

Bultmann argues:

The Easter faith of the first disciples is not a fact on the ground of which we believe insofar as it could relieve us of the risk of such faith but itself belongs to the eschatological occurrence that is the object of faith.

In other words, the word of proclamation that arises in the event of Easter itself belongs to the eschatological salvation occurrence. With the judging and liberating death of Christ, God has also established the 'ministry of reconciliation' and/or the 'word of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:18-19). It is this word that is 'added' to the cross and makes it understandable as the salvation occurrence by demanding faith, putting to each of us the question whether we are willing to understand ourselves as crucified with Christ and as thereby also risen with him. In the sounding forth of the word, cross and resurrection become present and the eschatological now takes place. The eschatological promise of Isa. 49:8 is fulfilled: 'Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation' (2 Cor 6:2). . . . And of the sermon that preaches Christ, the word of the Johannine Jesus holds good: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. . . . The hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live' (Jn 5:24-25). In the preached word, and only in it, is the risen one to be encountered. 'Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ' (Rom 10:17).

Just as the word and the apostle who preaches it belong to the eschatological occurrence, so also does the church in which the word continues to be proclaimed and within which believers gather as those who are 'holy,' that is, as those who have made the transition to eschatological existence. 'Church' (ἐκκλησία) is an eschatological concept, and when it is called the 'body of Christ,' this is to express its 'cosmic' meaning: it is not a historical phenomenon in the sense of world history but in the sense that it is in history that it is realized. . . .

Just as he in whom God presently acts, through whom God has reconciled the world, is a real historical human being, so the word of God is not the mysterious word of some oracle but sober proclamation of the person and destiny of Jesus of Nazareth in their significance as history of salvation. As such it can be understood as a phenomenon of intellectual history and, with respect to its content of ideas, it is a possible world view; and yet this proclamation makes the claim to be the eschatological word of God.

The preachers, the apostles, are human beings who can be understood historically in their humanity. The church is a historical sociological phenomenon whose history can be understood historically as a part of the history of culture. And yet they are all eschatological phenomena, eschatological occurrence.

All of these claims are a 'scandal' (σκάνδαλον) that is not to be overcome in philosophical dialogue but only in obedient faith. They are all phenomena that are subject to historical, sociological, and

psychological examination, and yet for faith they are all eschatological phenomena (*NTM*: 40 ff.).

It is clear from this passage, I believe, that Bultmann's analysis of "the eschatological occurrence," like the closely convergent analyses, in their different ways, of Marxsen and Knox, exactly parallels my analysis of the constitution of any religion, and therefore also of Christianity. Bultmann's analysis depends on identifying all the things that, as he puts it, "belong to" the occurrence. In addition to "the saving act of God," without which the occurrence neither would nor could be, properly, "eschatological," there are "the person and destiny of Jesus of Nazareth," "the Easter faith of the first disciples," "the word of proclamation that arises in the event of Easter," "the preachers, the apostles," who preach the word (these last two being summarily referred to by Paul as the "word of reconciliation" and the "ministry of reconciliation"), and "the church in which the word continues to be proclaimed, and within which believers gather as those who are 'holy,' that is, as those who have made the transition to eschatological existence."

My analysis, on the other hand, takes two forms. One of them analyzes what could be called the "constitutive factors" of a religion, including the Christian religion, given my insight that "the constitution of a religion has a threefold structure determined by two correlations. First, there is the correlation between *the religious object* and *the religious subject*; and, second, there is the correlation involved in the religious object itself between its *transcendental aspect* and its *historical aspect*.

The other form my analysis takes analyzes the correlation between a religion's *explicit primal source of authority* and its *primary authority*. Allowing, as I do, that a religion's primary authority—which is to say, its earliest, original and originating, and therefore constitutive witness—has the same two aspects that any witness has, i.e., is an *act* as well as an explication of a *content* (or, in Paul's terms, a "ministry" mediating a word as well as the "word" thereby mediated), I, in my own way, take account both of the church as the primary authorized bearer of the witness, as well as the community within which the witness is

borne, and of the witness the church bears—as well as, of course, by implication, the secondary authorities that the primary authority in turn authorizes.

26 March 2009