BENJAMIN A. EDSALL

Paul's Witness to Formative Early Christian Instruction

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe
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For Deanna,
who deserves more than this book

Preface

This book is a lightly revised version of my doctoral dissertation, which was submitted to the Faculty of Theology (now Theology and Religion) at the University of Oxford. All who have undertaken to write a dissertation know well the communal nature of the endeavor. Such is no less the case here.

This project would have been impossible but for the guidance of my supervisor, Prof. Markus Bockmuehl, who simultaneously gave me the freedom to pursue the present topic in my own way and kept the project from growing too far out of proportion. Those who know him and his work will undoubtedly see much of his influence here; it has only been beneficial and my gratitude and debt to him are deep.

Many others at the University of Oxford and elsewhere contributed to the completion of this project and deserve my thanks. Dr. David Lincicum stepped in for Prof. Bockmuehl as my interim supervisor at the Master's level and I remain grateful for his help then and his friendship now. Profs. John Muddiman and Christopher Rowland provided feedback at crucial stages and Prof. Christopher Tuckett helpfully served at my Confirmation of Status and as my internal examiner for my *viva*, working with me on the more complex administrative tangles of completion. Prof. N. T. Wright served as my external examiner and I am deeply grateful for his close reading and helpful critique of my dissertation, which I have tried to address in revising this study. To my friends who have graciously engaged me about my research when they all had much better things to be doing – Bobby Ryu, Casey Strine, Justin Hardin, Nick Ellis, Alex Kirk, Jenn Strawbridge, Jeremy Kidwell (early on and at the eleventh hour), Chris Hays, T. M. Law and many others – I am grateful. Bobby, Justin, and Alex gave feedback on early drafts of my dissertation and Casey provided valuable feedback on the entirety of this monograph. I am also thankful for the opportunity I had to road-test some of this material (largely from chapters 1–3) on the Oxford New Testament Graduate Seminar, the Oxbridge NT Seminar and at the International Society of Biblical Literature meeting in London (2011).

I am exceedingly thankful to the Oxford Clarendon Fund and the Long Studentship at Queen's College for funding this research. Their support enabled me to focus on my work and still maintain a healthy family life. While I know that this kind of "outcome" is not quantifiable for a financial report, that

fact does not make it any less valuable. Quite literally, I could not have done this without their help. The Faculty of Theology at Oxford and Queen's College also generously covered the cost of two conferences at which I was able to interact with a variety of other scholars about my research at important stages in my work.

Thanks is also due to Prof. Jörg Frey for accepting my dissertation into the WUNT II series and to Dr. Henning Ziebritzki and Bettina Gade at Mohr Siebeck for their expert guidance throughout the process of publication.

My family has been a constant encouragement to me throughout this project and long before. My children, Nora and Eli, remind me that reading them a book (one more time!) is more important than that fifteen minutes of research. To my wife, Deanna (who also proof-read the entire manuscript!), there are no words that I could write to express my love and thanks. She has borne the hardships of graduate life with patience and grace.

Oxford, Feast of St. Simeon Ben Edsall

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Abbreviations

Where possible, the abbreviations conform to Patrick H. Alexander, John F. Kutsko, James D. Ernest, Shirley Decker-Lucke, and David L. Petersen, ed. *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999). Citations of papyri follow John F. Oats, *et al.*, ed. N.D. *Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets* (Web Edition: library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/papyrus/texts/clist.html). See the latter for bibliographic information pertaining to the publications of papyri. Additions and alterations are as follows.

BTH	Bibliothèque de théologie historique
CBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CSIC	Consejo Superior de Investigacionces Científicas
Diaet.	*De diaeta in morbis acutis* in É. Littré, ed. 1840. *Oeuvres complètes d'Hippocrate*. Vol. 2. Paris: Baillière.
EKK	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar
HE	Hermes: Einzelschriften
IJudO	Noy, David, Hanswulf Bloedhorn, and Alexander Panayotov, ed. 2004. *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*. 3 vols. TSAJ 99, 101, 102. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
JGRChrJ	*Journal for Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*
ModChm	*Modern Churchman*
MThSt	Marburger Theologische Studien
PhilAnt	Philosophie der Antike
RVV	Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten
SESJ	Suomen Eksegeettisen Seuran Julkaisuja
SJSJ	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
SMBen	Série monographique de Benedictina
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and its World
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
VAWJ	Veröffentlichungen der Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Early Christian Teaching

In the study of the development of the early Christian movement, early Christian teaching – *kerygma*, *didache* or catechesis – has often been proposed as a unifying foundation. On this view, explored in more detail below, the differences between (at least some of) the texts that make up the New Testament are merely variations on the stable musical theme of early Christian teaching. Of course, for some, this theme is quite minimal, being restricted to the worship of Jesus of Nazareth as Christ the Lord. For others, the theme of early Christian instruction is merely in the ear of the listener, a later harmonization of initial discord.

Although the terminology of "the *kerygma*" is particularly indebted to early 20th century biblical scholarship, appeals to unifying *and unwritten* formative Christian instruction are hardly new. In his famous work *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus of Lyons criticizes his opponents for, among other things, taking scripture out of context to create their own theological systems.

> If anyone takes these [Homeric] verses and restores them to their original setting, he will make the system disappear. And thus whoever keeps the rule of truth [τὸν κανόνα τῆς ἀληθείας], which he received through baptism, unchanged within himself knows these names, phrases and parables from the scriptures but he does not recognize their blasphemous system. If he recognizes the stones [of the mosaic] he will not take the fox for the royal image. (*Haer*. 1.1.9; trans. Grant 1997, 70)

This passage, involving Irenaeus' earlier analogy to the mosaic of the king (*Haer*. 1.1.8), notably places emphasis on the "rule of truth" (ὁ κανών τῆς ἀληθείας) as the key for interpreting scripture.[1] Irenaeus goes on to claim that this "rule of truth" includes belief in the one creator God, the father, the incarnate son Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit who inspired the prophets to speak about Jesus' birth, death, resurrection and ascension, and the coming eschatological judgment by Christ (*Haer*. 1.1.10). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the same concerns present here are reflected in the later creeds and texts such as the *Apostolic Constitutions* (6.3.11).

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[1] Cf. also Tertullian *Apol*. 47.10: "regulam veritatis, quae veniat a Christo transmissa per comites ipsius."

One particularly interesting feature here is that Irenaeus is consciously appealing not to a general theological structure but to a specific tradition, baptismal instruction (ὃν διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἴληφεν, *Haer.* 1.1.9) that was handed on by the apostles and stands apart from scripture itself (cf. 1.1.8; 3.2.2). A similar concern to rely on the teaching of the apostles is found in the *Didache* which is entitled διδαχὴ τῶν [δώδεκα] ἀποστόλων.[2] Other examples, many with less historical proximity, could be adduced *ad nauseam*. But even in antiquity these claims for harmonious continuity were contested. Indeed, the very fact of their constant assertion suggests disagreement on this matter. Celsus famously claimed that there were as many theological positions as there were Christians (who were, in his opinion, ignorant masses anyway),[3] and many scholars today would agree with him. Perhaps even more telling are the debates between Paul and his opponents, particularly reflected in Galatians and 2 Corinthians, who evidently self-identified as followers of Jesus and yet are indicted by Paul as preaching "another gospel."

Who then is right, Irenaeus or Celsus? Is there a *kerygma*, *didache*, catechesis, baptismal instruction, or some other type of teaching that unified the early Christian movement? If so, how might one find this without presupposing it *a priori*? I will in due course attempt to answer these questions refracted through a Pauline prism. But before doing so, our object of inquiry requires clarification by way of a few definitions and a brief history of scholarship.

1.2 Definitions: Dispensing with *Kerygma*, Catechesis and *Didache*

As I mentioned above, the use of the term *kerygma* in New Testament scholarship is particularly indebted to the use of the term in the early 20th century and properly refers to the preaching that undergirds early Christianity. For some this meant a core set of propositions that could be traced across a wide range of texts. Rudolf Bultmann and some of his students, however, rejected such a distillation arguing that the *kerygma* is nothing more than "the proclamation of the decisive act of God in Christ" (Bultmann 1953, 13). However, Bultmann's *kerygma* was intentionally a theological abstraction – in his terms, it was demythologized – and he still went into great detail tracing the development of the actual content of early Christian teaching in his *Theology of the New Testament* (Bultmann 1952). Use of the term is somewhat plastic, referring specifically to preaching (i.e., *Missionspredigt*) as well as to a demythologized "core" of the New Testament. Given that I am interested in more than

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[2] See the textual discussion of the title in Niederwimmer 1989, 81.

[3] Preserved in Origen *Cels*. 3.10, 12.

either of these alternatives provides, I will eschew the use of it in what follows. It should be noted here, however, that in spite of these points of discontinuity, this study stands in the "tradition," one might say, of these predecessors insofar as I am interested in the relationship of preaching (and other teaching) to the unity of the early church (or lack thereof).

The term "catechesis" has a much longer history as a technical term than *kerygma* and accordingly carries a good deal of baggage. According to Lampe's *Patristic Lexicon*, the Greek verb κατηχέω became a technical term for pre-baptismal Christian instruction only from the 4th century CE.[4] It is worth noting that the passage from Irenaeus cited above referred specifically to baptismal instruction and yet did not use the term "catechesis," which would be strange if it had been a commonly used technical term in his time. Nevertheless, prior to the 4th century and as early as the 1st century CE the verb κατηχέω was used in reference to instruction more generally.[5] The nominal form of the verb κατήχησις has a similar development, becoming a technical term around the time of Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 CE; cf. his *Paedagogus*) but used earlier than that as a general term for instruction or passing on information.[6] With respect to the early Christian movement, no doubt any instruction that we might call "catechesis" overlapped in content with what we might call the *kerygma*. Therefore, while the initial preaching (of a missionary for instance) may be distinguishable from later instruction in historical order, isolating the content of one from the other is notoriously difficult and will not be attempted here.[7] Furthermore, because the term catechesis has been used as a technical term quite specifically for pre-baptismal instruction for over a millennium, it carries overtones that I simply do not want to evoke in my analysis.

A less prevalent term, *didache*, was often used as a "lesser satellite" to *kerygma* (McDonald 1980, 4). According to C. H. Dodd, *didache* comprised ethical instruction with occasional apologetic materials and even theological exposition (Dodd, 1936, 7). However, distinguishing between the *kerygma* and *didache* becomes difficult to the point of impossibility once one tries to move beyond the theoretical. In this case the same problems apply as in trying to distinguish between the content of the *kerygma* and that of catechesis – there is no sure way to cut the gordian knot. Furthermore, statements such as

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[4] Particularly at the 2nd Ecumenical Constantinopolitan Council in 381 CE; cf. Lampe *s.v.* κατηχέω who cites Athanasius *Ep. fest*.

[5] E.g., 1 Cor 14:19; Gal 6:6; Rom 2:8; Luke 1:4; Acts 18:25; 21:21, 24; Josephus *Vita* 65.

[6] Chrysippus uses the term (negatively) for general instruction (*Frag. moral*. 229a); Dionysius of Halicarnassus for rhetorical instruction (*Dem*. 50); Soranus for (alleged) medical instruction (*Gyn*. 1.3.4). and Philo (*Legat*. 198) uses it simply in reference to a report.

[7] See below for a brief account of previous scholarship on this matter.

"It was by *kerygma*, says Paul, not by *didaché*, that it pleased God to save men," suggest that this division is theologically rather than historically motivated.[8] In this case, the *kerygma* is not an historical artifact of actual preaching but rather a theological key for the New Testament and even Christian thought as a whole.[9] All subjects that fall outside the *kerygmatic* core – moral teaching, community formation, apologetic, theological exposition – become subsidiary issues at best. So *didache* becomes a catch-all category of communication for things that are not essential to the Gospel, however that might be determined, regardless of when they were communicated. However, this sort of *a priori* privileging of one set of topics over another does not give a clear picture of early Christian formative instruction, in which preaching was not separable from teaching, and has been largely dropped from more recent studies.[10]

Therefore, due to the plasticity of the term *kerygma*, the baggage of the term catechesis, the problems of the term *didache* and the extreme difficulty of distinguishing between initial preaching and subsequent instruction, these terms inhibit a clear picture of what I am after – namely, an account of the *content* of formative instruction within early Christianity. This instruction comprises the preaching and teaching that lies behind, and is presupposed by, the various texts of the New Testament. This is not to assume from the start that there is *one* unified "formative instruction" within early Christianity; it is simply to say that the author of any given New Testament text presumed of his (or her) audience *some kind* of knowledge about Jesus and nascent Christianity, whether the knowledge was imparted in a missionary sermon in the *agora*, communal worship meetings or some other teaching context. The matter of unity, disunity or some middle ground will be addressed later, but that is a matter for the conclusion, not the introduction.

With these definitions out of the way, it is important to survey previous scholarly investigations of the content of early Christian formative instruction.

1.3 Previous Scholarship: An Overview

The history of scholarship on the teaching of the early church is diffuse and not always easily categorized. However, the general outline provides instructive background.[11] Since the authors surveyed here use the terms *kerygma* or

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[8] The quote is from Dodd 1936, 8; it is cited and criticized in McDonald 1980, 5–6.

[9] This is put forward forcefully in Dodd 1936, 77–78 but the impulse is the same as that which lies behind Bultmann's quest for the *kerygma*.

[10] See the discussion of McDonald 1980 in §1.3.3 below; note also the earlier criticisms of Dodd's approach in Evans 1956 and Moule 1966, 130.

[11] An extended version this section has been published in Edsall 2012. It should be noted

catechesis frequently, to avoid these terms would result in misrepresentation and, in any case, would be impractical. Therefore, in spite of my desire to avoid these terms in my own analysis, I am compelled to use them temporarily here.

While, as noted above, interest in identifying the teaching of the early church stretches back in various forms to the post-apostolic period, the works of Alfred Seeberg (1863–1915) provided new impetus to the question. Between 1903 and 1908, Seeberg produced four monographs in pursuit of what he saw as *the* early Christian catechism.[12] His approach was appropriated and developed, though not without criticism, for the greater part of seventy years but by the late 1970s the tide of scholarly opinion had eroded the foundation on which he built his theories. Although Seeberg preceded the introduction of *Formgeschichte* as a formal method,[13] from the beginning the quest for early Christian teaching had a distinctively form-critical flavor (so Kümmel 1973, 450 n. 404). Seeberg's work was followed by Martin Dibelius, C. H. Dodd and E. G. Selwyn, among others, all of whom took a similar path in examining the *kerygma* or catechesis in question.

1.3.1 The Early Christian Kerygma and Catechism

1.3.1.1 Alfred Seeberg

Seeberg's catechism comprised ethical teaching (*die Sittenlehre*) and faith-formula (*die Glaubensformel*). The former were, he argued, equivalent to "the ways" (1 Cor 4:16) and the "pattern of teaching" (Rom 6:17) that Paul mentions and were made up of virtue and vice lists (Seeberg 1903, 1–8).[14] The *Glaubensformel* fulfilled a dual function of providing the content for missionary preaching[15] as well as acting as a baptismal confession (168, 213); it is the theological core of the New Testament and early Christianity that was present in preaching and teaching. Seeberg began his reconstruction of the *Glaubensformel* with 1 Cor 15:3–5, arguing that the death, resurrection and ascension

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that this account only fits a particular stream of NT scholarship, since among others more influenced by the conflict-based reconstructions of J. J. Semler, W. M. L. de Wette, and F. C. Baur the unity of the early church had long been denied. For an overview of these scholars and their impact, see Kümmel 1973, 62–73, 120–184.

[12] Seeberg 1903; Seeberg 1905; Seeberg 1906; Seeberg 1908, translations of his works are my own.

[13] Especially in Dibelius 1919 (2nd ed. 1933, ET 1934) who likely drew his terminology from the pioneering study of Norden 1913.

[14] Translations of the New Testament are my own, occasionally modified from the NRSV.

[15] Later Seeberg directly identified the two: "Der Inhalt des Evangeliums [which is the message preached by Paul, 31–32] ist der Inhalt der Glaubensformel"; Seeberg 1905, 34.

of Jesus was the center of early Christian theology (45). He then filled out the content of the *Glaubensformel* with a further exploration of Paul's letters, 1 Peter, the Pastoral Epistles, Luke and Hebrews, identifying major themes such as the confession of the one creator God who raised Jesus from the dead, Christ being from the seed of David, and his imminent return for judgment (58–151).[16]

Seeberg's approach was functionally statistical. For both aspects of his catechesis he proceeded by identifying recurring terms and themes within the New Testament (and some other early Christian texts) and those with the greatest spread were accorded the highest likelihood of being part of *der Katechismus der Urchristenheit*.[17] There are a number of problems with this method, which will be discussed below, but with the advent of form criticism as a method, similar investigations were carried out many times in the subsequent decades. Nevertheless, for reasons of space and because this ground has been covered more fully elsewhere by myself and others,[18] I will only briefly discuss a few key scholars before turning to criticism and the aftermath.

1.3.1.2 Martin Dibelius and C. H. Dodd

In the work of Martin Dibelius and C. H. Dodd, the quest for the preaching and teaching of the early church became intimately connected with *Formgeschichte* and with a particular view of the speech material in Acts. Both authors adopted a similar division to Seeberg's *Sittenlehre* and *Glaubensformel* with Dibelius distinguishing between the *kerygma* and paraenetic material (though he also included scriptural proof separately, cf. Dibelius 1934, 17) and Dodd between the *kerygma* and *didache* (moral teaching) of the early church (Dodd 1936, 56). Further, both authors isolated the contents of the *kerygma* by comparing references in Paul's letters to Acts and then extending the survey through the rest of the New Testament (Dibelius 1934, 9–36; Dodd 1936, 13–14).

Dodd in particular emphasized the *kerygma*, arguing that it "included the facts of the death and resurrection of Christ in an eschatological setting" while also arguing that Paul himself drew on an older *kerygma* common to himself and other Christian missionaries which included proof from prophecy, Jesus' davidic lineage, and his exaltation by God (Dodd 1936, 13–14). Dibelius, on the other hand, drew heavily on Seeberg's approach to the paraenetic material,

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[16] This is similar to the account of missionary preaching in other scholars around that time, cf. the apparently independent views of Harnack 1904, 111; Deissmann 1926 [1911], 244; Weiss 1959 [1917], 1:220–257 and Meyer 1923, 349–363.

[17] For his treatment of virtue and vice lists, which is representative of his approach, see Seeberg 1903, 9–31.

[18] See Edsall 2012 and the critics discussed below.

arguing that Paul's statement in Rom 6:17, the hortatory section in Rom 12–13, and similar materials in James, 1 Peter, 1 Clement, *Didache* and *Shepherd of Hermas*, indicate that Paul "assumes that his readers have received similar teaching" and thus the hortatory sections of Paul's letters "belong to tradition" (Dibelius 1934, 239–240).

1.3.1.3 E. G. Selwyn

In the second appendix to his 1946 commentary on 1 Peter, E. G. Selwyn took up the catechetical torch.[19] Explicitly working within a form-critical framework, Selwyn identified two stages of development within what he argued was *the* early Christian baptismal catechism. Beginning with a comparison between the Thessalonian letters, 1 Peter, and the Apostolic decree (Acts 15:19–21), he argued that the first stage of catechetical material included baptism, the abstention from idolatry, murder and sexual immorality and the dualistic imagery of light and dark (Selwyn 1958, 369–372), while the central virtue was love (374). Selwyn identified the second stage of the catechism with an earlier proposal by Philip Carrington (1940). His analysis of this stage was grounded in parallels identified between Romans, Colossians, Ephesians, 1 Peter, and James. This catechism begins with baptism as the entry point into new life which necessitates certain renunciations, patterns of faith and worship (somewhat analogous to Seeberg's *Glaubensformel*) and social duties (Selwyn 1958, 389–423).

1.3.1.4 Common Presuppositions

It is important to note that, various disagreements and nuances aside, the above authors (and the majority of scholars in the first half of the 20th century) agreed on four major points: (1) the existence of the *kerygma* or *catechesis* (variously defined), (2) the ability of scholars to identify it especially through the use of *Formgeschichte* (at least in general outline), (3) the utility of Acts for reconstructing early Christian preaching and (4) the essential unity of the early church necessary to support such theses.[20] It is, however, precisely these four points that have become increasingly seen as problematic.[21]

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[19] He was, in particular, drawing on Carrington 1940, though he notes his indebtedness to Martin Dibelius as well. Citations for Selwyn are from the 1958 second edition.

[20] Note, however, the exceptions listed above, p. 4 n. 11.

[21] I have omitted here the overlapping history of scholarship on virtue and vice lists; for this see Edsall 2012, 417–420, 430–431.

1.3.2 Dismantling the Kerygma and Catechism

1.3.2.1 Ulrich Wilckens and Acts

While confidence about these various reconstructions varied from scholar to scholar, it was not until the final three points of agreement listed above came under increasing fire that the quest for the *kerygma* and catechesis began to waver. In 1963 Ulrich Wilckens published *Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte* in which he contested the then popular view of Dibelius (among others) that the speeches in the early part of Acts could be explored for content of the earliest *kerygma*.[22] Wilckens argued on the contrary that the speeches were inextricably linked to their literary contexts and accordingly could not be treated as foreign remnants of an older stratum of tradition (Wilckens 1974, 71).[23] He then examined the connections made by Dibelius between 1 Cor 15:3–8, 1 Thess 1:9–10 and the early speeches in Acts concluding that there are, at best, minor agreements and that Paul's letters display quite a different emphasis (Wilckens 1974, 77–86). Arguing instead that Luke worked backwards from later missionary preaching to construct speeches he thought fitting for the speakers, Wilckens' arguments effectively undermined the basis for Seeberg's, Dibelius' and Dodd's reconstructions.[24]

Furthermore, Wilckens' argument that Luke appears to be dependent on Paul (Wilckens 1974, 89) touches on another issue in the works of Seeberg *et al*., which is worth reflecting on here. The cross-textual form-critical approach to early Christian teaching, as discussed above, does not sufficiently account for the possibility of direct lines of influence between the parallels cited.[25] Seeberg and Selwyn especially present their evidence as though it were spread evenly across the NT texts, but upon closer examination one can easily see that the majority of the evidence is Pauline.[26] What then is the evidence that

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[22] Citations for this work are from the 1974 second edition.

[23] Cf. already Baur 1875, 61.

[24] Note that Graham Stanton, who disputed many of Wilckens' conclusions, still offered criticisms of form-critical assumptions concerning the *Sitz im Leben* of texts and was less optimistic about establishing the theological outlook of the church at any given time or the details of its missionary preaching (Stanton 1974, 6, 115).

[25] A similar problem attends the more recent work of E. Earle Ellis 1999, on which see Edsall 2012, 432–433.

[26] So Crouch 1972, 15–16 on Seeberg. This applies to the use of the criterion of "repeated occurrence" in Eriksson 1998, 97 and n. 115 (who is drawing explicitly on earlier form-critical criteria, 81 and *passim*) where the death of Christ "for" believers in 1 Cor 8:11 is only identified as being repeated in other *Pauline* texts with no discussion of their rhetorical context in each passage. Eriksson is on better grounds, however, insofar as this particular formulation is part of the tradition cited in 1 Cor 15:3. It is this link, rather than any appeal to "repeated occurrence," that identifies the phrase as "traditional." Similarly, in Eriksson's discussion of 1 Cor 10:16 (117), the form-critical criteria are problematic, but the passage it-

these "catechetical" themes were present in other areas of the early Christian movement? In fact, this critique is even more pronounced for Selwyn's arguments since he attributes many of the similarities between 1 Peter and 1 Thessalonians to the fact that Peter and Paul list Silvanus as co-author (or possibly as *amanuensis*; διὰ Σιλουανοῦ, 1 Pet 5:12), placing 1 Peter even closer to the Pauline orbit.

1.3.2.2 Erhardt Güttgemanns and Form Criticism

With Erhardt Güttgemanns' publication of his *Offene Fragen zur Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (1967, 2nd ed. 1971, ET 1979), another of the supports for reconstructions like those of Seeberg collapsed. Although he was concerned principally with the Gospels, many of his observations undermined the entire project of form criticism. In a move that anticipates what came to be known in Anglophone scholarship as the literary turn, Güttgemanns noted that the "anti-individualist" approach of the form-critic is not able to take the author of the text into account (Güttgemanns 1979, 103). This strikes at the heart of Dibelius' argument that the hortatory material in Paul's letters was general and unconnected to the given situation, a position that was followed by many scholars.[27] Further, he noted that "hypothetical reconstruction of the pre-history" of these forms is necessarily dependent on the ways in which the authors use them (104). That is, we are at the mercy of the final form of the text for our ability to isolate pre-textual traditions. Drawing also on Wilckens' arguments, Güttgemanns denied the value of Acts for reconstructing early Christian teaching and he concluded that

> "ur-historical" territory seems to be a pretty shaky terrain, because of the often considerable differences in the traditio-historical results in each case, and it is necessary to persuade oneself of its safety, since the evolutionary implications of the method [of form criticism] produce only false hopes and scientific phantoms. (311)

He levels similar critiques against Dodd noting also that Paul's statements in 1 Cor 11:23–25 and 15:3–7 "concern not the reconstructed Markan 'outline' but the passion narrative" (316), thus severing the connection between the early Pauline evidence and the gospels and calling form-critical synthesis across these texts into question. Turning finally to Seeberg, Güttgemanns rejects what he sees as a confused mixture of *Form-* and *Religionsgeschichte* but the center of his criticism is Seeberg's concept of "an ancient, all encompassing

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self can be linked with explicitly identified tradition in 11:23–25; cf. his problematic appeal to repetition of 1 Cor 12:13 in Gal 3:26–28; Col 3:10–11; Eph 6:8 and Ignatius *Smyrn*. 1:2 (127–128 and n. 263), all of which have clear direct ties to Paul and his letters and so do not obviously indicate "that the tradition was widespread and well-known" at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians.

[27] But see the criticism in Furnish 1968, 68–69.

credo" (319). Without Acts to provide crucial material and the form-critical framework to support syntheses across the various New Testament texts, this was no longer a viable theory in his eyes.

1.3.2.3 Disunity and James Dunn

Also crucial to Güttgemann's criticisms was his correct assessment that the arguments of Seeberg *et al.* were based on a presupposition of the unity of the early church, a unity that Güttgemanns thought was no longer tenable (Güttgemanns 1979, 317). In this he was not alone. A steady stream of scholars had long denied the unity of the early church that a widespread *kerygma* or catechesis requires. Of immediate relevance to our project are the criticisms of Ernst Käsemann. Reacting to the heritage of his teacher, Rudolf Bultmann, Käsemann argued "[t]here is no uniform and steady development of the whole church" but rather "many currents" and "a great variety of traditions."[28] Any unity there is in the New Testament witness "is provided by an early catholicizing and more or less orthodox Church's interest in normative doctrine."[29]

In this context of the decline of form criticism and apparent fragmentation of early Christianity, James D. G. Dunn produced his incisive *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (1977, 2nd ed. 1990, 3rd ed. 2006). In a sweeping statement that bears quoting in full, Dunn dismisses the work of Dodd and Seeberg.

> The second [pitfall of study of primitive confessional formulae] is the danger of looking for a single unified creed – the danger of making a patchwork quilt of bits and pieces from here and there in the NT and hailing it as a seamless robe. This was the weakness of Dodd's reconstruction of the primitive kerygma. And A. Seeberg fell into the same trap in his pioneering study in our present area of concern. The temptation here is to pick out confessional forms from diverse strands of the primitive tradition and to group them together into a single formula, disregarding questions about their original life-settings. In such a case 'the Church's primitive confession of faith' is nothing more than an uneven amalgam of disparate elements bonded together by twentieth-century methodology. (Dunn 1977, 34)[30]

He takes up a similar critique of the theories of Selwyn where he subsumes them under the tendency towards "pan-liturgism" (Dunn 1977, 141–148).

Dunn's criticism here is certainly justified and Selwyn provides a perfect instantiation of the problem in such a widespread synthetic approach. Selwyn lays out the various parallels in a set of charts (Selwyn 1958, 369–372, 389–423), which, while impressive at first glance, are in fact misleading. In an effort to present the parallels in the most easily accessible way, he is forced to

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[28] For his own account of his break with Bultmann's idealism, see Käsemann 1988, 328–331.

[29] Käsemann 1973, 242, cf. Käsemann 1988, 332.

[30] See also Cullmann 1943, 6.

use one text as the base of the pattern (usually from 1 Peter) and rearrange the other texts in the chart to match. This leads to the impression that the catechetical material adduced by Selwyn occurs in the same order when very often material from disparate parts of a text are juxtaposed, even with the order reversed, to show the "form" more clearly. Furthermore, as noted above, the assumption of the representative quality of Pauline letters and the possibility of influence of one text (or author) on another renders judgments about the spread of common themes difficult. The facile synthesis attempted by Selwyn, and Seeberg before him, begs questions of textual relationships, influence, dating, and many others – too many questions to be convincing.

What is particularly interesting about Dunn's treatment is the small amount of space he gives to refuting these various theories. Apparently, by 1977, he felt that the variety of the New Testament witnesses was established clearly enough to become his operating assumption. Indeed, in the end he identifies a single unifying element in early Christianity.

> [T]he unity between the historical Jesus and the exalted Christ, that is to say, the conviction that the wandering charismatic preacher from Nazareth had ministered, died and been raised from the dead to bring God and man finally together, the recognition that the divine power through which they now worshipped and were encountered and accepted by God was one and the same person…[31]

Thus, a unified *kerygma* or catechetical framework that underlies the New Testament texts is designated as a scholarly fiction.

1.3.3 Early Christian Teaching After Form Criticism

In the wake of criticisms such as those leveled by Dunn, the quest for the preaching and/or teaching of the early church had a very different, more restrained, quality. For instance, in 1980 James McDonald proposed a structural analysis of early Christian teaching, rightly arguing that the terms *kerygma* and *didache* were scholarly constructs based on a false opposition between preaching and ethical teaching and so were not useful categories for analyzing early Christian instruction (McDonald 1980, 1–7). Rather, McDonald proposed dividing relevant materials into different *modes* of communication: Propheteia, Paraclesis and Homily, Paranesis and Catechesis, and Paradosis. Of these four categories, Paradosis "is a fundamental form of Christian communication. It is 'of first importance' (1 Cor. 15:1). It differs from our first three structures – *propheteia*, *paraclesis*, and *paraenesis* – in that it provides them with basic data…its centre, its substance, is inviolate" (McDonald 1980, 124). This sounds very much like the relation between the *Glaubensformel* and *Missionspredigt* already argued by Seeberg (1903, 154). Furthermore, in

[31] Dunn 1977, 369. This conclusion regarding the unifying significance of Christ was anticipated by Käsemann 1963.

determining the content of this tradition, McDonald is forced to rely on previous form-critical analyses, thus opening him up to the critiques leveled against his predecessors.

Eugene Lemcio responded to Dunn's analysis with two articles (restated in Lemcio 1991) in which he identified "six constant items" within the *kerygmatic* core of the New Testament message: "(1) God who (2) sent (Gospels) or raised (3) Jesus. (4) A response (receiving, repentance, faith) (5) towards God (6) brings benefits (variously described)."[32] It should be noted that the *kerygmatic* frame resulting from his work is decidedly minimal. Further, at almost every point these statements admit a variety of interpretations (e.g., the benefits are "variously described"). Further, this analysis says nothing of the early teaching on morality, community formation, ethics, or any other non-core topic. In the end, his analysis is more suggestive than exhaustive.

In recent years scholarly approaches to early Christian teaching have varied, ranging from those who largely ignore questions regarding the *content* of such teaching, an approach that dominates the field, to those who adopt the presuppositions and methods of those already criticized.[33] Neither of these options is sufficient: the first fails to inquire after an important aspect of the development and internal relations of the nascent Christian movement and the second fails to escape the pitfalls of previous form-critical approaches.

If one is to attend to the question of the content of early Christian teaching and preaching, as I contend one should, certain lessons from previous attempts must be taken to heart. Form criticism, with its attendant synthetic approach across a number of texts, is too problematic a basis for reconstructing anything other than a general pastiche of recurrent early Christian themes. A new approach must treat texts as whole cloth, attending to their rhetoric and supplying a nuanced view of their referential value. Further, mining the speeches in Acts for the earliest Christian preaching is problematic in light of their literary function and context. And, finally, one must not start with the determinative presupposition of a unified early church.

Excursus 1: A Note on Recent Studies of Paul's Teaching

The approach to early Christian formative instruction, outlined below, has a number of things in common with certain features of scholarly literature specifically on Paul's missionary work. These studies are similar in many respects to those discussed above, with older scholarship pursuing a form-criti-

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[32] Lemcio 1988, 6; cf. Lemcio 1990, 7–8.

[33] See Edsall 2012, 432–433 for a discussion of Reinbold 2000 (a prosopographical approach, denying unified catechetical material), Ellis 1999 (a traditional form-critical approach, affirming unified early Christian teaching), and Schnabel 2004 (a mixed approach, denying a fixed early Christian missionary sermon).

cal reconstruction[34] and more recent scholarship employing different methods. For the most part, studies in the 21st century have focused on Paul's work in particular locations – Börschel (2001) on Thessalonica and Chester (2003) on Corinth. These works are addressed throughout my argument, including Excursus 2. Two very recent works on Paul's establishment of communities and their character, worth singling out briefly here, are James C. Hanges' *Paul, Founder of Churches* (Hanges 2012) and Claire Smith's *Pauline Communities as 'Scholastic Communities'* (Smith 2012). Hanges argues carefully that Paul's establishment of communities should be seen in relation to Greco-Roman cult "founders" and "cult transfers" in which a founder figure set up a cultic association (which he argues is the closest analogy to Pauline communities), and provided the association charter as well as teaching on cultic matters, social behavior and, importantly, providing a foundational narrative within which the association was to place themselves (Hanges 2012, 47–139). He does not claim that this analogy exhausts the explanation of Paul's work, but that it explains certain elements of it in terms that were native to Paul's original context and audience (Hanges 2012, 462, *passim*). As will become clear, the role of a cult "founder" identified by Hanges does indeed have significant parallels to Paul's work, though it needs to be mentioned that the evidence base for Hanges' analogy is relatively narrow and he is occasionally forced to extrapolate generalities from single examples, as in the case of his comparison of Pauline teaching on sexual ethics and other cult founders (408).

Smith's work is of a different character, focusing on the character of Pauline communities. Smith classifies them as "learning communities," adapting Edwin Judge's phrase "scholastic communities" (Smith 2012, 388–391). According to Smith, this means that Paul deliberately set up his communities (though she focuses on 1 Corinthians and the Pastorals) in such a way that teaching and learning was a continual process. While this is an interesting argument, it is not without its limitations. In the first place, her approach of examining "teaching vocabulary" in Paul's letters does not differentiate between Paul's initial teaching, Paul's teaching in his letter, other teaching activity within the community or even divine instruction. These are not all "teaching" in the same sense and it leads to somewhat vague conclusions about the significance of who was teaching whom, about what, how, where, and why (note esp. the charts in her appendices, 396–493). Therefore, while Smith argues *that* learning (of various stripes) was of central importance for Paul's communities, she does not devote much space to *what* they were learning, which is of course the purpose of this study. Furthermore, her use of the Pastorals as comparative material with 1 Corinthians is problematic since

[34] E.g., Bussmann 1971 with bibliography of earlier attempts, and as recently as Pak 1991; cf. Edsall 2012, 428 for criticism.

many scholars view these as later, non-Pauline compositions written in a situation with a reified tradition and community structure. If that is the case, then the importance of teaching and learning in that setting is not necessarily representative of Paul's practice and a lack of sustained interaction with other non-disputed Pauline letters weakens her case. Finally, the fact *that* the Corinthians were continually instructing each other, even at Paul's instigation, does not mean that *what* they taught was valid in Paul's eyes. Indeed, that does not seem to have been the case, as his extensive corrections in 1 and 2 Corinthians suggest.

1.4 Early Christian Teaching: A Pauline Approach

In light of the above survey, a number of courses could fruitfully be charted. One could proceed by assembling the wide range of material extant from early Christianity and present patterns that emerge without attempting to link these main contours to any historical period with accuracy. However, these contextually disconnected patterns are too often in the eye of the beholder. Instead, this study will pursue evidence that *can* be tied to an early historical period with a procedure duly chastened in light of previous attempts.

As noted, the reconstructions provided by scholars in the first half of the 20th century went beyond the available evidence. The fact is that *Paul* is our best and earliest contemporary witness to the nascent Christian movement, in spite of the fact that his testimony poses its own problems (in particular regarding the extent to which "Pauline" Christianity can be considered representative or the use of his highly rhetorical letters for the purposes of historical reconstruction).[35] Introducing parallels from other periods of church history begs the questions of influence and anachronism.

Therefore, our point of departure here will be to ask what is *Paul's witness* to his initial teaching in his churches. This is not to insist at the start on a total uniformity in Paul's teaching at every locale, but merely to take seriously, at least on a provisional basis, Paul's own claim that there were certain things which he taught ἐν πάσῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ (1 Cor 4:17; cf. 14:33).

Importantly, Paul also provides evidence, indirect though it is, regarding the relationship between what he called "my gospel" (Rom 2:16) and the teaching provided by other early Christian teachers (cf. Rom 6:17). Thus, while the analysis focuses on Paul's teaching and Paul's letters, the trajectory

[35] But cf. the pertinent comments of Ginzburg 1999, 24–25: "Sources are neither open windows, as the positivists believe, nor fences obstructing vision, as the skeptics hold: if anything, we could compare them to distorting mirrors. The analysis of the specific distortion of every specific source already implies a constructive element. But construction…is not incompatible with proof…Knowledge (even historical knowledge) is possible" (25).

of the project will point beyond Paul to wider early Christian instruction. The move, then, is from establishing the outlines of Paul's teaching in churches he himself founded to a comparison of that teaching with the presumed prior instruction in his letter to the Roman Christian communities which were founded by others. In this process, points of convergence and divergence between the two suggest places where Paul considers his own teaching to line up with or differ from that of others.[36]

This study, then, is an attempt to re-open the question of formative early Christian instruction and place the results on a firmer methodological foundation than form criticism provides. In doing so, I will partially confirm the current consensus that there was no fixed formative instruction (in terms either of a *kerygma* and *didache* or catechesis) that extended throughout the early church by the middle of the first century CE. On the other hand, my argument will pose a challenge to the minimalist conclusions of this consensus, well represented by Ernst Käsemann and James Dunn, by identifying a remarkable breadth in Paul's teaching as well as his presumed agreement with a non-Pauline community. The expected continuity is not reducible to Jesus of Nazareth as Christ the risen Lord, but includes a whole host of cosmological, eschatological, ethical and practical matters.

The argument that ensues takes place in three parts. In Part I, I lay out the method for this study. Part II takes up the bulk of the space with an investigation of Paul's formative instruction evident in two of his letters, 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians. I close the main argument in Part III by comparing Paul's teaching with the framework of formative instruction presumed in his letter to the Romans, which was written to communities founded by teachers other than Paul. To begin, I now turn to answer the question, "How does one find Paul's teaching?"

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[36] See the justification for use of these letters in §2.2.4.