

Marxsen's reasoning, having concluded that Jesus cannot be immediately reached, since we can always ascertain only how those to whom we owe our only sources understood and experienced him, seems to me as dubious as Mackey's reasoning concerning the historical informativeness of myth (cf. Marxsen, Christologie-praktisch: 39 f.)

Even if one grants that we could hardly have any interest in a Jesus who awoke no interest in those around him (although, naturally, there are the best of reasons for not granting the general principle that this seems to presuppose, since whether or not x is worthy of interest cannot be decided by determining whether or not one or more contemporaries of x found x to be of interest); and even if one further grants that Jesus was indeed interested in awakening a certain kind, or certain kinds, of interest in his contemporaries, there is no reason to infer either that our interest in him would have to be the same as that of those around him or that he is to be credited with having succeeded in awakening their interest simply because what they do and do not say about him obviously reflects their interest in him. If for all of one's interest in awakening a certain kind of interest in others, the net effect of one's efforts is that they insist upon responding only with another kind of interest, one might be pardoned for not wanting to be credited with "success" in one's efforts to awaken their interest! Nor would we run any risk of doing away with x's "success" in awakening the interest of x's contemporaries if we sought to eliminate from their statements about x such interests or kinds of interest in him as were other than, perhaps even contrary to, the kind of interest that he was interested in awakening in them. In sum: Marxsen's whole reasoning here begs the question that, on his own showing, form criticism makes it peculiarly problematic, even if not quite impossible, to answer.