

# NEW TESTAMENT ESSAYS

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## DIDACHE, KERYGMA AND EVANGELION

by

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I DO not propose to re-examine the use in early Christian literature of the three terms which provide a title for this paper. I am starting from the now generally accepted theory that the Kerygma and the Didache, denoting the Apostolic Preaching and the Apostolic Teaching, are to be distinguished and that the traditions in which the one and the other were embodied, whether in oral or literary form, were, so to speak, separate entities, serving distinct purposes—traditions which were eventually associated in the gospel, when Matthew and Luke re-edited and enlarged Mark's gospel. This view of the relation of Didache and Kerygma to Evangelion is summarized conveniently in this passage from Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, i, 86:

The reason that the sayings of the Lord, which at first were handed down separately from the Christological Kerugma, came more and more to be taken up into 'the gospel' (in Mark, still sparingly, whereas Matthew and Luke combine the Kerugma and the tradition of Jesus' sayings into a unity) is that, while missionary preaching continued, preaching to Christian congregations took on ever-increasing importance, and for these already believing congregations, Jesus in the role of 'Teacher' had become important again.

While I am not inclined to follow Dom. Butler and Dr. Austin Farrer in their attempts to persuade us to dispense with Q, I am disposed to think that the Didache and the Kerygma have been too rigidly separated, that some elements of the teaching of Jesus may have been incorporated in the Christological Kerygma from the first, and that the taking up of the sayings of the Lord into the gospel, while it may well have been desirable in preaching to Christian congregations, was discovered to be an element of increasing importance in missionary preaching. It was precisely

because missionary preaching continued, that the gospel needed to be presented in the forms given to it by Matthew and Luke.

In C. H. Dodd's masterly and still indispensable study of the Apostolic Preaching and its developments, the Kerygma as analysed in the table at the end of the book, contains no direct reference to the sayings of Jesus. In Acts, there is in the Kerygma an appeal to the mighty works which God did through Jesus, and this is evidence of the Divine approval of Jesus and of the presence of God with him. For the rest, the main themes are the Crucifixion and the Resurrection: the offer of the remission of sins in the name of Jesus: the assertions that Jesus is to be our judge, and that all that has happened, has happened according to the Scriptures. The Kerygma according to Paul concentrates on these main themes, and omits the mighty works as well as the words of the Lord. It is, however, unwise to assume that the primitive Christological Kerygma was at any time confined within such limits. Recent studies of what may be called the Apostolic Paradosis suggest that Kerygma and Didache were distilled out of a tradition that included both. Such is the contention of Harald Riesefeld in his paper, *The Gospel Tradition and its Beginnings*. He suggests that many of the logia of Jesus, particularly passages which manifest poetic form, were not only memorable but actually designed to be memorized. Jesus, like a Rabbi, entrusted his word to chosen disciples. An interesting argument leads him to the following conclusion: 'It was owing to the tradition of the words and deeds of Jesus which began from Jesus himself that the primitive Church had the basis for its faith'.<sup>1</sup> In an important article '*Paradosis et Kyrios*', Oscar Cullmann argued that when Paul I Cor. 11:23 says, 'I received from the Lord' he is identifying Kyrios and Paradosis. The account of the Last Supper which Paul received from the Lord, came to him not by special revelation or vision, but from the Apostolic Tradition, and the Apostolic Tradition is regarded as the word of the Lord. However, Cullmann thinks that the designation *Kyrios* does not point to the historic Jesus, as the chronological starting-point and first link in the chain of transmission. It refers rather to the Lord raised to the right hand of God, who would be for Paul the true author of the whole tradition as it develops in the bosom of the Apostolic Church. In Cullmann's view this hypothesis gives the best explanation of the fact that the Apostolic Paradosis could be identified by Paul

purely and simply with the Kyrios. The Lord is to be found behind and active in the transmission of the tradition, and not only at its commencement. The risen Christ is himself the author of the Gospel, of which he is at the same time the theme.<sup>2</sup> This interpretation of Paul's view of the relation of Paradosis to Kyrios may be accepted without thereby excluding Riesenfeld's suggestion that the Apostolic Tradition was initiated by Jesus himself during his ministry. For Paul the tradition is Apostolic because it is based on the recollections of those who knew the Lord in the days of his flesh and who were qualified to be witnesses of his resurrection. It is as a witness to the resurrection that Paul claims his place among the Apostles, and there can be no successors to the Apostles so far as their original calling and function are concerned.

What, then, did the Paradosis, the Apostolic Tradition, contain? It is natural to conceive it as parallel to Rabbinic tradition with the two strands, the Halacha and the Haggada, the first concerned with ethical teaching, and the second with stories and doctrine. So of the Christian Paradosis in the time of Paul, Cullmann says:

On the one hand, it is concerned with moral rules, which like the Halacha, bear on the life of the faithful (see I Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 3:6; Rom. 6:17; Phil. 4:9; Col. 2:6). On the other, we have a summary of the Christian message, conceived in the fashion of a credal formula and bringing together the facts of the life of Jesus and their theological interpretation (I Cor. 15:3 f.). Finally, we have isolated stories of the life of Jesus: (I Cor. 11:23 f.).

Cullmann adds:

The primitive Paradosis probably consisted of the summary of the Kerygma. But by the time of the Apostle Paul, the tradition has already advanced a step: from now on it is concerned equally with the logia of Jesus and stories of his life.<sup>3</sup>

Here Cullmann seems to be identifying the primitive Paradosis with the Kerygma, the Apostolic Preaching as Dodd summarized it in the table at the end of his book, with what Bultmann calls the Christological Kerygma. But this Christological Kerygma is in the first instance, the presentation of the Gospel to Jewish hearers. It emphasizes certain elements in the Apostolic Paradosis, the mighty works, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and the evidence from prophecy that in these events God's purpose

may be discerned, which formed the kernel of the Kerygma, but this Kerygma need never have constituted the whole of the primitive Paradosis. As Bultmann and Dodd both hold, the Didache which corresponds to the Halacha belonged to the primitive Paradosis from the beginning, though it figures little in the Christological Kerygma. It should be noted, however, that a Kerygma which concentrated on the story of the Passion, on the events which led up to it, and on stories of healing, cannot have been silent with regard to sayings of Jesus. Too many logia are too closely associated with the deeds of Jesus and the events of his life, to be ignored in the Christological Kerygma. So I doubt whether concern with the logia of Jesus and with stories of his life represents a development of the primitive Paradosis. It contained both Didache and Kerygma from the start.

Perhaps we have paid too little attention to Luke's sentences introductory to his gospel and to Acts. He claims to be basing his narrative on the Apostolic Paradosis, on tradition handed on by those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, but he implies that those traditions were not in order. Incidentally, if only Luke had said that the eye-witnesses and ministers of the word were among the many who had undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, it would have strengthened Dr. Austin Farrer's case enormously. For having claimed that Luke, when he said 'many' must have meant two—like those hosts and hostesses who say 'Take as many as you like, take two'—Dr. Farrer might then have added that one of the two was by an eye-witness, namely Matthew, and the other by a minister of the word, namely Mark, who went with Paul and Barnabas to Cyprus as minister.<sup>4</sup> But unfortunately, it is the traditions, not the narratives, that Luke attributes to eye-witnesses and ministers, and on these traditions some sort of order has to be imposed. Luke implies that the Paradosis included many elements and that the traditions regarding the words and works of Jesus were not an ordered whole, but consisted of detached groups of sayings or incidents and often of isolated sayings or incidents. When Luke says he has tried to write things in order, he may not be contrasting his narrative with earlier narratives, but simply claiming to put together the disorderly fragments of the Paradosis in an orderly manner. When he describes his gospel in the opening of Acts, he says it was a

record of all that Jesus began to do and to teach. It is tempting, though probably mistaken, to see in this phrase a reference to his two main sources, Mark and Q! Manifestly, when Luke wrote of the things accomplished in the Christian dispensation, he was not thinking only of the death and resurrection of Jesus. He had in mind both the mighty works and the teachings of Jesus. For Luke these are an essential part of the Kerygma, and so of the Evangelion.

It is of course not surprising that by the time the gospel of Luke is written, the teaching of Jesus is associated with the record of all that Jesus began to do. But this is not the intrusion of an alien element into the primitive Christological Kerygma, nor is it without its place in the presentation of the gospel to the Gentiles. In the *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, Irenæus describes the Apostles as witnesses in the following terms:

His disciples, the witnesses of all His good deeds and of His teachings and His sufferings and death and resurrection, and of his ascension into heaven after His bodily resurrection—these were the apostles, who after (receiving) the power of the Holy Spirit were sent forth by Him into all the world, and wrought the calling of the Gentiles, showing to mankind the way of life, to turn them from idols and fornication and covetousness, cleansing their souls and bodies by the baptism of water and of the Holy Spirit: which Holy Spirit they had received of the Lord, and they distributed and imparted It to them that believed: and thus they ordered and established the Churches.<sup>5</sup>

Here, Irenæus takes it for granted that the teachings are included in the Apostolic witness and are indeed a vital element in the Kerygma for the Gentiles. It should be noted that the Kerygma for the Gentiles differed from the Kerygma for Jewish hearers in two particulars. First, the faith in God the Creator which was implied in the Kerygma as represented in the speeches in Acts had to be made explicit when the preachers turned to the Gentiles. Acts 14:15-7 is also an early proclamation of the gospel, and it claims to convert Gentiles from the worship of idols to faith in the living God. Paul mentions this point when describing the conversion of the Thessalonians,<sup>6</sup> and Irenæus regards this as the normal foundation of the effective calling of all Gentiles. But whereas Paul puts second the Christian hope—the Thessalonians have turned from idols to the living and true God and *await His Son from Heaven*—Irenæus puts second the moral change, the turning

from fornication and covetousness through the way of life for mankind revealed in the teachings of Jesus. Clearly the tradition of the teaching of Jesus belongs now to the Kerygma. It has its place in missionary preaching and makes an effective appeal to Gentile hearers.

That the sayings of Jesus had an arresting and converting power is manifest, and Gentiles responded more readily than Jews. Trypho the Jew admits that the precepts contained in what Christians call the gospel are wonderful and great, but so great and wonderful that it is doubtful whether any one can keep them.<sup>7</sup> Irenaeus, on the other hand, speaks for Gentiles when he contrasts the simplicity and directness of the teaching of Jesus with the complexities of the Jewish Law.

That not by the much-speaking of the law, but by the brevity of faith and love, men were to be saved, Isaiah says thus: 'A word brief and short in righteousness: for a short word will God make in the whole world.' And therefore the apostle Paul says: 'Love is the fulfilling of the law': for he who loves God has fulfilled the law. Moreover the Lord when he was asked which is the first commandment, said: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy strength. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments, He says, all the law hangeth and the prophets.' So then by our faith in Him, He has made our love to God and our neighbour to grow, making us godly and righteous and good. And therefore a *short word* has God made on the earth in the world.<sup>8</sup>

Justin Martyr bears witness to the same characteristic of the sayings of Jesus, when he says in his first *Apology*: 'Short and concise are the words that have come from Him: for he was no Sophist, but His speech was God's power.'<sup>9</sup> The sayings have converting power. In the three chapters that follow Justin cites many of the teachings of Jesus. No doubt he selects such teachings as may convince the Emperor of the innocent life and character of Christians. Naturally he included 'Render unto Caesar' as proof of the loyalty of Christians. The Emperor has nothing to fear from such citizens. But when Justin starts from the Lord's demand for chastity and purity, and continues with teachings about universal love, non-resistance, generous charity and freedom from care for riches, he is thinking of the same deliverance from fornication and covetousness which Irenaeus singled out as essential features of conversion among Gentiles. Incidentally, Justin also emphasizes



faith in God as creator. This is clear from the form in which he cites the first great commandment. 'Thou shalt worship the Lord God and Him only should thou serve with thy whole heart and with all thy strength,—*the Lord God who made thee.*' In the same context he makes a similar addition to the saying, 'There is none good save only *God who made all things.*'<sup>10</sup> The gospel, the Christological Kerygma itself made ethical monotheism an effective reality for men who were living in what Klausner rightly called 'a world decaying for lack of God and social morality.' If in ethical monotheism we find the treasures of Israel, then it is true that Jesus took the treasures of Israel and made them available for mankind.

There is a story told of Olive Schreiner as a young girl, reading the Sermon on the Mount and rushing into her mother's drawing-room and saying, 'Look, Mother! Now we can live like this!' It seems to me that it is in some such spirit that Justin cites the brief concise words of Jesus and that Irenaeus writes of the short word of God, which through faith in Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit in the Church, makes our love to God and our neighbour grow, making us godly and righteous and good. Didache and Kerygma together make up Evangelion.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Professor Harald Riesenfeld's address delivered at the Opening Session of the Congress on 'The Four Gospels in 1957' in Oxford on September 6 has been published by A. R. Mowbray Co., Ltd. under the title, *The Gospel Tradition and its Beginnings: a study in the Limits of 'Form-geschichte.'* In it he argues the case for recognizing that the primitive Gospel-tradition, the original Apostolic Paradosis, must have been a kind of Holy Word, recording both the words and deeds of Jesus. As a negative result of his investigations he claimed that 'The Sitz-im-Leben' and the original source of the Gospel tradition was neither mission preaching nor the communal instruction of the primitive Church' (p. 16). In other words, Kerygma and Didache derive from the Gospel tradition, and did not produce the Gospel tradition by their coalescence.

There is much to be said for the view that the primitive Church had as the basis of its faith a tradition of the words and deeds of Jesus which began from Jesus himself (p. 29). But if we accept this in principle, the limits and the form of the Gospel tradition have still to be determined.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Oscar Cullmann's article, 'Paradosis et Kyrios: le problème de la Tradition dans le Paulinisme', was published in RHPR 1950, No. 1. I have summarized in the text the following passage from p. 15 of the article. '[Le désignation Kyrios] ne viserait pas le Jésus historique, commencement chronologique et premier chaînon de la chaîne de transmission, mais le Seigneur élevé

à la droite de Dieu; ce serait lui le véritable agent de toute la tradition qui se développe au sein de l'Église apostolique. Nous pensons que cette hypothèse explique de la meilleure façon le fait que le paradosis apostolique ait pu être identifiée par Saint Paul purement et simplement avec le Kyrios... Selon l'apôtre, le 'Seigneur' est lui-même à l'oeuvre dans la transmission de ses paroles et de ses oeuvres par la communauté primitive, qu'il agit à travers elle.'

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 18. 'Quel est, d'après Saint Paul, le contenu de la Paradosis? D'une part, il s'agit de règles morales, qui, à la façon de la 'halacha' se rapportent à la vie des fidèles.... D'autre part, nous avons un résumé du message chrétien conçu à la manière d'une formule de confession et réunissant des faits de la vie de Jésus et leur interprétation théologique... Enfin, des récits isolés de la vie de Jésus.

La paradosis primitive était probablement constituée par le résumé du Kerygma. Mais, à l'époque de l'apôtre Paul, la tradition a déjà fait un pas en avant; elle a désormais pour objet également des logia de Jésus et des récits touchant sa vie.'

The material of this article, which also appeared in SJT 1950, 180-97, was incorporated by Dr. Cullmann in his essay 'The Tradition' in *The Early Church*, ed. A. J. B. Higgins (1956), 55-99 [Ed.].

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Austin Farrer's paper, 'On Dispensing with Q' is included in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, ed. D. E. Nineham.

Dr. Farrer believes that 'the literary history of the Gospels will turn out to be a simpler matter than we had supposed. St. Matthew will be seen to be an amplified version of St. Mark, based on a decade of habitual preaching, and incorporating oral material, but presupposing no other literary source beside St. Mark himself. St. Luke, in turn, will be found to presuppose St. Matthew and St. Mark, and St. John to presuppose the three others. The whole literary history of the canonical Gospel tradition will be found to be contained in the fourfold canon itself, except in so far as it lies in the Old Testament, the Pseudo-epigrapha, and the other New Testament writings' (p. 85). But the natural interpretation of Luke's preface to his gospel is that he knew of more than two literary sources. He certainly claims to draw on the original apostolic tradition and there is no reason to suppose that he knew this tradition only in oral form. When Dr. Farrer asks, 'What did the primitive Christians write, beside letters and homilies and gospels?' (p. 61), the answer is, in all probability they had in writing, collections of the logia of Jesus, such as are found in the first four chapters of the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles; collections of Testimonia, or proof-texts from the Old Testament to show that the events of the life of Jesus happened according to the Scriptures: isolated stories like the Pericope Adulterae: and quite possibly documents of a liturgical character or concerned with Church-government.

<sup>5</sup> Irenaeus, *The Apostolic Preaching*, translated by J. Armitage Robinson, 41, p. 106.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Thess. 1:9, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. 10: 'Υμῶν δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ εὐαγγελίῳ παραγγέλματα θαυμαστά οὕτως καὶ μεγάλα ἐπίσταμαι εἶναι, ὡς ὑπολαμβάνειν μηδένα δύνασθαι φιλᾶσαι αὐτά.

<sup>8</sup> Irenaeus, *The Apostolic Preaching*, c. 87, p. 141.

<sup>9</sup> Justin Martyr, *Apology* 1, c. 14, *ad fin.*: Βραχεῖς δὲ καὶ συντομοὶ παρ' χ\*

αὐτοῦ λόγοι γεγόνασιν οὐ γὰρ σοφιστῆς ὑπῆρχεν, ἀλλὰ δύναμις θεοῦ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ ἦν.

<sup>10</sup> Justin Martyr, *Apology* I, c. 16: Κύριον τὸν θεὸν σὸν προσκυνήσεις . . . κύριον τὸν θεὸν τὸν ποιήσαντά σε. Οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ μόνος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα. It is not too much to say that in the preaching of the gospel to the Hellenistic world, the thought of God as Creator and Preserver became of primary importance; cf. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, i, 66-72. In this, the Christian evangelists were continuing the propaganda of Hellenistic Judaism. What Jewish Christian and Hellenistic Jew had in common, faith in the living and true God, stood in the forefront of the gospel for the Gentiles. See further, *The Mind of the Early Converts* by Campbell N. Moody, an original and penetrating study of the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists, illuminated by the writer's experience as a missionary in Formosa.