

“KYRIOS” AS DESIGNATION FOR THE ORAL TRADITION CONCERNING JESUS

(*Paradosis and Kyrios*)¹

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THE work of the form-critics on the Gospel has directed our attention more than ever before to the historical development of the material of the tradition, which took place before the fixing of our Gospels in writing. Collections of single or several words of Jesus, and narratives about Jesus, were establishing themselves already in the early Church, and were passed on by it. How far this tradition was already in part written down, or, as with the oldest Jewish traditions, was only orally transmitted, is not a question of importance for us here, but in any case it could never be solved with certainty. That is also true, as M. Dibelius has rightly stressed, of the much quoted “Q source”.² It is indeed very probable that already before the composition of our Gospels, there were smaller writings, above all collections of words of Jesus, but it is in no way possible to define or demarcate them more exactly. On principle, this whole stream of tradition, whether it is transmitted in written or oral fashion, in so far as it is not yet channelled in our Gospels, can and must be handled as a unit. When in the title we speak of an “oral” tradition concerning Jesus, we mean simply the tradition concerning Jesus which existed before the Gospels. Similarly, in the Jewish tradition of the Old Testament law, the interpretations of the law were at first orally handed down from Rabbi to pupil, and then later written, but neither the fact of this taking place, nor the time when it took place, are of any fundamental importance for this Jewish tradition.

When we speak of the tradition in the early Church in what follows, we shall have to keep constantly before us, the parallel in the Jewish tradition of the Rabbis. We shall see that Paul

¹ Lecture given to the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* in Oxford, 15th September 1949.—

² M. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, 2nd edn., 1933, pp. 234 ff.

used exactly the same Greek word, *παράδοσις*, which to him as the pupil of Rabbi Gamaliel was familiar from his Jewish past. If we consider how, in general, Jesus spoke against the *paradosis* of the Jews, then we are immediately faced with a problem. How could Paul take this notion, apparently discredited by Jesus, and without more ado transfer it to the instruction and teaching which were held to be normative in the Christian Church?

The problem, however, is yet more complicated by the fact that, instead of "tradition", Paul can sometimes say "the Lord" (*ὁ Κύριος*) as for example when he quotes words of Jesus (1 Thess. 4.15; 1 Cor. 7.10, and 7.25; 1 Cor. 9.14). In 1 Cor. 11.23 he joins the two concepts "tradition" and *Kyrios* when he writes: "I have received the tradition from the Lord." There follows the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper: "that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed . . ." *Ἐγὼ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου . . .* Why "from *Kyrios*"? Why not "from the Church"?

This passage, 1 Cor. 11.23, is usually, but falsely, treated alone, and has, as is well known, given rise to two different interpretations. The one maintains that this passage is not concerned with tradition in the usual Jewish sense, whereby a whole chain of successive human members would be presupposed, from whom Paul had received the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, but that, on the contrary, it is here a question of direct, immediate revelation from the Lord. This has come to Paul in a visionary experience such as that referred to in Galatians 1.12 where he says, he has not received the Gospel from men, but through direct revelation, through *apokalypsis*, and where clearly the moment of Christ's appearing on the road to Damascus is meant.

This interpretation has been given again and again; by Lefèvre d'Étaples, and by Bengel who followed and quoted him approvingly in this same interpretation; then in more recent times with special emphasis by F. Godet,¹ A. Loisy² (who erroneously considers this whole passage to be an insertion) and W. Heitmüller.³ The French deniers of the historical

¹ F. Godet, *Commentaire sur la 1ère ep. aux Corinthiens*, vol. 2, 1887, pp. 160 ff.

² A. Loisy, *Les origines de la Cène eucharistique. Congrès d'Histoire du Christianisme*, vol. 1, p. 77 ff.

³ W. Heitmüller, *Zum Problem Paulus und Jesus* (Z.N.W., 1912), p. 321.

existence of Jesus, Couchoud¹ and Alfáric,² have made use of the same explanation. They believe that they can make this passage into a sort of test case for showing the one source out of which the material of the Gospel has arisen: Paul has had visions, and he has transferred the matter of these visions into history, while in reality this "Lord Jesus" never lived.

If this is the right way to understand 1 Cor. 11.23, that is, if the words: "I have received the tradition from the Lord" mean: "I have received the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper directly in a vision from the Lord", then this passage will have no bearing upon the problem of "the tradition" which we are discussing. It will not deal at all with the tradition in the Church. However, by far the preponderant majority of scholars, representing all points of view, are agreed that this interpretation is not accurate, and that the words: "I have received the tradition from the Lord", do not exclude the normal tradition which comes through the Church. I name here, for instance, H. Lietzmann,³ Johannes Weiss,⁴ E. B. Allo,⁵ Jean Héring⁶ (in the latest commentary on 1 Corinthians), R. Bultmann (in his *Theology of the New Testament* which appeared a short time ago).⁷ Also M. Goguel has shown, against those who deny the historical existence of Jesus, that in reality those words presume an historical transmission of the facts.⁸

Thus we see that a very wide consensus exists among the scholars of the various schools and even confessions. And if this interpretation is accurate, then the words "I have received the tradition from the Lord" mean nothing else than: "to receive by means of the tradition which comes through the Church". But if this is so, how is Paul's surprising expression, "from the Lord", to be explained? Here the various individual interpretations draw somewhat apart, though all more or less agree that with the preposition *ἀπό* Paul points to the chrono-

¹ P. L. Couchoud, *Le mystère de Jésus*, 1924, p. 141.

² P. Alfáric, *Le Jésus de Paul* (*Revue d'Histoire des Religions*, 1927), pp. 276 ff.

³ H. Lietzmann, *An die Korinther*, 1-2 (*Handbuch zum N.T.*), 4th edit. by W. G. Kümmel, 1949, p. 57; see also the footnote added by W. G. Kümmel, p. 185.

⁴ John. Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (*Krit. exeg. Kommentar N.T.*), 1919, p. 283.

⁵ E. B. Allo, *Première épître aux Corinthiens*, 2nd edit., 1934.

⁶ J. Héring, *La première épître de S. Paul aux Corinthiens* (*Commentaire du N.T.*), 1949, p. 100.

⁷ R. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 1948, pp. 148 f.

⁸ M. Goguel, *La relation du dernier repas de Jésus dans 1 Cor. 11 et la tradition historique chez l'apôtre Paul* (*Revue d'Histoire et de Philos. rel.*, 1930, pp. 61 f.)

logical origin of the whole presupposed chain of tradition: I have received it *from the Lord*. One might reword it thus: I have received it through a chain of tradition, which begins with the Lord.

This answer to our question, Why the designation *Kyrios*? will have to be tested, but it must first be pointed out that we are dealing here with an hypothesis, and that, in the nature of the case, we are forced to use an hypothesis for the answering of this question. Instead of the above hypothesis, however, I should prefer to put forward another which is somewhat different. I agree indeed with the great majority of scholars that 1 Cor. 11.23 deals with a tradition through the Church, and not with a vision; but I should like to explain the fact that Paul refers it back to the *Lord* rather in terms of the whole complex of *paradosis* in the *New Testament*. I should like to show that, seen in this connexion, the designation *Kyrios* not only points to the historical Jesus as the chronological beginning of the chain of tradition, as the first member of it, but accepts the exalted Lord as the real Author of the whole tradition developing itself in the apostolic Church. Thus the apostolic *paradosis* can be set directly on a level with the exalted *Kyrios*. The *Lord* is Himself at work in the tradition of His words and deeds through the Apostles; He works through the apostolic church. I find this assumption already in Chrysostom's explanation of our passage, when he writes (Hon. 27.4): "For to-day also it is the same one, who produces and delivers everything, even as at that time" (καὶ γὰρ καὶ σήμερον αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ πάντα ἐργαζόμενος καὶ παραδούς ὡσπερ καὶ τότε). It must be said at once, however, that Chrysostom's conclusion that *all* Church tradition—including the later, till "to-day"—is to be attributed to the authorship of the Lord Himself, by no means follows from the Pauline designation. Nevertheless in what concerns the *apostolic* tradition, Chrysostom seems to have defined properly the importance of the New Testament connexion of *paradosis* and *Kyrios*.

The course of our argument will now be as follows: In the first section, we shall try to demonstrate that for Paul the *paradosis*, in so far as it refers to the formula of faith, and to the words and deeds of Jesus, is really tradition coming through the Church, to which the Jewish *paradosis* is a parallel. In the second

section, we shall show what relation this tradition through the Church has to the direct *apokalypsis* of the Lord to the Apostles. Then in the third section, we shall consider the general background of Pauline theology, and also of St. John's Gospel according to which all apostolic tradition not only began with the Lord, but in its whole dimension is caused by Him and is really to be considered His work. Finally, we shall speak, in the fourth section, of the relation between this tradition and the apostolic office.

I

Jesus and the early Church lived in an atmosphere entirely permeated with the concept of tradition. That means that the rabbinic interpretation of the Scripture was placing itself more and more as a norm alongside of, and ruling over, the Scripture. Jesus rejected this whole *παράδοσις τῶν πρεσβυτέρων* as the work of men, which instead of explaining the Scripture in reality set it aside (Mark 7.3 ff.; Matt. 15.2). The slogan of the pious Jews was "hold to the tradition" (*κρατεῖν τὴν παράδοσιν*, Mark 7.18). Jesus took it up, when He said, ironically: "Laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men" (Mark 7.8).

In the letters of Paul, on the other hand, we find him using the whole Jewish *paradosis* terminology, and in a thoroughly positive sense, as for example in his admonition to the Thesalonians: "Hold (*κρατεῖτε*) to the *paradosis*" (2 Thess. 2.15). Also we find the other *termini* which belong to the concept of the tradition recurring, and becoming something like *termini technici*: the synonym for *κρατεῖν*: *κατέχειν* (1 Cor. 11.2 and 1 Cor. 15.2); further: "Stand in the tradition" (*στήκετε*, 1 Cor. 15.1 and 2 Thess. 2.15); but especially "receive" (*παραλαμβάνειν*) and "deliver" (*παραδίδόναι*) (1 Cor. 11.2, 11.23, 15.3; 1 Thess. 2.13; 2 Thess. 2.15, 3.6; Rom. 6.17; Gal. 1.9, 1.12; Phil. 4.9; Col. 2.6, 2.8).¹ It is completely misleading to want to see here, as E. Norden does,² the influence of the Greek mystery language. On the contrary, it is clear that this entire terminology comes from the Jews. *παραλαμβάνειν* is a translation of the

¹ On the expression *φυλάττειν παραθήκην* (1 Tim. 6.20; 2 Tim. 1.14) see P. C. Spicq, *S. Paul et la loi des dépôts* (*Revue biblique*, 1931), pp. 481 ff.

² E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 1913, pp. 267 f.

Hebraic *gibbel min*, παραδιδόναι of the Hebraic *masar le*.¹ And the exact correspondence of the two Pauline passages in the first Corinthian letter shows that it is a matter of purely formal expressions:

1 Cor. 11.23: (ἐγὼ) παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου ὁ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν.

1 Cor. 15.3: παρέδωκα ὑμῖν (ἐν πρώτοις) ὁ καὶ παρέλαβον.
The verbs in the primary and secondary clauses are simply interchanged. That this is possible, is characteristic of the nature of the tradition, which forms a chain. At all events it is clear that this is the language of a Jewish formula, by which the Rabbis refer to the *halacha* and the *haggada*. In the other above mentioned passages, it is sometimes Paul, sometimes the Church, which "has received".

The little word καὶ is to be particularly noticed, also, because it certainly belongs to the formula language of the *paradosis* terminology. Not only does it occur in both 1 Cor. 11.23 and 1 Cor. 15.3, but also in 1 Cor. 15.1: τὸ εὐαγγέλιον . . . ὁ καὶ παρελάβετε. E. B. Allo² has rightly stressed, that in 1 Cor. 11.23 this καὶ must itself refer to the manner of the transmission: I have received the tradition in the same way as I have handed it on to you, and that means: by mediation.

This now throws light on the addition mentioned at the beginning of 1 Cor. 11.23: "from the Lord", because it means that this addition does not exclude the mediation. Although the words "from the Lord" are lacking in 1 Cor. 15.3 ff., the form of expression, in other respects, is completely parallel, and the fact that both passages used the same formula proves that here, as there, a chain of tradition must be presupposed. In his book, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, recently published in a new edition, J. Jeremias³ has shown that, in regard to 1 Cor. 15.3 ff., the content of the *paradosis*, which is introduced with this formula, is linguistically un-Pauline. This also, therefore, confirms the assumption that Paul has taken over a text already fixed. The same can be said for 1 Cor. 11.23, even though Paul declares that he has received this account of the institution of the Lord's Supper "from the Lord". And further M. Goguel,⁴ and recently also, R. Bultmann,⁵ rightly maintain that this ac-

¹ See J. Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, 2nd edn., 1949, pp. 95 f.

² op. cit., p. 311. ³ op. cit., p. 96. ⁴ op. cit., p. 75. ⁵ op. cit., p. 149.

count could not have been written down by Paul on the basis of a visionary experience, because when compared with the parallel Synoptic narratives of the Lord's Supper, he clearly represents a further, progressive stage in the tradition.

But what *content* does Paul designate as *paradosis*? First, rules which after the fashion of the *halacha* have to do with the conduct of the faithful, as for example 1 Cor. 11.2; 2 Thess. 3.6; Rom. 6.17; Phil. 4.9; Col. 2.6; secondly, a summary of the Christian preaching, fixed after the fashion of a rule of faith, where facts of the life of Jesus are united with their theological interpretation, as in 1 Cor. 15.3 ff.; finally, words and single narratives from the life of Jesus, as in 1 Cor. 11.23.

Very likely R. Bultmann is right when he says that the original thing was the kerygmatic summary of the faith. But, as we have seen, the tradition had gone a stage further by the time of Paul, and now had words of Jesus and narratives from the life of Jesus as its subject. So far as the words of Jesus are concerned, this tradition must have already progressed a long way. Even the relatively small number of words of Jesus quoted by Paul causes us to suspect that they have already played a great role (1 Thess. 4.15; 1 Cor. 7.10; 1 Cor. 9.14). The way in which Paul approaches these words of Jesus, especially in 1 Cor. 7, shows that the *paradosis* of such words was very comprehensive and already rather sharply marked out. He distinguishes clearly between the instructions, which he himself as an Apostle gives, and those which the "Lord" gives. Especially instructive is verse 25, where he writes that, for the unmarried, he has no regulations from the Lord. Since Paul particularly remarks, that in this case he has no words from Jesus at his disposal, it is obviously presupposed that, in general, even in regard to the most particular questions of conduct, there were such words in the *paradosis*.

At all events we maintain that the words of Jesus, which Paul quotes from the *paradosis*, belong to the same class as those kerygmatic formulas of faith in 1 Cor. 15.3, and as that narrative from the life of Jesus in 1 Cor. 11.23.

Throughout it is a question of tradition which the Apostle Paul has received from others and hands on further, just as the rabbinic tradition of the interpretation of the law was received and handed on. The authority with which the Rabbi mediates

tradition has here passed over to the Apostle.¹ The *tanna* of the Jews is replaced by the Apostle of Christ. The fact that, according to his own account, Paul is drawn to Jerusalem in order to meet with the Apostle Cephas (Gal. 1.18), at least suggests to us that he wanted to receive tradition from him. Just as one Rabbi could only receive tradition from another Rabbi, so in the same way very likely one Apostle is able to receive tradition *at first hand* from another Apostle. To be sure Paul reports that he first set out for Jerusalem after three years, but it can be assumed as certain that, already previously, he had received apostolic tradition as it was circulated in the Damascus area. More than this we cannot say, for whether the various parts of the traditions of Paul originate in Jerusalem, Damascus or Antioch, cannot with certainty be discovered, and so we must reckon with all three possibilities.² Nevertheless it can be affirmed confidently that the authorised tradition is that which comes from the *Apostles*, meaning not only the twelve Apostles but the wider New Testament group, of those who "had seen Jesus". When Marcion struck out the words: *ὁ καὶ παρέλαβον* in 1 Cor. 15.3, it was because he interpreted them in the sense of a dependence of Paul on the original Apostles, and in principle at least this interpretation should be right.

The analogy of the Jewish tradition suggests that perhaps also in regard to content all those traditions concerning Christ, *kerygma*, words of Jesus, narratives, are to be considered as the *one true* interpretation of the Old Testament law. This is at least indicated by the words *κατὰ τὰς γραφάς* in the formula of faith which is delivered in 1 Cor. 15.3 ff. Already here then the question emerges *whether Jesus Christ the "Lord", as the fulfilment of the law, does not take the place of all Jewish paradosis.*

On this basis we are able to understand the fact with which we began, and which is by no means understandable in itself, that even in the proclamation of Christ, Paul employed the concept of the *paradosis* which Jesus rejected so sharply. For Christ all *paradosis* of the law was only the tradition of men;

¹ On this see P. Carrington, *The Primitive Christian Catechism*, 1940, pp. 67 f.

² J. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p. 97, for example, thinks of the tradition of 1 Cor. 11.23 f. as that of the community in Antioch; J. Héring, *op. cit.*, p. 100, as that of the community in Damascus.

but now from Christ there can be *paradosis* which is not *παράδοσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων*.

This brings us to our main problem: How is Paul able to designate the tradition from Christ as *Kyrios*?

II

The contradiction between Paul's emphatic stressing that he "has not received his gospel from men" (Gal. 1.12), and, at the same time, his appealing to *paradosis*, which he can only have received through the mediation of tradition, is a continual cause of perplexity. In regard to Acts 9.10 ff., Calvin sought to answer the objection that Ananias had played the role of a human mediator by indicating, on the basis of this passage, that direct divine revelation and human transmission, which God Himself uses, go hand in hand. The more recent explanations solve the apparent contradiction by distinguishing between historical facts and their theological understanding. According to this solution Paul was able to receive the *facts* only through human mediation; what was revealed to him in direct *apokalypsis* from the Lord is the theological understanding of these facts, in other words, the "Gospel" of which he speaks in Gal. 1.12.

This distinction may be right in itself. In the previous section we gave the formula of faith, words of Jesus, and single narratives, as the content of the *paradosis*, and now we are able to add the Gospel, *euaggelion*, as "understanding" of the facts in the sense of Gal. 1.12. This, however, is not to be regarded as one element alongside the others, for Paul and the early Church did not consciously distinguish between the various contents of the *paradosis*. This is demonstrated by the mixture of fact and theological interpretation in the faith formula of 1 Cor. 15.3 ff., for example. Both are involved here, and we cannot say that Paul received the one through direct revelation, and the other through mediation.

It is, however, to be particularly noticed that this very *paradosis*, to which Paul expressly adds that he has received it "from the Lord", namely 1 Cor. 11.23, consists mainly of a factual account of the last meal of Jesus. Only with great effort can the foregoing distinction be applied here, so that one could perhaps say with H. Lietzmann: "In the consciousness of Paul,

everything that he has heard concerning Jesus before and after the conversion, flows out of the revelation at Damascus as the originating source."¹ Or, on the other hand—and this is the usual explanation already mentioned—one understands this reference to the *Kyrios* merely to mean that the Lord is the first chronological member of a chain of tradition, to whom others have succeeded up to Paul. According to this explanation, in spite of the reference to the *Kyrios*, it is a question of the human transmission of a fact, and not as in Gal. 1.12 of the direct revelation of its evangelical understanding.

In support of this explanation, which is at present the most popular one, it is generally argued that Paul does not employ the preposition *παρά*, as is usual with this verb, but *ἀπό*. But this argument does not have the weight usually attributed to it, for the difference between *παρά* and *ἀπό* in this case does not appear to be fundamental. If it is said that *ἀπό* indicates only the *direction* of the origin, and not the *immediate* origin itself, this could also be valid of *παρά*. Further there is at least *one* example in Paul where *ἀπό* unambiguously designates the *immediate* origin of a communication: Col. 1.7 "as ye also learned of Epaphras" (*ἐμάθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρα*).

But even independently of the use of the preposition, the words *ἀπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου* in 1 Cor. 11.23, refer back to Christ as the One who stands, not only at the beginning, but also behind the transmission of the tradition, that is, the One who is at work *in* it. *ἀπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου* can mean a direct receiving from the Lord, without it being necessary to think of a vision or of excluding middle members through whom the Lord Himself imparts the *paradosis*. Our last section will show that the Apostles are these middle men, and that their reality as Apostles lies in their being bearers of direct revelation. One is concerned with this, the other with that fact of the Christian history, so that they are dependent one upon the other. But above all the testimony of the Apostles together constitutes the *paradosis* of Christ, in which the *Kyrios* Himself is at work.

This explanation helps us to understand how both the tradition of the words of Jesus and those of narratives of His life are to be attributed to the exalted Lord Himself. And *Kyrios* in the introductory formula to the quoted words of Jesus, is not

¹ op. cit., p. 57. See also *Messe und Herrenmahl*, 1926, p. 255.

to be understood otherwise than as in 1 Cor. 11.23, which is a narrative. This is corroborated also by Col. 2.6, where Paul exhorts: "as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord" (by tradition, *παρελάβετε*). The context indicates that the instructions meant are those according to which the faithful should "walk", and in verse 8 this *paradosis* is expressly distinguished from all "tradition of men" (*παράδοσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων*) as it is spread abroad by the false teachers. In Col. 2.6 the *Kyrios* is designated as content of the *paradosis*, but He is *content and author of the paradosis at the same time*.

This conclusion is especially indicated by the present tense which stands in 1 Cor. 7.10: "unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord" (*παραγγέλλω*). Chr. F. Baur has already pointed to this present tense. *It is the exalted Lord who now preaches to the Corinthians that which He had taught His disciples during His Incarnation on earth.*

To be sure the historical tense, the aorist, *διέταξεν*, is found in 1 Cor. 9.14 (in Thess. 4.15 the question cannot be definitely decided, but the expression *λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ Κυρίου* presupposes rather the present tense). The change between the present and aorist indicates, in this case also, that the exalted Lord and the Jesus who walked on earth, are one and the same. The exalted One Himself after His resurrection delivers the words which He has spoken. One could mention in addition, that in 1 Cor. 7.10 the verb *παραγγέλλω* contains within it the preposition *παρά* which points to the tradition, and that perhaps this verb is here chosen intentionally with this in mind.

In a study of *Euaggelion*, which is important for our discussion, E. Molland¹ in referring to J. Schniewind² shows that in the expression *εὐαγγέλιον Χριστοῦ* in Rom. 15.19 and other passages, the genitive *Χριστοῦ* is a *genitivus subjectivus*, so that here also the same complex fact of which we are speaking is apparent: the exalted Christ is Himself originator of the Gospel, of which He is also the object. He is at the same time subject and object.

We conclude that the reconciliation of Paul's assertion that he has received the Gospel direct from the Lord, with the fact

¹ E. Molland, *Das paulinische Evangelium*, 1934, p. 100.

² J. Schniewind, *Die Begriffe Wort und Evangelium bei Paulus*, 1910, p. 110. See also *Euaggelion. Ursprung und erste Gestalt des Begriffs Evangelium*, 1927.

established in the first section of this paper, that he has taken over *paradosis* from others, is that the exalted Christ Himself, as transmitter of His words and deeds, stands behind the transmitting Apostles.

III

We have yet to inquire whether this conception of the *Kyrios* as the originator of the *paradosis* of Christ, can be confirmed in the theology of Paul, and established in the rest of the New Testament.

First of all it must be remembered that, according to the testimony of the evangelist, Jesus Himself had a definite conception of the *παράδοσις τῶν πρεσβυτέρων* in its relation to the Scripture. He contrasted it as *παράδοσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων* to the commandment of God, *ἐντολὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ* (Mark 7.8). Does Jesus wish to condemn all exposition of the Scripture by this? The antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount show on the contrary that, in place of the expositions of the *πρεσβύτεροι* He puts His own, which fulfilled in radical fashion the real intention of the divine will in each commandment. W. G. Kümmel has rightly stressed in a paper for the *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*,¹ that with the words *ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν* Jesus opposes the definitive and only valid Messianic *paradosis* to the *paradosis* of the Rabbis which He rejected. This latter is *paradosis* of men; the former, on the other hand, for which He Himself lays the basis in the Sermon on the Mount, has as its originator the one who speaks as "Ego" in the full authority of the *Messiah*. As the Fulfiller of the law, He, the Messiah, took the place of the *παράδοσις τῶν πρεσβυτέρων*. One can say quite pointedly: Jesus Himself is the only *paradosis* according to the Synoptic testimony.

In the letters which we have received, Paul has nowhere drawn this conclusion from Jesus' own attitude to the law, but nevertheless a direct line can be drawn from that attitude of Jesus to Paul's conception of Jesus as the end (*τέλος*) of the law. In the important book by W. D. Davies on *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*,² which appeared recently, the Pauline thought

¹ W. G. Kümmel, *Jesus und der jüdische Traditionsgedanke* (Z.N.W., 1934), pp. 105 ff.

² W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 1948. See especially pp. 147 ff.

of Christ as the new law is moved to the forefront in a very clarifying fashion. Christ the Lord takes the place of the law for Paul. It is not as if Jesus were for him *first of all* the law-giver or the law-interpreter, and then as if on the basis of this He became in His own *person* the incarnation of the new Messianic law. On the contrary, for Paul Christ is the fulfilled new law *above all* in His *person* and His work, and as already indicated His importance as lawgiver is derived from this and based on it, in so far as He in His words gives new *halachot*, and by the example of His life gives instruction (Phil. 2.5). The second thought is subordinated to the first, but in such a way that there is no opposition existing between the two.¹

Paul has developed the fundamental interpretation of Jesus as the new law in 2 Cor. 3.4 ff. Here it is not Christ, but Paul, who is set in a parallel relation to Moses. Paul is the "minister of the new testament", just as Moses was the minister of the old, and in place of the law in the old covenant, is Christ in the new. To be sure already from the old covenant the divine glory radiated through the law, so that the countenance of its transmitter, Moses, truly reflected that glory, though only momentarily, and he had to place a veil over his face so that the children of Israel would not see this glory passing. In Christ the veil is done away (verse 14); in His person the divine glory is open for all to see. The ministers of this new covenant reflect the divine glory which is not passing away, with unveiled countenance (verse 18), and this happens "by the Spirit of the Lord" (*ἀπὸ Κυρίου πνεύματος*, verse 18).

The relation to the *Spirit* which lies at the basis of this whole contrast of the old and new covenants in 2 Cor. 3 (letter-spirit) is important for our question. It points to the end-time which is fulfilled in Christ. Ultimately, according to Jer. 31.33, the law shall be written in men's hearts. Ultimately also the Holy Spirit will come. Both are realised in Christ; He is the new law and He is the Spirit.² It is not by chance that this bold assertion: *the Lord Himself is the Spirit*, stands precisely in this section concerning the law (verse 17). Because the Holy Spirit imparts Himself, the law can now be inscribed in the heart.

¹ H. Windisch, *Der Sinn der Bergpredigt*, 1929, erroneously opposes Matthew to St. Paul on this point.

² C. H. Dodd, *History and the Gospel*, 1943, pp. 55 f. has seen this very clearly. See also *The Apostolic Preaching and its Development*, 1936, *passim*.

The place of the paradosis of the law is taken now by the Holy Spirit, who is identical with the Lord. The revelation of the divine glory (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, verse 18), takes place καθάπερ ἀπὸ Κυρίου πνεύματος. Of course, this passage is only concerned with the tradition of the law, but there is a line running from this tradition to that of the early Church. This becomes apparent when we consider that everything which concerns Christ is on the whole fulfilment of the Old Testament, and when we recall the exact analogy, even in terminology, between the tradition of the Church to the rabbinic tradition. This then may be considered as the theological background for the interpretation of the relation between *Kyrios* and *paradosis*, which I have suggested above: the *Kyrios* Christ has taken the place of the *paradosis* of the law, and has imparted Himself also, in regard to this function, as Holy Spirit. It now becomes clear how the exalted Lord as the real Bearer of tradition can be at work in the apostolic tradition about His words and deeds which comes through the apostolic Church.

Though Paul has not applied this line of argument in 2 Cor. 3 to the tradition concerning the words and the life of Jesus, the case is otherwise in the Gospel according to John; for this is precisely the real subject of this Gospel, the connexion between the earthly life of Jesus and the exalted Lord. The closing discourse of St. John's Gospel develops the train of thought which I see in Paul, though with Paul it is rather like an undeveloped assumption. *The conception of the apostolic tradition concerning the earthly Jesus which the Spirit has created* is present most clearly in John 16.13 and 14.26: "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

If my interpretation of the Pauline conception of the connexion between *Kyrios* and *paradosis* is right, we are dealing with an original Christian thought, which, it is true, is not everywhere brought to a head in the same way, but which, nevertheless, can be considered as a common and far-reaching presupposition.

IV

Several times already in this paper, we have met with the

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role belonging to the Apostle in his unique function as the witness entrusted with the transmission of the *paradosis*, behind which the *Kyrios* Himself stands. In the previously mentioned third chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostles and Holy Spirit are spoken of together. They both take the place of the law-mediator and law-interpreter of the Old Testament. Certainly the Holy Spirit is not reserved for the Apostles alone, but over against the rabbinic principle of tradition in Judaism, the characteristic and distinctive mark of the transmission of the *paradosis* concerning Christ is a twofold fact: firstly, that the mediator of the tradition is not the teacher, but the *Apostle* as direct witness; secondly, the principle of succession does not operate mechanically as with the Rabbis, but is bound to the *Holy Spirit*; and we shall now speak of this two-sided fact.

We have seen that Paul in Gal. 1.12 expressly denies having received the Gospel from men. That is fundamental for his apostolic authority. As Apostle, as witness, he must stand in direct connexion with the Lord. That is the unique honour of the Apostle; that he has been given direct *apokalypsis*. This includes not only the theological understanding of the events of salvation, but also the fact of these events as such. Consider the resurrection, which is to be transmitted by the Apostles, as direct evidence of the facts (Acts 1.22; 1 Cor. 9.1). But beyond that there are also those facts experienced by the Twelve in the time that the incarnate Jesus "went in and out among us" (Acts 1.21). In the light of this, the above-mentioned distinction between the impartation of facts and the impartation of their theological understanding loses still more its significance; for both are revealed to the Apostles by the Lord, and for both He is direct witness.

At this point it is necessary to recall that in early Christianity there is the Apostle in the wider and in the narrower sense: in the wider sense as eye-witness of the resurrection of Christ, in the narrower sense as a member of the circle of the Twelve who has to bear witness not only to the resurrection but also to the Incarnation of Christ on earth. To this distinction belongs the fact that not *every* Apostle is able, as direct eye-witness, to pass on the information regarding *all* facts. Indeed Paul himself is not able to report as an eye-witness the facts of the

earthly life of Jesus, at all events in the chief things. And yet he is an Apostle in so far as he can give direct eye-witness evidence of the exalted Lord, whom he has seen and heard on the road to Damascus. For the other facts he is dependent on the *eye-witness evidence of the other Apostles*. His meeting with Cephas in Jerusalem may be recalled in this connexion (Gal. 1.18), but also the *paradosis* of 1 Cor. 15.3 ff., where he clearly distinguishes the Easter events in the narrower sense of the eye-witness evidence of others, from the appearance which has been granted to him. It has not been sufficiently noticed that in this very passage, after the quotation of the *paradosis*, he emphasises, in verse 11, his harmony with the original Apostles.

It is now clear how, on the basis of a deep sense of community which is created by the witness-function of the Apostles, all tradition, in so far as it is passed on by the Apostle, could be considered as revealed directly by Christ. So Paul is able to say he has received a tradition "from the Lord", when in reality he has received it by means of other Apostles. *By means of the Apostles is not by means of men, but by means of Christ the Lord Himself, from whom this Revelation is imparted.* All the knowledge that is in the Church, whether it be knowledge of words of Jesus, of narratives of His life, or of their understanding, comes from the Apostles. To one this, and to another that, has been directly imparted. The essence of the Apostle is in his being a bearer of direct Revelation. Since however everything has not been revealed to each individual Apostle, one Apostle must at some time pass on his testimony to another (Gal. 1.18; 1 Cor. 15.11), and the *paradosis* in its entirety, to which all the Apostles contribute, constitutes the Revelation of Christ.

In derivative fashion, then, the whole *apostolic Church* is turned into a bearer of tradition, as, historically speaking, must actually have been the case. But for all that, it must nevertheless be firmly maintained that the theological foundation of the tradition rests on the office of the Apostles. In his *Theologie*,¹ R. Bultmann writes correctly and to the point: the conception of Apostle was determined by the thought of the tradition.

Just as the Jewish tradition comes *through* the *Tannaim*, so the tradition from Jesus comes *through* the Apostles. It is indeed no accident that in the passages which are the chief evidence

¹ p. 61.

for the *paradosis* of Christ, above all Gal. 1.12 and 1 Cor. 15.3 ff., but also elsewhere, the apostolic office is always dealt with at the same time.

Moreover, this is the way in which the *ἐγώ*, emphasised in 1 Cor. 11.23, is to be understood: "I (the Apostle) have received from the Lord . . .". It is right that frequently this *ego* has attention drawn to itself, but it has seldom found the right interpretation. Paul would certainly have been able to set this *ego* in the exactly parallel passage, 1 Cor. 15.3. He has done it, however, only in 1 Cor. 11.23, because especially against the Corinthians' false conception of the Lord's Supper all depended on stressing his apostolic *role as bearer of tradition*.

Quite different is the use of the *ego* in 1 Cor. 7.10 where it is contrasted with the *Kyrios*, and yet it is here the same *ego* of the apostolic consciousness. In 1 Cor. 7.10, Paul points to the fact that, even where the *Kyrios* Himself gives no direct instruction in a transmitted *logion* of Jesus, the Apostle is allowed to give his own judgment. Verse 5 shows that this *ego* includes the apostolic claim: "concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord *to be faithful*". This grace to be faithful refers to the apostolic office.

This apostolic role, to be faithful, manifests itself in a double function: on the one side, to transmit the *paradosis* about Jesus, faithfully—that is the meaning of the *ego* of 1 Cor. 11.23; on the other side, beyond this *paradosis*, but in the sense of it, to give judgments, though to be sure these are expressly subordinated to the *paradosis*—that is the meaning of *ego* in 1 Cor. 7.10. This last named *ego* certainly owes its claim entirely to the first named, where it proves the identity of the Apostle as the bearer of the tradition of Christ.

The Jewish Rabbis pass on the *παράδοσις τῶν πρεσβυτέρων* in what we might call a mechanical, teaching chain, which just on that account is only "tradition of men", as Jesus says (Mark 7.8). But the function of bearing the tradition with the Apostles is performed by the Spirit, and takes place on the basis of election. In apostolic times succession and Holy Spirit formed as yet no contradiction. In Judaism the activity of the Rabbi indicated the end of prophecy, the end of the working of the Spirit. The Rabbi here relieved the prophet. The

Apostle on the other hand is also a transmitter of tradition like the Rabbi, but here the Holy Spirit is added to the office.

For this reason the function of the Apostles as bearers of tradition can be traced back finally to the *Kyrios* Himself, who indeed is the *Pneuma* (2 Cor. 3.17). We asked ourselves at the beginning of this paper how Paul could grant such great honour to the concept of *paradosis* after Jesus had rejected the tradition as a work of men, running counter to the commandment of God (Mark 7.8). Jesus made His judgment in such a way that even in regard to form it appeared to include a condemnation of all Revelation which took place through the transmission of tradition. We see now that a *παράδοσις τῶν ἀποστόλων* according to the early Christian view is not just *παράδοσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων*. On the contrary the *Kyrios* Himself is at work in it, so that apostolic transmission of tradition constitutes no opposition to direct Revelation. In Col. 2.6-8, Paul distinguishes between legitimate *paradosis* of Christ Jesus the Lord (verse 6, *παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν Κύριον*) and tradition of men, since he applies the expression used by Jesus *παράδοσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων* to the gnostic traditions.

Here it becomes clear again that on the ground of the New Testament legitimate tradition can only be the *paradosis* which is designated by *Kyrios* and passed on through the Apostles. At the same time this high estimation of the apostolic tradition in no way means that all later Church *paradosis* is justified, and could be perhaps attributed in some way to the *Kyrios* Himself. For the apostolic office is a unique one. But with this question we do not have to deal in this paper.

Correction in last issue:

p. 96, line 10: for "futility" read "ability."