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1 CORINTHIANS 15:3b-5: PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN PROCLAMATION

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
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requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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GREEK TRANSLITERATIONS

a = α	n = ν
b = β	x = ξ
g = γ	o = \omicron
d = δ	p = π
e = ϵ	r = ρ
z = ζ	s = σ s
\bar{e} = η	t = τ
th = θ	u, y = υ
i = ι	ph = ϕ
k = κ	ch = χ
l = λ	ps = ψ
m = μ	\bar{o} = ω

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul was not one of the twelve. And yet, despite the fact that he was not one of the original disciples called by Jesus, he did consider himself an Apostle. He claimed the same authority for his preaching as did the original disciples (1 Cor. 15:11). But what was his relationship to the Apostles who were witnesses both to the resurrection of Jesus and his earthly life? Did he view his teaching as a continuation of the witness they originated, or did he consider himself an innovator? Does his rebuke of Peter as recorded in the second chapter of Galatians constitute a typical example of his attitude to the disciples who were in Jerusalem? Did he develop Christianity into a different religion than it was in the hands of the companions of Jesus? Was he the first to understand Christ's death as an atoning sacrifice? Did he receive the content of his teaching at his conversion, or later from Peter and James? Was he more influenced by his background as a Pharisaic Jew or by the Hellenism of the culture to which he presented his gospel? Is Paul concerned to preach the same gospel which was preached by the leaders of the congregation in Jerusalem? How, in brief, is Paul to be viewed in relation to his fellow Apostles?

Obviously, these questions cover almost the entire spectrum of New Testament theology and cannot be answered definitively in one paper. Therefore, for matters of limitation, it shall be the purpose of this paper to examine one specific text in the Pauline corpus in which Paul himself cites something he had received. In 1 Corinthians 15:3b-5 Paul describes the gospel which the Corinthians came to believe and by which they were saved. Does this passage tell us anything about Paul's relationship with the apostles in Jerusalem? What does it tell us of the chief emphases in the gospel Paul had received?

In order to answer these questions, the formal structure of the passage must first be determined. Is Paul here referring to something passed on to him by the primitive church or something he received at his conversion? Is Paul here quoting a rhythmic formula common in the primitive church or a summary he himself had drawn up? These questions will be the main concern in Chapter II.

Chapter III will build on Chapter II in the following manner: if 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 were a passage common in the early church, how was it used? Was it a common confession of faith? Was it a type of baptismal creed? Was it used as a mnemonic device for Christian instruction?

The fourth chapter deals with the origin of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5. The origin of this passage will greatly affect what conclusions can be drawn as to Paul's relationship to the

leaders of the first church in Jerusalem. If this tradition originated among the Hellenistic churches, then it tells us nothing about Paul's relationship to the first Apostles. If, on the other hand, this passage originated in Jerusalem, then the manner in which Paul uses it in 1 Cor. 15 can tell us much of his attitude to the original twelve.

The possible extent of the traditional formula will be the subject of the fifth chapter. Because the writers of the New Testament did not use quotation marks, how much of 1 Cor. 15 might be a word for word quotation is a question which needs consideration. The extent of the paradosis¹ may also have much to say about its formal structure, origin, and theology.

The sixth chapter will deal with Paul's purpose in citing this supposed formula. This chapter will treat the question of the situation in the Corinthian congregation which gave rise to the writing of Chapter 15 in general and especially the citing of the paradosis.

In order to understand fully what this section has to say about the subject of its four verbs, Jesus Christ, the seventh chapter will be devoted to a thorough analysis of each of the phrases in verses 3b-5. The pre-Pauline

¹Paradosis is a transliteration of a Greek term and is used here as a technical term for teachings of or about Jesus Christ which were passed on to one another by the members of the early Christian church.

understanding of Jesus Christ and his work will be the main subject of this chapter.

The final chapter will contain conclusions drawn from the study of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5. It will suggest implications for Paul's relationship with the first Apostles and an understanding of the primitive Christian proclamation, and will conclude with a number of questions for further study.

CHAPTER II

THE FORMAL STRUCTURE OF 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3b-5

For many years exegetes ignored the distinctive formal structure of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5. It was considered simply a summary of the gospel which Paul had preached to the people at Corinth. But with the rise of form criticism and its attempt to go behind the New Testament writings, scholars began to distinguish various layers of development in the New Testament Scriptures. One of the layers detected in the text of the New Testament was that of early Christian preaching. The sermons of the book of Acts and various segments of Paul's letters were viewed as the earliest proclamation of the post-resurrection church. Alfred Seeburg¹ was the first to detect in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 a formulated statement of the proclamation of the primitive² church. This is a position which has found common acceptance. In fact, it is often accepted as proved beyond any reasonable doubt.³ This position is held for a number of reasons which

¹Alfred Seeburg, Der Katechismus Der Urchristenheit (Muenchen: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1903), pp. 45-48.

²The term "primitive" as used in this paper refers to the period of the Christian church after the resurrection and prior to the time of Paul's epistles.

³Joachim Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, translated from the German by Norman Perrin (London: SCM Press, c.1966), pp. 102-103. Oscar Cullmann, The Early

we shall summarize below.

Paradidōmi and Paralambanō

In the first place, Paul uses here two terms (paralambanō and paradidōmi) which are the Greek equivalents of the Hebrew kibbel and masar. The two Hebrew terms are rabbinic technical terms for the receiving and handing on of oral or written tradition.⁴ An example of this rabbinic chain of tradition, received and handed on, is cited in the Babylonian Talmud:

Moses received the Torah from Sinai, and he delivered it to Joshua; and Joshua (delivered it) to the Elders; and the Elders (delivered it) to the Prophets; and the Prophets delivered it to the men of the Great Synagogue.⁵

Because the primitive church lived in an atmosphere permeated with Jewish tradition and the rabbinic interpretation of the law, the words paralambanō and paradidōmi came to be technical

Church, edited by A. Higgins (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1956), p. 33. Martin Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, translated from the German by Bertram Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), pp. 21-23. Archibald Hunter, Paul and His Predecessors (Second edition; London: SCM Press, 1961), pp. 117-119. Hugh Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 211-212.

⁴The word "tradition" is used in this paper in its New Testament meaning as a body of facts or teachings handed on from teacher to pupil, apostle to congregation. It carries none of the connotations present day usage indicates. It is virtually synonymous with paradosis. Cf. supra, p. 3, n. 1.

⁵Seder Nezihin, The Babylonian Talmud, Vol. VIII, translated by A. J. Israelstam (London: The Socino Press, 1935), Aboth 1:1-5.

terms in the New Testament for the receiving and handing on of traditions about Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:23 is an excellent example. Here Paul cites a tradition he had received concerning the Lord's Supper. As Cullmann says of this text and 1 Cor. 15:3,

The verbs in the principal and subordinate clauses are simply interchanged. This is because the very essence of tradition is that it forms a chain. At all events, it is clear that these are Jewish formulae, by which the rabbis refer to the halakha and the haggada.⁶

Paul uses the related term paradosis in 1 Cor. 11:2, 2 Thess. 2:15 and 3:6 to refer to the content of his teaching, that is, the traditions he passed on to the congregations. It is to these that the congregation is to hold. Birger Gerhardsson says on this point,

According to Paul, early Christianity has a body of authoritative material which he calls "tradition" (paradosis) 2 Thess. 3.6, and "the traditions" (paradoseis), 1 Cor. 11.2, 2 Thess. 2.15. The delivery of this tradition is indicated by the verb paradidonai, 1 Cor. 11.2, 23, 15.3, its reception by paralambanein, 1 Cor. 11.23, 15.1,3, Gal. 1.9, Phil. 4.9, Col. 2.6, 1 Thess. 2.13, 4.1, 2 Thess. 3.6. When the congregations are exhorted to "stand fast by" and "hold fast" this tradition, the verbs used are katechein, 1 Cor. 11.2, kratein, 2 Thess. 2.15, and hestekēnai, 1 Cor. 15.1.⁷

There is, then, in the two verbs paralambanō and paradidōmi reference to a chain of tradition received and passed on by the members of the primitive church. It is to this

⁶Cullmann, p. 63.

⁷Birger Gerhardsson, Memory and Manuscript, translated by Eric J. Sharpe (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1961), p. 290.

paradosis that Paul refers in our text when he uses these two technical terms. As Buechsel summarizes:

paradounai is used as a technical term when its object is teaching, etc. Thus it is used of the Halachic tradition of the Jews in general in Acts 6:14, or more specifically that which goes beyond the laws in Mk. 5:13, or of Christian tradition with no more precise definition of content in R. 5:17; I C. 11:2, 23; 15:3.⁸

Non-Pauline Elements

There are a number of words and phrases which appear in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 which are uncommon in the Pauline corpus. Because some of them occur only here, it has been thought⁹ that Paul is quoting a tradition which he received from the primitive church word for word.

The word ōphthē is found in the Pauline corpus only here and in the confessional formula of 1 Tim. 3:16. Paul uses the perfect passive of the verb egeirō only in 1 Cor. 15:4 and in 15:12-14, 16f. and 20.¹⁰ His normal usage is the aorist, either passive or active. The expression "the twelve" is found only here in the Pauline corpus. Paul's usual term is "the Apostles." The placing of the ordinal

⁸Friedrich Buechsel, "didōmi," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., c.1964), p. 171.

⁹Cf. supra, p. 5, n. 3.

¹⁰Jeremias, p. 102, says that the use of the passive in the remainder of chapter fifteen is clearly due to the influence of its use in vss. 3b-5.

number after the noun in the phrase tē hēmera tē tritē is found nowhere else in Paul. The phrase kata tas graphas is not a Pauline expression. He normally uses kathōs (or katha-
per) gegraptai. Huper tōn hamartiōn hēmon has no parallel in the Pauline writings.¹¹

The fact that in these two and one half verses there are six elements uncommon in Pauline usage, would suggest that the formula of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 was not composed by Paul.

Paul's Statement in Verse Eleven

The line of argumentation Paul is employing in Chapter Fifteen and specifically in verses 1-11 seems to be aimed at a refutation of the statement of some of the Corinthians in verse twelve, "there is no resurrection of the dead." It is against the denial of the general resurrection of the dead that Paul cites the preaching of the Apostles. He wishes to show that if there is no resurrection from the dead, then Christ cannot have been raised from the dead (verse 13). In all of this he seeks to show certain Corinthians that their denial of the resurrection amounts to a denial of one of the chief points of the gospel he had preached to them and they had accepted. It probably would have been easy for Paul's

¹¹Eduard Schweizer, "Two New Testament Creeds Compared," Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation, edited by William Klassen and Graydon Snyder (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1962), p. 291, n. 1, points out that this clause represents not only a different usage, but also a different understanding of the concept of sin.

opponents in Corinth to point out that his gospel was different from that of the other apostles (in fact, they may already have done so) if he had founded his argument in this section exclusively on his own preaching. But Paul shows in verses 1-11 that his proclamation is that of all the Apostles. His gospel is their gospel. He stands in a chain of tradition that goes back to the Lord himself (11:23). The Corinthians who denied the general resurrection were not opposing the opinion of Paul, but the preaching common to all the Apostles. "Therefore whether I or they, thus we preach and thus you came to believe." This statement is best understood when verses 3b-5 are seen as an actual quotation from the proclamation of the primitive church. A. M. Hunter says concerning this point,

Verse 11 of this chapter expressly declares that what has just been recounted (perhaps "recited" is the better word) is no private credo of the writer, but the kerygma of all the apostles, of Peter and James no less than Paul--"Whether then it be I or they, so we preached and so ye believed."¹²

The Use of Hoti

The Greek word hoti is used in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 four times. It is tantamount to quotation marks¹³ and suggests that Paul

¹²Hunter, p. 15.

¹³F. Blass, A. Debrunner and R. Funk, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1961), par. 470 (1), p. 246. Hereafter referred to as BDF.

is quoting word for word from a statement composed by someone else.

Elements Incongruous with the Context

Paul in 1 Cor. 15 is concerned with the resurrection. He is attempting to refute the belief of some Corinthians that there will be no resurrection from the dead. Hurd is of the opinion that Paul is responding here to an issue raised by the Corinthians in their latest letter to the Apostle. He states,

Thus we conclude that the substance of the Corinthians' position was as follows: Concerning resurrection we maintain that there is no bodily resurrection of the dead. The whole idea of such a thing is foreign to the Spirit which is the true gift of God.¹⁴

If this is Paul's topic, why does he deviate so far from it by bringing in the sacrificial death of Christ in accordance with the predictions of Scripture, the burial of Christ, and his resurrection on the third day kata tas graphas? The mention of the death and burial, and the resurrection by themselves could possibly be explained as necessary prefaces for the validity of the resurrection appearances. But the theological interpretation and the details of these two and one-half verses are not really essential to Paul's argument. The only satisfying explanation of these incongruous elements is

¹⁴John Coolidge Hurd, The Origin of 1 Corinthians (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), p. 199.

that Paul was quoting word for word from a formula, and he did not deviate from it even when it was not strictly relevant to his line of reasoning.

The Structural Parallelism of Verses 3b-5

There seems to be a balanced structure between the lines of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5. Jeremias calls this structural arrangement "parallelismus membrorum."¹⁵ It can be pictured thus:

<u>hoti Christos apethanen huper tōn hamartiōn hēmōn</u>	<u>kata tas graphas</u>
kai hoti <u>etaphē</u>	
<u>hoti egēgertai tē hemera tē tritē</u>	<u>kata tas graphas</u>
<u>kai hoti ōphthē kēpha, eita tois dōdeka</u>	

The first and third lines correspond to each other in length, in construction, and in the ending "according to the scriptures." The second and fourth lines also seem to correspond to each other in that they are both shorter in relationship to the first and third. Each of them serves to verify the longer line immediately preceding it.

This structured parallelism of 1 Corinthians 15:3b-5 indicates that it is a specially worded and constructed tradition. It suggests the possibility that Paul is here quoting a formula composed by his spiritual predecessors. The earlier argumentation based on the non-Pauline elements in

¹⁵Jeremias, p. 102.

1 Cor. 15:3b-5 adds weight to this possibility.

Tini Logō

Further evidence for the pre-Pauline nature of verses 3b-5 may be found in the phrase tini logō in verse 2. Paul says, in this verse, "With what word I preached to you." How are we to understand logos in this context? Gerhardsson offers a suggestion,

We can make a particularly important observation from I Cor. 15:1ff., where Paul does not speak merely about the fact of the Corinthians having received the gospel; he also reminds them with what word (tini logō) he preached the gospel to them. He thus made use, when preaching the gospel, of a logos which he himself had received as authoritative tradition (ho kai pare-labon).¹⁶

This proposal of Gerhardsson does seem plausible when we realize that Paul uses logos in 1 Corinthians in the singular nine out of thirteen times to refer to the proclamation of the gospel. A good example is 1 Cor. 1:18: "The logos of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing." There is, then, philological justification to interpret tini logō as an actual logos Paul had received.

The elements listed above in this chapter, which point to the formal structure of 1 Corinthians 15:3b-5 as a tradition of the primitive church, would carry very little weight if they stood singly. But they do not. The evidence is cumulative and the single elements must be viewed as a whole.

¹⁶Gerhardsson, p. 296.

Together they lead to the conclusion that what is found in verses 3b-5 of 1 Cor. 15 must be a pre-Pauline paradosis. What is cited here by Paul, then, is an element of tradition which goes back to the decades immediately following the resurrection. It is possibly the oldest witness to the resurrection we have. Hunter says of it,

Of all the survivals of pre-Pauline Christianity in the Pauline corpus this is unquestionably the most precious. It is our pearl of great price. We may well be grateful to the Corinthians for their doubts about the resurrection; otherwise, Paul might never have been prompted to give us this priceless fragment of paradosis.¹⁷

If it is determined that 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 is pre-Pauline, then a number of related questions arise. What was the original context of the passage? Was it part of a creed which the earliest Christians used to confess their faith? Was it a part of a missionary manual given out to all Christian preachers who travelled to spread the gospel? Was it a section of catechetical instruction for new members in the church? The third chapter will be devoted to determining the use of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 in the primitive church.

¹⁷Hunter, p. 15.

CHAPTER III

THE USE OF 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3b-5 IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

Confession

Vernon Neufeld¹ posits the theory that 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 was a confession of the earliest church. It was derived from the most primitive of all confessions which Paul cites in 1 Cor. 12:3, "Jesus is Lord." Neufeld views 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 as an expansion of this most primitive confession. He concludes that Paul used this confession here as a norm or standard for the true faith and employed it polemically to combat false ideas.

It is true that Paul uses this paradosis to combat the false ideas some of the Corinthians had about the resurrection, but it is much less obvious that this tradition is an expansion of the confession "Jesus is Lord." There is no overt reference here to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Phil. 2:5-11 which Neufeld classifies with our text as an expansion of the primitive confession would serve as a more obvious confession of the Lordship of Jesus than 1 Cor. 15:3b-5.

It also seems that if this text was a confession which Christians used, then it would be more suited to Paul's argument to picture this tradition as something the Corinthians

¹Vernon H. Neufeld, The Earliest Christian Confessions (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963), pp. 67-68.

had confessed themselves and were now denying through their denial of the general resurrection.² Paul does not cite 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 as a confession, but as part of his preaching.³

Preaching

This category and the following seem to be the more probable uses which the Christians of the apostolic era made of this tradition. Paul himself in verse one of chapter fifteen says he preached this tradition to the Corinthians. He says he delivered this tradition along with others (1 Cor. 11:23-26) to the Corinthians. It was the gospel he preached to them.

Of course, the fact that Paul employed this tradition for his preaching does not necessarily mean that his practice was standard in the primitive church. But we have no other instance in the New Testament where this paradosis was used for anything else. Paul offers the only explicit indication as to its usage.

²Cf. infra, Chapter V.

³For further study on the difference between confession and preaching in the primitive church, cf. Werner Kramer, Christ, Lord, Son of God, translated by Brian Hardy from the German, Studies in Biblical Theology, L (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, c.1966), pp. 67-69.

Teaching

In his approach to the problem of tradition, Gerhardsson stresses the fact that by the time of the New Testament, the rabbis had highly developed techniques for aiding memorization. One of these was the use of simanim. These simanim were headings or catchwords which would immediately bring to the student's mind a number of teachings of the rabbi on a given subject. They were mnemonic devices. Gerhardsson poses the theory that Paul in his teaching used a number of simanim. He says,

As we know, a number of quite definite doctrinal topoi appear in the Pauline literature. It seems likely that Paul followed the same procedure in his oral teaching. It is not improbable that he linked his teaching with definite doctrinal statements, logoi, which were received and logoi of his own formulation which he repeated time and time again and then interpreted.⁴

He describes 1 Cor. 15:3-11 in this manner,

It seems, however, to be of vital importance to note that the logos which we find in I Cor. 15.3ff. seems to be built up in such a way that each individual element functions as a siman for a passage from the gospel tradition: (a) the passion narrative--in shorter or longer form?--in which it is a well-known fact that the whole and the details are seen in the light of Scripture, (b) the narrative of the burial [sic!] of Jesus, (c) a narrative telling that the resurrection took place on the third day according to the Scriptures [the tradition of the empty tomb!], (d) the first revelation of the Risen Lord to Peter [cf. Lk. 24.34, John 21.15ff., Matt. 16.16ff.], (e) the revelation to the twelve [cf. Lk. 24.33ff., John 20.19ff.] and then to the others in chronological order [f-i].⁵

⁴Birger Gerhardsson, Memory and Manuscript, translated by Eric J. Sharpe (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell's, 1961), p. 290.

⁵Ibid., p. 300.

This theory throws new light on the subject of the use of this tradition in the primitive church. Perhaps Paul employed this tradition as any rabbi would have done in his teaching. This could also be the way it was employed in the primitive church before Paul.

A number of points speak in favor of this possibility. Paul's background was that of a Jew zealous for the traditions of his fathers. In his letters he constantly refers to traditions already transmitted to his congregations. The word paradosis and the related terms paradidōmi and paralambanō are used by Paul in a technical sense to refer to the content of the Christian message.⁶

Yet all of these points do not prove that Paul used 1 Cor. 15:3b-8 as a mnemonic device.

One of the problems involved in seeing this segment of tradition as part of the early Christian catechism is that there is no indication that it fits the pattern of catechetical instruction in the primitive church. Phillip Carrington in his book The Primitive Christian Catechism does not include in his pattern of the primitive Christian catechism information concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He finds that the emphasis lies on various exhortations to a holy and undefiled life.⁷ We find none of this in

⁶Cf. supra, p. 7.

⁷Phillip Carrington, The Primitive Christian Catechism (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge Press, 1940), pp. 47-50.

1 Cor. 15:3b-5 or any of the immediately following verses. This does not mean, however, that our section could not have been taken from its original context, which might have included exhortations.⁸

Conclusions

It would indeed be foolhardy to draw definite conclusions concerning the use of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 in the primitive church on the basis of the above evidence. But the following can be said with some degree of certainty.

Paul himself refers to the contents of our passage as "the gospel." He states he delivered this gospel to the people of Corinth and they received it (parelabete). We are not to think of this receiving and imparting in a mechanistic manner. Paralambanō and paradidōmi must not be misunderstood to mean a formal type of imparting and receiving which requires no personal involvement. This would be in contradiction to Paul's use of the terms as is indicated by Seeburg. He says,

Paul uses the word paralambanein as a term to refer to a spiritual content which anyone receives for his own property. One receives the gospel (I Th. 2,13; Gal. 1, 2. 12), the person which it treats, Christ (Col. 2,5), one receives instructions (I Th. 4,1; Phil. 4,9) and

⁸It is important to note in this connection that this summary of preaching seems to be meant rather for people who were believers than for those outside the Christian church. The statement reads, "Christ died for our sins." This could possibly indicate that this paradosis was aimed at church members.

traditions, be they of moral (II Th. 3,6), or be they of historical or religious (I Cor. 15,3; 11,23) content. Paul never uses the word in the sense of a bare impartation, to which the receiver could remain indifferent, but instead makes it mean such an impartation whose content is a personal, applicable possession for the one who learns it.⁹

Paul describes our text as a part of his preaching. It is by the imparting of this tradition that the Corinthians came to be believers (verse 2 episteusate--Ingressive Aorist).¹⁰ This section of 1 Corinthians 15 should be viewed as part of the proclamation of St. Paul. It might, along with 1 Cor. 11:23-26, have formed part of a book of traditions. Paul used this book to bring the gospel to the people in Corinth and to instruct them in faith and church life. In so doing, he most likely acted similarly to other missionaries of his day.

What we have here in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 and in 11:23-26 are probably only small parts of a larger collection of traditions. This can be asserted with considerable confidence when it is realized that in the epistles Paul always assumes the congregation's awareness of traditions passed on to them when he was present with them.¹¹ It is, therefore, highly

⁹Alfred Seeburg, Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit (Muenchen: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1903), p. 46.

¹⁰BDF, par. 33, p. 18.

¹¹Romans seems to be the exception to this rule. But even in Romans Paul can assume a common Christian tradition. This supports the contention that Paul's missionary methods were similar to others of his day.

significant that in two of the references to tradition which he quotes directly he expressly mentions that he received them in the chain of tradition. They were not his invention.

This traditional material¹² was received by Paul and used by him in his task as a missionary. We can determine that it contained facts (and interpretation) concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As soon as we determine the formal structure of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 as a tradition of the primitive church from the first two decades after the resurrection, we approach another difficulty. The question must be asked: Where did this paradosis material come from? Who originally formulated it? Did it come from the earliest Christian community in Jerusalem? Is it instead a summary of preaching drawn up by Greek-Christians in the Hellenistic world? The question of the origin of the tradition will be the subject of the fourth chapter.

¹²E. G. Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter (London: Macmillan and Co., 1964), p. 385, asks, "In what form were the books which were in use in the church of the first century? What were the contents of the library of a settled local church or its presbyters, or of the traveling library of an evangelist, a prophet, or an Apostle? We may surmise that they were of no great quantity; but that they existed is clear from the allusions in 2 Tim. 4.13 to "the books" and "the parchments," in I Peter 2.6 to a written document, perhaps to "prophets" writings in Romans 16.26, and to early accounts of our Lord's ministry in St. Luke's Preface. . . .

They are written, moreover, to meet definite needs arising at different points in the Church's expansion; summaries of the Christian faith, of the Lord's deeds, of His teaching, of Christian duty, of liturgical usage, and so on. . . ."

CHAPTER IV

THE ORIGIN OF 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3b-5

Jerusalem as the Origin of the Tradition

The view that this early Christian tradition originated in Jerusalem is the one most scholars hold today.¹ This view is based on a number of evidences which deal with linguistic indications of a Semitic original and with the theological content of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5. We begin with the possibility of an Aramaic original.

This suggestion has been made by Jeremias in his book The Eucharistic Words of Jesus. His whole line of argumentation will be presented here:

There are, if not strict proofs, at any rate signs that the core of the kerygma is a translation of a Semitic original. The evidence is as follows:
(1) The text contains numerous semitisms: (a) the

¹A. M. Hunter, Paul and His Predecessors (Second edition; London: SCM Press, 1961), pp. 117-118. Birger Gerhardsson, Memory and Manuscript (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1961), p. 297. Hans Joachim Schoeps, Paul, translated by Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 61. John Gresham Machen, The Origin of Paul's Religion (New York: Macmillan Co., 1925), pp. 76-78. Joachim Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, translated from the German by Norman Perrin (Fourth edition; London: SCM Press, c.1966), pp. 102-103. Eduard Schweizer, "Two New Testament Creeds Compared," Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation, edited by W. Klassen and F. Snyder (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 166-169. Robert Mounce, "Continuity of the Primitive Tradition; Some Pre-Pauline Elements in 1 Corinthians," Interpretation, XIII (1959), 417-424.

structure in synthetic parallelismus membrorum. . . . Further indications of a Semitic original are (b) the absence of particles except kai; the independence from the LXX of the reference to Isāiah 53 ("for our sins in accordance with the scriptures"); (d) the adversative kai at the beginning of the third line (cf. de, Acts 13.30); (e) the placing of the ordinal number after the noun in tē hēmera tē tritē, which is the only possible order in a Semitic language; (f) the use of the word ōphthē instead of the more natural ephanē, which is to be explained by the fact that Hebrew nirah and Aramaic ithame have the double meaning "he was seen" and "he appeared"; (g) the introduction of the logical subject in the dative Kēpha after the passive verb, instead of the expected hupo with the genitive. These semitisms show that the kerygma was formulated in a Jewish-Christian milieu.²

Hans Conzelmann was not convinced by the argumentation presented by Jeremias. In an article in Evangelische Theologie he takes exception to every point made by him.³ His basic contention in each instance is that the points made by Jeremias do not prove the original Aramaic language of the text. They only show Semitic ways of thinking, not translations from a Semitic original. The Semitic original of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 is thus not a proven fact. Jeremias also seems to recognize this, for, as he says prior to the above quotation, these are not to be taken as strict proofs, but signs. Two objections raised by Conzelmann centering around the anarthrous Christos and the phrase kata tas graphas, seem to be especially cogent. He cites both as Greek-Christian and not Jewish-Christian

²Jeremias, pp. 102-103.

³Hans Conzelmann, "Zur Analyse der Bekenntnisformel I Kor. 15,3-5," Evangelische Theologie, XXV (January-February 1965), 1-11.

idioms. Jeremias grants the credibility of interpreting kata tas graphas this way and states:

There are some features which do not possess an exact Hebrew or Aramaic equivalent, such as kata tas graphas, "in accordance with the scriptures," and the passive egērhē, "he was raised." Therefore we cannot say that the kerygma is a translation from a Semitic original in its present wording. It must have taken the shape it now has in a Greek-speaking environment. Yet it cannot have originated there. With Paul's closing assertion, I Cor. 15.11, that his kerygma was identical with that of the first apostles, and with the independence from the LXX of the reference to Isaiah 53, it is a safe conclusion that the core of the kerygma was not formulated by Paul, but comes from the Aramaic-speaking earliest community.⁴

It is not possible to formulate final conclusions about the origin of this tradition on the basis of its original language. It appears to contain both Semitic and Greek idioms. Other evidence must be produced. To that we turn now.

There are several additional arguments which support the view that this tradition finds its origin in Jerusalem. The first of these is based on Paul's own statement in verse eleven. He says, "Therefore whether it be I or they, thus we preach and thus you came to believe." The ekeinoi in verse eleven must refer back to the individuals named in the immediate context. They would be Cephas, the twelve, the five hundred brethren, James, and all the apostles. For in this context Paul is showing his position as one of those

⁴Jeremias, p. 103.

who has seen the risen Lord. Paul says that his preaching agrees with that of those in the church before him, principally Cephas and James. His citation of the tradition is meant partly to show the unity he shares with the earlier witnesses of the resurrection. Since these are principally Jerusalemites, Paul must be citing a tradition from Jerusalem. Otherwise it would make little sense in the context of his argument. As Gerhardsson says:

The possibility that he is referring to something he had received from the vague entity usually called "the Hellenistic community" is equally improbable. It is quite out of the question that Paul would have recognized such an unqualified body as "die hellenistische Gemeinde" to be capable of delivering a tradition which he--as an Apostle--could call authoritative paradosis.⁵

The entire context of the paradosis weighs in favor of finding its origin in Jerusalem. Paul is arguing that his preaching is the same as that of the first Apostles. He is concerned that his preaching of the cross and resurrection be presented to the Corinthians as identical with that of the primitive church in Jerusalem. This is continually a concern of Paul. It is important for Paul that he can say in Galatians 2:7 that the Apostles in Jerusalem gave their approval to his ministry among the Gentiles. That his gospel is the same as theirs is the concern of Paul in 1 Cor. 15:1-11. For this reason he cites a tradition which was drawn up by the leaders of the congregation in Jerusalem.

⁵Gerhardsson, p. 297.

Another related reason is the mention of Cephas⁶ and the twelve. Cephas looms large in the early church. He was the leader of the circle of disciples who followed Jesus. He delivered the first sermon of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2). "The twelve" is a designation of the group of disciples called by Jesus himself and sent out by him to be his witnesses. They, too, are based in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4, 2:5, 6:7). The individual witness mentioned in verse 7 is James, one of the leaders of church in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9,12; Acts 15:13).

The double reference to the Old Testament Scriptures is another argument for the origin of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 in Jerusalem. Jesus' death and resurrection as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures is what we would expect as an emphasis of the Jewish-Christian community in Jerusalem. Eduard Schweizer has made a valuable contribution to the problem of the origin of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5. He has compared this tradition with the creed of 1 Timothy 3:16. He says,

Both creeds stress the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. The first does it in terms of time and history-- he is the eschatological fulfiller of God's Heilsgeschichte. The second does the same in terms of space; he is the heavenly Lord in whom heaven and earth are reunited. The first creed speaks in the Palestinian-Jewish terms of incarnation and exaltation. Much more important, however, these creeds answer two quite different questions. The first answers the

⁶The Aramaic name Cephas used in 1 Cor. 15:5 does not give any support to the theory that Jerusalem is the origin of the paradosis. This is Paul's usual designation for Peter (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; Gal. 1:18; 2:9,11,14). Only in Gal. 2:7,8 does Paul use the name Peter.

problem of the Palestinian Jew: How may I get rid of my sins, how shall I get through doomsday: The second answers the Hellenistic question: How may I be freed from the powers of a blind fate?⁷

The several arguments cited above once again must be viewed together in order to stand as weighty evidence. None of them alone proves that this tradition originated in Jerusalem. But when they are viewed together, they do present a sound case for the theory. But before a conclusion is reached, the arguments for a Hellenistic-Christian⁸ origin must be considered.

Hellenistic Christianity as the Origin of the Tradition

The arguments which have been posed for the origin of this paradosis in the Hellenistic community are not as numerous as those for the origin in Jerusalem. These arguments are sponsored chiefly by Wilhelm Heitmüller,⁹ Martin Dibelius,¹⁰

⁷Schweizer, pp. 171-172.

⁸Hellenistic Christianity in this paper is meant to refer to the non-Jewish, Greek speaking Christians who lived outside of Jerusalem. It was among Hellenistic Christian churches that Paul carried out his work.

⁹"Zum Problem Paulus und Jesus," Das Paulusbild in der Neueren Deutschen Forschung, edited by Karl Heinrich Rengstorff (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buch-gesellschaft, 1964), pp. 124-143.

¹⁰From Tradition to Gospel, translated from the Second Revised Edition by Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 29.

Wilhelm Bousset,¹¹ and Rudolf Bultmann.¹²

One of the questions raised against the theory that 1 Corinthians 15:3b-5 originated in Jerusalem is the fact that there appears to be no literary unity between this tradition and that of the early speeches of Acts. Dibelius says,

And further, if the development of the tradition had been so uniform that Christian preaching had everywhere employed the same formulation of the message, we should discover literary traces of this uniformity. Instead of this, however, we meet with significant and striking differences. The message found in I Cor. 15 regards the appearance of Jesus to Cephas as the first, and as fundamental for the Easter faith. It is this very appearance which, as is well known, is not recorded in the synoptics. The mention of the burial of Jesus (I Cor. 15) which had already become part of the message, and thereby, so to say, one of the acts of salvation, is lacking in the speeches of Acts, with the exception of Acts 13.¹³

The point Dibelius makes in reference to the speeches of Acts is a valid one. The burial of Christ is not mentioned until the thirteenth chapter of Acts. The resurrection of Christ on the third day is not an element of the early speeches in Acts. The sacrificial understanding of Jesus' death is nowhere directly mentioned in the proclamation of Acts. The idea of death and resurrection is set in a polemical context in the sermons of Acts.

¹¹Kurios Christos (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1965), p. 76.

¹²Theology of the New Testament, I, translated from the German by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 296.

¹³Dibelius, p. 20.

And yet, while there are differences between the summary of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 and the speeches of Acts, there are also a great number of similarities. Both emphasize the fulfillment of the will of God as foretold in the Scriptures in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 does this by the repetition of the phrase kata tas graphas in two of the four lines of the paradosis. The early speeches of Acts repeatedly mention "the definite plan and foreknowledge of God," "all that God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old," or something similar (2:23; 3:18,21-26; 4:25; 7:2-50,51).

In both the early sermons of Acts and 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ is emphasized. It is explicitly mentioned in Acts 2:38, 3:19, and 5:32. Peter tells the crowd in the second chapter of Acts when they ask what to do, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Stress is placed on baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. It is he who has gained the forgiveness of sins for the people.

There is also a possibility that the ebed Yahweh is a theme in both places. The servant of God is not mentioned in 1 Corinthians. But the sacrificial death of Isaiah 53 is certainly present in the statement of 15:3, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." We find the mention of the servant of God in Acts 4:25,27,30. The term is not

used in these verses to show the sacrificial aspect of Christ's death, but it does seem highly probable that the ebed Yahweh is in the background of the thought, since Acts 8:35 applies Isaiah 53 to Jesus Christ. Is it not conceivable that the rest of the chapter of Isaiah (including the sacrificial death) was also applied to Christ by the community at Jerusalem? The reference in Acts 10:39 ("They put him to death by hanging him on a tree;") to Deut. 21:22 may be an allusion to the thought which lies behind Gal. 3:13, "Christ redeemed us from the law, having become a curse for us. . . ." The reference in Acts may be an early allusion to the sacrificial death of Christ.

The theme of the resurrection is also very prominent in the book of Acts. The fact that it was God who raised Jesus from the dead (emphasized by the passive eqēgertai in 1 Cor. 15:4) is mentioned also in the early speeches of Acts (2:24, 3:26, 4:10, 10:40).

Christos is used in the church of Jerusalem not as a proper name, but, as in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5, as a title. In Acts 3:20 Peter says, "and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus. . . ."

The disciples are considered witnesses to the resurrection in both 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 and the early speeches of Acts. Peter tells the crowd in Acts 2:32, "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses." The idea that the disciples are witnesses to the resurrection is also found in Acts 4:33, 5:32, and 1:22.

The importance of the number twelve is obvious in 1 Cor. 15 and in Acts 1, where the disciples decide to elect another witness to the resurrection to take Judas' place and complete the number twelve. Cephas is of importance in both 1 Cor. 15 and in Acts.

The few discrepancies¹⁴ which do exist between the sermons in Acts and the tradition of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 may be explained in one of two ways:

In the first place, there were different audiences. Paul was writing to people who lived in Corinth, while the disciples were preaching to the Jews in Jerusalem. The Jews of Jerusalem needed to be convicted of the death of Christ before they could repent and receive the forgiveness of sins earned for them by Jesus Christ. The proclamation which Paul received was meant not to convict its hearers of their part in the death of Jesus Christ, but to tell them of the forgiveness of sins he had gained for them in his death. There is no polemical tone in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5. This could account for some of the differences between the paradosis and the proclamation of Acts.¹⁵

¹⁴Cf. supra, p. 29.

¹⁵The tradition in 1 Cor. 15 must not have been meant for Jerusalem Jews in its original context either. This does not mean that it could not have originated in Jerusalem. It simply means that it was written for other audiences than the Jews at Jerusalem. If it was part of a book of traditions, then it is conceivable that it was drawn up for Gentiles.

A further point requires exploration. The sermons of Acts were recorded by Luke. He is the author of this book and the question must always be asked: How great a part did Luke play in fashioning the theology of the Book of Acts? Because Luke is the final author of Acts, it is difficult to use the sermons in Acts as a conclusive standard by which the preaching of the church in Jerusalem is to be judged.

We conclude that the literary disparity between the tradition in 1 Cor. 15 and the sermons in Acts is not a conclusive argument which proves that the paradosis could not have originated in Jerusalem.

Another argument for the Hellenistic-Christian origin of this segment of tradition is the fact that Paul attached himself to Hellenistic churches after his conversion. Dibelius states,

But the researches of the last few years . . . have shown that in the case of what Paul "received" it was not the primitive Church which gave, but rather the circle of Hellenistic churches to which Paul attached himself when he became a Christian, and which transmitted to him both the Christian tradition and the call to be a Christian missionary.¹⁶

It is true that Paul attached himself to Hellenistic churches after he became a missionary. He was a missionary to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:2,8). But this does not necessarily mean that the traditions he received were transmitted to him from these Hellenistic churches. We have no evidence to

¹⁶Dibelius, p. 18, n. 2.

support the theory that Paul derived most of his theology from the Hellenistic churches. Why could it not just as well have been the other way around? Schoeps argues for this interpretation,

I think rather that the position which the sources indicate is in fact to be interpreted conversely: it was not Paul who was dependent on a special Hellenistic tradition, but the latter which is to be derived from him, inasmuch as he, the Jewish Christian, became the spokesman of the Greek Christians, and by his own interpretations of the post-messianic situation has conveyed to us not only the catchwords of these communities but also highly important descriptions of their position in the critical age between the resurrection and the parousia.¹⁷

The above argument that Paul was dependent upon the Hellenistic community for the Christian tradition is based on an assumption common several decades ago among New Testament scholars, that the major influence on the theology of Paul was Hellenistic Christianity. With this basic viewpoint, it was then relatively easy to assert that Paul received the paradosis from the Hellenistic circle of congregations and that it was representative of their theology. But today such a basic assumption of the Hellenistic influence on Paul cannot be asserted. With the discovery of the Qumran Scrolls and the closer examination of rabbinic materials has come the understanding that Paul is to be viewed against his background as a Pharisaic Jew.¹⁸ For this reason the Hellenistic assumption

¹⁷Schoeps, p. 63.

¹⁸W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (London: SPCK, 1948); Gerhardsson, Memory and Manuscript; Hans Joachim Schoeps, Paul all contend for this position.

must be seriously questioned.

Dibelius and Bousset both argue that the start of Paul's mission to the Gentiles was not Jerusalem but Antioch. Therefore, anything he received for his missionary work would have been given to him at this time. Dibelius says,

We learn that even Paul himself received this formula possibly when he became a Christian or at latest when he became a missionary, i.e. in the thirties of the first century and in Damascus or in Syrian Antioch. Even these Hellenistic churches apparently handed on to their new converts or to the missionaries whom they sent out a short outline or summary of the Christian message, a formula which reminded the young Christian of his faith and which gave a teacher of this faith guidance for his instruction. . . .¹⁹

It is, of course, possible that Paul could have received this paradosis along with others in Antioch or Damascus. But this does not settle the question of the origin of the tradition. Where Paul received the tradition and where it originally came from are two different questions. If Paul received this tradition from Hellenists who originated it, why does it betray so much of the Jewish-Palestinian understanding of the Christ event as Schweizer has indicated above?²⁰ Why do we not find more mystery elements which the Hellenists would have accented? Hunter puts this in a negative way,

Nor again (to carry the exchange into Bousset's own camp) do I think this is quite the kind of gospel summary likely to have been drawn up by Hellenists who had transmogrified Christianity into a full-blown

¹⁹Dibelius, p. 19.

²⁰Cf. supra, p. 27.

mystery cult--a cult for which the Christ of traditional dogma became a "generalized blend of Attis, Osiris, and Mithras, wearing as a not-too-well fitting mask the features of Jesus of Nazareth."²¹

We have in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 not a summary of Hellenistic theology, but a tradition which the Jerusalem Christians composed as a summary of their proclamation of the Christ event. This summary along with others (1 Cor. 11:23-26) was given to Paul sometime after his conversion.²²

²¹Hunter, p. 17.

²²It is impossible to assert with certainty where and when Paul received this paradosis. Dodd believes he received it in Jerusalem when he consulted with Peter and James (Gal. 1:18-19). He says, "When did Paul 'receive' the tradition of the death and resurrection of Christ? His conversion can, on his own showing, be dated not later than about A.D. 33-34. His first visit to Jerusalem was three years after this (possibly just over two years on our exclusive reckoning); at the utmost, therefore, not more than seven years after the Crucifixion. At that time he stayed with Peter for a fortnight and we may presume they did not spend all the time talking about the weather." Charles Harold Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), p. 16. For further insight concerning this meeting between Peter, James, and Paul, cf. G. D. Kilpatrick, "Galatians 1:18 Historēsai Kēphan," in New Testament Essays, edited by A. J. B. Higgins (Manchester: The University Press, c.1959), pp. 144-149. In this article Kilpatrick interprets historēsai Kēphan "to get information from Cephas."

Dodd's opinion is not conclusive enough to prove that Paul received this tradition in Jerusalem. He could have received it when he was baptized in Damascus. He must have received its contents in Damascus immediately after his conversion. Otherwise, how could he have "proved Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 9:22)?

CHAPTER V

PAUL'S PURPOSE IN CITING THIS TRADITION

A number of theories have been posited by scholars in an attempt to classify Paul's opponents at Corinth under a single category. Baur, Lutgert, Schmithals have viewed the dissenters of Corinth as Gnostics. Schoeps has seen them as Judaizers, and Reicke has viewed them as Judaizing Gnostics. This continuing debate has led Hurd to conclude: "At present scholarly opinion appears to be at something of a stalemate on the subject of the larger background of the Corinthian situation."¹ It is not the purpose of this paper to delve into the various theories of the background of 1 Corinthians. This topic will be considered only as it relates to 1 Cor. 15. However, the following facts are pertinent:

1. There was a denial of the general resurrection in Corinth. Paul specifically says in verse 12, "But if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" In some way or another certain members of the Corinthian congregation had denied the resurrection of the dead. Apparently they did not

¹John Collidge Hurd, The Origin of I Corinthians (New York: The Seabury Press, 1965), p. 107.

deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ, only the general resurrection. To show their error, Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 15 that the general resurrection is tied indissolubly to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of the Corinthians is dependent on Christ's resurrection. If Christ is not raised, then the Christian proclamation is in vain as is the faith of the Corinthians (15:14). In this way Paul proceeds to show that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an essential part of the proclamation of the gospel. To deny the general resurrection is thus to deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ and thereby to remove the keystone of the Christian proclamation. Seeburg puts it thus:

the intention which verses 1-11 serves, namely to bring the reader to the awareness that the resurrection of Jesus as a component of the Gospel is an incontestable basic truth of Christianity.²

The denial of the general resurrection means ultimately a denial of the gospel.

2. Paul is attempting here to show that the gospel preached by him was not one that he had made up or originated, but was founded on a tradition handed down by the Apostles in Jerusalem. He stood in

²Alfred Seeburg, Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit (Muenchen: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1903), p. 47.

succession to them. He was no innovator in regards to his preaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He says this in verse eleven, "Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed." The actual quotation of a tradition of the primitive church in Jerusalem verifies his claim.

Paul's purpose in citing the tradition of 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 was not to prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ,³ but instead to show the Corinthians that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is inseparably linked with the general resurrection of the dead. To deny one is to deny the other.

³as Rudolf Bultmann interprets in Kerygma and Myth, edited by Hans Werner Bartsch (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 39.

CHAPTER VI

THE EXTENT OF THE PARADOSIS

The Paradosis Begins in Verse Three.

It is relatively easy to determine the beginning of the formula St. Paul is quoting here. It begins in the second half of verse 3 with the first occurrence of the hoti.

"Hoti, 'that,' given four times, is tantamount to quotation marks, and suggests a formula."¹ The general introduction of the formula is all of verses 1 and 2 but the specific introduction is found in the words paredōka gar humin en prōtois, ho kai parelabon. There is no disagreement among scholars concerning the beginning of the formula. There is however difference of opinion as to where the formula ends. The majority of scholars see it ending after the dōdeka of verse 5.² But several New Testament exegetes have lately posited the possibility that this formula may extend as far

¹A. M. Hunter, Paul and His Predecessors (Second edition; London: SCM Press, 1961), p. 15. F. Blass, A. Debrunner, Robert Funk, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1961) calls this a hoti recitativum, Par. 397 (5), p. 205.

²Joachim Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, translated by Norman Perrin from the German (Fourth edition; London: SCM Press, c.1966), p. 102. Hunter, p. 18. Eduard Schweizer, "Two New Testament Creeds Compared," Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation, edited by W. Klassen and F. Snyder (New York: Harper and Row, c.1962), pp. 165-170.

as verse 7.³ The arguments for the former of these two views will be considered first.

Reasons for Ending the Paradosis at Verse Five

The most common reason given for seeing the ending of the quoted formula at verse 5 is a syntactical and linguistic one. There is a definite break between verses 5 and 6. For one thing, verse 6 begins with epeita instead of hoti. Verse 6 is no longer dependent on the first half of verse 3 as are 3b, 4, and 5. An independent construction is begun at this point through the repetition of ōphthē.

Not only is there a break in syntax between verses 5 and 6, but there is also a loss of rhythm from verse 6 onward. The steady repetition of the hoti and the parallelismus membrorum do not continue with verse 6 and following. The whole rhythm of the formula is lost.

For these two reasons, the majority of scholars posit that the pre-Pauline formula comes to an end after verse 5.

But these two reasons are not as sound as they seem to be at first glance. For one thing, linguistic grounds alone are not enough to prove that the end of the formula occurs after verse 5. Bammel says the break between verse 5 and 6 is not deep enough to serve as an unequivocal criterion. He

³Ernst Bammel, "Herkunft und Funktion der Traditionselement in I Kor 15:1-11," Theologische Zeitschrift, XI (November-December 1955) 401-419. P. Winter, "I Corinthians 15:3b-7," Novum Testamentum, II. (February 1957), 142-150.

sees a similar construction in 1 Thess. 4:15-17, where the occurrence of an epeita does not indicate a break from a formula the author is quoting.⁴ This is a good point but it must not be pressed too far because of the different nature of the two passages. In 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 we have a series of parallel statements establishing a type of rhythmic pattern while 1 Thess. 4:15-17 does not leave this impression at all.

The argument of the parallel members also presents a problem. The fourth line of the quotation is not exactly parallel to the second. In the second line we have the statement kai hoti etaphē, while the fourth line reads kai hoti ōphthē kēpha, eita tois dōdeka. The fourth line does not balance with the second line as does the first with the third. This has caused Boers to comment:

If it had been built up as formally parallel as he (Jeremias) thinks, the longer Kēpha, eita tois dōdeka in the second shorter hoti sentence would have been disturbing. Ophthē on the other hand, might have been too abrupt an abstract ending, but one may ask whether it had not originally ended with Kēpha.⁵

For the quotation to be perfectly parallel, it would have to end with ōphthē. But as Boers says, this would make little sense. All of this shows that the assumption of scholars on the extent of this tradition is not as sound as it might at first appear.

⁴Bammel, p. 401.

⁵Hendrikus Wouterus Boers, The Diversity of New Testament Christological Concepts and the Confession of Faith (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn, 1962), p. 108.

Reasons for Ending the Paradosis at Verse Seven

Ernst Bammel also has questioned the assumption that the traditional formula of 1 Cor. 15 ends at verse 5. He follows the theory that Paul is here combining two separate traditions concerning the resurrection appearances. The first ends at the close of verse 5 and is basically a Petrine tradition. The second is found in verse 7 and represents a Jacobine tradition of resurrection appearances. The two have been combined by Paul and, therefore, the tradition he received extends to more than just verse 5; it includes verse 7 at least, even though this is a separate tradition.⁶

The theory of Bammel does merit more consideration. It seems possible that there could be traditional material in verse 6 and especially verse 7.⁷ For in verse 7 we find an almost exact parallel to verse 5. This in itself calls for more examination and consideration. If the argument is made

⁶Bammel, p. 408.

⁷Winter's theory (cf. supra, p. 40, n. 3) is that there are two separate and parallel traditions of resurrection appearances in verses 5-7. He reads eita tois apostolois pasin as a combination of the two originally separate clauses eita tois apostolois kai pasin tois adelphois. The two parallel traditions then appear:

Cephas
The Twelve
Over 500 Brethren

James
The Apostles
All the Brethren

However, Winter refutes his own argument when he says that there is no textual evidence for his conjecture and can be none. His argument must remain pure conjecture.

that the parallelism ends in verse 5, then it can be shown that the possibility of parallelism exists in verse 7. It is obvious that Paul's remark about Christ's appearance to himself cannot be a part of what he received. It also appears that the latter half of verse 6 is a parenthetical remark by the Apostle to verify the witness of the resurrection. As Hunter says,

"of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep" is a parenthesis inserted by Paul to underline the good attestation of this appearance. "Most of these five hundred," he advises the Corinthian sceptics, "are still living. If you doubt my word, ask them."⁸

Is it not possible on the basis of parallelism to take the rest of the phrases in this section as part of the tradition which Paul received? If he received these traditions at Jerusalem (as we have argued above) then he could have received there from Peter as well as James the traditions concerning the resurrection appearances to James and all the apostles.

Dodd argues that if the list of appearances was not a part of the tradition, then Paul was exposing his flank to his critics who would have been happy to point to any flaw in his credentials or in his presentation of the common tradition.⁹

⁸Hunter, p. 16.

⁹Charles H. Dodd, "The Appearances of the Risen Christ: An Essay in Form-Criticism of the Gospels," in Studies in the Gospels, edited by D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), p. 27.

If all this is true, then the formula would read:

"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,
He was buried,
He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures,
He was seen by Cephas, then the twelve.
Then He was seen by more than 500 brothers at once.
Then He was seen by James, then by all the apostles

The above is suggested only as a possibility and not as a firm conclusion. The inclusion of the appearances of the resurrected Christ into the tradition which Paul received is something which should be re-examined. In some way Paul received all of these traditions, since they tell of events in which he was not personally involved. Is it not reasonable to think that he received them all at the same time and is here listing them all as authoritative witnesses to the resurrection? For the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the point Paul is trying to make in this context. The witnesses to the resurrection, then, are of utmost importance for his argument.

CHAPTER VII

INDIVIDUAL PHRASES OF THE PARADOSIS

"Christ died for our sins"

This statement of the paradosis falls under the category of what St. Paul "received," and therefore must be regarded as pre-Pauline. Paul in this sentence sets forth two thoughts: one is historical--the death of the Christ; the second is the interpretation of faith--"for our sins." The interpretation as well as the fact of history belong to what Paul "received." We are not to understand huper tōn hamartiōn with Johannes Weiss as a Haggadic addition by Paul to the primitive tradition.¹ The fact that hamartia in the plural is unPauline excludes the possibility that this could be a Pauline addition. It must be taken as a part of the pre-Pauline tradition. This indicates that the death of Christ was already understood and proclaimed as sacrificial by the primitive community in Jerusalem.

It is also significant that the term "our" is used. This seems to be an inclusive term meant for those who were already a part of the circle of believers. It could be an expression of unity by the Jerusalem congregation here applied to the Gentiles; or it could indicate that it was employed by Paul

¹Johannes Weiss, Der Erste Korintherbrief (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 1910), p. 348.

as instruction of those who had already come to faith. However it was meant, it is an inclusive term.

The Title Christos

In 1 Cor. 15:3b we have the title Christ without the article and without the name Jesus either before or after it. The Greek Christos is a translation of the Hebrew mashiach, meaning "anointed one."

This is not a proper name here, but a title. For as Cullmann points out, the original Palestinian church did not use this term as a proper name, but as a title with all the connotations of Old Testament Messiahship as a background.² Acts 3:20 is a good example of this.

In 1 Cor. 15:3b we see the primitive community expressing its faith that Jesus of Nazareth was none other than the Messiah of Jewish expectations. "The deep meaning of the Davidic rule was fulfilled in the kingship which Jesus exercised when he was exalted to the right hand of God. There he achieved the goal of the Israelite monarchy."³

The primitive church here defines the role of the expected Messiah not as that of a political king, but one who dies for the sins of others, who is buried, and who is

²Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament, translated from the German by Shirley Guthrie (Revised edition; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963) p. 134.

³Ibid.

raised by God on the third day, and who is seen by his disciples in proof of his resurrection. We have then here two concepts of the work of Jesus blended--that of the Messiah and of the Servant of God.

"For Our Sins"

That the sacrificial aspect of Christ's death is a genuine part of the paradosis and not a Pauline addition has been argued above.⁴ Weiss is in error when he states that the phrase huper tōn hamartiōn did not belong to this tradition.

"According to the Scriptures"

This phrase will be dealt with in three parts. First, the meaning of the phrase by itself will be considered; second, its relationship to the atoning death of Christ will be explored; and third, its relationship to the resurrection on the third day will be dealt with.

Kata tas Graphas (1)

Kata tas graphas is found in the Pauline corpus only in 1 Cor. 15:3 and 4. This particular expression is found nowhere else in the New Testament. Graphē in the singular is used with kata in James 2:8, but this is the closest one

⁴Supra, p. 45.

can come to a parallel in the New Testament.

The use of the plural graphas does not refer to a single passage, but to the Scriptures as a whole. Schrenk, after a study of the relevant passages concludes,

all point in the same direction; they link the saving act of Christ, His suffering, death and resurrection, and the Gospel in general, with all the OT Scriptures and their prophetic witness.⁵

It is wrong to take kata tas graphas to mean primarily individual proof passages from the Old Testament. Whether the phrase may secondarily refer to individual texts will be discussed later.

The importance of the idea of fulfillment of the Scriptures for the early church can clearly be seen by the repetition of the phrase "according to the Scriptures" in the tradition of 1 Cor. 15. For when the church stated that the events of the sacrificial death and the resurrection of the Christ on the third day were the fulfillment of the promises of God in the Scriptures, she was seeing them as the goal of Heilsgeschichte. The fulfillment of all God's promises was before her eyes in the person of Jesus Christ. The consummation of what God had intended from the beginning and had carried through in his historical activity in Israel was for her a present reality. The eschaton had arrived. Hunter

⁵Gottlob Schrenk, "graphō," Vol. I in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, c.1964), p. 752. Hereafter referred to as TDNT.

puts it,

The early Christian message was set in a framework of "realized eschatology." The fulfillment of prophecy means that the Day of the Lord of which the Old Testament prophets had dreamed and prophesied is now become an actuality. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and in the outpouring of the Spirit, the new era has dawned and Christians are already "tasting the powers of the age to come."⁶

Kata tas Graphas (2)

When Paul says that Christ "died for our sins according to the Scriptures," was it the Old Testament in general to which he referred, or to passages in particular? As stated above, the reference with the plural graphas must be taken primarily in the sense of the whole of the Old Testament witness. In a secondary sense, it can possibly be taken as a reference to a particular passage. The one (in fact the only one) which has been suggested is found in Isaiah 53:12. It reads in the Septuagint, dia tas hamartias autōn paredothē. Because of the similarity to the phrase in our text huper tōn hamartiōn, scholars have seen a reference by this pre-Pauline paradosis to this specific passage of the Old Testament. For it is only there in the Old Testament that we find a trace of the idea of the one suffering for the many. And it is only there that suffering and death are posited of the Messiah. So this naturally would be the big chapter in the

⁶A. M. Hunter, Paul and His Predecessors (Second revised edition; London: SCM Press, 1961), p. 18.

Old Testament for the New Testament preachers who wanted to prove that the atoning death of Christ was not a repudiation of his Messianic claim, but that it was a fulfillment of it and that he died as a sacrifice for others in accordance with Isaiah 53. Barnabas Lindars says,

The very primitive allusions which we have just noticed to the leading idea of the prophecy indicate that the whole passage Isa. 52.13-53.12 was accepted by the first Christians as a prophetic account of what had happened to Jesus, his sufferings, death and exaltation. It is all ready to answer the question, when posed by hostile critics, Why did God allow Jesus to die, if he is the Lord's Christ? It is because he was foreordained to fulfil the mission of the Servant. Such an answer, relying on the relevance of the passage as a whole, is consistent with the earliest phase of the Church's thought. . . .⁷

Without a doubt there is an allusion in the phrase kata tas graphas as it is applied to the sacrificial death of Christ to the divine necessity that Jesus Christ suffer and die. But the question is still debated whether the author of 1 Cor. 15:3b had the specific passage of Isaiah 53 in mind or not. Jeremias wonders why such an assumption was ever questioned. He says,

The archaic confession, I Cor. 15.3, shows where the answer was found: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." The phrase "for our sins" implies that his death was a vicarious one, which "according to the Scriptures" backs this interpretation of Jesus' death with Isa. 53--it is the only chapter in the Old Testament that contains a statement corresponding to "he died for our sins." It will always remain difficult

⁷Barnabas Lindars, New Testament Apologetic (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1961), p. 79.

for me to understand how it could have been doubted that I Cor. 15.3 alludes to Isa. 53.⁸

It is surely a powerful argument that Isaiah 53 is the only chapter in the Old Testament that contains a statement corresponding to "he died for our sins." This is why one is almost compelled to see in this verse an allusion to Isaiah 53.⁹

Jean Hering, who takes a differing point of view here, sees three separate stages in the development of scriptural proof for the Messiah's death. The first stage was simply that the Messiah's death conforms to the divine plan. At the second stage Christians held the conviction that it must be in accordance with the Scriptures, and the final stage involved a groping for precise texts. I Cor. 15:3 and 4 belong to the second stage.¹⁰ This classification, however, is too simple. It seems impossible that New Testament preachers could have used the phrase kata tas graphas (or its equivalent) before Jewish audiences concerning the scandalous death of

⁸Joachim Jeremias, The Central Message of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, c.1965), p. 39.

⁹Hans Conzelmann, "Zur Analyse der Bekenntnisformel I Corinthianer 15:3-5," Evangelische Theologie, XXV (January-February 1965), p. 5, points out that allusions to Old Testament passages concerning the death of Christ were common in the early church.

¹⁰Jean Hering, The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, translated from the French second edition by A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: The Epworth Press, c.1962), p. 159.

the Messiah or his resurrection from the dead without being challenged to prove with specific passages from the Old Testament such heretical statements. They would have been called on to show the passages in the Old Testament where the Messiah is spoken of as dying for the sins of others. The clearest passage they could refer to (perhaps the only one!) was to be found in Isaiah 53.¹¹

It is also significant that the phrase kata tas graphas is attached to only two of the four lines. Its omission for the burial (and also the appearances of Jesus) may possibly indicate that specific texts are in mind here, and none could be found for these facts. It would have been especially important not to use kata tas graphas for the burial of Christ if one was following Isaiah 53, for this chapter states that the servant would be buried with the wicked. Christ, however, was buried in a rich man's tomb.

Kata tas Graphas (3)

In the third line of the formula the phrase "according to the Scriptures" is linked with the resurrection of Jesus

¹¹It must be pointed out here that we find a number of references to specific passages from the Old Testament in the early preaching of the book of Acts. The allusions in Acts 4:27,30 to Jesus as the servant may already be an understanding of Jesus' death as a sacrificial death. The reference of Acts 5:30 to death by hanging on a tree could be background for a specific reference to the sacrificial death of Christ. Acts 8:32-33 quotes directly from Isa. 53, so the "suffering servant" chapter must have been known to the church of Jerusalem.

Christ on the third day. It reads, "and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." The early church felt it important to show that Christ's rising from the grave on the third day was in fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. How then shall we take this phrase? Is it a general reference to the Old Testament or to a specific passage?

Most probably, the understanding of kata tas graphas in line three should be the same as that in line one. The parallelism between the lines points to this. It also follows that the kata tas graphas must refer to the whole phrase as in line one. It was important in line one to view not merely the fact of the death of Christ as a fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures, but to view the sacrificial death as "according to the Scriptures." It would not be the purpose here simply to point to the resurrection as the fulfillment of Scripture. For even John the Baptist was rumored to have been raised from the dead (Mark 6:14). It would also seem more logical to have placed the kata tas graphas between the fact of the resurrection and the historical note of the third day if the Scriptural proof extended only to the resurrection. For these reasons the solution which Metzger offers (that the kata tas graphas refers to the resurrection in general with no allusion to the third day)¹² must be rejected.

¹²Bruce Metzger, "A Suggestion Concerning the Meaning of I Corinthians 15:4b," in Journal of Theological Studies, New

The parallelism with line one also suggests that kata tas graphas be taken with reference both to the whole of Scripture and to specific passages. The possibilities here are Jonah 1:17, Hosea 6:2 and 2 Kings 20:5. The reference in Jonah is to Jonah's spending three days and three nights in the fish's belly. This passage is used by Christ in Matthew 12:40. The Hosea reference is to the restoration of the nation on the third day, and 2 Kings 20:5 refers to Hezekiah's recovery from his sickness on the third day.

The most likely of these three is Hosea 6:2. One reason is that 1 Cor. 15:4 follows exactly the Septuagint version of this passage. They both contain the words tē hēmera tē tritē in exactly the same order. This, of course, is due to the influence of Semitic word order. But this is not as strong an argument as it might at first appear. The same wording is also found in 2 Kings 20:5. The occurrence of the same words in both Old Testament texts, however, does not completely remove the force of the argument for seeing Hosea 6:2 as the Old Testament background to 1 Cor. 15:4.

Dodd claims that our reference is to Hosea 6:2. He points out that the whole book of Hosea is conducive to any early Christian "searching the Scripture" for light upon the kerygma. The references to God's covenant (2:18, 10:4), the

Series, VIII (1957), pp. 118-123. Metzger suggests that the element of the third day was added to convey the assurance that Christ would be but a visitor in the house of the dead, and not a permanent resident.

affirmation of Israel's redemption (7:13, 13:14), Israel as a vine (10:1), and the knowledge of God as the mark of the renewed Israel (4:6) are all significant emphases. Dodd concludes,

I believe we are justified in concluding that the whole of this short book of Hosea was influential in early Christian thought; whole chapters 1-2 and perhaps 13 and 5:8-6:3 had especial significance. These passages bring into clear relief what is a dominant theme all through: the theme of judgment upon a sinful people as the inevitable and indispensable, but also the certain prelude to redemption, renewal, or resurrection.¹³

This point has merit when it is seen that the New Testament five times ¹⁴ quotes expressly from Hosea while alluding to the book in eleven other places.¹⁵ And yet not one of these is a quotation of Hosea 6:2. Dodd's point is, therefore, well made, but it could be countered with the fact that the New Testament nowhere uses what would seem to be the most important passage of the book of Hosea.

However, the fact that Hosea 6:2 is not quoted in the New Testament and does not seem to be one of the chief texts used to support Christ's resurrection from the Old Testament may not be definite proof that the pre-Pauline tradition did

¹³C. H. Dodd, According to the Scriptures (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 77.

¹⁴Rom. 9:26, Rom. 9:25, Matt. 9:13, 12:7, 2:15, 1 Cor. 15:55.

¹⁵1 Peter 2:10, Eph. 6:17, Luke 21:22, 23:30, Rev. 6:16, 3:17, 6:8, Acts 13:10, Heb. 13:15, 2 Cor. 9:10, 1 Pet. 2:10.

have reference to it. It is entirely possible that in the development of the early church it became more important to show that Christ himself had predicted his own resurrection than that this was an Old Testament prediction. Lindars says on this point,

Secondly, and more important, we have seen reason to believe that Jesus did himself speak of a revival on the third day in some form. Although his words are based on prophecy, the interest fastens on the fact that he had himself spoken it.¹⁶

This explanation may account for the silence of the New Testament as to the use of Hosea 6:2 in reference to the resurrection of Christ on the third day.

Another argument for the influence of Hosea 6:2 on the tradition behind 1 Cor. 15:4b is the fact that this Old Testament passage was interpreted by the rabbis as referring to the resurrection of the dead. In the Midrash on the book of Esther we read, "The dead also will come to life only after three days (from the beginning of the final judgment), as it says, 'On the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His presence.'"¹⁷

An objection which might be raised at this point is that the reference in Hosea 6:2 is to a nation, while the reference in our passage is to Christ as an individual. How

¹⁶Lindars, p. 64.

¹⁷"Esther," Midrash Rabbah, edited by Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman, translated by Maurice Simon (London: The Socino Press, 1939), p. 112.

could the primitive church take a passage which refers to a nation and apply it to Christ? The passage reads from verse one, "Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn, that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him." This objection, however, is not a valid one. For the point in the perspective of the New Testament would be that Israel is a prototype of Jesus Christ. This is the whole thrust of Heilsgeschichte. Ramsey states,

The particular passages had their significance because the Scriptures as a whole had found fulfilment. What God did of old time, in the call and redemption of Israel, in the catastrophes and deliverances of her history, has now found its climax in the deliverance of Christ from death.¹⁸

Gerhard Delling offers a final argument for understanding kata tas graphas as a specific reference to Hosea 6:2. He points out that the Targum alters Hosea 6:2 by removing the phrase "the third day" and substituting "on the day of the resurrection of the dead," thus making it a general reference. He says this is done with the same view in mind as the revision of the Ebed Yahweh songs in the Targum, namely, to remove the possibility that Christians could use these passages to refer to the Messiah. This view assumes that Christians

¹⁸Michael Ramsey, The Resurrection of Christ (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), p. 26.

were already using Hosea 6:2 for such a purpose.¹⁹

The conclusion reached here after presentation of both sides of the debate is the same as in verse 3b. The phrase kata tas graphas in both verses refers first of all to the overarching will of God as revealed in the whole of the Old Testament, and secondly as this will is displayed in two specific passages.

"He was Raised on the Third Day"

This phrase by itself raises a number of questions. The questions deal either with the egēgertai or the tē hēmera tē tritē. We shall begin with the verb.

The verb egeirō (raise, lift up) when used of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is always used in the passive. The idea is that Christ did not raise himself, but that he was raised by God. It is most frequently used in the aorist passive when Christ is the subject. Here it is used in the perfect tense to indicate a continuing effect on the subject.²⁰ According to our passage, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ has a lasting effect; He is the Risen One. Neufeld thinks that the use here and in other places of Christos

¹⁹Gerhard Delling, "hēmera," TDNT, II, 949.

²⁰F. Blass, A. Debrunner and R. Funk, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1961). Par. 342(1), p. 176.

with the passive suggests that it is a primitive formula.²¹
 The verb here is not to be taken as a middle voice since the idea of Christ raising himself up is entirely foreign to New Testament thought.²²

"On the third day" presents another problem. Where did this idea come from? Was it derived from Old Testament prophecies concerning the third day? Did it develop from the dying and rising gods of the mystery cults? Why was the third day specifically chosen?

There are a number of theories to explain the emphasis on the third day for the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It has been attributed to the Old Testament idea that important events happen on the third day. It has been attributed to Old Testament prophecies which call for resurrection on the third day (2 Kings 20:5, Hosea 6:2, Jonah 1:17). It has been associated with the Jewish belief that the soul hovered near the corpse for three days and departed only on the fourth day, when death finally supervened. John 11:39 is supposed to be an example of this. Bruce Metzger has proposed that it arose out of the fact that in the Ancient Near East "three days" constituted a temporary habitation, while the "fourth day" implied a permanent residence. The New Testament is thereby witnessing that Jesus Christ was only

²¹Vernon Neufeld, The Earliest Christian Confessions (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963), p. 48.

²²Murdoch Dahl, The Resurrection of the Body, #36 in Studies in Biblical Theology (London: SCM Press, c.1962), p. 97.

a temporary visitor in the house of the dead.²³

But, in reality, it is impossible to substantiate any of these hypotheses. They seem to be solutions that bypass the most obvious answer to the question of where the idea of the third day developed. The easiest solution is that the first resurrection appearances actually took place on the third day after Christ's death, and the earliest Christians assumed that Christ was raised early that same day. For it is incredible that the idea of Christ's resurrection on the third day could have developed out of such a scarcity of Old Testament prophecies concerning the resurrection on the third day. It is also difficult to think that the mystery religions could have had an influence such as this so shortly after the resurrection itself. All of the other solutions also seem to be vain searching in the wrong direction.

"The third day" is a Semitic idiom that frequently means "a short time." We find it used in the New Testament in Luke 13:32 where Jesus says, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course." In the verses following he speaks of his death, so it is logical to think of the third day in this passage as a reference to the time he will die. This was most likely how the first disciples understood this phrase. Then when Jesus appeared on the third day after his death, they

²³Metzger, pp. 118-123.

reinterpreted the phrase and understood it as a literal reference to the moment of resurrection. They began to search for Old Testament passages that showed the resurrection of Christ on the third day as "according to the Scriptures." It was not any of the understandings of the third day that gave rise to the record of Jesus' resurrection on the third day, but it was the event of the resurrection (witnessed through his appearances to his disciples) that gave rise to our text and others. It may even be possible to trace this back to the original prophecy of Christ himself.²⁴

Cameron Mackay states in summary,

A reassuring conclusion from the general vagueness is that it is unlikely that the Old Testament passages can have created the belief that the Resurrection occurred on the third day. It is far more probable that the event, attested by good evidence, created any use of proof-texts that was made. . . . rather a build-up of evidence is suggested, Hosea propping Jonah, Jonah Hosea, with other material contributing to a stable structure, an arch whereof Easter morning was keystone.²⁵

"And He Was Buried"

The prominence of the burial of Christ as a part of this quoted formula indicates its importance in the proclamation of the primitive church. Why was such importance

²⁴A. E. Morris, "A Note on I Corinthians 15:3-4," in Expository Times, XLV (1933-34), p. 44 says, "We suggest that the order should be reversed. The collection of Testimonies was based on an exposition of the Old Testament given by our Lord. . . ."

²⁵Cameron Mackay, "The Third Day," Church Quarterly Review, CLXIV (1963), p. 290.

placed on the fact of Christ's burial? A perusal of the gospel accounts shows that the story of the empty tomb is mentioned in all four gospels. The primitive church wanted to state that when Jesus was taken down from the cross he was unequivocally dead. His burial is a verification of his death. This is one of the purposes of the parallelism in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5. Each of the short lines is given as a reinforcement of the statement of the preceding longer line. The burial emphasizes the fact of Christ's death, and the appearances emphasize the fact of the resurrection. "And he was buried" means he was really dead. Baird states,

The empty tomb, even if historical, would have been powerless to elicit faith. The point of the statement, "He was buried," was to stress the reality of Christ's death so as to underscore the certainty of God's action in his resurrection.²⁶

Whether Paul (or the pre-Pauline formula) is here alluding to the story of the empty tomb cannot be ascertained from this statement. But the point of the story of the empty tomb is certainly the point here. Christ arose from the dead! It is very likely that Paul knew the story of the empty tomb since he met with Peter, the main character in John's gospel story.

²⁶William Baird, The Corinthian Church--A Biblical Approach to Urban Culture (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1964), p. 170.

"He Was Seen by Cephas, Then by the Twelve"

This verse lists two resurrection appearances, the first to Cephas and the second to the twelve. A correct understanding of the meaning of these appearances centers around the use of the verb ōphthē and the persons to whom the appearances were directed.

A question which has been frequently raised is whether the appearances were objective historical appearances of the risen Christ, or subjective hallucinations. It is not the purpose of this paper to deal extensively with this question, because it is impossible to answer the question on the basis of 1 Cor. 15:5-8. The only indications we have are found in what follows.

A brief study of the word ōphthē reveals several things. The verb ōphthē is used in the Old Testament mostly of beings that make their appearance in a supernatural manner, almost always with the dative of the person to whom they appear: God (Gen. 12:7; 17:1), Angels (Exodus 3:2).²⁷ In the New Testament it is used in much the same manner. It is used a total of nineteen times. Eight times it is used of the

²⁷Bauer, Walter, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated from the German and revised by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1957), p. 581. Hereafter cited as BAG.

appearances of the risen Christ;²⁸ six times of immortal beings such as God, angels, Moses Elijah.²⁹ Four times it is used of things which appear: three of these are in the Book of Revelation (11:19; 12:1,3), and the other is of a "vision" which appeared to Paul in the night in Acts 16:9.³⁰ So it seems that the emphasis in the New Testament (if we list the appearances of Christ under the appearances of immortal beings) is on the appearance of a being who has gone beyond the grave to a mortal man. The use of the verb ōphthē in 1 Cor. 15 is intended to show that Jesus Christ is more than an ordinary mortal. He is one who has come back from the dead as Moses and Elijah who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3; Mark 9:4). He no longer is bound to the realm of the earthly. He is now a part of the realm which transcends the earthly, to which angels, Moses, Elijah, and God belong. He is no longer a mere mortal.

It is also important to note the context in which ōphthē is used in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5. With the exception of apethanen, all of the verbs in this sequence are in the passive voice. They describe something that has happened to

²⁸Luke 24:34; Acts 13:31; 26:16; 1 Cor. 15:5,6,7,8; 1 Tim. 3:16.

²⁹Matt. 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 1:11; 22:43; Acts 7:2,30.

³⁰Horaō in the Aorist passive is used a single time in a natural sense of Moses when he appeared to the two men fighting in Egypt (Acts 7:26).

Christ. Since death is something which happens to a person, we may include apethanen here also. In this passive context, it would be best to translate the verb ōphthē with the phrase "he was seen." Not only do we find the emphasis on the other-worldly status of Christ after his death, but also on what happens to him. Christ was seen after his resurrection by his disciples. They are to be the witnesses of his resurrection. Paul is giving in 1 Cor. 15 the authoritative witnesses to the resurrection. Christ was seen by them.

The appearance to Peter is of interest for several reasons. We notice first of all that his Aramaic name is used. This is common usage by Paul who always uses the Aramaic Cephas in 1 Corinthians and usually in all of his letters, the two exceptions being Gal. 2:7 and 8.

It is most likely that we are correct in assuming that the use in the pre-Pauline formula of the name Cephas instead of Peter is to emphasize his importance as the "rock" of the early church. Cullmann in his book Peter says,

In any event, the fact that the word Kepha was translated into Greek is significant. It confirms the fact that the word is not a proper name; proper names are not translated.³¹

The name Kephas is not a name in our sense of the term, but a title. It is a title which points to the function of Peter as the rock upon which the church of the Apostles was built.

³¹Oscar Cullmann, Peter, translated by Floyd Filson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. 19.

It probably goes back to the story found in Matthew 16:16-20, where this name was given to Peter by Jesus. To take it in this sense, fits in well with the context, since dōdekoi and Christos are not proper names either.

The appearance to Peter is of interest for another reason. It is not mentioned in the Gospels except for Luke 24:34, where we find the closely parallel structure hoti ontōs ēgerthē ho kurios kai ōphthē Simōni. It is probable that these two accounts are derived from the same tradition, or possibly Luke's verse is derived from the paradosis which lies behind 1 Cor. 15:3b-5. In any case, it is indeed strange that the gospel records do not give us an account of the appearance of the risen Christ to Peter as they do of others.³²

"Then by the twelve" is the parallel phrase to the appearance to Peter. "The twelve" is not meant to indicate the exact number of the disciples, but it is rather a title.³³ The formula is not interested in the group for its own sake, but simply for its function in the church. As Rengstorf states,

³²Cullmann, Peter, p. 60, conjectures that this account was lost with the lost ending of Mark.

³³At this point in the text the original version of D and G plus the Vulgate and a Syriac translation have hendeka for dōdeka. It is obvious here that a scribe desiring to be numerically correct and to harmonize this passage with Matthew 28:16 substituted the number eleven for the title "the twelve." For Judas was not among the disciples any longer. The majority of manuscript evidence is for dōdeka.

If anything is certain about the mention of the twelve in this list, it is that Paul does not speak of them as a constituent part of the organized primitive community, nor as its leaders, but rather as a group among the first witnesses of the resurrection which is of particular importance in virtue of its connection with Jesus.³⁴

It is also possible that "the twelve" carries the connotation of the representatives of the people of God.³⁵ They may represent the twelve tribes of the New Israel founded by Jesus Christ. As the fulfillment of God's will is emphasized through the twice-cited "according to the Scriptures," so here the fulfillment of the founding of a new Israel may be implied in the use of the term "the twelve."

As it was the purpose of the second line to verify the longer first line, so here the mention of the witnesses is intended to verify the fact that God raised Christ from the dead on the third day. No one saw the resurrection take place, but these witnesses saw the risen Lord! This is proof enough for the primitive church that it really happened.

It is not within the scope of this paper to consider the other Christophanies which occur in verses 6, 7 and 8. A study of these and a comparison of them with the Gospel accounts is a full-length dissertation in itself.³⁶

³⁴R. H. Rengstorf, "dōdeka," TDNT, II, 327.

³⁵This could be the thought underlying Matt. 19:28.

³⁶For further study, see Michael C. Perry, The Easter Enigma (London: Faber and Faber, c.1959) and E. L. Allen, "The Lost Kerygma," in New Testament Studies, III (1956-1957), 349-353.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

In 1 Corinthians 15:3b-5 the Apostle Paul quotes word for word from a formula he had received prior to his preaching in Corinth. It is a tradition passed on to him by the leaders of the primitive church in Jerusalem, which he in turn passed on to mission congregations in the Gentile world. He may have received it from Peter and James themselves when he visited them in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18-19). This paradosis was part of a book of traditions (which also included 1 Cor. 11:23-25) dealing with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It originated in the city of Jerusalem among the earliest Aramaic-speaking Christians there, and may have been written originally in the Hebrew language.

It is cited in 1 Cor. 15 to emphasize several points. It is meant to show the Corinthians that the gospel common to all the Apostles included the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This was among the most important elements of the gospel. Paul also quoted this formula to emphasize his assertion in 15:11 that his gospel is the same as that of all the Apostles.

The formula begins in the second half of verse 3. It extends for certain to the end of verse 5, and there is a very good possibility that it extends to the end of verse 7 (with the exclusion of the parenthetical remark, "most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep"). This is a

question which needs more consideration than it is receiving by scholars today.

This section of the proclamation of the primitive church consists of two interwoven elements. It is a combination of event and interpretation. "Christ died" is essentially the proclamation of an event, while "for our sins" is clearly faith's interpretation of that event. It points to the atoning death of the Messiah as a key element in the earliest preaching of the church. The burial of Jesus Christ is included in the primitive proclamation to verify the reality of Jesus' death and thereby to serve as an assurance of the resurrection from the dead. This resurrection of the Christ is cited as taking place on a definite date--the third day after his crucifixion. Both the atoning death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection on the third day are considered the fulfillment of the expectations of the Old Testament witness. They are the climax of God's will as shown forth in the writings of the Old Testament. The framers of the pre-Pauline paradosis not only viewed the atoning death and the resurrection on the third day as fulfillment of God's will in a general sense, but they also had specific Old Testament passages in mind. Isaiah 53:12 is the Old Testament background for the sacrificial death of the Christ, while Hosea 6:2 with its reference to the resurrection of Israel on the third day seems to have been interpreted in the primitive church as a prediction of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on

the third day.

The appearance of the risen one to Cephas and the twelve emphasizes two things. It emphasizes that Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, was one who had penetrated beyond the grave and had returned to show his disciples he had risen from the dead. He was more than a mortal. The use of a verb common to theophanies confesses the church's faith in the super-human nature of the risen Christ. The use of this verb in the passive emphasizes also the importance of the witnesses of the resurrection for the primitive church. They were the keystone of faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They were so important to the primitive church that their names were included in the primitive Christian proclamation. The specific names used for Peter and the disciples ("Cephas" and "the twelve") show that these individuals were viewed in their importance for the primitive church. "Cephas" was the rock upon which the church was founded and "the twelve" were the followers who knew Jesus in his lifetime.

This primitive proclamation is composed of events which took place in an historical setting. In 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 Jesus Christ is spoken of as a real person who really died, who was really buried, but one also who was raised from the dead, and proved to his disciples he was alive again by appearing to them. The mention of the burial and the third day emphasizes the concern of the primitive Christian community to relate the Christ of faith to the Jesus of history.

Jesus Christ is the main focus of interest in this tradition. He is the subject of every one of the verbs in these four lines. But it must be stated that this tradition strongly stresses the will of God. The twice-cited phrase kata tas graphas and the passive egēgertai point beyond Jesus Christ to the God by whose will the saving events take place. It is not proper to speak here of what Jesus Christ has done, but what God the Father has done through His anointed one.

The Christ is pictured here in his uniqueness as the eschatological fulfiller of God's salvation history. He dies as the fulfillment of the Suffering Servant; he is raised as the new Israel on the third day; he is seen by the twelve. This is the primitive church's way of saying that in Jesus Christ the eschaton has arrived.

According to 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 we can say with certainty that St. Paul was no innovator. He did not compose his own gospel. This tradition passed on to him by the early Apostles is considered by him as of chief importance. He stands in a chain of tradition, receiving traditions from the Apostles before him and passing them on to his congregations. He effects through his preaching a continuity of the Apostolic tradition.

This section of 1 Corinthians 15 also tells us something of the proclamation and instruction in the church of Paul's day. There were authoritative traditions, fixed

either orally or in written form. These were meant to preserve the correct teaching and to guide missionaries and church members in their understanding of the faith. The tradition of this period does not appear to be free and floating.

Questions for Further Study

A number of questions have arisen in the course of this study which do not fall directly within the scope of this paper.

A question which scholars today seem desirous to ignore is the question of the length of the quotation. Where does it stop? Should all of the resurrection appearances (including Paul's) be considered a part of this summary of the primitive Christian proclamation? Do we find in verse seven a Jacobine tradition of resurrection appearances in contrast to a Petrine one in verse five?

How are all of these resurrection appearances to be reconciled with the gospels? What happened to the account of the appearance of Christ to Peter? This would seem to have been of greatest significance for the primitive church. Why was it not preserved in the Gospel account? Where is the account of the appearance to James to be found? Do the synoptics record the appearance of Christ to the five hundred brethren?

An interesting project, which would help one more thoroughly understand the theology of this short summary,

would be to compare this section with other parts of the New Testament thought to be creeds or hymns. A comparison-contrast study of this sort would yield much for our understanding of the assumptions behind 1 Cor. 15:3b-5.

Are the results of this study a contradiction to what Paul says in Galatians 1:12, "For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ"? Why does Paul in Galatians so vehemently deny that he was taught his gospel and then speak of it in 1 Corinthians as something he had received in the chain of tradition from the earlier Apostles?

Why is there no mention of the earthly life of Jesus in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5? Are we to conclude from this that the preaching of the early church was not concerned with the earthly life of Jesus?

How did the missionaries of the first century go about teaching their converts? Was it essentially memory work? Does the rabbinic background of the New Testament shed additional light on Christian methods of preserving and transmitting traditions about Jesus Christ?

A final question which is a problem here is: What is the relationship of faith to history? Did the primitive church and Paul believe they could prove the historicity of the resurrection by citing witnesses who saw the risen Lord? Is Paul here engaging in a fatal argument when he tries to prove the resurrection? Is his aim here to prove the resurrection at all?

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