

1. Even if material attributed to Jesus in the Jesus traditions could be shown to be historically authentic, there remains the possibility that the reason it was—or continues to be—attributed to him is not empirical-historical, but rather existential-historical. Thus, for example, perhaps the reason for attributing to Jesus the sayings in the earliest stratum of the synoptic tradition, where he is represented as so speaking of the imminent reign of God and of the coming Son of Man as to imply an extraordinary claim for the significance of his own person and words (Lk 12:8 f.; Mk 8:38), was, really, an existential-historical reason.

2. In this case, someone today who would maintain at all costs that such material is historically authentic may do so with something like the same motivation. One maintains that Jesus in fact said or did something or other in order to express his decisive significance, ignoring or forgetting that doing this involves a category mistake. (It involves such a mistake because, whether Jesus did or did not say or do something has no bearing whatever on whether he has the meaning for me that I experience and express him to have.) But, then, the proper course is to insist on the logical priority of the question as to the reason(s) our sources include the materials they include. Do they include a particular saying or deed because someone assumed—rightly or wrongly—that it was empirical-historically true that Jesus did in fact say or do what is attributed to him, or do they include the material in question because someone took it to express, however appropriately or inappropriately, the decisive significance of Jesus that she or he was, above all, concerned to assert?

3. The situation is analogous to that in which someone today feels constrained to insist on the empirical truth of a mythical statement. For here, too, there is a category mistake, in that, whether or not the mythical statement were empirically true, the question would remain whether or not one was willing to accept the self-understanding of which it is the expression.

4. What is the moral of all this? The moral is that, although existential statements concerning the meaning of ultimate reality for us do indeed have both metaphysical implications about the structure of ultimate reality in itself and moral implications for how we are to act and what we are to do in

relation to others—in this agreeing with the catholic tradition—these implications, whether metaphysical or moral, are categorially different from both empirical (including empirical-historical) and pseudo-empirical (i.e., legendary and mythical) statements. Conversely, although existential statements about the meaning of ultimate reality for us are indeed categorially different from all empirical (including empirical-historical) and pseudo-empirical (i.e., legendary and mythical) statements—in this agreeing with Bultmann—these statements nevertheless do have metaphysical and moral implications, but for the truth of which they themselves could not possibly be true.

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