I. Introduction

"It was in Antioch that the disciples first got the name of Christians" — so Acts XI, 26 tells us. They were called Christians, because they were adherents of "(the) Christ". Acts XI 25 mentions the teaching activity of Barnabas and Paul in Antioch, and, indeed, it is in the letters of Paul that the word <XPI~TOS is used most often in the New Testament, either together with the name Jesus or independently. And hardly as title, rather as a second "proper" name, virtually interchangeable with "Jesus". Perhaps we may draw a comparison between the use of the names "Jesus" and "Christ", together and apart, and that of "Simon" and "Peter" in the case of the well-known apostle.

In any case two things are clear, as N. A. Dahl and W. Kramer have shown: First that Paul's use of <XPI~TOS is determined by what happened to Jesus of Nazareth. "Der Christus-Name ist bei Paulus kein von der Person und dem Werk Jesu Christi ablösbare Titel." The use as a name presupposes a complete "christianization" of the title. Secondly, Paul's use of this appellation goes back to an earlier use of the word, which is equally "christianized". After the careful investigations of W. Kramer in his Christos Kyrios Gottessohn two facts stand out:


4. Especially p. 15-60.
First, that the title χριστός is especially used in connection with the expressions πιστεύειν εἰς (πίστις), κηρύσσειν, το εὐαγγέλιον and ἀπόστολος. This means that the title χριστός is connected with the proclamation of the gospel by those who were authorized to preach it, and with the confessing of the faith — particularly at baptism. K. Berger has rightly connected this use of the word with the tradition of the prophet, anointed with the Spirit, which he finds in Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah and elsewhere.\(^5\)

Many other texts show that χριστός was also particularly used in formulas speaking of the death of Jesus and in double formulas dealing with his death and resurrection. (Not in the oldest formulas that speak of the resurrection only; they mainly mention God as subject and Jesus as object). It is here, especially, that W. Kramer arrives at the conclusion that the word χριστός is entirely “filled” with what Christians testify concerning Jesus, particularly his death on behalf of (ὑπὲρ) others, and his resurrection. The missionary preaching with which χριστός is connected has completely altered the contents of the title.\(^6\)

How can we explain this early, frequent and completely Christian use of the word χριστός? At least two problems ask for a solution. First, that of the relation between the Christian use of the word and Jesus’ use of it. We shall not go into that problem here, but simply note that the infrequent use of the title χριστός in the Synoptic Gospels, particularly in Mark, and their tendency to portray Jesus as avoiding the use of that word (or at least being very cautious in using it), are generally thought to reflect a historical situation. Jesus must have assigned to himself a crucial position in God’s dealings with mankind, but it is not certain that he called himself “the Messiah”\(^7\).

---


6. Again K. BERGER (op. cit., p. 398f.) has tried to explain this against the background of the tradition of the anointed prophet, legitimated by God through the gift of the Spirit. He makes a number of illuminating remarks about the vindication through exaltation of God’s prophetic servants, about the use of the term anointing in Rev. XI, 4 and about martyr-traditions in Judaism and early Christianity, but he fails to show why the χριστός - title was particularly connected with Jesus’ passion and death, and with his resurrection only in so far as this is mentioned together with his death.