

That Jesus, through his words and deeds, *shows* me a possibility for understanding my existence, which I can then decide either to accept or to reject, is what happens through a successful existentialist interpretation of the earliest layer of the synoptic tradition insofar as I understand it. But that, beyond this, Jesus becomes a word addressed to me personally that *gives* me existence is what may happen through the kerygma insofar as I understand it and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, decide to accept it through faith.

Of course, the kerygma could not have originated through the kerygma but only through an immediate experience of Jesus himself. Thus the pre-Easter decision of the disciples to “follow” Jesus may be understood as having been made on the basis of an experience and understanding of him as a word addressed to them personally that gave them existence; and the Jesus-kerygma, as distinct from the Christ-kerygma, may be understood to express their decision even as it calls upon others to concur in it. Then the decision of the disciples at Easter to continue to “follow” Jesus notwithstanding his crucifixion may be understood as having been made on the basis of a similar experience and understanding of him in spite—or, possibly, just because—of his death on the cross; and the Christ-kerygma, as distinct from the Jesus-kerygma, may be understood not only to express their decision even as it calls upon others to share it, but also to make more or less explicit the christological assertion that their decision implies.

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