

Bultmann's formulations require to be improved on wherever they privilege not only the Christ-kerygma in general, but even the christology of cross and resurrection in particular, as *the* New Testament kerygma. This they do, for example, when Bultmann says, simply, that the NT's talking about Jesus' resurrection is "an expression of the significance of the cross" (NTM: 36). The truth of which this statement is, at best, a misleading formulation—judging even by Bultmann's own account of the emergence of christology—is that the NT's talking about resurrection is an expression of the decisive significance of *Jesus*. Singling out Jesus' *cross* (or, alternatively, his birth or his baptism) is itself already but a way of expressing the decisive significance of Jesus himself.

Significantly, not all of Bultmann's formulations are thus objectionable. In the context in which he asks about the point of mythological talk, he says the question becomes pressing whether its point "is not simply to express the significance of the historical figure of Jesus and his story, namely, their significance as saving figure and salvation occurrence." And he then answers the question by saying, "It seems clear enough that the point of statements about preexistence or virgin birth is indeed to express the significance of[, not the cross, but] the person of Jesus for faith. What he is for us is not exhausted by, in fact, does not even appear in, what he seems to be for ordinary historical observation. . . . [H]is real meaning becomes evident only when this way of asking questions is set aside. . . . [T]he significance of his story[, his cross] lies in what God wants to say to us through it. Thus his significance as a figure is not to be understood in an innerworldly context; in mythological language he comes from eternity, and his origin is not human or natural" (33).

In any case, to have explained clearly and consistently why it simply will not do to privilege either the Christ-kerygma generally or the christology of cross and resurrection in particular is the abiding contribution of Willi Marxsen. Nor is his contribution in any way diminished because all the grounds for this explanation are already given, in effect, by Bultmann himself in *Jesus* (1926)!

5 April 2010