is the head of the body, the church ;
he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead
that in everything he might be pre-eminent.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell
and through him to reconcile to himself all things
whether on earth or in heaven,
making peace by the blood of his cross.

There is no doubt that this passage is an apogee in Paul's Christology. Christ is the goal of creation and he has reconciled not only mankind but everything in creation. But this Christology was already present in the mind of the primitive Church which resumed it in a hymn, and Paul, in Col. 1:15-20, has built on a hymn originally in praise of the cosmic rank of Christ.

Besides credal formulas and Christian hymns as vehicles for tradition in the early Church there were also, apparently, collections of 'sayings of the Lord.' These were organised not so much to underpin the doctrinal structure as to clarify practical, everyday problems. In Paul's letters we find 'words of the Lord' expressly cited as such some four or five times, but some twenty-four times are they implicitly included in the letters.

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians we can discover, besides the words of Christ cited in the narrative on the Last Supper (1 Cor. 11:23), two further sayings of Christ. In 1 Cor. 7:10, we read: 'To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband—and that the husband should not divorce his wife.' If we compare this text with Mt. 19:6, Mk. 10:9 and Lk. 16:18, we shall find that even if Paul does not give us the *ipsissima verba Christi*, we do have their substance. Similarly 1 Cor. 9:14: 'In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel' gives us the substance of a saying of Christ which authorised missionaries to claim their maintenance ('The labourer is worthy of his hire' Mt. 10:10, Lk. 10:7; 1 Tim. 5:18 cites this latter text as Scripture). Lastly, there is in Paul's speech at Miletus (Ac. 20:35) a further saying of Christ expressly given as such: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'—a saying which has no parallel in the synoptic tradition.

In chapters 12-14 of Romans there are various examples of allusions to sayings of Christ found in the Synoptics. A few examples: Rom. 12:14: 'Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them'—a reminiscence, surely, of the beatitudes; Rom. 12:17: 'Repay no one evil for evil' (cf. Mt. 5:39ff.); Rom. 13:7: 'Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due' (cf. the tribute to Caesar incident in Mt. 22:15-22, Mk. 12:13-17, Lk. 20:20-6); lastly in Rom. 13:8-10: 'Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbour

has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law' (Mt. 22:34-40, Lk. 10:25-8, Mk. 12:28-34).

In chapters 4-5 of 1 Thess. we have another series of allusions to 'words of the Lord' which deal mostly with the Day of the Lord and may be compared with the eschatological discourses in the Synoptic Gospels; but beside these apocalyptic sayings there are many others. Further, scattered among the letters to the Corinthians, Galatians and Philippians are a number of other allusions to sayings of Christ. It has been assumed, then, that in the primitive Church were collections of such sayings for the use of missionaries, and a remark like that of 1 Cor. 7:25, 'Now concerning the unmarried, I have no command of the Lord,' implies that Paul did have a number of such commands on which he drew to exhort his converts.

The final form we may list as a vehicle for transmitting tradition is the catechetical tradition. We can find in Paul's letters, after he has given his doctrinal exposition, words of exhortation. What is remarkable is that we can detect similarities in this exhortatory material with that found in the Catholic Epistles. Studies following this lead have discovered a certain pattern of instruction, a catechism, which may well have formed part of the preparation of catechumens for baptism. A comparison among the various letters of the New Testament shows that this pattern followed (according to Professor Dodd) a sevenfold form: there is the laying aside of pagan vices; the putting on of the 'new man' with all his virtues; the ordering of family relations on an effective Christian basis; respect for elders or leaders; the prudent dealing with those not of the household of the faith; the living of law-abiding lives and the paying of taxes; finally, vigilance in the present time.

Now Paul expressly refers to such a tradition on moral practices in the letters to the Thessalonians. In 1 Thess. 4:1, he writes: 'You learned from us how you ought to live' and in 2 Thess. 3:6, 'Keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.' Also, can we not observe in Rom. 6:17 a reference to that pattern of instruction: 'But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the pattern (*typon*) of teaching to which you were committed' (cf. also Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Cor. 11:2)? If we turn to those sections of the Pauline letters which take up the more practical issues of morality (e.g. Rom. 12-13; Gal. 5:13ff.; Col. 3:1-4, 6; Eph. 4:17ff.; 1 Thess. 4:1-9), we find lists of vices to be

avoided and lists of virtues to be practised, 'household rules' laying down relations between husbands and wives, masters and servants, etc., plus various admonitions on humility, hospitality, brotherly love and, indeed, on good works in general.

One cannot lightly put away the impression, when reading the hortatory sections of the epistles, that the maxims introduced there are strung together loosely and are mere reminders of what the converts had previously covered more intensively in a fairly systematic form. That many of these maxims go back to Christ himself, there can be no doubt. But it is not impossible that contemporary 'rules of good behaviour' were co-opted to serve the Christian message and underwent a Christianising influence when they found a new—and their real—home in the Church.

To sum up : Paul, in his letters, shows us how tradition was working in the Church. He offers us fragments of traditional material which was transmitted in the Church via credal formulas, hymns, sayings of Christ, and in the moral catechism. It has not been possible here to develop the fourfold argument drawn from context, style, vocabulary and doctrine to demonstrate how seriously scholars believe they are able to detect pre-Pauline elements in Paul's letters. It has not been possible either to discuss Paul's use and development of the doctrine handed on to him in the primitive Church. Both these questions require extensive treatment. But it is hoped that an outline has been given of how Paul has, in the very use of those fragments of tradition, acknowledged his indebtedness to those before him in Christ. We have also seen something of how tradition was being transmitted in the life of the Church. That Paul was so dependent on those who preceded him in no way diminishes the remarkable contribution he himself was able to make to Christianity, for revelation found in him yet another agent for finalising the summit of revelation reached in Christ. Paul had much to receive from his predecessors, but he had much to pass on.

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