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The Early Dark Ages of the Church —
Some Reflections

EDGAR KRENTZ

"Different Ministries, Different Means, One God!" —
A Theological Opinion on the Racial Issue

KENNETH F. KORBY

The Ministry of Absolution

FRIEDRICH-WILHELM KUENNETH

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE:

This is a revised and slightly expanded version of a lecture delivered before the faculty, student body, and guests of the Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon, in October 1968. The writer wishes to thank all at this school for making his visit memorable and pleasant and hopes that the lecture will in some small way convey his profound thanks. In a slightly altered form the article is scheduled to appear in the Journal of the Near East School of Theology.

The period of history from the Resurrection to the oldest document in the New Testament is in many ways the darkest in the history of the church. No document in the New Testament antedates the year 50, the generally agreed-on date for 1 Thessalonians.¹ Even if we would date Galatians early, say A.D. 48/49 on the South Galatian hypothesis, we would push our knowledge back only a year and a half. The only other possible candidate for an earlier date is the Epistle of James, placed by a minority of scholars at a time prior

to the Pauline Gentile mission.² There are thus about 20 years for which we have no primary documentation.

Yet it is in this period that important, if not decisive, developments took place in the Christian church. Some can be partially documented from the Book of Acts: the geographic spread of the church beyond Jerusalem-Judea; the gradual inclusion of the Gentiles; some aspects of the life of the church. But our ignorance far exceeds our knowledge. Even if we accept the essential historicity of Acts along with a number of recent scholars,³ a multitude of questions that fascinate the student of the earliest church remain unanswered. The churches in Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria were all founded in this period; yet we can only make guesses about who the missionaries were who first preached to awaken faith in these most important civic

² Most recently by Wilhelm Michaelis, *Einführung in das Neue Testament* (Bern, 1961) ³ [editions are hereafter indicated by superscript numbers], pp. 278—79 (with references to older literature). The implausibility of this view is shown by Kümmel, pp. 289—91, and Franz Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1964), pp. 12—23.

³ See R. P. C. Hanson, *The Acts* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 1—35; A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford, 1963); Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Garden City, New York, 1967).

¹ See Paul Feine and Johannes Behm, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 14th revised edition by Werner Georg Kümmel, tr. A. J. Mattill Jr. (Nashville and New York, 1966), p. 183; Willi Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, tr. G. Buswell (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 34.

The author is professor of exegetical theology (New Testament) at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

centers.⁴ Is Walter Bauer correct when he suggests in his epoch-making book *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (Tübingen, 1934; 1964²) that early Christianity in Alexandria was judged later to be heretical because gnostic and so it was expunged from historical memory?⁵ Why are no Aramaic records preserved from this early church? What was the function of the Twelve, a group referred to in 1 Cor. 15:5? What was the conception of and role of the apostle in this period? Was it identical with that of the Twelve? Acts seems to use the term only for the original Twelve and always in the plural. The apparent exception in Acts 14:14 applies the term to Barnabas and Paul as missionaries of the church of Antioch.

What theological problems did the young church face? How did it solve them? A reading of Acts would suggest that most of the problems that faced the early church down to A.D. 45 were more sociological than theological—for example, the greed of Ananias and Sapphira and the grasping character of Simon Magus. But Acts contains enough hints to make us wonder. Acts 7:56 represents the only use

of the title *Son of Man* for Jesus outside the Gospels. In Acts it is on Stephen's lips, in the Gospels always on those of Jesus. Was there a theology that understood Jesus as the coming Son of Man but that proved inadequate and thus disappeared?

Would such a Christology have been characteristic of Judeo-Christianity as opposed to Hellenistic Christianity? And is that why it disappeared? Such is the opinion of Wilhelm Bousset⁶ and Reginald Fuller.⁷ Are such Christians to be equated with the Judaizers with whom Paul disputes the nature of the Gospel? Or were they a latent force called forth by his work? Did the early missionaries vary the terms with which they preached Jesus as they moved through the ancient world? Did such variety polarize Christianity, or were early Christians held under a higher unity of faith? Was Paul a great innovator in theology, or was he merely a courageous proclaimer of theologies already current in the church? Is he the Hellenizer of Christianity, as some 19th-century scholars argued,⁸ or does he continue, though expand, the apostolic proclamation?

Such questions are only representative

⁴ The early establishment of the church at Antioch on the Orontes and at Rome is evident from the New Testament. The case of Alexandria is far less clear, as Floyd V. Filson, *A New Testament History* (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 246, n. 31, points out. Some have seen evidence of the existence of Christianity in Alexandria in the Emperor Claudius' famous letter to the Alexandrians written A.D. 41 (P. London 1912 = *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* no. 153), especially in the reference to Jews from Palestine who cause disturbances. The extensive bibliography is available in *CPJ*.

⁵ See Hans Dieter Betz, "Orthodoxy and Heresy in Primitive Christianity," *Interpretation*, XIX (1965), 299—311.

⁶ *Kyrios Christos* (Göttingen, 1913; 1965⁵), pp. 1—22, 77—84.

⁷ *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York, 1965), pp. 143—56. See also Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York and Evanston, 1967), *passim*, and the literature referred to there.

⁸ See the relevant sections of Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History*, tr. W. Montgomery (New York, 1912). The question is certainly not answered, as a rapid reading of the volume *Das Paulusbild in der neueren deutschen Forschung*, ed. Karl Heinrich Rengstorff (Darmstadt, 1964), will show. Rudolf Bultmann, "Zur Geschichte der Paulus-Forschung," *ibid.*, pp. 305—307, shows that this is a central issue for the understanding of early Christianity.

of the kind that arise when one tries to reconstruct the history of the church in this period. It has been called "the twilight region of Christianity" and its study characterized as a "little-trodden, difficult, and dangerous way."⁹ Yet these questions are important, for answers to them might demonstrate that there was (or was not) a continuity of interpretation of Jesus from the Resurrection to our first literary sources.¹⁰ The way may be difficult; that makes it only more interesting and fascinating for the student.

The resources for this study include the Book of Acts and such material as can be recovered from the rest of the New Testament. Charles Harold Dodd¹¹ has called attention to the common kerygma that underlies the sermons in Acts, though his analysis has been challenged recently.¹² Yet Acts according to its own outline (1:8) is something less than a complete history. It concentrates its interest on two figures, Peter and Paul, in order to trace the missionary spread west toward Rome. Luke omits much that must have been common knowledge for his readers but is lost in the mists of the past today. Acts, for example, never mentions the letters of Paul. It gives no information about the arrangements Paul made for the organization of the churches he left behind in his

travels. Acts gives no information about the liturgy or worship of these churches. We do not know if Paul's sermons customarily lasted as long as that spellbinder in Troas that put young Eutychus to sleep. Acts raises more questions than it answers.¹³

We are forced to look for more primitive material embedded in the documents of the New Testament. This type of study is relatively young. Each year sees some significant additions to our knowledge. Some material is expressly marked off by the writers as earlier tradition, for example, 1 Cor. 11:23 and 15:3-5. Other material can be recovered only by a careful analysis of formal elements or by other linguistic phenomena. The father of such studies in the New Testament is the great classicist Eduard Norden. His volume *Agnostos Theos*, first published at Leipzig in 1913, is still a basic text.¹⁴ In it he identified Acts 17, Col. 1:15-20, 1 Tim. 3:16, and other passages as stylistically foreign in their New Testament contexts.

This study has been carried on for about 50 years. Ernst Lohmeyer, in a long series of works beginning in 1926, demonstrated the value and significance of the method

⁹ Archibald M. Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors* (Philadelphia, 1961²), p. 14 (originally written in 1940).

¹⁰ See Robert H. Mounce, "Continuity in the Primitive Tradition. Some Pre-Pauline Elements in I Corinthians," *Interpretation*, XIII (1959), 418.

¹¹ *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York and London, 1951², first published 1936).

¹² Robert C. Worley, *Preaching and Teaching in the Earliest Church* (Philadelphia, 1967).

¹³ It is not our purpose here to discuss the great difficulties in using Acts as a source. Some of the difficulties are presented in the recent book by F. Gerald Downing, *The Church and Jesus: A Study in History, Philosophy and Theology* (London, 1968), pp. 25-44, 57 to 76, with rich bibliographic notes.

¹⁴ It bears the subtitle *Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede*. To my knowledge the first use of the term *Formgeschichte* appeared in the work *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, a study of an obscure religious text by Alfons Dieterich in 1903. As has so often happened, methods developed in classical philology were imported into Biblical studies somewhat later.

in New Testament studies.¹⁵ Since 1950 men of greatly varied theological positions have added to the growing body of literature: Gerhard Delling, Oscar Cullmann, Ernst Käsemann, Eduard Schweizer, Joachim Jeremias, Otto Michel, Eduard Lohse, James M. Robinson, Philip Carrington, Edward Gordon Selwyn, Nils A. Dahl, Archibald M. Hunter, Gottfried Schille, Reinhard Deichgräber, and many others. Such scholars have identified much material that is older than the documents in which it is found. This paper will list some of the areas studied, point out the criteria used, and illustrate the method with a number of passages from the New Testament.

Much time has been spent in studying the epistolary form, the significance of the thanksgiving, the influence of rhetoric,¹⁶ the use of the Old Testament in the New,¹⁷ and the autobiographical sections of the epistles.¹⁸ These studies have made great

contributions to the evaluation of the Christian contribution to ancient style.

More directly relevant to the understanding of earliest Christianity has been the study of the parenetic and catechetical teaching of the New Testament. The relation of the virtue and vice catalogs of the New Testament to those of both Judaism (including Qumran) and Hellenism has been carefully evaluated. The upshot is to demonstrate that the early church was not unique in its ethical teaching by virtue of being absolutely novel.¹⁹ Rather, the uniqueness of Christianity lay in the unique motivation to action. The *Haustafeln* have been similarly treated (see the bibliographies in Furnish and Schrage).

The greatest contributions in this area have come in the study of early Christian catechesis. Here the names of Philip Carrington²⁰ and Dean Edward Gordon Selwyn²¹ take pride of place. They demonstrated that a common catechetical pattern is to be found in 1 Thess. 4:1-9 and 1 Peter 1:13-22. The common elements of holiness, abstention from immorality, *philadel-*

Yonick under the title *Letters of St. Paul: Modern Studies* (Chicago, 1968).

¹⁵ See the *Forschungsbericht* in Gottfried Schille, *Frühchristliche Hymnen* (Berlin, 1965²), pp. 12—14, and Martin Dibelius, "Zur Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments (ausserhalb der Evangelien)," *Theologische Rundschau*, Neue Folge III (1931), 207—242.

¹⁶ A special study of note is Ulrich Schmidt, *Der Priamel des Wertes* (Wiesbaden, 1963), an investigation of the priamel of value in the ancient world, including 1 Corinthians.

¹⁷ Attention is called, *inter alia*, to the following basic works: Joseph Bonsirven, S. J., *Exégèse rabbinique et exégèse paulinienne* (Paris, 1939); C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London, 1952); J. W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Assen, 1954); E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh, 1957); Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (London, 1961).

¹⁸ Béda Rigaux, *Paulus und seine Briefe: Der Stand der Forschung*, tr. August Berz (München, 1964); English tr. by Stephen

¹⁹ Anton Vögtle, *Die Tugend- und Lasterkataloge* (Münster, 1936); S. Wibbing, *Die Tugend- und Lasterkataloge im NT und ihre Traditionsgeschichte unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Qumran-Texte* (Berlin, 1959); Rigaux, pp. 200—201; Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville and New York, 1968), pp. 81—92; Wolfgang Schrage, *Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese* (Gütersloh, 1961), pp. 198—204.

²⁰ *The Primitive Christian Catechism: A Study in the Epistles* (Cambridge, 1940).

²¹ "Excursus II: The Interrelation of I Peter and the Other New Testament Epistles," *The First Epistle of Peter* (London, 1949), pp. 363 to 466. See also Schrage and Hunter, pp. 52 to 57.

phia, and peace have been called an "early Christian holiness code," since the elements seem to be based on Lev. 17—20. A second pattern can be traced in 1 Peter 2:1-2, James 1:21, Col. 3:8—4:12, and Eph. 4:22 ff. Its catchwords are "put off," "put on the new man," "be subject," "watch," and "stand." Such catechetical teaching was often introduced by an appeal such as "we all know that . . ." or "do not be ignorant that . . ." It presupposed a prior oral teaching to which appeal might be made. Its occurrence in 1 Thessalonians shows that such developed catechetical teaching was present by A.D. 50 as part of the baptismal instruction. It is thus almost certain that it takes us "back to the time before Paul's letters and thus to the decades after Christ's death and resurrection." ²²

Ethics pushes us into the area of early Christian worship and liturgy, for ethical teaching is often an appeal to realize what has happened in baptism (see Col. 3:3 ff.). Liturgy is usually a conservative phenomenon; it tends to resist change. Liturgical materials in the early church are no exception. Paul himself clearly identifies his teaching about the origin of the Lord's Supper as tradition (note the verbs *par-elabon* and *paredōka* in 1 Cor. 11:23). Usually, however, other criteria must be used in order to identify elements that come into the New Testament from liturgy.

One such criterion is that of language. Although all the documents of the New

Testament are originally written in Greek, some Aramaic expressions survive. Some such as *allēlouia* and *hōsanna* come from Old Testament worship. In its use of *amēn* the Christian community did not follow its Lord but continued to use *amēn* as an acclamation of asseveration.²³ Two other Aramaic expressions deserve closer examination.

Both *abba* and *marana tha* are Aramaic acclamations used in Greek-speaking churches.²⁴ *Abba* occurs in Rom. 8:15 and Gal. 4:6; in both passages it requires translation. Moreover, in both contexts sonship and the Spirit are involved. In the Spirit one can call God *abba*. Jeremias has pointed out that the usage of this term for God is unique to Jesus and the church.²⁵ Jesus addressed God as *abba* (Mark 14:36), not as *abinu*; that is, He called God simply and directly "Daddy" and not a more formal "our Father." The Spirit

²³ See Heinrich Schlier, "Amēn," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart, 1932 ff.), I, 339—42; Alfred Stuiber, "Amen," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, I (1958), 153—59. For Jesus' peculiar use of *amēn* to open sentences, see Joachim Jeremias, "Characteristics of the IPSISSIMA VOX JESU," *The Prayers of Jesus* (London, 1967), pp. 112—15.

²⁴ On these formulas and other literary forms in the New Testament, in addition to the works of Dinkler and Rigaux already mentioned in the notes, see Ernst Käsemann, "Formeln II: literarische Formeln im Neuen Testament," *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen, 1957—65³), II, 993—96 [hereafter cited as *RGG*³]; Günther Bornkamm, "Formen und Gattungen II: Im NT," *RGG*³, II, 999—1006; Gerhard Delling, *Worship in the New Testament*, tr. Percy Scott (Philadelphia, 1962), pp. 69—73.

²⁵ "Abba," *The Prayers of Jesus*, pp. 11—65. See also Delling, pp. 70—71, and Charles Francis Digby Moule, *Worship in the New Testament* (Richmond, Va., 1961), pp. 76—78.

²² Erich Dinkler, "Form Criticism of the New Testament," *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (London, 1962), p. 685; see also W. D. Davies, "Ethics in the New Testament," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York and Nashville, 1962), II, 172—76.

enables the Christian to use *abba* as an identifying acclamation; he belongs to that group initiated by Jesus which is characterized by this form of address to God. This acclamation, like *Kyrios Iêsous* (1 Cor. 12:3), is possible only via the Spirit. It thus implies an eschatology that regards Jesus as the initiator of the new age (see Gal. 4:1-7).

Marana tha, "Our Lord, come" — so the church prayed to Jesus (1 Cor. 16:22; cf. Did. 10:6). But what did it mean when it used this Aramaic phrase? Philologically it could be analyzed to mean not only "Our Lord, come!" but also as "Our Lord came" (a perfect) or "Our Lord has come" (a present perfect), to use Kramer's analysis.²⁶ A decision on the basis of Aramaic morphology is not possible; rather, the entire context of the acclamation has to be considered. Two views have been put forward. Hans Lietzmann²⁷ suggested that this acclamation was part of a liturgy that followed the reading of one of Paul's letters and introduced the Eucharist. C. F. D. Moule²⁸ follows this interpretation in his book on worship but suggests in another context²⁹ that it may have more properly belonged in the context of the ban formula. He cites 1 Cor. 5:4-5 and 2 Cor. 1:23 as apposite material from the same corpus of letters.

²⁶ Werner Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God* (London, 1966), p. 100.

²⁷ Hans Lietzmann, *Messe und Herrenmahl* (Bonn, 1926), pp. 229, 237—38; in English, *Mass and the Lord's Supper*, tr. Dorothea H. G. Reeve (Leiden, 1953 ff., still not complete), p. 186 and pp. 192—93. Kramer, p. 100, follows him in positing a eucharistic context.

²⁸ *Worship*, pp. 43—44.

²⁹ C. F. D. Moule, "A Reconsideration of the Context of MARANATHA," *New Testament Studies*, VI (1959/60), 307—10.

The liturgical context cannot be irrefutably demonstrated, but it can be shown to be more likely. Günther Bornkamm³⁰ has shown that the language and thought of 1 Cor. 16:22 contains nothing specifically Pauline. *Philein ton kyrion* is singular in Paul, who otherwise uses *agapan*; moreover *agapan* is used in the sense of holding to one's *homologia* (Rom. 8:28, 1 Cor. 2:9, 8:3, Eph. 6:24, 2 Tim. 4:8). His suggestion that the form of the verse is that of sacral law received strong support from Ernst Käsemann, who identified the prophet as the one who formulated law words in early Christianity.³¹ Now it is known from 1 Cor. 14:24 ff. that the prophet played a great role in early Christian worship. He refutes and interrogates the worshipping community. 1 Cor. 11:26 underscores the eschatological character of the Eucharist: it proclaims the *Lord's* death "till He comes." 1 Cor. 16:22 might well give one formula for such prophetic *anakrisis* and *elenchis*:

The prophet: "If anyone does not love the Lord let the eschatological ban be upon him."³²

The people: "Our Lord, come!" (an eschatological confession

³⁰ "Das Anathema in der urchristlichen Abendmahlsliturgie," *Das Ende des Gesetzes* (München, 1963⁴), p. 124.

³¹ Ernst Käsemann, "Sätze heiligen Rechtes im Neuen Testament," *New Testament Studies*, I (1954/55), 248—60, reprinted in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen, 1965), II, 69—82; English tr., "Sentences of Holy Law in the New Testament," *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia, 1969), pp. 66—81.

³² Bornkamm, p. 125, presents the evidence for the eschatological character of the anathema.

and prayer at the same time)

The prophet: "The grace of the Lord Jesus is with you."

Kyrios = *Marana* is thus primarily an eschatological title in the Palestinian church. It would accord well with the words of Stephen in Acts 7:56, whether one views the Son of Man in that vision as judge or advocate.³³ It would fit in well with the contents of Q, that elusive Gospel source. The Son of Man sayings in it are almost all eschatological in orientation. The early church looked for its Lord to return; it expected of Him vindication and judgment. It confessed that hope in every Eucharistic celebration — as the survival of the acclamation *marana tha* witnesses.³⁴

A survey of surviving Aramaic linguistic fossils in the Greek Testament brought us rapidly to Christology and eschatology. The same result is achieved by an examination of other forms borrowed from Judaism: the doxology, the eulogy (*berachah*), and the *homologia*. We see that the Christians continued the custom of the pious Jew of pronouncing a blessing on God's name. Such blessings or doxologies may even be inserted in contexts that are not immediately appropriate, as in Rom.

1:25 ("... worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.") or Rom. 9:5.³⁵ It is only relatively late that such ascriptions are given to Christ, as in 2 Tim. 4:18 and 2 Peter 3:18. The *axios* formulas of the Apocalypse (4:11 and 5:12) are probably not derived from Judaism or Old Testament models but from pagan life. There are no similar *axios* passages in the Septuagint.

Now such *berachoth* and doxologies are not marked off expressly as quotations nor characterized by linguistic foreignness. They are recognizable only by their form, language, and position in the sentence, that is, by form criticism. Thus the two *berachoth* of Romans interrupt the flow of thought and add nothing to it. They are analogous to the "Blessed be Thou, Jahweh" added at the end of petitions in the *Shemoneh Esreh*, the great synagog prayer.³⁶

Creedal formulas have also been investigated.³⁷ Some formulations are acclama-

³³ See C. F. D. Moule, "From Defendant to Judge — and Deliverer," *The Phenomenon of the New Testament* (London, 1967), pp. 90 to 91; C. K. Barrett, "Stephen and the Son of Man," *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen* (Berlin, 1964), pp. 32—38.

³⁴ Wilhelm Bousset's view that the title *Kyrios* originated in the Hellenistic church is thus wrong. See Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hobeistitel* (Göttingen, 1963), pp. 100—110; English tr. by Harold Knight and George Ogg, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology* (London, 1969); Reginald Fuller, pp. 157 to 158.

³⁵ Other doxologies or eulogies can be found in 2 Cor. 11:31, 1 Tim. 1:17, Eph. 1:3, Rom. 11:36, and so forth. See Bornkamm, *RGG*³, 1003; Rigaux, pp. 185—86; Delling, pp. 62—69. Reinhard Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit: Untersuchungen zu Form, Sprache und Stil der frühchristlichen Hymnen* (Göttingen, 1967), pp. 24—44, gives a good survey of these short praise ascriptions.

³⁶ The Hebrew text of the prayer is most easily found in W. Staerk, *Altjüdische liturgische Gebete* (Berlin, 1930²); a good German translation can be found in Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (München, 1956), IV, 1, 211—14. For examples from Qumran see Rigaux, p. 186.

³⁷ On these creedal formulas see Hans Lietzmann, *Symbolstudien I—XIV* (Darmstadt, 1966), a reprint from *Zeitschrift für die Neu-*

tions in origin (for example, Eph. 4:4), others are summaries of the church's proclamation (for example, 1 Cor. 15:3-5). They vary in complexity. Some are simple one-member statements confessing Jesus as Lord (1 Cor. 12:3, Phil. 2:11, Rom. 10:9, Col. 2:6),³⁸ Christ (1 John 2:22), or Son of God (Acts 8:37 [Western text], 1 John 4:15, 5:5). At times these simple one-member creeds may be expanded by recounting a sequence of events (1 Cor. 15:3-5), by an antithetical use of *kata sarka/kata pneuma* or *hyios David/hyios theou* (Rom. 1:3-4), or by a humiliation/exaltation scheme, as in Phil. 2:6-11.

The Jewish confession to one God (*heis theos*) naturally appeared in pagan contexts where polytheism was a problem (for example, Rom. 3:30). It is combined with the confession to Christ in 1 Cor. 8:6:

We, however, have one God, the Father,
from whom are all things, and we to Him,
And one Lord, Jesus Christ,
through whom are all things and we
through Him.³⁹

Tripartite confessions are also found; for example, Eph. 4:4-6 and Matt. 28:18-20. Their *Sitz im Leben* is probably the early baptismal liturgy.

The use of the *acclamatio* and the liturgical *Sitz im Leben* of these confessions

testamentliche Wissenschaft, 21 (1922) through 26 (1927); Oscar Cullmann, *The Earliest Christian Confessions*, tr. J. K. S. Reid (London, 1949); J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London, 1960²); Vernon H. Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (Leiden, 1963).

³⁸ In addition to the work by Kramer mentioned earlier, see also F. F. Bruce, "Jesus is Lord," *Soli Deo Gloria: New Testament Studies in Honor of William Childs Robinson* (Richmond, Va., 1968), pp. 23-36.

³⁹ Other examples can be found in 1 Tim. 2:5, 6:13, 2 Tim. 4:1; see Kelly, p. 20 f.

raise the question about the position that worship of or confession to Jesus took in the "liturgical life" of the community. ("Liturgical" is here not used in the sense of fixed forms implying a particular cultus and priesthood.) Pliny the Younger (A.D. 111-12) declares that Christians "on a fixed day [assemble] before daylight and repeat responsively a hymn to Christ as God" (*stato die ante lucem carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum invicem*).⁴⁰ Pliny thus describes antiphonal hymns to Christ as God. These words naturally reminded scholars of passages in the New Testament that speak of hymns. "May the word of Christ [account of Christ?] dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom (*sophia*) by means of psalms, hymns, and pneumatic [inspired? spiritual?] odes, singing with thanks in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16). Eph. 5:18-19 antiposes inspiration of the Spirit to inspiration by wine and adds the note that these three types of liturgical songs are "to the Lord." 1 Cor. 14:26 lists hymns as one of the component elements of corporate worship at Corinth. The discussion of Christian worship in 1 Cor. 14 supports the idea that hymnody was used to "teach and admonish" as well as to praise. It is not surprising that hymns then would be anonymous, since pneumatic (inspired) compositions would belong in the realm of prophecy.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Plinius Minor, *Ep.* X.96. On this passage see the excellent discussion with good bibliographical notes in Ralph P. Martin, "A Footnote to Pliny's Account of Christian Worship," *Vox Evangelica*, III (1964), 51-57, and David M. Stanley, "The Divinity of Christ in New Testament Hymns," *Studies in Salvation History*, ed. C. Luke Salm (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964), pp. 179-80.

⁴¹ See Stanley, p. 181. This would coincide

Scholars have noted criteria by which quotations in general and hymns in particular might be identified in the New Testament. Some of these are presented here with examples.⁴²

1. "Often the most reliable guide is the language of the immediate context: the creedal formulae or their constitutive elements are inserted and introduced by such words as 'deliver,' 'believe' or 'confess'."⁴³ Rom. 10:9 uses both *pisteuō* and *homologeō* in the immediate context. 1 Cor. 15:3 has the verbs *paralambanō* and *paredidōmi*. Eph. 5:14, "Arise, thou that sleepest, and wake from the dead, and Christ will lighten on you," is introduced with the words *dio legei*. In his marginal note Nes-
sie asks, "from where? the Apocaiypse of Elijah?" (*unde? Apc. Eliae?*). The words are not a citation from the Old Testament. The formulas of Scriptural citation in Paul are usually different, often taking the form *gegraptai*. The suggestion that it is a quotation from the liturgical life of the day

with the description above of the function of the prophet as one who admonishes via law words. Heb. 13:15 speaks of such hymns as "offerings of praise," identifying them also as confessions (*homologiai*); see Bornkamm, *RGG* 3, 1003.

⁴² The most convenient listing of such criteria can be found in Gottfried Schille, *Frühchristliche Hymnen* (Berlin, 1965²), pp. 15 to 23. Other material can be found in Ethelbert Stauffer, *New Testament Theology*, tr. John Marsh (New York, 1955), appendix III: "Twelve Criteria of Creedal Formulae in the New Testament," pp. 338—39; Bornkamm, *RGG* 3, 1003; Ralph P. Martin, "Aspects of Worship in the New Testament Church," *Vox Evangelica*, II (1963), 16—21. Johannes Schattenmann, *Studien zum neutestamentlichen Prosahymnus* (München, 1965), suggests criteria based on syllabification and end rhyme. His examples are not persuasive.

⁴³ Stauffer, no. 1, p. 338; Schille, no. 1, p. 16.

is persuasive. Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.* IX.84.2) cites it as such. Its language fits well into a baptismal context⁴⁴ and has parallels in the cultic language of the Greek mysteries.⁴⁵ Other introductory formulas might include *gar* (Rom. 11:34), *de*, or *hoti* (as in 1 Cor. 15:3-5).

2. When a quotation is ended, an author will often summarize the point he intended to support by quoting it. He may indicate such a summation by the use of an inferential particle (*ara oun, mê oun tis*).⁴⁶ A good example adduced by Schille is the Old Testament quotation in Rom. 14:11-12, introduced by *gegraptai* and then applied with an *ara oun* (cf. 1 Cor. 5:10 and the *oun* in Eph. 5:15).

3. A quotation will often not fit smoothly into its context. It is characterized by "textual dislocations."⁴⁷ The *hos* introducing 1 Tim. 3:16 is a good example, as will be shown later.

4. At times a citation can be identified by the fact that some of its content is extraneous to the point being made. A "Zitat erscheint im Zusammenhang dadurch als 'Exkurs' oder ist wenigstens teilweise überflüssig."⁴⁸ Such extraneous material can be accounted for by the normal tendency to carry a quotation along to a natural break-off point. A good example is the hymn cited in Phil. 2:6-11. Paul's parenetic of humility there demands only the first strophe of this two-stage hymn. Verses

⁴⁴ Martin, "Aspects," p. 19; Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser* (Düsseldorf, 1963⁴), pp. 240—42.

⁴⁵ Josef Kroll, *Die Christliche Hymnodik bis zu Klemens von Alexandria* (Darmstadt, 1968), pp. 15—16.

⁴⁶ Schille, no. 2, p. 17.

⁴⁷ Stauffer, no. 2, p. 339.

⁴⁸ Schille, no. 3, p. 17.

9-11 are extraneous to the argument, as Paul's subsequent statements (2:12 ff.) make clear.

5. Stylistic features and linguistic peculiarities will also call attention to the presence of a quotation. The occurrence of vocabulary not normally used by an author or of grammatical constructions that cannot otherwise be paralleled in his writings suggest that the language may be borrowed from another source. It is on this basis that Rom. 3:24-26b is identified by many as a non-Pauline formulation, probably from a Judeo-Christian source that used the model of a covenant theology.⁴⁹ Or to take another example, creedal formulas and hymns will often use a first-person plural form of the verb, while epistolary language usually employs the second person plural. This might well account for the shift of person in Eph. 1:13.

Hymnic passages will probably show some other stylistic peculiarities. Eduard Norden pointed out that ancient hymnody used relative pronouns (often in the third person), frequent participles, and often a tightly compressed style.⁵⁰ The description from Pliny cited above would suggest also the use of antithetical and synonymous parallelism, the division of material into strophes, and other rhetorical devices (anaphora, end rhyme, and so forth). The article by Martin and Schille's volume offer rich illustrative material.

On the basis of these criteria scholars generally agree that Phil. 2:6-11,⁵¹ Eph.

5:14, 1 Tim. 3:16, and Col. 1:15-20⁵² are hymnic. Other passages that are labeled hymnic by some are John 1:1-18 (in part), Heb. 1:3-4, 1 Peter 1:18-20, 2:21-24, 3:18-22, Eph. 1:2-12 [14?], and many passages in the Apocalypse. They are basically Christological in content, as Pliny and the New Testament passages adduced indicate. They are confessional in character and also useful for teaching and admonition (Col. 3). None of them corresponds to the personal psalms of the Old Testament Psalter in form or style, except the hymns of the infancy narratives in Luke.

We propose to examine two of these passages in somewhat greater detail as an illustration of the method and then draw some inferences for the present day.

We turn first to 1 Cor. 15:3-5.⁵³ Note

in the Setting of Early Christian Worship (Cambridge, 1967).

⁵² Hans Jakob Gabathuler, *Jesus Christus Haupt der Kirche—Haupt der Welt: Der Christushymnus Colosser 1, 15-20 in der theologischen Forschung der letzten 130 Jahren* (Zürich/Stuttgart, 1965). For a more general treatment of the hymns in the New Testament see the work by Deichgräber.

⁵³ The bibliography on this passage is immense. In addition to the standard commentaries see the following two discussions of the Resurrection: Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, *Die Auferstehung Jesu* (Witten/Ruhr, 1960⁴) pp. 117—35; Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte* (Göttingen, 1964³), pp. 94 to 112. Recent material on this specific passage would include: Ernst Lichtenstein, "Die älteste christliche Traditionsformel," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, LXIII (1950), 1—74; Ernst Bammel, "Herkunft und Funktion der Traditionselemente in 1 Kor. 15, 1-11," *Theologische Zeitschrift*, XI (1955), 401—19; E. L. Allen, "The Lost Kerygma," *New Testament Studies*, III (1956/57), 349—53; Paul Winter, "I Corinthians XV 3b-7," *Novum Testamentum*, II (1957), 142—50 (answer to Allen); William Baird, "What Is the Kerygma? A Study of I Cor. 15:3-8 and Gal. 1:11-17," *Journal of*

⁴⁹ See John Reumann, "The Gospel of the Righteousness of God," *Interpretation*, XX (1966), 432—52. The article has an excellent bibliography on this passage.

⁵⁰ *Agnostos Theos*, pp. 252—57.

⁵¹ See Ralph P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians ii.5-11 in Recent Interpretation and*

that Paul himself marks this passage off as tradition by the two Greek words *paralam-banō* and *paradidōmi* in verse 3; they correspond precisely to the technical terms of early Judaism for the reception and the passing on of tradition, *qibēl min* and *māsar le*.⁵⁴ In verse 11 Paul states that this kerygma has been the content of both his and the earlier proclamation (the *ekeinoi* must refer to the earlier apostles).

The non-Pauline character of this formula is further ratified by an examination of the language. The fourfold use of *boti* indicates quotation in verses 3-5. The phrase *kata tas graphas* (twice in these verses) occurs nowhere else in Paul. He normally introduces a quotation with *ge-graptai*. *Ōphthē* appears only in 1 Tim. 3:16 aside from this passage in Paul — and

Biblical Literature, LXXVI (1957), 181—90; Robert H. Mounce, "Continuity of the Primitive Tradition: Some Pre-Pauline Elements in I Corinthians," *Interpretation*, XIII (1959), 417—24; Hans Werner Bartsch, "Die Argumentation des Paulus im I Cor. 15:3-11," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, LV (1964), 261—74; Eduard Schweizer, "Two New Testament Creeds Compared," *Neotestamentica* (Zürich/Stuttgart, 1963), pp. 122 to 135; Hans Conzelmann, "On the Analysis of the Confessional Formula in I Corinthians 15:3-5," *Interpretation*, XXII (1966), 15—25; M. Dahl, *The Resurrection of the Body: A Study of I Cor. 15* (London, 1962); Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hobeistitel* (Göttingen, 1963), pp. 197—211; Werner Kramer, pp. 15—40; Joachim Jeremias, "Artikellosoς Χριστός, zur Ursprache von I Cor. 15:3b-5," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, LVII (1966), 211 to 215; Hans von Campenhausen, "The Events of Easter and the Empty Tomb," *Tradition and Life in the Church* (Philadelphia, 1968), pp. 42—54.

⁵⁴ Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen, 1959³), p. 20 and p. 207, Anm. 1; Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (New York, 1955), p. 129, points to *Pirke Aboth* I.1 as a good parallel for these terms.

that is also a formula taken over from elsewhere. The Twelve are mentioned nowhere else in Paul. *Egēgertai* is also not the normal Pauline way of referring to the Resurrection, although the verb does occur in verses 12-14, 16-17, and 20, but always with reference back to the formula.

The most convincing illustration of the non-Pauline language is the phrase *hyper tōn hamartiōn*. Normally Paul uses *hyper* of the relation of Christ's death to people, *peri* of its relation to sin. Thus "while we were still sinners, Christ died on behalf of (*hyper*) us" (Rom. 5:8). He died "on behalf of impious people" (Rom. 5:6, *hyper asebiōn*).⁵⁵ Equally important is the fact that Paul normally uses the term *hamartia* in the singular. The term occurs in Paul 64 times. Of the 48 occurrences in Romans all but three are in the singular; two are Old Testament quotations (Rom. 4:7 and 11:27), the third (7:5) is demanded by the plural *pathēmata*. In 1 Corinthians the term is found in the plural in our passage and in 15:17, which refers back to it. The more normal singular occurs in 15:56. In the other Pauline epistles the word occurs in the plural in the Pastorals (three times) and once each in Colossians and Ephesians. The plural in Gal. 1:4 also comes from the citation of a pre-Pauline formula, whereas in 1 Thess. 2:16 it is an Old Testament allusion.⁵⁶ In short, the word is almost always singular in Paul unless he is using the Old Testament or other earlier mate-

⁵⁵ Kramer, pp. 22—23; Charles Kingsley Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York and Evanston, 1968), p. 338.

⁵⁶ The word statistics are taken from Robert Morgenthaler, *Statistik des neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes* (Zürich/Frankfurt am Main, 1958), p. 71.

rial. Eduard Schweizer comments on the significance of the singular:

Paul himself uses "sin" in the singular only, which, of course, is theologically extremely relevant. Life is one for Paul, either righteousness or sin. He speaks of single trespasses and takes them seriously; however, they are either incongruities which urge men to start new and believe more congruently or expressions of a life which, as a whole, is sin. Thus life cannot be divided into so many single moral acts. It is always a whole, devoted either to God or to egotism.⁵⁷

Sin for Paul is not individual acts; for them he uses the term *paraptōma* (Rom. 5:20). Sin is rather one of the forces of this age that hold man in subjection and from which he must be delivered. It is thus unitary.⁵⁸ The phraseology in 1 Cor. 15:3 is thus not Pauline.

How far does this quotation extend? It is certainly completed by verse 8, since Paul there introduces his own vision of the resurrected Christ. At the beginning of verse 6 the construction changes: Paul shifts from dependent clauses introduced by *hoti* to independent statements. The original formula was probably complete with the reference to the Twelve. It is likely that the other appearances came from a separate list added to the original

formula either by Paul or someone before him.

The original Christ formula thus was a four-line statement, probably to be introduced either by "we confess . . ." (*homologoumen*) or "we believe . . ." (*pisteuomen*).⁵⁹ It should be printed in four lines: [We believe]

- (1) that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
- (2) and that He was buried,
- (3) and that He has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,
- (4) and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve.

This formula is the Gospel that Paul mentions in 15:1. It is this that he holds in common with the earlier apostles.⁶⁰

We note at once that these four lines are very carefully composed. The first and third lines are longer; each has the verb expanded by two descriptive adverbial phrases. The short second and fourth lines are not expanded. These two lines each bring supporting evidence for the longer line that precedes it. The resurrection appearances bring evidence for the reality of Jesus' resurrection. The addition of the second list of appearances (15:6-7) served the same purpose. Paul has inserted 15:6b

⁵⁷ Eduard Schweizer, p. 122, note 1.

⁵⁸ For full documentation of this point, see my article "Freedom in Christ—Gift and Demand," *Concordia Theological Monthly* (Freed to Serve. Tribute to Alfred O. Fierbringer), XL (1969), 356—68. This interpretation of the sense of *hamartia* in Paul is supported by the relative infrequency of the idea of the forgiveness of sins in Paul. On this point see James Everett Frame, "Paul's Idea of Deliverance," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, XLIX (1930), 1—12.

⁵⁹ Kramer, pp. 19 ff., on the basis of Rom. 10:9 and similar passages calls this a "*pistis*-formula" and argues for the verb *pisteuō*. He may well be correct.

⁶⁰ Other words tied to this *pistis*-formula are "proclaim" (*kéryssō*) and "apostle" (*apostolos*). One might argue that it is a missionary formula from Paul. See Kramer, pp. 45—64. Jean Hering's opinion that 15:3-4 is the *euaggelion* of 15:1 and 15:5-8 the *logos* of 15:2 thus founders on the shoals of literary and formal analysis. See his *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (London, 1962), p. 158.

in order to make clear the import of this for the Corinthians' view of the resurrection (15:12).⁶¹ This suggests that the second line was designed to bring proof for the reality of Jesus' death. The confession must have arisen in a context where the reality of the death was an issue (cf. Matt. 28:11-15). For Paul, Jesus' burial was unimportant; he mentions it nowhere else.

The emphasis in the passage is thus placed on the two longer lines. This is confirmed by the repeated *kata tas graphas*.⁶² In these two lines the first is more important. Jesus' death is presented as the key event in the salvation of men.⁶³ The point of the third line lies in the fact that the resurrection is the demonstration that God accepted Jesus' death for our sins; resurrection is public ratification. The first

line alone indicates the significance of this action in the phrase "on behalf of our sins." Paul in 1 Cor. 15 himself develops the significance of Jesus' resurrection as the first fruit. (1 Cor. 15:20-24)

Both death and resurrection took place *kata tas graphas*. It is difficult to point to any specific passage in the Old Testament that the formula could have in mind. Hos. 6:2 speaks of the resurrection of Israel, not any individual, and is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. No other passages easily suggest themselves. Nor does it help to attach *kata tas graphas* to "on the third day." Hans Conzelmann surveys the sense of this phrase and concludes that no interpretations are conclusive.⁶⁴ What Hos. 6:2 does suggest is that the third day is the crucial day after an event full of tension. On that day the outcome and meaning ought to be clear.⁶⁵

It is no easier to find specific passages that refer to a death for sins in the Old Testament. Isaiah 53 is not frequently used in the New Testament. Note that Matt. 8:17 sees the fulfillment of Is. 53:4 in Jesus' healing miracles. Acts 2 does not mention it at all. In Acts 3 it is used to underscore the exaltation of Jesus but not His death (Acts 3:13). Acts 8:32-33 cites Is. 53:7-8 but omits the crucial words "be-

⁶¹ There is no need to discuss here the precise nature of the Corinthian heresy, since that lies outside our scope. For the view (which I share) that the heresy included the idea that the resurrection had already taken place in baptism (cf. 2 Tim. 2:18), see Bartsch, pp. 265 ff. He refers to the important essay by Julius Schniewind, "Die Leugner der Auferstehung in Korinth," *Nachgelassene Reden und Aufsätze* (Berlin, 1952), pp. 110-39. The whole discussion has recently been summarized and evaluated by Jack H. Wilson, "The Corinthians Who Say There Is No Resurrection of the Dead," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, LIX (1958), 90-107.

⁶² Hahn, p. 199.

⁶³ There are parallels in the New Testament. See Gal. 1:4, "who gave Himself on behalf of our sins, in order that He might rescue us from the present evil age." See also Rom. 4:25, Rom. 6:3-9, Rom. 14:15, and Kramer, pp. 26-33. This is at first surprising, since Paul introduces the formula to argue the reality of the *resurrection*! The death and burial were not completely relevant to his concern (see criterion 4 above). Paul makes little use of the reference to "sins" in the subsequent discussion. See Hunter, pp. 15-16, and Hahn, p. 198.

⁶⁴ Hans Conzelmann, *Grundriss der Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (München, 1968), pp. 85-86; English tr. by John Bowden, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (New York, 1969), p. 66.

⁶⁵ Cf. Martha's reference to the fourth day in John 11:39. See Cameron Mackay, "The Third Day," *Church Quarterly Review*, CLXIV (1963), 289-99. He refers to Gen. 22:4 as a good example. See also Bruce M. Metzger, "A Suggestion Concerning the Meaning of I Cor. XV.4b," *Journal of Theological Studies*, new series VIII (1957), 118-23.

cause of the sins of My people." Perhaps Acts 3:18 gives a pointer: "to Him all the prophets bore witness." The double reference to the *graphai* underscores the conviction that the death and resurrection of Jesus happened under the control of God and thus bring all of God's promises to fulfillment.⁶⁶

What is the apologetic purpose that such a faith affirmation served? Jewish people in the intertestamental era came to the belief that the death of *any* righteous man had atoning value both for himself and for others. See Ps. Sol. 10:2, 2 Macc. 7:18 f., 32 ff., 4 Macc. 1:11, 6:28 f., 17:20 ff.⁶⁷ In this context 1 Cor. 15:3-5 states that the death of Christ is the death of the *one* righteous man that atones for sin. His death is the only answer to the question, How does God deliver from sins? It argues for a Jewish context for the confession of faith. God's promises made in the Old Testament find their completion in Christ.

Where did this confession originate? Linguistically Jeremias seems to have established its Palestinian character.⁶⁸ The historian cannot give a certain answer to

the source in Paul's life, for Paul seems to credit it to the apostles in 15:11. Paul might have learned it from Peter or James when he went to Jerusalem on his first post-conversion visit (Gal. 1:18). C. H. Dodd dryly remarks "that they did not spend all their time talking about the weather."⁶⁹ Its Jewish background seems assured because of the reference to the third day, the use of the Semitic Cephas, and above all the idea of atoning death presupposed here. The Greeks never seem to have spoken of an atoning death. The faith formula comes out of an early Jewish, and probably Palestinian, Christian congregation.⁷⁰

The other passage we shall examine is 1 Tim. 3:16.⁷¹ This passage is not marked off as a hymn by any of the explicit indications of quotation used in 1 Cor. 15:3

⁶⁹ *The Apostolic Preaching* (New York, 1951²), p. 16.

⁷⁰ Kramer, pp. 29—34; Hahn, pp. 207—13. Fuller, p. 161, points to the similarity to the synoptic suffering Son of Man passages. There is also another view of the death of Jesus current in early Jewish-Christian circles. In Acts 2:23-24, 3:15, 4:10, 5:30, and 10:39 Jesus' death is used to raise an accusation against the Jews. "You killed the Lord of life." The death then is given no direct saving significance; rather it is an evil that must be set right by the resurrection. By raising Him God appoints Him "Lord and Messiah," in spite of what the Jews have done. This resurrection Christology has a different antithesis than does the kerygma theology of 1 Cor. 15:3-5.

⁷¹ The bibliography on this passage is far less extensive than that on 1 Cor. 15:3b-5. In addition to the commentaries see Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig, 1913), pp. 254 to 267; Schweizer (above, note 53); Stanley (above, note 40); Martin, "Aspects" (above, note 42), pp. 21—26, with extensive bibliography; Schille (above, note 42), p. 38 (places it into the category of *Erlöserlieder*); Deichgräber (above, note 35), pp. 133—37; Fuller, pp. 216—18.

⁶⁶ On this sense of the Old Testament references, see Hahn, pp. 200—203. For a contrary opinion on the place of Is. 53 and this passage, see Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (London, 1961), pp. 78 ff.

⁶⁷ Billerbeck, II, 279 ff.; Eduard Schweizer, *Lordship and Discipleship* (London, 1960), pp. 22—26; "Discipleship and Belief in Jesus as Lord from Jesus to the Hellenistic Church," *New Testament Studies*, II (1955/56), 89—90; Eduard Lohse, *Märtyrer und Gottesknecht* (Göttingen, 1955), pp. 38 ff., 64 ff., 83, Anm. 7; Hahn, p. 56.

⁶⁸ Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London, 1955), pp. 129—31. Conzelmann disputes this Palestinian character. It might be agreed that the confession could have originated in Greek-speaking Syrian Judaism; this would not change the basic point.

(*hoti*, *paralambanō*, etc.). The word *homologoumenōs* might be understood as "in accordance with our *homologia*" and so point to a quotation. Yet most scholars take it as merely equivalent to "by common consent."⁷² The former is persuasive to me.

Though no specific formula of citation is used, scholars generally regard the six *stichoi* as a poetic citation.⁷³ Its place in the context is one of the reasons. A textual difficulty calls attention to this. The first line opens with the relative pronoun *hos*, (ΟΣ), translated "He was manifested . . ." in the Revised Standard Version (with a footnote indicating "Greek *Who*"). This relative pronoun has no antecedent; some later manuscripts made an easy change,

⁷² Most commentators take the second sense, probably under the direct or indirect influence of Alfred Seeberg, *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit* (Leipzig, 1903, reprint München, 1966), p. 113. Seeberg surveys the state of exegesis on this passage at the turn of the century on pp. 112–25. Among modern commentators Lock, in the *International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh, 1924), p. 44, allows as a possibility the translation "by common profession," with a reference to Ambrosiaster. The most recent scientific commentary, produced by Gottfried Holtz, suggests the translation "wie alle einmütig bekennen" and glosses it with the comment "Man wird den Schluss ziehen müssen, dass der beschliessende Hymnus von allen im Gottesdienst Anwesenden als Bekenntnislied gesungen ist." *Die Pastoralbriefe*, in *Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament* (Berlin, 1965), XIII, 89–90. See also Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *Studies in the Pastoral Epistles* (London, 1968), pp. 21–28.

⁷³ Thus W. F. Beck in his translation *The New Testament in the Language of Today* (St. Louis, 1964), p. 368, prints this in six poetic lines. Paul Elmer Kretzmann, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (St. Louis, 1918), p. 109, says that we have here either "eine altchristliche Doxologie," or a "Hymnus," or, perhaps, "eine Bekenntnisformel."

inserting a dash over the two letters and one inside the omega and thus creating the normal abbreviation for God, ΘΣ. It is this text which is translated in the King James Version, "God was manifest . . ." A second tradition changed the ΟΣ to Ο (*ho*), the neuter relative pronoun, and so gave it an antecedent in *mysterion*. The textual difficulty is caused by the insertion of a hymnic passage, using relative pronouns where the verbs all recount deeds or actions.⁷⁴ Like other hymnic passages (Phil. 2:6–11, Eph. 5:14), it is inserted into a parenthetic context. Chapter 3 has discussed the qualifications of *episkopoi*, *diakonoi*, and *gynaikas* (deaconesses) (3:11). Chapter 4 discusses the heresy at Ephesus. Action is here motivated by a reference to a summary of the faith known to the author and readers.

Form-analysis of the six lines yields the same conclusion. No passage in the New Testament surpasses this one in care of composition; its structure, carried out with consistency, is compact, artistic, and beautiful. Three words suffice for each line. The compressed parallelism of six aorist passive verbs each followed by a dative is striking. The verbs have *homoioteleuton*, all ending in *-thē*. The datives are arranged in pairs: two singular (*sarki*, *pneumati*), two plural (*aggelois*, *ethnesin*), two singular (*kosmō*, *doxē*). These features mark it out as a hymn; the rhythmic pattern supports this suggestion.⁷⁵ It is poetry that must be judged by the standards of ancient Near Eastern hymnic form, as

⁷⁴ Deichgräber, p. 133.

⁷⁵ J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (New York and Evanston, 1963), p. 89, supports this strongly and points to 2 Tim. 2:11–13 as a parallel.

stated briefly by Deichgräber (pp. 21—23) and exemplified by the *Odes of Solomon*⁷⁶ and sections of the Hermetic corpus.⁷⁷ Any other standard, even that of epic or lyric poetry from the Greco-Roman world, would force its analysis into the wrong structure (a *metabasis eis allo genos*).

The vocabulary of this passage is also striking. The term *ōphthē*, as pointed out previously, occurs only in this passage and in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 in the Pauline corpus with reference to Christ. As Norden⁷⁸ pointed out, *epistēuthē* is rather singular. Other individual turns of language are clear. The *en* in verses 4 and 5 clearly marks off the nations and the universe as spheres or locales and should be rendered "in" or "among." This suggests that *sarx* and *pneuma* (verses 1 and 2) are probably also to be understood locally and antithetically as two spheres of existence, the sphere of human existence and the sphere of heavenly existence.⁷⁹ This is the sense the two terms have in two other early creedal formulas, Rom. 1:3-4 and 1 Peter 3:18. It is clear that this is not the normal Pauline usage of *sarx* as that in man which makes him subject to sin (the term does not occur elsewhere in the Pastorals). The probability exists then that the other two words, *aggelōis* and

doxa, should also be understood as denoting spheres of existence.⁸⁰

Such an analysis suggests that Nestle is correct in printing the hymn as three distichs, each dominated by the opposition of two spheres. The thought is structured antithetically. The variation of singular and plural supports this. This leads to a magnificent chiasmic structure (a = human, b = spirit sphere): ab:ba:ab. An antithesis between first and sixth lines is also obvious. At the same time each line contains (implicitly) the presupposition for the statement in the next.⁸¹

The first distich describes Jesus' appearance on earth. He is manifested (note the passive, indicating God is the actor). God manifested Jesus in the realm of human existence.⁸² This incarnation (the term should not be pressed) is balanced by the *ediskaiōthe* in the realm of *pneuma*. The verb in this phrase is not used in the normal Pauline sense. Rather it describes "die Erhöhung in die Sphäre des *pneuma*," as Dibelius paraphrases it.⁸³ This elevation took place through the resurrection. In that light it is striking that no mention is made of the death of Jesus, no word about

⁷⁶ Most easily available in the edition of Walter Bauer, *Die Oden Salomos* (Berlin, 1933, Kleine Texte 64).

⁷⁷ The best edition is *Corpus Hermeticum*, ed. A. D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière (4 vols.; Paris, 1945—54).

⁷⁸ *Agnostos Theos*, p. 255, note 3. See also Martin, "Aspects," p. 22.

⁷⁹ E. Schweizer, "*sarx*," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart, 1932 ff.), VII, 108; 119 ff. See also Martin, "Aspects," p. 24.

⁸⁰ See Martin Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* (Göttingen, 1909), p. 179; also his commentary in the *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Tübingen, 1955³), p. 50.

⁸¹ I would thus reject those analyses that divide the hymn into two tristichs, as printed in *The Greek New Testament* (Bible Societies version edited by Kurt Aland, et al., 1966). This analysis opposes the first three lines to the last three. See Martin, "Aspects," p. 22.

⁸² For parallels see 1 Peter 3:18, Heb. 9:26, and 1 Peter 1:20.

⁸³ Dibelius, in the *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament*, p. 50, refers to Ignatius, Philadelphians 8:2 *ad finem*; *Corp. Herm.* XIII.9; *Odes Sol.* 31:5, 17:2, 25:12, 29:5 as parallels illustrating this usage.

suffering appears, as, for example, in Barnabas 6:7. The *phanerōsis* appears to come from the ruler ideology. 2 Thess. 2:8 uses the term *epiphaneia* in conjunction with *parousia* (compare the use of the *apantēsis* idea in 1 Thess. 4:17). Thus, the two *stichoi* together present one idea, the elevation of a ruler.⁸⁴ Consequently, I understand *sarx* and *pneuma* as standing in a kind of complementary antithesis, the two together denoting the entire sphere of God's action in Jesus.

The second distich describes the *proclamatio* or presentation of the elevated ruler to those over whom He rules. This presentation takes place in the upper world of the angelic beings via a public display (*ōphthē*) that demonstrates the right of the person to rule. It calls forth "the worship accorded by angelic powers to the ascending, glorified Christ."⁸⁵ The appearance before the angels is a demonstration to them of the rank He now holds, just as

the appearance of the child before the gods and heroes in Vergil, *Ecl.* IV. 15—17, is a demonstration that the child is a ruler who brings peace.⁸⁶ The one elevated is the *kyrios* over all the forces of the universe (cf. Eph. 2:6-7; 3:9 ff.). Their dominion is broken; the world is free of all such lords. There is no more need to indulge in empty genealogies in order to know whom to placate (1 Tim. 1:4; Titus 3:9). The presentation in the spirit world is balanced by the proclamation among the nations. All rational beings are brought under His sway via His appearance in the world and elevation to the spirit world. After a king is enthroned, messengers run throughout the kingdom to announce the new lord. This ancient custom is paralleled by the worldwide proclamation of the *kyriotēs* of Jesus Christ.⁸⁷ The hymn itself is an example of such proclamation, in both its form and its content.

The third distich describes what Jeremias has called *Intbronization*, that is, the action of the people ruled in recognizing their new Lord. This is accomplished in the world of men via faith, in heaven through His being taken up into the *kebhod* *Yahweh*, the *doxa* that characterizes God. This faith is expressed in the world in the acclamation *kyrios Iēsous Christos*, the Christian counterpart to "Long live the king!"⁸⁸

⁸⁴ See Joachim Jeremias, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus*, in *Das Neue Testament Deutsch*, IX (Göttingen, 1949), p. 21. I would not share the view that the term *phaneroō* can only be explained from the background of the gnostic redeemer myth; for this view see Hannelis Schulte, *Der Begriff der Offenbarung im Neuen Testament* (München, 1949), pp. 28—29, 70—87. See also Martin, "Aspects," pp. 24—25.

⁸⁵ Kelly, p. 91. If the interpretation of distich one is correct, then the appearance to angels cannot refer to some *descensus ad inferos*, as E. K. Simpson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London, 1954), p. 62, holds.

The angelic forces, then, are not chthonic, but the kind of spirits described in Gal. 3:19-21, 4:3-5, 8-9; Col. 2:8-10, 15, 20; Phil. 2:9 ff.; Eph. 6:12; Rom. 8:38; Heb. 1:6, and in *Corp. Herm.* I. Cf. Jeremias, p. 22; Dibelius, *Pastoralbriefe*, pp. 50—51; *Geisterwelt*, pp. 175 to 180; Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (New York, 1961), pp. 45—52.

⁸⁶ ille deum vitam accipiet divisque videbit permixtos heroas et ipse videbitur illis, pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem.

⁸⁷ See in the Old Testament Is. 52:7 and Deichgräber, p. 135, notes 2, 3, 4, and 5. Note also how Matt. 28:18-20 also includes a command to proclaim the *exousia*. See Otto Michel, "Der Abschluss des Matthäusevangeliums," *Evangelische Theologie*, X (1950/51), 16—26.

⁸⁸ Attention should be given to the similarity of this hymn in thought to the ideas ex-

In contrast to 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 it should be noted that there is no mention of Jesus' death and no reference to sins. The hymn is structured topically; it thinks in spatial concepts. In true chronological order, Jesus' enthronement as *kosmokratōr* would precede the proclamation.⁸⁹ Here all the weight falls on the vindication of Jesus (resurrection? ascension?), not His death.

What is the antithesis that called forth such a creed? Surely it is fear and slavery called forth by the belief that the world is under the domination of evil spirits who control men and their access to God, the belief that men are under the control of fate (*heimarmenē*) and powers over which they have no control. This hymn confesses that Jesus has overcome such powers and de-demonized the world. This has taken place quite apart from man and his belief. The *extra nos* side of deliverance is emphasized. The church is under His rule, the *regnum Christi*.

If this interpretation is correct, the hymn is thus against the existentially dominated interpretation of the Gospel by Rudolf Bultmann and the New Hermeneutic. Freedom is not won by the faith of the Christian but by the exterior and prior act of Christ. There is, nevertheless, a certain danger in this hymn. It could lead to underplaying the events of Jesus' life and ministry. It would lend itself to a *theologia gloriae* such as Paul fought at Corinth. Change the situation, and this necessary creedal formulation could become heretical. As Kaj Munk said, "Truth can not [sic]

be pickled."⁹⁰ It survives only in tension with false alternatives.

In saying that, we have already moved into the meaning of the type of research we have described for the task of theology and, much more importantly, the task of the proclaimer today. We have been carried to a small degree into the dark and silent years of the early church. In the process we have found that confession to Christ goes back as far as historical research can penetrate. There never was a confessionless Christianity, and its confession was always Christological. Apart from Christ there is religion but no Christianity. This is the note of continuity that ran through all the life and faith of the earliest church.

At the same time the study has shown that this unity was not marked by a press for uniformity. Each creedal formulation takes its terms from the antithesis it faced. In a Jewish context Jesus is preached as the Christ who died for sins, in a Gentile context as the one who rules via His exaltation. Paul in Rom. 3:24-26a criticizes and reinterprets a type of covenant Christology that is not adequate for the Roman church. Creeds are judged in terms of the situation addressed.

It is a striking fact that no early Christian made a collection of these hymns and creeds. There was no tendency to standardization. Most formulas were saved by accident, by chance citation in parennetic contexts. This ought to be enough to warn against overly hasty generalization.

Yet we know that theological reflection began very early. Paul was no innovator,

pressed by Paul in his interpretation of Ps. 110 in 1 Cor. 15:20-28. See the acclamation in Phil. 2:11 also.

⁸⁹ On this see Schweitzer, "Two Creeds," p. 126, and the passages to which he refers.

⁹⁰ Kaj Munk, "Christ and John the Baptist: 'Truth can not be pickled,'" *Four Sermons*, tr. John M. Jensen (Blair, Nebr., n.d.), p. 11.

but "tradent" and commentator on theological thinking that began with Easter. His own theology was worked out in dialog with the world of his time. His example urges us to be both open to hear what others confess and critical of the implications they draw from their confession. Theology can never be the simple repeti-

tion of the formulas of the past. We stay in the succession of the confessors only as we confess anew—on the basis of our inheritance, to be sure—the meaning of Christ in terms that fit our day and speak to our problems in the language of our time.

St. Louis, Mo.