

TRADITION HISTORY

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The German word *Traditionsgeschichte* is often translated into English as “tradition criticism”, but this term suffers from the same defects as the term “form criticism” when that stands for *Formgeschichte*. For *Geschichte* does not mean “criticism” but rather, in this context, “meaningful process” and “changeable movement”. In New Testament study, therefore, the term “tradition criticism” would be better abandoned and replaced by the term “tradition history”, interpreted in the sense of an on-going process of development in the form and/or meaning of concepts or words or sayings or blocks of material. The pattern, the limits and the range of such a development may of course vary. One example would be the evolution in the thought of a given writer, as for instance the use of the term “head” for an unspecified member of the body of Christ in the earlier Pauline letters (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:21) but its application to Christ alone in later Pauline letters (e.g. Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:15). Another example would be the idea suggested by some that “Son of man” is a term used by Jesus without implying any equation between himself and that figure, while at a subsequent stage in the traditional process the identification is established. As to the range of the overall tradition-historical development, the most widely used is that which stretches from the historical Jesus via the Aramaic-speaking/Palestinian Jewish-Christian community and the Hellenistic Jewish-Christian community through to Gentile Christianity.¹

It follows from this summary that “tradition history” includes “redaction criticism/history”. The latter term, which in the case of the gospels stands for the refashioning and editing of material by the theologically active evangelist, is only a special case of the former. But as such it draws attention to evidence within the text which permits comparisons and contrasts between different versions. This demonstrates the fact of development and indicates certain tendencies within the transmission process, with the result that tradition-historical study as such is protected from any charge of imposing an alien pattern upon the text. That is, we are not limited to dependence upon *a priori* presuppositions or the making of statements about what may conceivably have happened; we can repeatedly see with our eyes what actually did happen. So tradition history, as an idea, can be tested by the evidence provided by redaction criticism, its special case.

But tradition history stretches much further. It is not simply concerned with the interaction of a man and his sources but also with the process of development in material which, though related, does not have that relationship structured by direct literary dependence. Thus, for instance, redaction criticism is concerned with the use made by Matthew and Luke of the earlier Markan and Q versions of the parable of the mustard seed (Mk. 4:30–32, and par.). In this way it contributes evidence of one stage of tradition history. But the latter will also be concerned with how a postulated original form of the parable may have developed into those variant forms which underlie the Markan and Q versions. Similarly, redaction criticism is concerned with the use made by John of, for example, his sources underlying John 2:13–22, but tradition history as a whole includes this and also the process which has produced the variant forms of the material in John's sources and in Mark 11:15–18, 27–33; 14:58.

If the relationship between redaction criticism and tradition history is so close, it is just the same in respect of form criticism. The work of the pioneers of form criticism,² and indeed already before them D. F. Strauss and the Tübingen school of the 19th century, makes this plain. For as soon as the post-Easter churches are seen creatively at work inside the gospel traditions; as soon as variations in outlook among those early churches are appreciated; as soon as distinct concepts and traditions are assigned to various sources and settings; as soon as history-of-religions parallels are invoked to this end; just so soon has form history become, in fact, tradition history. So it is not too much to say that the totality of the application of the historical-critical method can be described as tradition-historical criticism.

As with other areas of New Testament study, so in this attempt to reconstruct a tradition-historical scheme, important questions about methods and criteria for decisions are raised. It is necessary to ask about the criteria for deciding whether or not given traditions belong to one and the same tradition-historical development. It is also necessary to ask about criteria for determining the setting of any given material in the mission of Jesus or in the life of a post-Easter community. And at every stage questions therefore arise about implications concerning historicity or otherwise. A few examples may perhaps help in exposing the issues.

I. *Post-Easter Material*

Firstly, there seems to be some relationship between Luke 22:27: "I am among you as the servant", and Mark 10:45: "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many", and also 1 Timothy 2:5: "... the man ... who gave himself as a ransom for all". Powerful arguments have been put forward by J. Jeremias in favour of locating Mark 10:45 within Palestinian tradition, while 1 Timothy 2:5 has "a more pronounced Greek flavour in every word".³ But what about Luke 22:27? This saying is not in a direct literary relationship with Mark 10:45 but, if it emerges that the variations between the Lukan and Markan forms

are typical of the sort of fluctuation shown by the gospel tradition as a whole, it would appear likely that some non-literary relationship exists between the two. Now in view of its less advanced theological content, Luke 22:27 is unlikely to be a later form of Mark 10:45, but it could very easily be, as often suggested, an earlier form. And if it does turn out that these forms are neither unrelated nor explicable in terms of a "Jesus might have said it twice" argument, we shall not only have here the raw material of a tradition-historical development but also find ourselves confronted by evidence that gospel sayings cannot without more ado be taken as *ipsissima verba* of Jesus.

Secondly, there are marked divergences in the wording of Peter's confession, "You are the messiah" (Mk. 8:29). Matthew has in addition the term "the Son of the living God", and Luke the extra words "of God". How should the variation be explained? A harmonizing additive approach would produce the form, "You are the messiah of God, the Son of the living God", but this would immediately run into difficulties. Firstly, the overloaded wording is awkward, and all the more so if we add extra wording from the parallel in John 6:69: "the holy one of God".⁴ Secondly, it is hard to envisage the evangelists reducing the wording of Peter's statement and scaling down his acclamation of Jesus as *ex hypothesi* they did. More likely is the view that Matthew and Luke have added phrases which amount to their own commentary on the idea of messiahship. But in that case we reduce drastically the likelihood that their additions are historical, and again we find ourselves involved inexorably in the tradition-historical enquiry.

Thirdly, to argue that a phrase here or a nuance there is unhistorical would not worry many who would, however, be seriously disturbed by the idea that any sayings are as a whole inauthentic. In other words, the fact that a saying is in the gospel tradition at all is for those persons a sufficient guarantee that it goes back substantially to Jesus. But since we are compelled to include in a discussion of tradition history an examination of the criteria for authenticity, this approach must be examined. And when it is examined the actual contents of the gospel tradition suggest (in the view of the present writer, though on this, as on all controversial topics, opinions would be divided⁵) that this approach has serious flaws, and correspondingly that allowance needs to be made for a greater degree of post-Jesus creativity within that tradition.

Take, for instance, Matthew 18:17: "If he (the offending brother) refuses to listen to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." This saying has in mind a disciplinary purification of the community, which is somewhat discordant with the message of the two parables of the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:24-30), and the dragnet (Mt. 13:47f).⁶ Moreover, the saying presupposes an audience which is Jewish and which also depreciates and excludes Gentiles and tax collectors.⁷ This seems most unlike the historical Jesus. The exclusion of the Gentiles was hardly his approach: quite the contrary, he announced in word (Mt. 8:11f.) and action (Mk. 11:15-17) their acceptance and continually held them up as those

whose example the Jews should follow in responding to the appeal or word of God (Lk. 7:9; 10:12–14; 11:31f). And what applies to the Gentiles applies even more forcefully to the tax collectors. It was their inclusion, their joyful participation in his fellowship meals, their genuine repentance, which Jesus was prepared to defend with vigour and in the teeth of scathing criticism (Lk. 7:34; 15:1f; Mk. 2:15–17).⁸ So it appears to be unlikely that Matthew 18:17 is authentic: indeed, it seems to represent a later acceptance of attitudes which Jesus himself had resisted.⁹

Similar issues are raised by Matthew 23:2f: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; so practise and observe everything they say to you . . .”. Such a saying undergirds Pharisaic traditional teaching with Mosaic authority,¹⁰ and accepts Moses as the final court of appeal. Far from making any distinction between law and tradition,¹¹ this saying belongs to the same rabbinic outlook as that expressed in, for instance, Peah 2:6: “Nahum the Scrivener said: ‘I have received a tradition from R. Measha, who received it from his father, who received it from the *zugoth*, who received it from the prophets as a *halakah* given to Moses from Sinai” (cf. Aboth 1:1). But the historical Jesus does not seem to have adopted so conservative an attitude to either tradition or law: indeed, it is probable that the combined effect of the evidence in Mark 7:15, 10:2–9, the traditions underlying Matthew 5:21–48, and Luke 9:60¹² is that Jesus authoritatively declared the will of God and proceeded on that basis to evaluate certain laws, but not that he set about deducing the will of God directly from the law. In that case, we would have to ask whether an alternative post-Easter setting is available for Matthew 23:2f. In view of the Pharisaic membership and theological influence within the church, which is attested in Acts 15:5; 21:20 (cf. Gal. 2:4f, 12), the answer might not be hard to reach.

We therefore conclude that the gospel tradition itself compels us to engage in tradition-historical enquiry. In looking to the gospels as sources for the sayings and actions of Jesus we can hardly avoid attributing to the later post-Easter stage both the redaction of material, and, on occasion, its creation. But we still have to discuss the validity of two related arguments which are often used in order to restrain tradition-historical work. The first takes the form of a denial of differences between parallel traditions in the interests of a harmonistic uniformity and in heavy reliance on the hypothesis of eyewitness testimony. The second maximizes the differences and argues for the separate distinctness of the incidents or settings or sayings concerned. These arguments and approaches to the text must be taken seriously and submitted to the test of the text itself in order that the problems of method which they raise may have justice done to them. We shall, therefore, take some relevant examples and, in so doing, hope not only to assess these approaches but also to illustrate the tradition-historical method in action.

II. *Unique Sayings and Incidents*

In principle there is of course every likelihood that Jesus did say certain things twice though in variant forms, and also that certain sorts of incident did occur more than once. The question is whether the actual phenomena of the tradition are adequately accounted for in every case by the invocation of such a principle. We can, I believe, see the guidelines for the use of the tradition-historical method emerging specially clearly in cases where a unique and unrepeatable (and often unrepeatable) situation is involved. This uniqueness can be grounded in either literary or historical considerations.

1. AN EXAMPLE OF LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS.

The New Testament contains several passages which presuppose an equation: Jesus = Wisdom. This is the case in the pre-Pauline material in Philippians 2:6–11 and Colossians 1:15–20, as well as in the Johannine prologue.¹³ In the fourth gospel, indeed, this equation is presumed not only in sayings about Jesus but also in sayings of Jesus (see especially 4:14; 6:35). But what about the synoptic tradition?

In Matthew 11:2–19 = Luke 7:18–35 a long section of material common to both gospels is climaxed in a saying about wisdom. For Matthew “wisdom is justified by her works” (11:19), but for Luke “wisdom is justified by all her children” (7:35). It is the relationship between Jesus and wisdom in the developing tradition which here concerns us. It must, first, be quite clear that the literary setting of each version of the saying proves that the same saying is under consideration. That is, “Jesus might have said it twice” is not a viable option. Secondly, we clearly have to choose between the two rather than to amalgamate them¹⁴ if we are to avoid producing a theologically confused hybrid version. Thirdly, the identity of the “children of wisdom” in the Lukan strand is already made plain by the word *πάντων* which negatively precludes John and Jesus (7:33f) and positively takes up *πᾶς ὁ λαός καὶ οἱ τελῶναι* in 7:29. The link between 7:29 and 7:35 is reinforced by the common use of *δικαιοῦν*. For Luke, John and Jesus are the messengers of wisdom, and the people at large and the tax collectors are her children.¹⁵ It is probable that Luke’s understanding is broadly in line with that of Q (even though the *πάντων* of 7:35 is typical of his style and is probably his own editorial insertion), for 7:29f contains un-Lukan features and is probably substantially drawn from Q.¹⁶ At the Q stage it probably did not include *πᾶς ὁ λαός* but did refer to prostitutes, in view of Matthew 21:32 which is related to Luke 7:29f and in view of Luke’s addition of 7:36–50 immediately afterwards:¹⁷ the latter passage, which centres on “a woman which was a sinner”, may well have been introduced at this point in reminiscence of the Q form of Luke 7:29. Be that as it may, Q like Luke saw John and Jesus as wisdom’s messengers,¹⁸ and those who responded to their missions as wisdom’s children. This usage of the “children of wisdom” idea

is of course in line with the Old Testament tradition of wisdom's children as those who listen attentively to her teaching (Pr. 8:32f; Eccclus. 4:11; 15:2).

This reconstruction depends, however, on the Matthaean reference to wisdom's "works" being secondary. But this is indeed extremely likely. For Matthew 11 as a whole exhibits a uniform pattern of concern with "works". This is the case in 11:2 where the words *τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ* are unlikely to have been omitted by Luke if they stood in Q, and therefore are attributable to Matthew.¹⁹ This is also the case in 11:20–23 which Matthew has added after 11:2–19, and in which Jesus reproves unrepentant cities who have witnessed but rejected his mighty works.²⁰ So the form of Matthew 11:19 is the product of the evangelist's intervention, and this intervention has significant theological overtones. Above all, the correlation between *τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ* and *τὰ ἔργα τῆς σοφίας* automatically intensifies the rapprochement between Jesus the messiah and wisdom. This rapprochement is not yet a straight equation, in view of *ἀντὶς* (Mt. 11:19).²¹ But it is a rapprochement which we can, as it were, see growing closer before our eyes as Matthew brings together some traditions which view Jesus as the person sent by, but not the same as, wisdom,²² and others (for example, Mt. 11:28–30²³) where the equation has probably already been established.²⁴ All the more interesting, incidentally, is Luke's determined faithfulness to the less developed christological viewpoint.

Here then is a case where literary setting puts us on the track of a divergence in the tradition of one and the same saying, and consequently on the track of an extended tradition-historical development. In the process, not only are important questions about method posed and answered, but also important restraints imposed on any attempt to construct too neat a sequence in terms of time and place. By this I mean the following: (a) While Q and Luke are witnesses to the existence of a christology which does not go beyond the view that Jesus is a messenger of Wisdom to the "Jesus = Wisdom" equation, Matthew is a witness to the survival of both schemes in one and the same community without the more developed pattern obliterating the less developed one. (b) With pre-Pauline material acting as a witness to the remarkable earliness of the stage at which the "Jesus = Wisdom" scheme was constructed, it is important to see that schemes later in time can still be more primitive in content. Tempting though it must have been to make the synoptic Jesus claim pre-existence or agency in creation as did the pre-Pauline material, and later indeed the Johannine Jesus, the first three evangelists still hold back. (c) Luke (a Gentile Christian) and Q (belonging perhaps to a Hellenistic Jewish Christian environment) have in common the view that Jesus was simply a messenger of Wisdom; Matthew's community stands at the point of convergence of this and the more developed view. Therefore we have to learn to live with a greater degree of raggedness at the edges and a less neat evolutionary process than would emerge if we envisaged a straight and consecutive development from Jesus to the Aramaic-speaking and Hellenistic Jewish-Christian outlooks and ultimately to the Gentile Christian position. Not only were the early com-

munities mixed in membership (as the Pauline correspondence also demonstrates), but they were also communities within which spectrums of membership probably varied in theology.

2. AN EXAMPLE OF HISTORICAL UNIQUENESS.

The visit of Mary Magdalene to Jesus' tomb on the first Easter morning is a case in point this time. Since it is an unrepeated occurrence there is in principle the possibility that the different accounts may form a tradition-historical sequence. This is, incidentally, by no means ruled out if the traditions prove capable of harmonization, for the differing perspectives of the various traditions could still form such a sequence; but it is positively required if, as D. F. Strauss²⁵ argued with characteristic vigour long ago, harmonization proves impossible.

Now the timing of the visits of Mary to the tomb in Mark 16:1-8 and John 20:1f. means that they represent one and the same event, and the content of each tradition reinforces this view. The incident in John 20:1f. could not have happened *before* the Mark 16:1-8 one, for it would be absurd for the women to speculate about how the stone might be moved away (Mk. 16:3) if it had already been seen to be moved (John 20:2); equally, it would be absurd for the women to set out to anoint a body (Mk. 16:1) which was already known by at least one of them to be no longer there (Jn. 20:2). But the John 20:1f. incident could not have happened *after* the Mark 16:1-8 one, for the words of Mary (Jn. 20:2), "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him", far from presupposing the angelic message announcing resurrection (Mk. 16:6), show that "the thought of a resurrection did not enter her head".²⁶ Attempts to achieve a harmony between the traditions have certainly been made. Thus Z. C. Hodges has argued for a decision by Mary not to tell of the angelic vision,²⁷ but this falls foul of Luke 24:23, not to mention Matthew 28:9f., and it also leaves us wondering why at the later stage Mary is still consumed with anguish and grief and still genuinely convinced that the body has been stolen (Jn. 20:11, 13). For similar reasons, D. Guthrie has suggested that Mary set out for the tomb and then, seeing the stone moved, rushed back to the disciples and left her companions to see and hear the angel.²⁸ But this attempt at harmonization only produces disharmony with Luke 24:9f. It therefore seems to respect the intentions and the contents of each tradition rather more if we accept that one and the same event has been presented by means of divergent traditions, and that the forms and functions of each must be determined within the tradition-historical process.

To determine these forms and functions means taking into account a number of possibilities, and to decide between these means a more protracted investigation than we can accommodate here. Suffice to mention two possibilities: (a) If John 20:3-10 were treated as separable and then removed from the narrative, John 20:1f., 11ff. could then be taken as one unit which has been remodelled to accommodate the intervening passage.

This underlying unit with its reference to Mary and the angels could then be taken as parallel to, but later in composition than, Mark 16:1–8. Since this latter passage may itself have been subject to editorial modification – for instance, an intrusion may have occurred with verse 7, or even with verses 1, 4, 5, 7 and 8b,²⁹ or with some other combination – the tradition-historical sequence might consist of a primary pre-Markan unit which was then modified by literary means into the present Markan unit (with or without a lost ending!), which in turn developed, but not by direct literary intervention, into the Johannine form.³⁰ The theological and apologetic considerations which were in force at each stage would then need to be uncovered. (b) Alternatively, it could be that John 20:11–14a, a passage which plays little part in the chapter as a whole, is itself an editorial bridge passage based on general acquaintance with synoptic data and leading to the appearance of Jesus to Mary, an event presented in a separate and self-sufficient unit of tradition in Matthew 28:9f. In this case, John 20:1f. might also represent a separate independent unit complete in itself,³¹ which could then be correlated with Mark 16:1–8 as a whole. If so, one possibility worthy of consideration is that John 20:1f. is more or less the earliest form of the tradition,³² and a form which is uninfluenced by post-Easter convictions and unhampered by the historical-critical objections³³ often felt to be involved in Mark 16:1–8. On this showing the tradition-historical sequence would be from John 20:1f. to the pre-Markan form, and then to Mark, and then to the versions of Matthew and Luke.

Here then is another example of the tradition-historical enquiry in action. Certainly there is room for legitimate difference of opinion among scholars as to the actual pattern of the tradition-historical development, but there can be no doubt that the content of the gospel tradition itself demands that the attempt to discover one be made.

III. *Which Community?*

The attempt to establish criteria by means of which traditions might be attributed to Jesus, to the Palestinian community, to Hellenistic Jewish-Christian communities or to Gentile Christian communities, is beset with formidable difficulties and is probably incapable of producing firm results. In part this is due to the nature of contemporary Judaism, and in part to the nature of primitive Christianity. To the degree that we do know something of each we can detect an extremely fluid and flexible situation in both, and to the degree that we do not know enough about each any observations are bound to be tentative. Again and again it is apparent that it is easier to replace old certainties with new uncertainties than to produce assured results, and it is as well to be open about this. Perhaps a few observations along this line may help.

(1) The distinction between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism cannot be treated as absolute. Long-established “Hellenistic” influence inside Palestine is a firm datum by the time the Christian movement begins. One

has only to recall the non-Palestinian origin of prominent Jewish leaders (e.g. the high priest Ananel or the great Hillel, both of whom came from Babylon), or the movements of distinguished rabbis in and out of Palestine (e.g. Joshua ben Perahjah in b.Sanh. 107b), or the wide adoption of non-Semitic loan-words, or the occurrence of so-called Hellenistic terminology and thought forms at Qumran, or the existence of a Hellenistic synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9).³⁴ The openness of the channels of communication is also suggested by the evidence of the hold kept by the Jerusalem authorities on the Diaspora (Acts 9:2; 28:21). It is not to be thought that all influence of "Hellenistic" thinking was shaken off with the dust of a person's feet when he crossed the frontiers of Palestine. And if Judaism is not susceptible to division into totally separate and water-tight compartments, it is not to be thought that nascent Christianity could be. For the varied phenomenon of Judaism was the most prominent feature of the circumstances within which the growing Christian church developed, and theological development was, in part at least, a response to circumstances.

(2) Distinctions between one sort of community and another may have been less significant than distinctions within communities. And while internal distinctions are likely to have brought about creative interaction between varieties of emphasis and even confrontation and controversy, there are clear signs in the gospels of processes of accommodation and conciliation. Not that such processes were bound to be successful, but the fact that they were necessary confirms that different views could be maintained within a single community. An example of this is the rigorist tendency which emerges in material like Matthew 5:18f. (cf. the comments above on Mt. 23:2f.), a point of view which is preserved rather than suppressed by both Q and Matthew, and even in a reduced form by Luke (Lk. 16:17).³⁵ Yet in all these documents material of this sort is set alongside other material whose perspective is different. This is a particularly illuminating issue because the spectrum of opinion existing within the Matthaean (non-Palestinian Jewish?) community seems to mirror the spectrum existing within the early Jerusalem community. That the leadership could safely stay in Jerusalem after a persecution dispersed those who were "liberal" in the matters affecting law and temple (Acts 8:1) strongly suggests that they were inoffensively conservative and advocates of a Matthew 5:18f.-type position. The judgment we make on the relative faithfulness to Jesus of the apostles and of the Stephen group will have a big influence on our decision about the authenticity of Matthew 5:18f., but for the present it is enough to note that the pre-persecution period in Jerusalem was one when differing outlooks co-existed inside one Christian community. The upshot is consequently that it is more advisable to speak of variant theological schemes or developing trends than to allocate the different patterns to separate slots.

(3) There is no automatic means of deciding whether material containing Semitisms belongs to Jesus or to the Aramaic-speaking communities. Equally, the absence of Semitisms or, say, the use of the LXX does not demonstrate a non-Semitic or non-Jesus point of origin. Any writer may

reformulate tradition in his own language or idiom, and he may equally adjust scriptural quotations and allusions to conform to the received biblical text in use in his own community. But the existence of tradition is not thereby disproved.

To sum up, Christianity was born into an exceptionally varied world of thought, and itself responded – indeed, within a missionary context, could not but respond – to that variety. It could no more preserve a compartmentalized character than the environment did. As far as tradition-history is concerned, the text of the New Testament permits us to reconstruct developments and successive stages of theological reflection, but not to be too confident about assigning these successive developments to specific areas or times.

IV. *Suggested Criteria for Sayings of Jesus*

The criteria for distinguishing Jesus-material from later church developments are still vigorously debated,³⁶ and uncertainty about this fundamental issue of method is in no small way the cause of the marked variation in the conclusions of various scholars, and ultimately the cause of the pessimistic declaration that “faith cannot and should not be dependent on the change and uncertainty of historical research.”

The criterion of dissimilarity has been formulated in a particularly clear-cut manner by R. H. Fuller: “Tradition-historical criticism eliminates from the authentic sayings of Jesus those which are paralleled in the Jewish tradition on the one hand (apocalyptic and Rabbinic) and those which reflect the faith, practice and situations of the post-Easter church as we know them outside the gospels.”³⁷ It will be noticed that this lays down dissimilarity as a *necessary* condition, and takes material *outside* the gospels as the primary data for the life of the church. But these are two of a range of considerations which call the dissimilarity criterion in question. Firstly, the deceptive simplicity of this test should not mask the fact that at most it can produce the distinctive Jesus but cannot guarantee the characteristic Jesus. And since there can be no assurance, nor indeed any likelihood, that Jesus overlapped in no way with contemporary Judaism and contributed nothing to primitive Christianity, the distinctive Jesus can hardly be the historical Jesus.³⁸ Secondly, by separating the “distinctive Jesus” (who is wrongly assumed to be the historical Jesus) from what functions as the “characteristic community”, it is a necessary presupposition of the method that the community members must have regarded authentic Jesus-material as neither vital nor important, since they did not ground their life and faith upon it. In effect, Easter becomes the point of discontinuity. But that is very doubtful since (a) H. Schürmann has rightly drawn attention to the pre-Easter beginnings of the community based upon a response to Jesus and his words, and the consequent sociological continuity,³⁹ and (b) whatever else Easter was not, it certainly was about the vindication of Jesus, his pre-Easter cause and his pre-Easter words. Thirdly, it is not possible to

salvage continuity by proposing, for example, an evolution from pre-Easter implicit christology to post-Easter explicit christology.⁴⁰ For if the post-Easter community members were correct, as is suggested, to regard Jesus as the messiah on the basis of what he had said and done, it follows that such implications must have been intended deliberately by Jesus, and that the disciples could just as easily have drawn the correct inference before Easter. Fourthly, the gospels themselves belong to the living experience of the communities, and it is highly doubtful whether anything at all within them can fail to represent the standpoint of some one community.⁴¹ As a consequence, the dissimilarity principle should logically produce one and only one result. That is, concerning the historical Jesus we know absolutely nothing. In view of the truly radical nature of this result which the dissimilarity criterion inevitably constructs, it is not surprising to see that its continued existence in principle has had to be allied to its tacit abandonment in practice. Thus: (a) R. H. Fuller declares that in the authoritative *Ἀμην* "Jesus pledges his whole person behind the truth of his proclamation. This formula has certainly been added secondarily to some of Jesus' sayings, as a synoptic comparison will show. But it cannot be doubted that it was characteristic of the historical Jesus."⁴² But surely secondary additions imply that the word figures in community theology, and that consequently what Fuller says cannot be doubted can, and indeed by the criterion of dissimilarity should, be doubted. (b) H. Conzelmann has analysed and assessed sayings which refer to "the Father", "my Father", and "your Father".⁴³ None of the first group, he suggests, goes back to Jesus. Nor do any of the second group, though somewhat surprisingly he writes: "If the form of address goes back to Jesus. . . ." In the third group, Conzelmann with obvious reserve allows that Matthew 5:48; 6:32 and 23:9 may go back to Jesus. But with much greater, and therefore rather surprising, confidence he then affirms: "There is no doubt that Jesus designated God as 'Father'." But surely again, by the criterion of dissimilarity, there must be some doubt. References to "Father" should be treated as inauthentic because of their overlap with Judaism, and references to "Abba" should be treated as inauthentic because of their overlap with Aramaic-speaking and Pauline Christianity, as attested by Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6.⁴⁴ (c) N. Perrin has argued that the coming of the kingdom is an authentic element in Jesus' preaching, and has used the dissimilarity criterion to ground such an argument, first of all, on the verbal distinction between the kingdom's "coming" (so, Jesus) and its "being established" (so, Judaism); secondly, on the Jesus-tradition's use of the "kingdom" as "a comprehensive term for the blessings of salvation", which is only rarely paralleled in Judaism; thirdly, its application to "the final act of God in visiting and redeeming his people".⁴⁵ But while the distinction between Judaism and Jesus in respect of the future coming of the kingdom is probably over-emphasized here, it is the impossibility of distinguishing Jesus from the church on this point which jeopardizes the argument. Indeed Perrin appears to be aware of precisely this Achilles' heel in his thesis, when he writes: "A reasonable explanation is

that usages of 'Kingdom of God' characteristic of the teaching of Jesus and not of the early Church live on in the synoptic tradition. This does not mean, of course, that even in the Kingdom sayings the tradition suddenly becomes historically reliable. If the Church had not had her own use for the sayings, she would not have preserved them, and if they could not have been made expressive of his purposes, no evangelist would have used them."⁴⁶ It is that last sentence which makes the fatal concession. For once it is allowed that the coming of the kingdom is indeed a theme of early Christian theology – and who can doubt that "May your kingdom come" (Mt. 6:10 = Lk. 11:2) is the church's prayer, even though it involves all three features listed by Perrin? – then there are only two options open: *Either* accept a line of continuity from Jesus to the church, which rules out the criterion of dissimilarity, *or* apply the criterion of dissimilarity, which rules out the line of continuity. If the second option is chosen, yet more material drops out of the authentic Jesus-tradition. And we are left to move step by step with inexorable certainty, but surely with increasing disquiet, to the truly radical conclusion mentioned above: that is, concerning the historical Jesus we know absolutely nothing.

The criterion of multiple attestation, i.e. whether or not a saying occurs in more than one independent strand of gospel tradition, cannot be tested independently of the assessment of the dissimilarity test. For traditions which are unrelated in literary terms could still emerge as an independent but common response to similar problems or insights. But if the logical possibility of a line of continuity from Jesus to the church is accepted, multiple attestation may have a part to play. For it can suggest that a deep impression has been made by a particular saying or theme, or that an earlier archetype exists behind the various forms, an archetype which is closer in time to the beginnings of the tradition. Even here, of course, the tradition-historical enquiry must at some stage take over, as the examples quoted earlier demonstrate. The same necessity is clearly indicated by the variations within multiple attestation in the cases of, for example, the traditions of the anointing (Mk. 14:3–9; Lk. 7:36–50; Jn. 12:1–8) or the saying about blasphemy against the Spirit (Mk. 3:28f; Mt. 12:31f. = Lk. 12:10). One must also add in connection with multiple attestation that using it can only produce eccentric results if it is taken to mean the laying down of a necessary condition.

The criterion of coherence also lacks the force to operate as a primary test, for it depends upon the existence of material which is already proved to be authentic, and with which other material may cohere. It can, however, prove useful in such circumstances. Thus, if a series of features of "Son of man" sayings can be shown to be among features of Jesus' mission in such a way that the only extra element in those sayings is the actual term "Son of man" itself, it is bound to be extremely difficult to dismiss all such "Son of man" sayings as inauthentic.⁴⁷ On the negative side, suggestions of a lack of coherence have to be used with caution, for, as M. D. Hooker and R. S. Barbour have pointed out, there is a risk of supposing incoherence when in fact there is paradox.⁴⁸ But equally, one must be alive to the risk of too freely

invoking paradox in such a way as to attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable.

The problems which emerge during any critical examination of criteria might suggest that there is no future for the enquiry except in pessimism or even agnosticism. But this would, I believe, be more sceptical than is necessary, though it must be conceded that any reconstruction of the content of Jesus' message or the shape of his mission will involve much that is tentative.

Dissimilarity is, as already noted, a doubtful tool when the relationship between Jesus and the post-Easter churches is under scrutiny. It also has some drawbacks in respect of a discussion of his relationship with Judaism, in view of the incompleteness of our knowledge of Judaism. But even though our understanding of Judaism must remain open to modification and supplementation, we can do no more than work from what we actually do know. And if we do that we can begin by taking account of that gospel material which, after the tradition-historical investigation has got as far as establishing the earliest form of the tradition, marks a deviation from the basic principles of Judaism. Now certainly that earliest form may represent the outlook of some person or community after Easter. But if there is no reason to suppose that anything intrinsic to Easter as such has created the tradition, we are bound to ask what decisive impulse may have led to such a new development and deviation from Judaism. And the most probable answer to that question is Jesus. It is important to be clear about what we are doing. That is, dissimilarity is not being regarded as necessary. It is merely being taken as a starting-point in the discussion of the relationship between the tradition and Judaism, and it is at the same time being supplemented by considerations of evolutionary continuity (not dissimilarity) in the relationship between Jesus and the churches. As an example one could take legal material. Mark 7:15 is a saying widely regarded as radical vis-à-vis the law.⁴⁹ It could theoretically be the product of Pauline influence, in view of the comparable outlook expressed in Romans 14:14. But instead of arguing that this deviation from the law is a post-Easter construction (which a consistent use of the dissimilarity criterion in a necessary sense should oblige us to do), we ask what could have moved Mark and Paul to take such a view. The most probable answer is Jesus, so that behind this material there can be heard his *ipsissima vox*. By the same method one could confidently attribute radical positions on divorce and discipleship (1 Cor. 7:10b, 11b; Mk. 10:2-9; Lk. 16:18 and Mt. 8:22 = Lk. 9:60) to Jesus. With multiple attestation (used positively rather than actually required) adding strength to the argument that in these sayings critical of law and tradition we do hear his voice, we have confidence in a wide range of gospel material which expresses this position. And we are, incidentally, working forward by this means to a position which stands some chance of explaining adequately post-Easter phenomena. That is a substantial advance.

To this modified use of the dissimilarity test there can be added considerations of coherence. That is, we assess next the material whose most primitive form coheres with the theological presuppositions and explicit

affirmations in the material already secured as authentic tradition. Again there are admittedly margins for error at every stage of the process, but this argumentation is not unique in that respect. Certainly coherence can lead too far, and should only be operated on the basis of a clear understanding of what sort of documents the gospels are. And, of course, there must also be a coherence of the context presupposed by a tradition with the context of Jesus' mission, as well as a coherence of content. But at least the use of coherence, after dissimilarity to Judaism has been explored, does offer certain advantages: (a) It allows for the incorporation of other material reflecting similarity between Jesus and Judaism. (b) It allows for the continuity between Jesus and some at least of the post-Easter Christian developments. And, as we have seen, no collection of criteria which prohibits in advance such factors can hope to do justice to the historical Jesus as he was in himself and as he participated in the development of events and ideas of his time.

All this is but the beginning of a process which is arduous and exacting. The suggestions above are but guidelines, and the implementation of them is just as certain to allow room for judgment by the individual, and therefore room for disagreement between individuals, as any other suggestions. For this we must settle, even if it seems by comparison with older but, in view of the character of the gospels, unrealistic certainties to be unsettling. But it does at least have the merit of recognizing that the gospels do belong to Jesus and also to the churches. For Jesus this means that he is seen as not merely *historisch*, a figure of the past, but also one whom we can see within the developing tradition as truly *geschichtlich*, that is, a person whose relevance is explored and exploited ever and again in places far removed from Galilee and Jerusalem and in times long after A.D. 30.

NOTES

1. Particularly clear examples of the method in action on the basis of such a scheme can be found in H. E. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (E.T. London 1965); R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London 1965); F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology* (E.T. London 1968).

2. See R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (E.T. Oxford 1963), p. 4.

3. *New Testament Theology I: The Proclamation of Jesus* (E.T. London 1971), pp. 293f.

4. The equivalence of Mark 8:29 and John 6:69 is widely recognised. Cf. R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I–XII* (London 1966), pp. 301–303.

5. See, for example, note 11 on p. 348.

6. J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (E.T. London 1963), pp. 224–227.

7. Cf. also Mt. 5:46f.

8. O. Michel, *τελώνης* TDNT 8 (1972), pp. 103–105; J. Jeremias, *Theology I*, pp. 113–118.

9. This conclusion is in no way prevented by the argument that the saying is authentic and was spoken by Jesus prophetically (cf. Jn. 14:26) with a view to a period after his death. Leaving aside the substantial number of questions begged by such an argument, it is sufficient to note here that Jesus would hardly have authorized the post-Easter churches to ig-

- nore or reject the principles for which he campaigned so determinedly during the pre-Easter period.
10. E. Klostermann, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (Tübingen 1927²), p. 181; R. Hummel, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäusevangelium* (München 1966), pp. 31f.
 11. It is argued by N. B. Stonehouse, *The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ* (London 1944), pp. 196f, that such a distinction is present in Mt. 23:4, 16ff, 23f, and therefore in 23:2f. However, this does not do justice to the word *πάντα* (Mt. 23:3), cf. G. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, (Göttingen 1966²), p. 16. Moreover, the tendency of Matthew to act as a conciliator between various divergent theological positions (see p. 169f. for another example of this in his treatment of "wisdom" material) without smoothing out the differences rules out any such limitation of Mt. 23:2f, which should therefore be allowed its full force.
 12. On this material, see H. Merkel, "Jesus und die Pharisäer", NTS. 14 (1967-68), pp. 194-208; M. Hengel, *Nachfolge und Charisma* (Berlin, 1968), pp. 3-17; H. Merkel, "Markus 7, 15 - das Jesuswort über die innere Verunreinigung", ZRGG 20 (1968), pp. 340-363; D. R. Catchpole, "The Synoptic Divorce Material as a Tradition-historical Problem", BJRL 57 (1974-75), pp. 92-127.
 13. On Phil. 2:6-11, see D. Georgi, "Der vorpaulinische Hymnus Phil. 2:6-11", in E. Dinkler (ed.), *Zeit und Geschichte* (Tübingen 1964), pp. 263-293; R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi* (Cambridge 1967); E. Käsemann, "A Critical Analysis of Philippians 2:5-11", JTh.Ch. 5 (1968), pp. 45-88. On Col. 1:15-20, E. Schweizer, "The Church as the Missionary Body of Christ", NTS 8 (1961-62), pp. 1-11. On the Johannine prologue, R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I-XII*, pp. 519-524; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John* (E.T. London 1968), pp. 481-493; E. Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (London 1969), pp. 138-167.
 14. So, rightly, R. V. G. Tasker, *Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London 1961), p. 119.
 15. H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium I* (Freiburg 1969), p. 423.
 16. Schürmann, op. cit., pp. 420f. D. Lührmann, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle*, (Neukirchen 1969), pp. 27f, argues that Luke 7:29f. comes from Q (cf. Mt. 21:32), but that Luke has altered its position and substituted it for Mt. 11:12f. which did occur in its present position in Q. He argues that there is no particular reason why Matthew should have inserted 11:12f., and that the special Matthaean interpretation appears first in 11:14f. (drawing upon Mark 9:13 and drawing out Mt. 11:10 = Lk. 7:27). However, the themes of prophecy, the kingdom and John which are common to Mt. 11:11 and 11:12f. are sufficient to explain why Matthew should insert 11:12f. at this point, while elsewhere in Q material Matthew shows a tendency to move material around (cf. Mt. 8:11f.) more than Luke does.
 17. Schürmann, op. cit., p. 423.
 18. Lührmann, op. cit., p. 99; otherwise, U. Wilckens, *σοφία* TDNT VII (1971), p. 515, who thinks an equation between Jesus and wisdom is already achieved in Q.
 19. Lührmann, op. cit., pp. 29f.
 20. Mt. 11:20-23 cannot originally have belonged with 11:2-19 since the persons addressed are different. The link word *τότε* between the two blocks is typical of Matthaean editorial work.
 21. That single word *αὐτῆς* must restrain the tendency (cf. M. J. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (Harvard 1970), p. 58) to treat Matthew's redaction as thorough-going and complete even to the point of saying that "Jesus is Sophia incarnate". In fact he has not quite got that far.
 22. On the Q tradition's view of Jesus as Wisdom's representative, see G. N. Stanton, "On the Christology of Q", in B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley (edd.), *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* (Cambridge 1973), pp. 27-42, esp. 36-38.
 23. U. Wilckens, op. cit., pp. 516f; H. D. Betz, "The Logion of the Easy Yoke and of Rest", JBL 88 (1967), pp. 10-24.
 24. The results obtained here can be confirmed and strengthened by a similar study of Mt. 23:34 = Lk. 11:49, where Wisdom's rôle as sender of the prophets and others (as in Q) is taken over by Jesus according to Matthaean redaction. Cf. Suggs, op. cit., pp. 13-29.
 25. *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (E.T. London 1973), pp. 709-718.

26. L. Morris, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London, 1972), p. 831.
27. "The Women and the Empty Tomb", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 123 (1966), pp. 301–309, esp. pp. 305f.
28. *Jesus the Messiah* (Glasgow 1972), p. 359.
29. Thus, L. Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung und leeres Grab* (Stuttgart 1969²), pp. 54f.
30. Thus, C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament* (London 1970), pp. 120–124.
31. At the pre-Johannine stage material now present in John 20:1f. may have led directly into the story of Peter's visit to the tomb. Cf. G. Hartmann, "Die Vorlage des Osterberichts in Joh. 20", *ZNW* 55 (1964), pp. 197–220.
32. So, P. Benoit, "Marie-Madeleine et les Disciples au Tombeau selon Joh 20:1–18", in W. Eltester, (ed.) *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche* (Berlin 1964), pp. 141–152.
33. For a summary of these specific problems, cf. Evans, op. cit., pp. 75–79.
34. Abundant evidence of this very open situation is readily accessible in J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (E.T. London 1969); M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (E.T. London 1974).
35. For the view that Mt. 5:19 stems from Q, see H. Schürmann, "Wer daher eines dieser geringsten Gebote auflöst . . .", repr. in *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den synoptischen Evangelien* (Düsseldorf 1968), pp. 126–136.
36. See N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London 1967), pp. 15–53; M. D. Hooker, "Christology and Methodology", *NTS* 17 (1970–71), pp. 480–487; id., 'On using the Wrong Tool', *Theology* 75 (1972), pp. 570–581; J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, I, pp. 1–41; R. S. Barbour, *Traditio-historical Criticism of the Gospels* (London 1972), pp. 1–27; D. G. A. Calvert, "An Examination of the Criteria for Distinguishing the Authentic Words of Jesus", *NTS* 18 (1971–72), pp. 209–219.
37. *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London 1965), p. 18; cf. E. Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus", *Essays on New Testament Themes* (E.T. London 1964), pp. 34–37; N. Perrin, op. cit., p. 39; H. Conzelmann, "Jesus Christus", *RGG* III, p. 623.
38. Cf. W. G. Kümmel, "Das Problem des geschichtlichen Jesus in der gegenwärtigen Forschungslage", in E. Grässer (ed.), *Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte* (Marburg 1965), p. 403; M. D. Hooker, "Christology", pp. 481f., who also rightly points out the limitations of our knowledge of both Judaism and Christianity.
39. "Die vorösterlichen Anfänge der Logientradition", *Untersuchungen*, pp. 39–65.
40. Thus, Käsemann, op. cit., pp. 37–45.
41. It is worth pondering the comment of G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (E.T. London 1960), p. 14: "We possess no single word of Jesus and no single story of Jesus, no matter how incontestably genuine they may be, which do not embody at the same time the confession of the believing congregation, or are at least embedded therein."
42. Op. cit., pp. 104f.
43. *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (E.T. London 1969), pp. 102–106.
44. R. S. Barbour, op. cit., p. 17, draws attention to the fact that *Abba* is "as characteristic of the prayers of the early Church as one could wish", but argues that those who accept authenticity in spite of the dissimilarity criterion probably do so largely because it is neither christological in the narrow sense nor kerygmatic. One can only note that the criterion of dissimilarity is not usually proposed with the intention to limit its application to christology and kerygma. It is hard to draw back from the main conviction that the process does indeed involve inconsistency.
45. Op. cit., pp. 54–63.
46. Op. cit., p. 62.
47. This approach can be seen in the article of I. H. Marshall, "The Synoptic Son of man sayings in Recent Discussion", *NTS* 12 (1965–66), pp. 327–351.
48. M. D. Hooker, "Christology", p. 483; R. S. Barbour, op. cit., pp. 9f.
49. See n.12.

methods in form criticism, and includes an invaluable bibliography of 238 titles.

- E. E. ELLIS, "New Directions in Form Criticism", in G. Strecker (ed.), *Jesus Christus in Historie und Theologie* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1975), pp. 299–315.
- E. V. McKNIGHT, *What is Form Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1969). The best basic book on the subject, including critiques of Bultmann, Dibelius, and others.
- G. N. STANTON, "Form Criticism Revisited", in M. D. Hooker and C. J. A. Hickling (ed.), *What about the New Testament?* (London: SCM Press 1975), pp. 13–27.
- V. TAYLOR, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan 1965²). An example of the more cautious British approach to form criticism.

Best read: McKnight.

CHAPTER X

TRADITION HISTORY

- R. S. BARBOUR, *Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels* (London: SPCK 1972).
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- L. E. KECK, *A Future for the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM Press 1973).
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CHAPTER XI

REDACTION CRITICISM

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J. L. MARTYN, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper and Row 1968).

N. PERRIN, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (London: SPCK 1970). A valuable introduction, if used with care.

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R. H. STEIN, "What is *Redaktionsgeschichte*?" *JBL* 88 (1969), pp. 45–56.

Best read: Perrin.

CHAPTER XII

HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT USES THE OLD

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