

Bultmann claims that "a human being lives, not by the idea of God's grace, but by the grace that is spoken to him or her individually here and now" (KM, 3: ).

As true as it seems to me to be that a human being, indeed, does not live by the idea of God's grace, I question whether the alternative that Bultmann formulates, or, at any rate, intends to formulate, is the only alternative that needs to be considered.

In the first place, a human being lives by the actuality, or event, of grace, whether this be the grace of creation or the grace of redemption. But on the assumption that God could not conceivably fail to act graciously both in creating and redeeming any world that could even possibly exist, every human being in every moment of his or her existence lives by the actuality of God's grace or, at any rate, has the possibility of so living, because God has always already--preveniently--acted graciously toward him or her individually here and now. This is the case, indeed, whether or not he or she is explicitly aware of it, and even if he or she may explicitly deny it.

But because or insofar as there are risks attendant upon both not being explicitly aware of God's grace and explicitly denying its actuality, a human being needs grace to be explicitly represented, and, in that sense, spoken, to him or her. In this sense or to this extent, it is true that a human being lives (also) by the grace that is spoken to him or her individually here and now.

For Bultmann, however, this is already to say that a human being lives by the grace that is spoken to him or her in (or through) Jesus Christ. But, once again, there is another alternative, since one's need for grace to be explicitly represented could quite possibly be met by someone or something other than Jesus Christ, provided only that he is not the only event in which

grace is spoken, which, of course, is precisely the question. Given the assumption that, because God could not conceivably fail to act graciously both in creating and redeeming everything that God creates, every human being in every moment of his or her existence either lives or has the possibility of living by the actuality of God's grace, it is entirely reasonable to allow that the gift and demand of grace could be explicitly represented to one through someone or something other than Jesus Christ, even if, as a matter of fact, he is the only event in which grace is spoken to one.

The truth seems to be that Bultmann's entirely correct understanding of grace and faith as event rather than idea is so tied up with a traditional model of grace as given only in or through Jesus Christ that he never even considers certain alternatives--alternatives that would allow one to affirm what he wishes to affirm and is justified in affirming as well as to deny what this affirmation requires one to deny, even while not affirming or denying his own position.