

Is it true that Jesus is to be encountered only through the kerygma?

Yes, it's true—only one must be careful in saying so lest it be misleading or even false.

Allowing that there are good reasons for distinguishing what Marxsen means by “Jesus-kerygma” from what he calls “Christ-kerygma,” one would have to say that, although Jesus is indeed to be encountered only through the kerygma, he is to be encountered through the Jesus-kerygma as well as through the Christ-kerygma.

But if the Jesus-kerygma as such properly plays the role of primary existential-historical *authority*—the Christ-kerygma being but the explication of what is already implicit in the “*that*” of the Jesus-kerygma, as distinct from its “*what*”—it can also be made to play the role of primary empirical-historical *source*. That is, it can be used as the source from which to reconstruct Jesus' own kerygma. But, then, what is reconstructed as Jesus' own kerygma can itself be interpreted on the basis of the existential question, thereby encountering Jesus as its bearer as well as mediating a similar encounter with him to others. Moreover, if Bultmann is correct, that Jesus' own kerygma at least implied the christology that was subsequently made explicit in the witness of the church, to encounter Jesus through his own kerygma interpreted on the basis of the existential question is to be met with the same christological claim, albeit implicitly, that one encounters explicitly in the Christ-kerygma and that is already made implicitly in the Jesus-kerygma from which Jesus' own kerygma has to be reconstructed.

Thus, although it is true that Jesus is to be encountered only through the kerygma, it is not true that he is to be encountered only through the kerygma *as kerygma*, since he can also be encountered through the kerygma *as empirical-historical source*.

And yet the Jesus whom the Christian witness asserts to be the Christ is the Jesus who is to be encountered as the Christ through the kerygma *as*

*kerygma*—implicitly, through the Jesus-kerygma, and explicitly through the Christ-kerygma.

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