

I find a striking convergence between—on the one hand—Luther's teaching "on what to look for and expect in the gospels" (as set forth especially in his brief instruction thereon and in his "Preface to the New Testament") and—on the other hand—the teachings of Bultmann and Marxsen and my own teaching today. Of course, there are differences in Luther's teaching in empirical-historical respects, many of which can be appropriated only in the light of more recent New Testament scholarship. But allowing for that as well as for his mythological world-picture and the need to demythologize it, I see the closest convergence between his existential-historical and/or theological insights and those of my two older contemporaries and myself.

This is clear, for example, at the point of both of Luther's main claims in his "Brief Instruction." First of all, contrary to the teaching implied by the common practice of saying that there are four (and only four) gospels and thus supposing that the teaching of the epistles is somehow merely "an addition to the teaching of the gospels," he insists that "there is only one gospel, but . . . it is described by many apostles." So "every single epistle of Paul and of Peter, as well as the Acts of the Apostles by Luke is a gospel, even though they do not record all the works and words of Christ, but one is shorter and includes less than another" (*LW*, 35: 117). "[A]t its briefest," he says, "the gospel is a discourse about Christ, that he is the Son of God and became man for us, that he died and was raised, that he has been established as a Lord over all things." Therefore, because Paul includes all this in his epistles, even though "[h]e bypasses all the miracles and incidents [*Wunder und wandel*]," he "includes the whole gospel adequately and abundantly" (118). In his way, then, Luther recognizes that all the New Testament writings are kerygma, even though there are differences between them because "the gospel can be either a brief or a lengthy message: one person can write of it briefly, another at length" (360; cf. 117). If this is not yet Bultmann's distinction between the "*what*" and the "*that*" of Jesus' kerygma or Marxsen's distinction between Jesus-kerygma and Christ-kerygma, it is the insight of which these distinctions are simply refinements.

Of course, Luther assumes that Christ himself already preaches the gospel later preached after him by the apostles. Indeed, his strong preference for the Gospel of John as "the one, fine, true, and chief gospel" is based on the

fact that "John writes very little about the works of Christ, but very much about his preaching, while the other evangelists write much about his works and little about his preaching" (362). But there is no reason even today for anyone to deny or seriously question this assumption—allowing, at least, for the important distinction between implicit and explicit christology—and there are good reasons to continue to make it, even though doing so is in no way essential to an adequate constructive christology.

As for Luther's second claim that—precisely because every New Testament writing is, in its way, gospel, if not *a* gospel—Christ is not, and is not to be made into, a Moses (119, 360), the convergence is even more striking. For what is it, exactly, to make Christ a Moses? To make Christ a Moses is to regard "the gospels and epistles as law books in which is supposed to be taught what we are to do and in which the works of Christ are pictured to us as nothing but examples" (117). Or, again, it is to read the New Testament writings "as if Christ did nothing more than teach and provide examples as the other saints do, as if the gospel were simply a textbook of teachings or laws" (119). Or yet again, it is to "make the gospel into a law book, a teaching of commandments, changing Christ into a Moses, the One who would help us into simply an instructor" (123). But in Luther's view, "the chief article and foundation of the gospel is that before you take Christ as an example, you accept and recognize him as a gift, as a present that God has given you and that is your own." Accordingly, "what it means to have a proper grasp of the gospel, that is, of the overwhelming goodness of God," is to grasp "the great fire of the love of God for us, whereby the heart and conscience become happy, secure, and content" (119).

Luther also recognizes, naturally, that "Christ in the gospel, and St. Peter and St. Paul besides, do give many commandments and doctrines, and expound the law." "But these," he says, "are to be counted like all Christ's other works and good deeds. To know his works and the things that happened to him is not yet to know the true gospel, for you do not yet thereby know that he has overcome sin, death, and the devil. So, too, it is not yet knowledge of the gospel when you know these doctrines and commandments, but only when the voice comes that says, 'Christ is your own, with his life, teaching, works, death, resurrection, and all that he is, has,

does, and can do" (360 f. I take it, by the way, that when Luther speaks in this vein, he has in mind the kind of thing he says elsewhere, in discussing Christ's institution of the sacrament in two forms—"his flesh under the bread, his blood under the wine—to indicate that not only his life and good works, which are indicated by his flesh and which he accomplished in his flesh, but also his passion and martyrdom, which are indicated by his blood and in which he poured out his blood, are all our own. And we, being drawn into them, may use and profit from them" [60]). In other words, Luther, in his way, makes the same point that Bultmann makes in denying that Jesus is called Christ because he is the prophet and teacher of the law, or that Marxsen makes when he insists that Jesus not only teaches a certain possibility, but also actualizes it.

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