

According to Bultmann, Paul's thought is that "God's act of salvation consists in his having instituted the 'ministry of reconciliation' or the 'word of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:18 f.), and that the *gospel* is the 'power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith' (Rom 1:16)" (*Existence and Faith*: 77). Or, again, he can say that, for Paul, "God has reconciled us with himself through Christ and has instituted the ministry (*διακονια*) or the word (*λογος*), i.e., the preaching, of reconciliation, so that the apostle lets his preaching be heard now in Christ's stead, nay, in God's stead" ("Das Verhältniss," etc.: 25). Or, yet again, Bultmann can say that the Christian proclamation says to its hearer that "in what happened in the past, however it may have happened, God has acted and that, through this action of God, the word of divine grace and judgment now encountering him is legitimated, indeed, that this action of God in its proper meaning is nothing other than instituting this word, proclaiming this word, itself" (*Glauben und Verstehen* 2:16).

But, then, this establishes the unique authority of the earliest Christian witness, which is precisely the original and originating and therefore constitutive form of the ministry or word of reconciliation whose institution is itself God's act of salvation.

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