

1. Marxsen's argument concerning the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth turns throughout on making a sharp distinction between "information" and "involvement." On the basis of this distinction, he insists that "our faith, our involvement, is not an instrument of knowledge which can convey information about the past" (24; cf. 112 f.). Thus he argues, for example, that while the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 9:1 f.) could be sure through their faith in response to Paul's preaching that Paul was an apostle sent from God, "the way he came to be an apostle is already outside the truth of their faith; for though Paul can tell them this, it is purely a matter of information" (112 f.). Similarly, Marxsen argues that the historical untenability of the Christ-myth hypothesis "must be demonstrated by historical research. One cannot appeal to faith in the matter" (121).

2. Marxsen also argues, again on the basis of the same distinction between "the 'information' side of our faith" and "our faith as involvement" (25), that "for my faith in Jesus, it is completely unimportant how Peter arrived at his faith in Jesus after Good Friday. It is equally unimportant how the person found faith who then communicated his faith to me, so that I, in my turn, could believe" (129). In other words, Marxsen argues not only that it is *impossible* to infer information from involvement but also that it is *unimportant* to do so. It is as theologically unnecessary as it is historically impossible.

3. But now what is the implication of this argument and of the distinction on which it is based? I have the distinct impression that its implication is considerably more far-reaching than Marxsen may realize. <sup>or intend</sup> For how could it be completely unimportant how Peter arrived at his faith in Jesus *after* Good Friday unless it were equally unimportant how Peter or anyone else might have arrived at such a faith *before* Good Friday? If "the way in which Peter's faith was sparked off after Good Friday is unimportant," then, clearly, whether Jesus did or did not say or do this or that to spark off the first disciples' faith must be equally unimportant. Thus, for example, whether or to what extent Jesus ever explicitly pronounced the forgiveness of sins in the name of God, etc., the faith in Jesus attested by the NT witnesses is, among other things, acceptance of the forgiveness of sins, Jesus being thereby understood as the actual event of such forgiveness *prevenient* to its

acceptance <sup>through</sup> ~~by~~ faith and hence also to the witness of faith. Consequently, to ask whether Jesus really forgave sins is exactly analogous to asking whether he really rose from the dead. Faith as such, as "involvement," provides no basis for answering the question, one way or the other, and it is completely unimportant, from the standpoint of faith, how the question is answered. To accept forgiveness as and when it is offered to one through the Christian witness of faith, whatever the circumstances under which that witness may have originated, is to believe that Jesus really forgives sins, just as to accept him as the living Lord of one's life is to believe that he really rose from the dead.

4. Marxsen's argument with respect to the Christ-myth hypothesis appears in an interesting light, once this implication is clearly recognized. For if it is true that, in demonstrating the untenability of this hypothesis, "one cannot appeal to faith in the matter," it is presumably also "completely unimportant," from the standpoint of faith, to do so. In other words, whether or not Jesus actually existed in the sense that would suffice to refute the Christ-myth hypothesis of Christian origins neither can nor need be determined so far as faith as such is concerned.

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