

According to Bultmann, "*das Eigentümliche der christlichen Religion ist . . . daß das Heil für den Menschen, daß das Gottesverhältnis vermittelt wird durch die geschichtliche Person Jesu von Nazareth und ihr Schicksal.*" Later in the same essay, he says, "*Nicht die Verkündigung eines neuen Gottesbegriffs . . . ist das Eigentümliche der Predigt Jesu, sondern die Behauptung, daß die Entscheidung ihm gegenüber die Entscheidung über Heil oder Gericht bedeutet*" ("*Urchristentum und Religionsgeschichte*": 9, 18).

By "*das Eigentümliche*" here Bultmann presumably means the same thing that is meant by the Latin word "*proprium*"—namely, what peculiarly, characteristically belongs to something as its own. But, then, if one takes his two statements together, he evidently means to say that what peculiarly, characteristically belongs to Christianity as its own is its having accepted the very claim that peculiarly, characteristically belongs to the preaching of Jesus as its own—namely, the claim that decision in relation to him himself means decision for either salvation or judgment. To accept this claim as valid is to affirm at least implicitly that salvation, relation to God, is indeed mediated through the historical person of Jesus and his fate.

Interestingly, Bultmann speaks in the same essay not only of "*das Eigentümliche der Predigt Jesu,*" but also of "*[d]as Entscheidende der Predigt Jesu,*" which he says is this —"*daß das Kommen der Gottesherrschaft bevorsteht, daß man ihr Hereinbrechen spürt, daß jetzt the letzte Stunde ist, die Stunde der Entscheidung und daß er selbst gesandt ist mit dem Wort der letzten Stunde, mit dem Ruf zur Entscheidung, daß also in der Annahme oder Verwerfung seines Wortes die Entscheidung über den Menschen fällt*" (18). Clearly, what is said to belong to Jesus' preaching as peculiarly, characteristically its own and what is said to be decisive about it are pretty much the same. But insofar as there is a difference between them, the first evidently lifts up Jesus' claim that his coming means the last hour for the world, that decision in relation to him himself means decision for either salvation or judgment, and so on—in short, Jesus' implicit christology. Thus, while Bultmann speaks of "eschatology," or "eschatological preaching," as "*eine Eigentümlichkeit der Verkündigung Jesu*" as well as of Paul and of early Christian faith (10); and while he insists that it is precisely this, rather than a new concept of God that is really new in Jesus over against the Old

Testament and Judaism as well as in Paul and the early community over against Jesus (17 f.), what he takes to be "**das Eigentümliche**" in Jesus' preaching is the claim he makes for himself—for the decisive significance of his own proclamation as God's last word before it is too late (18).

18 November 1997