

Assuming that Luther's interpretation of Paul points in the right direction, and that Bultmann's draws the necessary inference therefrom, I see the most direct and important connection between all three of their understandings and my own—at the very point where its appropriateness to Jesus Christ is widely supposed to be most open to objection!

According to Luther, what Paul means by our life, or righteousness, in Christ is not a *vita* or *justitia domestica* but a *vita* or *justitia aliena*. In other words, it's not something that we ever are or have in ourselves, but something that we always are or have only in Christ, by virtue of the free gift of God's love for us through him. To be sure, as Luther interprets Paul, he so restricts this understanding that it applies to this life only, life hereafter being radically different, in that what was theretofore not ours but solely God's now becomes our own, and we no longer live by faith but by sight, knowing as we ourselves are and ever have been known. And of course, Luther's own understanding, which closely tracks Paul's, is similarly restricted.

With Bultmann, however, any such radical difference between the terms of our life or righteousness in this life and in the next is expressly denied—and that on the warrant of an interpretation of Paul! Thus, in the concluding sentences of *Das Urchristentum*, Bultmann says: "Paul indeed speaks of the glory about to be revealed to us (Rom 8:18), of the eternal 'weight' of glory being prepared for us (2 Cor 4:17). But he likewise says that faith, hope, and love do not cease but abide even when 'the perfect' comes (1 Cor 13:13), which is to say, he can imagine no consummation in which the unworldly is simply a possession. In other words, the openness of Christian existence never ends" (233).

But what could possibly be meant by this except that our life or righteousness in Christ, not only in this life but in any other, is, in the words of the author of Colossians, "hidden with Christ in God" (3:3)? The openness of Christian existence never ends even when the perfect has come because our life or righteousness is never our own but always God's, never "domestic," but always "alien."

The conclusion seems all too obvious, then, that my understanding is entirely justified: "[T]he symbols of resurrection and immortality must be taken as pointing not to some other life beyond this life but to the abiding significance in God of this life itself. Which is to say that the only immortality or resurrection that is essential to Christian hope is not our own subjective survival of death, but our objective immortality or resurrection in God, our being finally accepted and judged by [God's] love, and thus imperishably united with all creation into [God's] own unending life" ("The Meaning of Christian Hope": 206).

In sum: The point of Luther's distinction between *vita domestica* and *vita aliena* and mine between subjective immortality and objective immortality are not different but the same.

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