

Bultmann's *Jesus* is not kerygma for the same reason that his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* is not kerygma—namely, because it is theology, i.e., existentialist interpretation of kerygma, as distinct from kerygma itself. (Significantly, Bultmann says explicitly that “one can speak of the proclamation of Jesus only as kerygma” [*Glauben und Verstehen* 1:172].) Of course, *Jesus* could be said to be *indirect* kerygma in the same sense in which all theology is “indirect address.”

But, surely Bultmann's *Jesus* is not *Christian* theology, because Jesus' proclamation is not *Christian* kerygma? In an important sense, indeed, it isn't. Bultmann is consistent in pointing out that “Jesus himself was not a ‘Christian,’ but from a historical standpoint stood within Judaism (although, to be sure, as one who broke through Jewish legalism).” Consequently, Jesus' kerygma is Jewish kerygma and Bultmann's *Jesus*, accordingly, is Jewish theology—in the sense in which his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* is Christian theology.

But there is another sense, perhaps even more important, in which Bultmann's *Jesus* is Christian theology after all. Actually, there are two somewhat different senses in which this may be claimed.

Clearly in *Jesus* no less than in all of his later writings, Bultmann represents Jesus' kerygma as at least implicitly Christian insofar as it involves an implicit christological claim. In other words, the Jesus who appears in this book, just as in all of Bultmann's other interpretations of him, is one who not only overcomes Jewish legalism in a radical way, but also makes a claim for the decisive significance of his own person. This is abundantly clear from the text that concludes the book (Mt 11:6) as well as from Bultmann's statement that, in holding Jesus to be the Messiah, “the earliest community . . . did not ascribe to him some special metaphysical being that gave his words authority, but rather confessed thereby, on the authority of his words, that God had made him the King of the community.”

But if this is one sense in which *Jesus* could be said to be Christian rather than Jewish theology (and one may reasonably claim that it is in this sense that Bultmann reckons Jesus' appearance and proclamation among the necessary historical presuppositions of the theology of the New Testament [*Theologie des Neuen Testaments*: 2]), there is yet another sense in which this could be said. By Bultmann's own express account, what he means by "Jesus" in this book—and, in his view, all that anyone could reasonably mean by the name, given the nature of the sources upon which any talk of Jesus must depend—is "the complex of ideas" of which Jesus is represented as the bearer in the earliest stratum of the synoptic tradition (*Jesus*: 15 f.). But this means, then, that, strictly speaking, Bultmann's Jesus is the Jesus of the Jesus-kerygma; and allowing (1) that one can indeed distinguish such a form of kerygma; and (2) that it is as much a form of *Christian* kerygma as the Christ-kerygma (or the Jesus-Christ-kerygma), there can hardly be any objection to saying that Bultmann's *Jesus* is Christian theology because it is, in fact, the existentialist interpretation of the Jesus-kerygma of the earliest Christian community.

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