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Brief Studies

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BRIEF STUDIES

ÜBERLIEFERUNG: TRADITION UND SCHRIFT IN DER EVANGELISCHEN UND KATHOLISCHEN THEOLOGIE DER GEGENWART. By Peter Lengersfeld. Paderborn: Bonifacius-Druckerei, 1960. 263 pages. Cloth. DM 16.00.

A Review Article

The author points out that never since the 16th century have Roman Catholic and non-Roman-Catholic partners in dialog taken each other as seriously as today. He, therefore, endeavors to give non-Roman-Catholics a sympathetic though critical hearing and seeks a mutual basis for discussion. He also endeavors to give Roman Catholics a deepened understanding. The book treats the normative character of Scripture and its dogmatic development, called *traditio divina* by Romanists. It investigates the period beginning with Karl Barth's *Römerbrief*.

On the basis of a study of *paradosis* and *paradidonai* in the Scriptures the author concludes: "God Himself is the basis and the source of all *paradosis*. The Father Himself in His eternal purpose dynamically established both the *paradosis* of Jesus on the cross and also the *paradosis* (*traditum-tradendum*) which Jesus has given to us. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, is object and first bearer of the Paternal *paradosis* will" (p. 37). "The New Testament apostolate is based on the will and command of the risen Lord" (p. 38). "The apostles are the bearers of the Lord's tradition. Furthermore they are equipped for this task with . . . the continually present assistance of Him who sent them and of His Spirit" (p. 40). The exalted and real completion of the apostolic *tradere Christum* eventualizes in the Holy Communion: "In their repetition of the words given to them by Jesus over the holy forms, Jesus' transmission of Himself

(*Selbstüberlieferung*) completes itself in the present." (P. 43)

"Through the connection of the apostolic proclamation with the proclamation of Jesus Christ, formed by the Holy Spirit and guaranteed by Him, there follows the necessity to believe the apostolic word." (P. 46)

The author holds that form criticism of Protestants has clarified the process of tradition. The apostles themselves were in the stream of tradition. The kernel of the *kerygma* is the apostolic presentation of the self-revelation of the Risen One. The earliest unfolding of this kernel is found in the formulas of faith and rules of ethics which arose through joint action of apostolic authority and congregational faith in the church. This is embodied in the broad kerygmatic stream of total material left by the apostles. The last is not revelation, but human words about revelation. The human sentences, however, are sanctioned by God and thus normative for all times. The *traditio verbalis* is the proclamation of the Gospel message; the *traditio realis* is that whereby Christ remains in the heart of the believers.

"The source of our faith is the transmission (*Überlieferung*) of God Himself in Christ mediated by the apostles. The norm of our speaking about faith and of our expressions of articles of faith is the speech of the apostles, their proclamation, and their confession." (P. 71)

The author sees in the canon a basic dilemma of Protestantism. He critically evaluates attempts to find "a canon within the canon," to make the canon relative, to refute the view that the authority of the canon is traced neither to a churchly decision nor the doctrine of verbal inspiration. He favors Cullmann's view "that the church's decision on the canon was an event in the history of salvation which had unique significance"

(p. 97). He concludes that canon and Scripture belong together and hence also Scripture and tradition. The church arrived at the recognition of canonicity through revelation. "This . . . revelation simply happens in this way that the Scripture in question comes into being as genuine development of the essence of the primitive church." Hence the later church "filled with the Spirit, finds something in the Scriptures which corresponds to its essence." (Pp. 114, 115)

The author then attempts to show that the Council of Trent, by rejecting the *partim-partim* in favor of *et*, refused to make Scripture and tradition the same. He agrees with Rahner: "The formal authority of the church to teach and the promised presence of the Spirit is never there to replace the material content canon of faith and morals. This teaching and pastoral office is promised that it can properly apply the norm [Scripture] but not that it, without the norm, can measure later phenomena." (P. 127)

In regard to the Scriptural principle and inspiration the author warns against opposite extremes: Monophysitism, which makes the letter an inspired, magical thing; Nestorianism, which isolates the human author from God's activity and places Scripture on the same level with other books. Protestants, in his opinion, approach the Nestorian error. He holds that the authority of Scripture is absolute and that tradition is not to be interpreted in a way that would reduce that authority. Roman Catholics, he holds, are in danger of forgetting that Scripture is the only norm and Protestants that tradition is the Spirit-guided interpretation. Form criticism, he asserts, has shown that there was tradition before Scripture. Hence the question is no longer whether there is tradition,

but what the individual's relationship to tradition is. In this connection Lengsfeld questions the function of confessions and dogmas in Protestantism. He concludes this discussion with the observation that Scripture is not in opposition to tradition. The source of doctrine and theology in the Roman church, according to him, is Holy Scripture alone. But Scripture demands a second source, which expands truth and makes it accessible. "This second source is the verbally expanded divine apostolic tradition, as it is derived from the witnesses of faith in the church and reaches its apex in the infallible decisions of the teaching office" (p. 191). "The church places itself and its tradition under Scripture. The church's word always remains a second, derived word. The ecclesiastical decisions of faith are not infallible because of the immediate guidance and leading of God but because the church and its doctrine has been given the guarantee of rightly hearing the Word and of rightly interpreting it" (p. 198). Nevertheless, the church's interpretation, even though it has a character of infallibility, "remains a human word of interpretation about the Word of God." (P. 198)

Though the author finds much to recommend in Bultmann's writings, he holds that the Roman church will not make his language its own.

This book offers much for those concerned with the dialog between Roman, Protestant, and Lutheran churches. It also indicates the areas of tension, as, for example, in the question whether "in a hierarchically constructed church for those who do the teaching [bishops, the pope] this promise [guidance of the Spirit] is valid in a special measure." (P. 202) ERWIN L. LUEKER