

1. Christology, according to Bultmann is the explication of a decision—specifically the decision called for by Jesus' claim that his hearers' destiny is decided by their response to him, and thus his implicit claim to be the decisive saving act of God. Otherwise put, christology is the explication of obedience to Jesus and his word, the obedience that lets one's situation be disclosed as new through him, that acknowledges him to have been sent by God, to be the revelation of God.

2. But when was this decision first made? When did this act of obedience first take place? Bultmann makes clear that the decision first became explicit in the christology of the earliest community, insofar as it confessed that Jesus had been made the (imminently coming) Messiah by God's raising him from the dead. It might appear, then, that the decision of which this earliest christology is the explication was the decision made by the first disciples with their Easter faith.

3. As it happens, however, Bultmann is equally clear that the decision involved in the disciples' Easter faith was by way of their *re*-making the same decision they had already made once, during Jesus' lifetime, by "following" him. Their earlier decision, he argues, had to be made anew and radically in face of Jesus' crucifixion; and it actually was made with their Easter faith, becoming explicit to the extent they confessed that, by Jesus' resurrection, God had made him the Messiah. This means, then, that the decision of which christology is the explication is not (only) an Easter, but (also) a *pre*-Easter decision, even as it was an implicit decision before it was made explicitly.

4. But, then, what Bultmann says about the more fully developed christology of Paul as well as that of the earliest community has an interesting implication: "If Paul, like the earliest community, saw in Jesus the Messiah, he did nothing other than affirm Jesus' own claim that the destiny of women and men is decided with reference to his person" (*Existence and Faith*: 195 f.). One can say equally truly: "If Paul, like the earliest community, saw in Jesus the Messiah, he did nothing other than explicate the pre-Easter decision of the first disciples to 'follow' Jesus, and thus to affirm his implicit claim to be the decisive saving act of God."

5. But now suppose, hypothetically, that Jesus never made or implied any such claim, but that the first disciples who decided to "follow" him and who reaffirmed this decision anew and radically in face of his crucifixion by their decision at Easter had nevertheless made their decisions just as Bultmann holds them to have done. In that event, it would not be true to say, as he does, that, in affirming Jesus to be the Messiah, Paul did nothing other than affirm Jesus' own claim that his hearers' destiny is decided by their response to him. But it could still be true that Paul's explicit christological claim, like that of the first disciples themselves in their post-Easter confession of Jesus as the Messiah, did nothing other than explicitly affirm the pre-Easter decision of those same first disciples.

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