

παραδίδωμι G4140 (*paradidōmi*), to hand down, pass on, transmit; παράδοσις G4142 (*paradosis*), tradition.

^{CL} 1. *paradidōmi* is found in Gk. from Plato onwards, meaning to hand down, pass on instruction from teacher to pupil (e.g. *Theaet.* 36, 198b). (For its other meanings, to hand over, deliver up, see → Judgment, art. παραδίδωμι.) In the sense of handing down instruction *paradidōmi* is also found in Aristotle, Polybius, Plutarch and others. In the Hellenistic mysteries the word is used in connexion with the delivery of a *hieros logos* (holy teaching) (cf. *Theon Smyrnaeus*, ed. E. Hiller, 1878, 14; Strabo, 10, 3, 7; Diodorus 5, 48, 4: *Corp. Herm.* 1, 32; 13, 15 and passim; and the Lat. equivalent *tradere* in Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 1, 13, 29 and Apuleius, *Met.* 9, 21). It is significant that Philo uses the word in similar fashion (e.g. *Vit. Mos.* 1, 23 and passim).

2. The noun *paradosis* is found from Thucydides onwards meaning, actively, handing down (e.g. in Plato, Epictetus) and, passively, that which is handed down (e.g. in *Corp. Herm.* 13, 22b and many gnostic writings. On the gnostic view of tradition see K. Wegenast, op. cit., 123 ff. It is possible that *paradosis* acquired its technical sense of “tradition” only through gnosticism.

^{OT} 1. The handing down of sagas, narratives, laws and lists of names occurred even in pre-historic Israel, but tradition properly so called, with its own terminology and self-awareness, came into being only when Judaism was confronted with aggressive Hellenism in the last two centuries B.C. and with Christianity in the 1st century A.D. Part of the new terminology was the Heb. equivalent

Plato Plato (c. 427–347 B.C.)

Theaet Theaetetus

. *Theaetetus*

art. article

Strabo Strabo (c. 63 B.C.–after A.D. 21)

Corp. Herm Corpus Hermeticum (anonymous Hell. writings of 2nd–3rd cents. A.D.)

. *Corpus Hermeticum* (anonymous Hell. writings of 2nd–3rd cents. A.D.)

Cicero Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.)

Met Metamorphoses

. *Metamorphoses*

Philo Philo of Alexandria (c. 50 B.C.–A.D. 45), also known as Philo Judaeus

Vit. Mos De Vita Mosis

. *De Vita Mosis*

Plato Plato (c. 427–347 B.C.)

Corp. Herm Corpus Hermeticum (anonymous Hell. writings of 2nd–3rd cents. A.D.)

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op. cit. opere citato (Lat.), in the work quoted

of *paradidōmi*, the important word *māsar*, which referred to the strictly regulated process of handing down received expositions of the law (cf. Aboth 1:1 “Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua”; similarly Peah 2:6 and *passim*).

2. Philo and Josephus, in common with profane Gk., use the noun *paradosis* to mean both “handing down” and “that which is handed down”, and Josephus characteristically uses the term *tēn paterōn paradosin*, the tradition of the fathers, for the scribes’ oral exposition of the Torah (*Ant.* 13, 409; cf. 10, 51; 13, 297; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 4, 150). The LXX, however, confines the word to its pass. sense (2 Esd. 7:26; Jer. 32:4 [39:4]; 34:2 [41:2]), the act. sense always being expressed by the vb. The Heb. equivalent is *māsōret*, which occurs in the OT only in Ezek. 20:37f. (Theodotion translates it here by *paradosis*), where it probably means a bond, obligation to the covenant.

In the period of the Tannaim *māsōret* carries a double meaning: (a) the tradition which safeguards the integrity of the biblical text; (b) non-halachic tradition. Aboth 3:14 gives a characteristic description of the function of tradition in the Jewish sense: “The tradition is a fence around the Law.”

^{NT} 1. In the NT the vb. *paradidōmi*, besides meaning to hand over, deliver up (→ Judgment), also conveys the idea of handing down tradition.

(a) In Mk. 7:13, “you make void the word of God through your tradition which you hand on”, the obj. of *paradidōmi* is the rabbinic halachah (exposition of the law); i.e. the vb. is used here in its normal Jewish sense. Similarly, it occurs in Acts 6:14 in the witnesses’ testimony against Stephen who is alleged to have said that Jesus would change the customs which Moses had delivered. In Acts 16:4 Luke uses *paradidōmi* in connexion with the *dogmata*, decisions, of the apostolic council which Paul delivered to the churches in Lycaonia and elsewhere.

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Josephus Flavius Josephus (c. A.D. 37–97)

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Ant Antiquitates Judaicae (Jewish Antiquities)

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Philo Philo of Alexandria (c. 50 B.C.–A.D. 45), also known as Philo Judaeus

Spec. Leg De Specialibus Legibus

. *De Specialibus Legibus*

LXX Septuagint(al)

pass. passive

act. active

obj. object

The use of *paradidōmi* in Lk. 1:2 is significant. Here its obj. is the oral *diēgēsis* or the account of those who “from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word”, the account being that of the events of Jesus’ life. (On the relationship between Lk. himself and the eyewitnesses, the “many”, who before Lk. had undertaken to compile a narrative of these matters, see G. Klein, “Lk. 1, 1–4 als theologisches Programm”, in E. Dinkler, ed., *Zeit und Geschichte*, 1964, 193 ff.) The *historia Jesu* has now taken the place of the exposition of the law as a tradition to be handed down.

(b) In Paul *paradidōmi* occurs 4 times in the sense of to deliver, commit (Rom. 6:17; 1 Cor. 11:2, 23; 15:3). Of these passages Rom. 6:17 is probably a gloss (cf. Wegenast, op. cit., 179); the subject of *paradidōmi*, here used in the pass., is not a teaching, but by contrast men who are “committed” to a form of doctrine. This use of the word has its roots in the mystery religions.

On the other hand, in 1 Cor. 11:2, 23 and 15:3 the obj. of the vb. is Christian doctrines. 1 Cor. 11:2 refers to instructions “delivered” by Paul at an earlier time, but since these instructions are not explicitly named, it is uncertain whether Paul means that he has passed on to the Corinthians instructions which he himself has received, or whether he is referring to his own commands as being particularly important and binding, in which case Paul himself would have to be regarded as the source of the tradition. In the two other Cor. passages, however, he explicitly states that he himself has received the tradition before passing it on.

In 1 Cor. 11:23 he names the “Lord” as the source of the tradition: *egō gar parelabon apo tou kyriou, ho kai paredōka hymin*, “for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you.” The phrase “from the Lord” is not a reference to an immediate revelation, nor an abbreviation for a continuous tradition; rather it expresses Paul’s belief that as the ensuing “words of institution” of the Lord’s Supper are handed down, the Lord himself speaks; and to Paul, *his* word is of supreme authority (cf. 1 Cor. 9:14). Any allusion here to a continuity of tradition in the rabbinic sense is unlikely, since Paul nowhere makes use of any such idea. He who can boast of a private revelation (Gal. 1:16 and passim) can appeal to a current tradition if it will help to further the gospel or if the unity of the gospel is to be stressed, but he certainly has no need to plead the authority of any continuous tradition.

In 1 Cor. 15:3 *paredōka* is not qualified by any reference to the source of the tradition, but linguistic evidence points to at least v. 3ff. as stemming from the earliest church tradition (cf. H. Conzelmann in *Interpretation* 20, 1966, 15 ff.).

obj. object

op. cit. opere citato (Lat.), in the work quoted

pass. passive

obj. object

The fact that in these passages Paul not only quotes the existing tradition but in each case interprets and modifies it (cf. Wegenast, *Das Verständnis der Tradition*, 1962, 52 ff. 93 ff.), shows how distinct his view of tradition was from that of the rabbis, who regarded it as of fundamental importance that the received tradition be passed on unchanged. To Paul, therefore, *paradidōmi* does not mean “to pass on unchanged”, but to pass on in a sense which permits the tradition to be modified to meet present needs. ([Ed.] Opinions differ on Paul’s use of tradition. For fuller discussions see → Proclamation, The Structure and Content of the Early Kerygma.)

(c) The situation is different in 2 Pet. 2:21: *hē paradotheisa ... entolē*, the commandment delivered, and Jude 3: *hē paradotheisa tois hagiois pistis*, the faith which was delivered to the saints; here commandment and → faith are to be seen as tradition which, being fixed once and for all, must be preserved intact.

(d) There are, then, 3 types of tradition in the NT expressed by *paradidōmi*; the following are said to be handed down: (i) the Jewish Halachah (Mk. 7:13; Acts 6:14; cf. Acts 16:4); (ii) early Christian narratives about Jesus (Lk. 1:2); (iii) confessions of faith and rules for the conduct of the church’s life (1 Cor. 11:2, 23; 15:3ff.; 2 Pet. 2:21; Jude 3).

The difference between Paul’s usage and that of the rabbis (also that of 2 Pet. and Jude) is that for Paul tradition is not sacrosanct; this adj. can be applied only to the → gospel, which is anterior to all tradition and which he received by revelation (cf. Gal. 1:6ff.). Thus the nuances in the meaning of *paradidōmi* reflect the development of Christianity from a charismatic movement to a church safeguarding its own tradition. An ever-increasing time-lag occurred between, on the one hand, the events which inaugurated Christianity, namely Christ’s life, death and resurrection, and, on the other hand, the actualities of the church’s life. It is of course true that preaching interpreted the past, but the church still had to face the immense problem of how to keep in touch with her origins. Hence “tradition” came to play a vital role, and in this context the following vbs. should also be noted: first, the vb. corresponding to *paradidōmi*, namely *paralambanō*, to receive; then *kēryssō*, to proclaim; *homologeō*, to confess; *didaskō*, to teach; and *euangelizomai*, to preach the gospel.

2. The noun *paradosis* is used in the NT, as in the LXX, only in the sense of “that which is handed down”, i.e. teaching, doctrine. It occurs only in Mk. 7, Matt. 15 and 5 Pauline passages.

(a) In Mk. 7:3, 5 (par. Matt. 15:2), as in Josephus, the phrase *paradosis tōn paterōn/presbyterōn* (tradition of the fathers/elders) means the fathers’ tradition of the law which is not laid down in

[Ed.] Editor, denoting an insertion by the editor

adj. adjective

LXX Septuagint(al)

par. parallel, and parallel(s)

Josephus Flavius Josephus (c. A.D. 37–97)

the Bible, and which Jesus in the same context (Mk. 7:8) calls “the tradition of men” (cf. SB I 691 ff.). According to Mk. 7, this rabbinic exposition of the law is in conflict with God’s will (cf. Gal. 1:14). In 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15 Paul’s instructions are called *paradoseis*. Before 2 Thess. 2:15 is seen as a classic proof-text for the Roman Catholic principle of tradition (namely both written and oral tradition), it should be borne in mind that *paradoseis* here does not consist of a fixed canon of writings handed down and supplemented by oral tradition, but refers to the apostle’s written and oral admonitions to the church, which the church has duly accepted (cf. 2 Thess. 3:6).

(b) The passages dealt with so far probably show the influence of Jewish “tradition”-terminology, but this is not so in Col. 2:8. Here the phrase *paradosis tou anthrōpou* does not mean Jewish exposition of the law as in Mk. 7:8, but is a polemical way of referring to the “traditions” which his Colossian opponents regard as revelations of the elemental spirits of the universe (→ στοιχεῖα). The Colossian believers are not to receive such “traditions”, since they have already “received” Christ Jesus (v. 6).¹

SB H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, I–VI, 1926–61

¹ K. Wegenast, “Παραδίδωμι,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 773–775.