

If there is a classic brief discussion of the whole question of "faith and history," surely it is Bultmann's discussion in *"Die Krisis des Glaubens."*

Historical science, he says, is generally regarded as creating a crisis for faith because it treats the New Testament critically and raises doubts about our knowledge of the historical Jesus, or because it places the Christian religion in the context of the general history of religion, thereby making it one more relative phenomenon among others.

But what the Christian proclamation communicates to us, he argues, is not at all a historical report about a piece of the past that we could test and either critically confirm or reject. Rather, it tells us that, in what happened in the past, however it may have happened, God has acted and that, through this action, the word of divine judgment and forgiveness now encountering us is legitimated, indeed, that the point of God's action is nothing other than establishing this word, proclaiming this word, itself. No historical science can control this assertion, either to confirm it or to reject it. For that this word and its proclamation are God's doing stands beyond historical observation.

Historical science becomes a crisis for faith only by virtue of the scandal that the Christian word of proclamation is asserted to be the legitimated word of God—namely, because we would like to control this uncontrollable assertion, because we claim to have criteria where, in the nature of the case, there can be no criteria.

But the same scandal is also the source of the crisis that arises from looking at things in the context of the general history of religion. To be sure, from a historical point of view, Christianity is one more relative phenomenon among others. But the scandalous Christian assertion is that a relative historical phenomenon, that this specific proclamation, is God's word. And this crisis is constant.

Incidentally, the parallel—indeed, convergence—is striking between what Bultmann says here about the Christian proclamation's not at all communicating to us a historical report and what Wittgenstein says about

Christianity's not being grounded on a historical truth, but issuing a call to faith.

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