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THE NEW QUEST OF THE
HISTORICAL JESUS IN SELECTED
ALTE MARBURGER OF RUDOLF BULTMANN

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology


by
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the new quest of the historical Jesus as it has been carried out by four pupils of Rudolf Bultmann. These four pupils are: Ernst Käsemann, Gunther Bornkamm, Gerhard Ebeling, and Ernst Fuchs. They are part of a group of former Bultmann pupils who have called themselves the "Alte Marburger," or "old Marburgers," from the fact that they all studied together under Bultmann at the University of Marburg.

The "new quest" is the only term that needs definition. The new quest of the historical Jesus is to be distinguished from the "old quest." Because the Christian faith has been talking about Jesus for over nineteen hundred years, the so-called "old quest" for the historical Jesus is in comparison quite a modern phenomenon.

The "old" or original quest for the historical Jesus began with Hermann Samuel Reimarus in the late eighteenth century. The opening sentence of Albert Schweitzer's classic work, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, reads: "Before Reimarus, no one had attempted to form a historical conception of the life of Jesus."¹ Prior to this time no scholar was concerned with the quest of the historical Jesus because Christians generally assumed that the picture of Jesus which was found in the Gospels

¹Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus (New York: Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 13. The book was first published under the German title Von Reimarus zu Wrede in 1906, and came out in English translation for the first time in 1910.

was a historically accurate picture. With the rise of modern historiography and the historical-critical method of research the Scriptures were reread with the hope that they would now provide a picture of the historical Jesus which was historically true and free from the dogmatic elements in the image of Christ traceable to the church's doctrine. This began the search for the "Jesus of history," a Jesus who could be found by a diligent historical plumbing of the Gospels. It was the hope of the nineteenth century scholars that once a true picture of Jesus as He really was had been put together by harmonizing the various Gospel accounts of Him, the faith of Christians would no longer be dependent on the dogmatic traditions of the church for its knowledge of the Jesus of history.

The result of this quest for the Jesus of history as it took place in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was innumerable biographies and chronologies of Jesus and His ministry.

The death blow to the original quest was dealt first in 1896 by Martin Kähler in his book, Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus (The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ).² It was Kähler's thesis that the Gospels are not to be taken as source books for developing a "Life of Jesus" but are primarily the faithful preaching of the first century church. The Gospels are the sermons of the early church. Kähler had taken the historical rug out from under the quest in the interest of preserving the certainty of faith!

²Martin Kähler, The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ, translated and edited by Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964).

Schweitzer's book, published ten years later in 1906, sealed the fate of the old quest by showing that the Jesus of Nazareth who emerged from the nineteenth century quest was not the Jesus of history but a papier maché figure built out of the philosophical idealism and liberal theology of the nineteenth century. The Jesus of the original quest had come out looking amazingly similar to nineteenth century man!

It took quite a while for the old quest to die completely. In some quarters it never did succumb to its critics and went on in the face of overwhelming academic condemnation. The rise of "dialectic theology" in the 1920's and the increasing emphasis on a theological interpretation rather than a historical interpretation of Scripture moved critical scholarship beyond the old quest and into a new era of New Testament studies. Form Criticism and the rise of "kerygmatic theology" with Rudolf Bultmann sealed off the old quest of the historical Jesus as an adventure of the past which could not again be undertaken with integrity.

Bultmann's influence has dominated the German theological world over the past thirty years since the demise of the old quest. It was his stress on the kerygmatic Christ against the Jesus of history which eventually caused his pupils to break away from him and take up what has since been called the new quest. In 1933 Bultmann wrote:

Jesus Christ confronts men nowhere other than in the Kerygma, as he had so confronted Paul and brought him to decision. . . . One may not seek to get beyond the Kerygma and use it to reconstruct the historical Jesus That would be the Christ according to the flesh of the past. Not the historical Jesus, but Jesus Christ, the preached Christ, is the Lord.³

³ Rudolf Bultmann, Glauben und Verstehen, Gesammelte Aufsätze (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1933), p. 208. Here and elsewhere in the thesis where the German has been translated and quoted in English, the

This set the stage for the new quest which was to wait yet another thirty years before it began.

In 1953 Ernst Käsemann addressed a reunion of the Alte Marburger and delivered a paper titled "The Problem of the Historical Jesus."⁴ In this essay Käsemann warned that unless the historical Jesus was once again made the proper object of historical and theological research the Christian faith would be in danger of lapsing into a docetism whose Christ would be a myth. Käsemann reiterated the impossibility of the old quest and said he was not calling for a repetition of past errors. He said that it was possible to know the historical Jesus through the parables and sayings of the Gospels as long as it was acknowledged that the Gospels were the preaching of the early church and not historical records. The kerygma which had for so long prevented inquiry into the historical Jesus was now to be the key to the new study.

Thus Käsemann inaugurated the modern or new quest of the historical Jesus. His opening contribution met with the immediate approval of many scholars who sought to join the new quest. Especially those of the Bultmann school began to produce articles and books on the subject.

translation, unless otherwise indicated, is the writer's. The German reads: "Jesus Christus begegnet dem Menschen nirgends anders als im Kerygma, so wie er dem Paulus selbst begegnet ist und ihn zur Entscheidung zwang. . . . Man darf also nicht hinter das Kerygma zurückgehen, es als 'Quelle' benutzend, um einen 'historischen Jesus' . . . zu rekonstruieren. Das wäre gerade der ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΚΑΤΑ ΒΑΡΝΑ, der vergangen ist. Nicht der historische Jesus, sondern Jesus Christus, der Gepredigte, ist der Herr."

⁴Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in Essays on New Testament Themes, in Studies in Biblical Theology XLI, translated by W. J. Montague (London: SCM Press, 1964).

Bultmann himself remained aloof from the new quest until 1959 when he addressed the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences with an essay that criticized the new quest and his former pupils who participated in it.⁵ Bultmann contends the historical Jesus, whether in a new or old quest, is beyond the grasp of responsible research and is unnecessary to faith anyway. Since 1959 the debate over the validity of the new quest has gone on in all quarters of biblical, systematic, and historical studies. The whole topic is still very much a live issue at this time in 1966.

Because of the immense literature which has appeared in the short span of thirteen years since Käsemann's address, any study of the new quest must necessarily self-impose some limitations. We have chosen to study the four Alte Marburger mentioned on page one. Käsemann was chosen because he inaugurated the new quest and has since become critical of its direction. Bornkamm was selected because he is the only one of the Alte Marburger who has produced a full-length book in the new quest. Abelung and Fuchs were chosen because of their unusual approach to the problem and their emphasis upon a "linguistic" interpretation of the historical Jesus.

The economy of the study regrettably necessitated dealing with Bultmann's position only in a rather tangential fashion. It is acknowledged that his position in the matter needs full exploration if the new quest is to be seen in total perspective.

⁵Rudolf Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ, Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus, translated and edited by Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 15-42.

As the Table of Contents indicates, Käsemann has been treated separately in Chapter II. Käsemann has set the stage for the new quest. He has certainly contributed to the new quest itself, but it is useful to present his contributions as being formulary.

Bornkamm, Ebeling, and Fuchs are treated in Chapter III as the essential contributors to the substance of the new quest. Their work is examined under four subheadings: the validity of the new quest, the means of access to the historical Jesus, the purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry, and the relationship of the Jesus of history to the Christ of the kerygma.

Chapter IV represents a sampling of the reactions to the new quest in theologians other than the four Alte Marburger of this study. This sampling is meant to be neither definitive nor wholly representative although it has tried to include the major criticisms and defenses which the new quest has occasioned.

Chapter V includes a summary of the similarities and differences among the Alte Marburger and a brief conclusion which represents the reaction of the writer to the new quest.

This study was undertaken because of its current importance to the field of New Testament studies and because of its perennial relevance to the field of systematic theology. The doctrine of the two natures of Christ which has underlain the church's christology since the days of the Council of Nicaea in 325 and the Council of Chalcedon in 451 has once more been under a cloud since the rise of kerygmatic theology. Käsemann is right in saying that there was a danger that the understanding of Christ as true God and true man would be lost to a docetic Christ-idea. The new

quest set out with the hope of correcting that situation, and this motivation alone justifies a close study of the attempt. At the bottom of this inquiry into the new quest lies the conviction that the doctrine of christology is essential to the Christian doctrine of soteriology. If Jesus is really the Christ, then nothing must hinder the Christian understanding and confrontation of Him as Jesus of Nazareth as well as Resurrected Lord.

Ernst Käsemann emerged as the key impetus for the renewed quest for the historical Jesus. It was Käsemann's programmatic essay, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," delivered on October 30, 1953 to his friends and colleagues at the reunion of the Alte Parburger,¹ which set in motion once again the quest for the historical Jesus which had generally been neglected in German scholarship since the early years of the twentieth century. Now the quest was to be taken up anew but with notable differences from the old quest of the nineteenth century. The new quest, with the insights of form criticism and half a century of added historical-critical research behind it, intended to avoid the mistakes of the previous research and at the same time to act as a corrective to what was felt to be an unbalanced emphasis in the kerygmatic christology of Rudolf Bultmann. Käsemann in 1953 laid the foundation for the new quest upon which Bornemann, Stähling, and Puchs were soon to build.

The Quest of Scholarship in the Mid-Twentieth Century

At the outset Käsemann acknowledges the determinative influence of

¹ Ernst Käsemann, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 51 (1954), 25-53.

CHAPTER II

THE POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR THE NEW QUEST

Ernst Käsemann

After all cross-currents of modern New Testament scholarship are charted and the various influences of scholarship upon the New Quest acknowledged, Ernst Käsemann emerges as the key impetus for the renewed concern for the historical Jesus. It was Käsemann's programmatic essay, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," delivered on October 20, 1953 to his friends and colleagues at the reunion of the Alte Marburger,¹ which set in motion once again the quest for the historical Jesus which had generally been moribund in German scholarship since the early years of the twentieth century. Now the quest was to be taken up anew but with notable differences from the old quest of the nineteenth century. The new quest, with the insights of form criticism and half a century of added historical-critical research behind it, intended to avoid the mistakes of the previous research and at the same time to act as a corrective to what was felt to be an unbalanced emphasis in the kerygmatic christology of Rudolf Bultmann. Käsemann in 1953 laid the foundation for the new quest upon which Bornkamm, Ebeling, and Fuchs were seen to build.

The State of Scholarship in the Mid-Twentieth Century

At the outset Käsemann acknowledges the determinative influence of

¹Ernst Kasemann, "Das Problem des Historischen Jesus," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 51 (1954), 25-53.

three men and their works upon the present situation of exegetical and systematic theologians. Martin Kähler with his book, The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ, Albert Schweitzer with his book, The Quest for the Historical Jesus, and Rudolf Bultmann with his two books, Jesus and the Word and Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting turned scholarship away from the nineteenth century "Life of Jesus" research. Kähler made the case for the New Testament to be understood as a book of sermons and not as an objective chronicle of Jesus' life; Schweitzer showed the impossibility of any and all attempts to outline a history or biography of Jesus; and Bultmann understood the Christian faith as being "faith in the exalted Lord for which the Jesus of history as such is no longer considered of decisive importance."²

According to Käsemann, the impact of these three men resulted in severe skepticism among critical scholars regarding the Jesus of history and the possibility of knowing anything about Him. Certainly the nineteenth century's hope of separating the Jesus of history from the church's dogmatic proclamations about Him was demolished. As Käsemann summarizes the issue, critical scholarship saw the old quest as

a failure. It was precisely that radical criticism which stood, and stands, incontestably in methodological continuity with the Enlightenment, which arrived at this result. It found that at the very beginning, not of primitive Christianity, but of its preaching, there stands, sharply formulated, the Church's dogma as the expression of its faith; and that there is no access to the historical Jesus other than by way of the community's faith in the Risen Lord.³

²Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," Essays on New Testament Themes, in Studies in Biblical Theology XLI translated by W. J. Montague (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 16.

³Ibid., p. 59.

To say that the Jesus of history is inaccessible to modern man except through the faith of the early Christian communities is devastating to the old quest's desire to peel back tradition and find the real Jesus of history. To say that the faith of these early communities is available to us only through their preaching which is handed down to us in the form of the New Testament, as do Kähler and Bultmann with Käsemann assenting, has serious implications for the view of the modern critical scholar toward the synoptic Gospels.

After rejecting the Gospels as a source of historically neutral, objective facts about the history and chronology of Jesus and His life, modern critical scholarship was forced by the fruits of its own work to conclude that the Gospels are the product of early Christian community's tradition. This tradition sought to give an account of the life of its Lord which grew out of its faith in Him. At first these traditions existed in the form of isolated stories and sayings, some of which had been spoken by Jesus Himself, but most of which were vignettes about Jesus told by Jesus' faithful followers and which were already interpretations of what they had seen and heard. Käsemann makes a strong point that even from the very first these stories and sayings were preserved and passed on not out of an uninvolved, historical desire for record keeping but always out of kerygmatic concern and interest. The starting point for all modern exegesis must be here at this point according to Käsemann if the contributions of recent scholarship are to be given their due. This especially holds true for any contemporary examination of the Gospels with regard to Jesus. Käsemann states quite clearly that preaching is the motivation and form of the Gospel's accounts of Jesus:

But of the individual sayings and stories it must be said that from their first appearance they were used in the service of the community's preaching and were indeed preserved for this very reason. It was not historical but kerygmatic interest which handed them on. From this standpoint it becomes comprehensible that this tradition, or at least the overwhelming mass of it, cannot be called authentic. Only a few words of the Sermon on the Mount and of the conflict with the Pharisees, a number of parables and some scattered material of various kinds go back with any real degree of probability to the Jesus of history himself. Of his deeds, we know only that he had the reputation of being a miracle-worker, that he himself referred to his power of exorcism and that he was finally crucified under Pilate. The preaching about him has almost entirely supplanted his own preaching, as can be seen most clearly of all in the completely unhistorical Gospel of John.⁴

Once modern scholarship found itself committed to this view of the Gospels, it felt compelled to explain how and why such a treatment of the Gospel's history of Jesus developed. Exposition on this concern will follow in the next two sections. It is sufficient in this opening treatment of the state of mid-twentieth century critical scholarship to note the way in which the Gospels are viewed.

Käsemann maintains that the above description is representative of the way in which current theology has responded to the labors of critical scholarship in the immediate past. Yet Käsemann, during the period of the early 1950's when he first began to articulate his thoughts in these matters, also sensed a reaction against this quite radical departure from the traditional views of the Jesus of history and the historical nature of the Gospels. Much of this reaction is against the extreme conclusions of Bultmann in these matters. Käsemann shares some of the misgivings, and sees this reaction being expressed today along the following three lines of inquiry.

First, an attempt is being made in some quarters to show that the

⁴Ibid., pp. 59-60.

Synoptics contain much more authentic material than is granted by the most extreme New Testament critics. Second, an argument is being given for the reliability of the Passion and Easter narratives if not totally at least in part. This is in spite of the acknowledged differences in the literary accounts of the Gospels at many points. In both these first two instances the hope is to prevent a radical break between kerygma and tradition which has been the unhappy conclusion of the most extreme approaches to the Gospel accounts of Jesus. The intention is to show that the kerygma does include the facts of the tradition, and that these facts are essential to the kerygma's content. Third, there is a growing commitment to the idea of a "salvation history" which runs parallel to universal history and which, through the agency of the history of faith and the Church, expresses God's activity in establishing a new creation.⁵

Käsemann notes that it is quite ironic that these three positions should describe the emerging situation of theological thinking in the present day of New Testament studies. It is ironic because those who are now reacting to the conclusions drawn by radical criticism are the same ones who welcomed it so openly when radical criticism first undercut the attempts of the nineteenth century to separate the real Jesus from church tradition and dogmatic proclamations. Now it is feared the pendulum of criticism has swung too far and there is a great danger of losing the historicity of the Gospels and of Jesus altogether in a surge of skepticism. Thus, one of the fundamental questions today is the relationship between history and the Gospels.

⁵Ibid., p. 17.

History in the Gospels

History which is the mere recitation of facts and figures is not history at all. Käsemann says:

if we desire to obtain knowledge of past history, we have to fall back on what has been narrated. History is only accessible to us through tradition and only comprehensible to us through interpretation. To be acquainted merely with what actually happened is of little use to us by itself.⁶

This is directed against all who would still approach the New Testament with the hope of finding there the unimpeachable facts of Jesus' life on earth and by finding these facts establish once and for all the "proof" of who and what He was. Käsemann says that such bare facts would establish nothing even if they were available. He argues that the decision between faith and unbelief is not made because someone has shown Jesus to be a miracle worker, or has established the reliability of the empty tomb traditions. Such bare facts do not constitute a historical record and it is futile for anyone to approach the New Testament in this way because even the writers of the Gospels did not understand history that way.⁷

The historical record which is found in the New Testament has interlaced the confession of the early Christian community with the facts and the figure of Jesus of Nazareth. This was not done inadvertently or because the New Testament writers did not have regard for historical objectivity. The history of Jesus was so intermixed with the confession of the early community that it has no independence of its own. Käsemann puts

⁶Ibid., p. 18.

⁷Ibid., p. 19.

this sharply when he writes:

The community takes so much trouble to maintain historical continuity with him who once trod this earth that it allows the historical events of this earthly life to pass for the most part into oblivion and replaces them by its own message.⁸

Although this may sound irresponsible and offensive to modern ears, this is not surprising when Käsemann's interpretation of history is considered.

It is precisely because the New Testament writers wanted to convey the historical truth about Jesus that they did not leave the telling of His life to so-called "pure" history. To tell who Jesus really was the Gospel writers had to say more than mere facts would indicate, so they made His history "true" by interpreting it kerygmatically. Käsemann puts this well when he writes:

For mere history becomes significant history not through tradition as such but through interpretation, not through the simple establishment of facts but through the understanding of the events of the past which have become objectified and frozen into facts. . . . Mere history only takes on genuine historical significance in so far as it can address both a question and an answer to our contemporary situation; in other words, by finding interpreters who hear and utter this question and answer. For this purpose primitive Christianity allows mere history no vehicle of expression other than the kerygma.⁹

The history which is in the Gospels was and is meant to be a living and contemporary account of what for the writers were already in a sequential sense past events. It was with the intention of keeping the history alive that the story of Jesus was taken up into the story of the faith.

If it can be concluded that this is the way in which the New Testament Gospel writers carried out the task of relating the history of Jesus, it cannot be concluded that the results were uniform. Certainly it is to

⁸ Ibid., p. 20.

⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

be granted the Synoptic writers that they considered themselves to be honestly relating authentic tradition about Jesus in their accounts. Yet it is quite apparent that there is considerable divergence when the Gospel of John is compared with the Synoptics and even when the Synoptics are compared with each other. Some have argued that this varied picture of the same tradition shows the discontinuity or even the incredibility of the history which is contained in the Gospels. Käsemann turns the fact of the disparity of Gospel accounts into an argument for the vitality and continuity of the historical record. He says:

The truth is that it is this variation which makes continuity possible at all. . . . The variation in the New Testament kerygma demonstrates that primitive Christendom held fast the profession of its faith throughout all changes of time and place, although these changes forced upon it the modification of received tradition.¹⁰

In the next section we shall consider Käsemann's treatment of the differences in approach used by the four Gospels. Here we are content to establish the point that in his view the Gospels all portray the factual elements of Jesus' life to some extent. John does this in a very different manner from the Synoptics, and Mark to a degree that is much less narrational than either Matthew or Luke.

Does the fact that the Gospels do not agree concerning the historical record of Jesus thereby deny even the existence of the historical Jesus? This is a conclusion which Käsemann never draws. But the question does suggest the limitations of the historical view we can have of Jesus. Käsemann writes:

¹⁰ Ibid.

It does not deny the existence of the historical Jesus. But it recognizes that we can only gain access to this Jesus through the medium of the primitive Christian gospel and the primary effect of this gospel is not to open up the way for us but to bar it. The historical Jesus meets us in the New Testament, our only real and original documentation of him, not as he was in himself, not as an isolated individual, but as the Lord of the community which believes in him.¹¹

The Gospels witness to a historical Jesus and so His existence as such is not doubted. But they never witness to Him as merely Jesus of Nazareth, but always as the one who is the Lord. It is because of the view of the early Christian community of Jesus as the Lord that the picture of the earthly Jesus is certainly colored by this confession and nearly consumed by it. "Käsemann feels that perhaps even the designation "Jesus of history" should be discarded because it is so misleading."¹² It suggests the Jesus of the old nineteenth century quest who is impossible to find. Käsemann never denies that there was a Jesus of history, but he does say that this Jesus cannot be known by retelling bare facts alone. This can even impede the genuine historical task.¹³ The history in the Gospels is always the history of Jesus encased in the kerygmatic confession of the early Christian community, and neither Jesus nor this history can be separated from that confession. We conclude this section with Käsemann's own words:

This is why we only make contact with this life history of Jesus through the kerygma of the community. The community neither could nor would separate this life history from its own history. Therefore it neither could nor would abstract from its Easter faith and distinguish between the earthly and the exalted Lord. By maintaining the identity of the two, it demonstrated that any questioning directed

¹¹ Ibid., p. 23.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., p. 24.

only toward the historical Jesus seemed to it to be pure abstraction.¹⁴
 Historification (Historisierung)¹⁵ and the Gospels

In spite of what has just been said in the previous section about the dubious nature of any query into the history of Jesus, Käsemann does not see this as a mandate to give up all historical pursuits in this area. By making the case for the special presence of history in the Gospels as strongly as he did, Käsemann wanted to show the impossibility of that research which would hope to uncover the real Jesus of history and in so doing substitute empirical belief in Him for faith's own commitment in trust to Jesus. Nevertheless Käsemann did not wish to suggest that nothing could be known of the Jesus of history. Some things can be known, but the warning is to those who would make this knowledge a proof upon which faith could depend. Käsemann says:

We cannot base our faith on him whom we are accustomed to call the Jesus of history. This does not mean that we could, even if we wished, abstain from the attempt to gain greater clarity and wider consensus. Neither as historians nor as theologians could we take this course. There are no grounds for lapsing into a defeatist scepticism; there are at least some things about which we can have the maximum possible certainty and which free us from the necessity of judging the faith of the community to be arbitrary and meaningless. But this kind of knowledge merely entitles us to prevent the Christian message from dissolving into myth.¹⁶

Käsemann believes that something can be known about the historical Jesus. For him this belief is not based on a pietistic wish that this be so, but

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵By historification (Historisierung) Käsemann means the adoption of historically unauthentic material into the historical record in such a way as to give the adopted material veracity in its new context. Ibid., pp. 25-26.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 59-62.

is based on his view of the New Testament and the way in which the Gospels treat the history of Jesus.

"Käsemann maintains that present day concern with the life of Jesus is a valid pursuit because the New Testament itself is concerned with His life.¹⁷ This is evident in the way the Gospels were put together or redacted by the Evangelists. The historical data which are genuine fragments from the life of Jesus and which have been taken over into the confession and evangelical proclamation of the early community of believers have also been supplemented by unauthentic tradition which is held to be faithfully attributable to Jesus even if not actually attributable. This process Käsemann calls historification or Historisierung.

What prompted the Gospel writers to include into their writing traditions which they may or may not have known to be accurate with regard to Jesus' life? To ask such a question is once again to slip into a modern concept of history which expects historians to be concerned with the objective facts and to report them in an unbiased manner devoid of interpretation or personal reaction. According to Käsemann this is not the way the Gospel writers approached their tasks. From the very outset the writers of our four Gospels who collected, collated, edited, selected, and rejected from traditional materials that were circulating about this man Jesus of Nazareth whom they knew as the Risen Lord meant to present a picture of the Jesus which corresponded to their kerygmatic belief in Him. In other words this means the Gospels were written with a theological bias which was current at the time. Käsemann has written in this regard:

¹⁷Ibid., p. 25.

For if primitive Christianity identifies the humiliated with the exalted Lord, in so doing it is confessing that, in its presentation of his story, it is incapable of abstracting from its faith. . . . Primitive Christianity is obviously of the opinion that the earthly Jesus cannot be understood otherwise than from the far side of Easter, that is, in his majesty as Lord of the community and that, conversely, the event of Easter cannot be adequately comprehended if it is looked at apart from the earthly Jesus. The Gospel is always involved in a war on two fronts.¹⁸

It is Käsemann's concern for both of these fronts, the kerygmatic and the historical, that prompts him to raise again the question of the historical Jesus. Just as the early church was "not minded to allow myth to take the place of history nor a heavenly being to take the place of the Man of Nazareth,"¹⁹ so is Käsemann concerned with the nearly overpowering influence of modern kerygmatic theology which tends to downplay or even exclude the historical. The motivation of the Gospel writers was at least in part to offset docetic tendencies in the faith;²⁰ the motivation of Käsemann in the new quest is the same. The battle of the two fronts goes on still.

To say that what we have in the Gospel accounts of Jesus and His life is the result of the historification by the writers of those Gospels is not to say that the Gospels are false. Quite to the contrary certain materials were included in the Gospels because they coincided with what faith already confessed about Jesus. If anything, this historification of the Gospels increased what was believed to be true about the earthly Jesus even if the exact details of Jesus' life which may have been missing were supplied and embellished by the writer who believed the earthly Jesus to be the kerygmatic Christ.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Under Käsemann's scrutiny each of the four Gospels proves to be quite distinctive upon comparison with each other regarding the process of historification. Each treats the known material and traditions about Jesus in a highly individualistic way, only Matthew has clearly and intentionally employed the means of historification in the strict sense of Käsemann's understanding of that term.

The Gospel of John has departed the most radically from the generally conceived historical traditions, and the writer has adapted the material to his own theological purposes in a much more drastic way than have the Synoptic writers. John has made no use of apocalyptic elements in his Gospel and has cast it in a thorough-going eschatological mold.²¹ For John the portrayal of Jesus' history was the means of presenting "the history of the praesentia of the Logos on earth."²² John's use of the historical materials available to him was a means to his theological end. By subjecting his material to extreme historification he by no means thought or meant to be altering the truth of Jesus of Nazareth whom he knew as Christ. Käsemann writes of John's treatment of history:

For him the merely historical only has interest and value to the extent to which it mirrors symbolically the recurring experiences of Christian faith. It provides him with the opportunity and the framework of writing for his own day the history of the Christus praesens.²³

Käsemann does not deal extensively with John's treatment of Jesus' life but merely gives rather general guide lines to the methodology of John. Käsemann does this in order to support his contention that the Gospels

²¹Ibid., p. 28.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 22.

treat the history of Jesus from a theological, confessional starting point which is believed to be historically true if not factually accurate in every detail.

Mark is also motivated by theological and confessional beliefs. There is in his Gospel a minimum of discourse material, as compared to Matthew or John, but in Mark there is an emphasis on the miracle stories of Jesus. Yet his concern is not to portray Jesus as a miracle worker but "he sees in the earthly life of Jesus the glory of the risen Son of God bursting victoriously into the demon-controlled world and revealing equally to the earth and to the principalities and powers their eternal Lord."²⁴ Jesus is seen as an eschatological figure by Mark as well as by John even though the way of handling this motif is quite different in Mark. John depicts Jesus as a rather straight-forward person whose nature and mission is quite apparent to all, but Mark's Jesus is surrounded by mystery and suspense. Citing Dibelius, Käsemann calls the Gospel of Mark "the book of the secret epiphanies of Jesus."²⁵ Käsemann also says, drawing on Wrede's classical work of 1901, Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien, that the life history of Jesus "becomes almost the subject of a mystery play; the Son of God, who has come down to earth, lifts his incognito from time to time, until at Easter he allows it to drop away altogether."²⁶

So in Mark, too, the process of historification has been employed to amplify the truth that was known about Jesus. This means that "the historical life of Jesus is no longer the focus of Mark's attention."

²⁴Ibid., p. 28.

²⁵Ibid., p. 22.

²⁶Ibid.

"It merely provides the stage on which the God-man enters the lists against his enemies. The history of Jesus has become mythicized."²⁷

For Käsemann to say that the history of Jesus has been mythicized is in no way to say that it is not true. It may even be a more accurate portrayal of who Jesus was because it also tries to say who He is.

It is the Gospel of Matthew which according to Käsemann provides instructive examples of the historification of traditional materials for the purpose of advancing the life history of Jesus in a truthful manner. He cites the infant narratives (Matthew 1-2) as being particularly instructive.

The stories of the birth and infancy of Jesus as included by Matthew in his Gospel are designed to do two things: (1) to show that the birth of Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies of Scripture; and (2) to show that Jesus is the second and last Moses.²⁸ The identification of Jesus with Moses is especially strong in Matthew. In both cases their births caused unrest among the rulers, and in both cases safety from death was sought in Egypt.²⁹ Additional parallels between Moses and Jesus could be drawn, but Matthew's intention is clear. For Käsemann it is also clear

that the Moses legends have provided the tradition about Jesus with its characteristic features, while the comparative study of religion enables us to add that such a transfer of motifs is a frequent phenomenon and that we have before us a typical example of legendary overpainting and of mythologizing.³⁰

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., p. 26.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

Matthew's intention according to Käsemann was to present Jesus as the Savior of His people just as Moses in his time was the savior of his people. The one important difference is of course that Jesus was to be the last Moses and the only real Savior. Matthew, like John and Mark, also presupposes that the life of Jesus is meant to be understood eschatologically and he uses the Moses legends toward this end. This is one aspect of the historification of the life of Jesus as Matthew presents it.

Miracles in Matthew are also treated eschatologically. They are "signs of the age of salvation" in Matthew 9-10 which reveal the mercy of God in the Last Days.³¹ Jesus Himself, as the second Moses, was also the one who brought the Messianic Torah. He was a rabbi, and yet no ordinary rabbi, for he spoke in veiled parables and was continually leveling judgment upon Jewry.³² Thus Jesus seemed to have several identities which are mixed and not always clear. Käsemann sums up the life of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of Matthew:

the whole life history of Jesus as Matthew presents it is not only seen from the standpoint of eschatology, but basically shaped by it. It is precisely here that the story of Jesus has been interwoven with traditional material which can only be described as being in itself unhistorical, legendary and mythical.³³

The use of historification by Matthew as with the other Evangelists is intended to outline the life of Jesus, not in a chronological, biographical manner but from the stance of the kerygma held by the primitive

³¹ Ibid., p. 27.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

Christian community. As such, it is meant to be a true portrayal of Jesus.

The Lucan corpus is different from the theological intentions of the other three Gospels. Although similar in basic content to both Mark and Matthew, Luke's intention is not eschatological, but truly historical. Käsemann says the Gospel of Luke is the first life of Jesus,³⁴ and as such it intends to trace "the great stages of the plan of salvation."³⁵ Luke replaces primitive Christian eschatology with salvation history.

Käsemann suggests that the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, taken together have no interest in apocalyptic eschatology but attempt to demonstrate a historically verifiable continuity between the Jesus of history and the "ever extending development" of the ministry of the Apostles.³⁶ Käsemann supports his argument for Luke's noneschatological approach to the life of Jesus with the simple statement that one does not write a history of the church as Luke has done if one expects the end of the world any day.³⁷

Even though Luke is not eschatologically oriented in his writing, he still has theological interests to advance and does not hesitate to subject his material to historification to accomplish that purpose.

His Jesus is the founder of the Christian religion. The Cross is a misunderstanding on the part of the Jews, who have not properly understood Old Testament prophecy, and the Resurrection is the necessary correction of this human error by the Great Disposer. The teaching of Jesus brings us a loftier ethic, the miracles are heavenly power bursting into the world, wonders which provide

³⁴ Ibid., p. 29.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

³⁷ Ibid.

evidence of divine majesty. The story of Jesus becomes something absolutely in the past, namely, initium Christianismi—mere history indeed.³⁸

"Käsemann concludes that Luke's replacement of eschatology with salvation history as the theological motif of his Gospel is itself a confirmation of the fact that the historification of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life is always done with regard to the eschatological view of Jesus which is operative in the writer's time. In Luke's case the eschatological view was suspended in favor of the historical.

"Käsemann's understanding of the Gospels is important for they are the source of any historical information about Jesus. The process of historification which the Evangelists used in writing their Gospels must be understood if there is to be any intelligent searching of Scripture for the historical Jesus in this day of acutely critical scholarship. That the Gospels have been subjected to historification and the theological biases of the writers in no way suggests that they are meaningless as true accounts of the Jesus of history. It does suggest that they will have to be understood in a way that is consonant with the writers' intentions and the confession of faith which prompted him to write.

Why the Jesus of History?

If the Gospels with the exception of Luke are not devoted to the history of Jesus, it is nevertheless certain that they are concerned with the Jesus of history. Why? Käsemann suggests that the Evangelists looked upon Jesus as Himself the eschatological event of all time and history, and to understand Him as such they had to see Him in the context

³⁸Ibid., p. 29.

of His earthly life where all events foretold by the prophets of old intersected. As we have seen, the birth, life, and death of Jesus do not stand in isolation from the kerygma which confessed the Risen Lord. The facts of Jesus' life as such had no importance for the Evangelists apart from the faith of the early Christian community.

The Jesus of history was important to the Gospel writers because in this particular man from Nazareth God's eschatological dealings with man were manifest in a concrete time and place in the history of the world. In Jesus both the "once" and the "once for all" of God's salvatory activity are brought together.³⁹ The life of Jesus was no ordinary life even though it was lived out in a fully human manner. The factors of His existence, such as birth, life and death, "do not appear as happenings within the ordinary course of nature but as events of salvation history."⁴⁰ Precisely because Jesus was held to be the "once" and the "once for all" of salvation history, the early Christian community

wrote Gospels and did not after Easter simply let the life story of Jesus go by the board. Easter did not render this experience superfluous; on the contrary, it confirmed it. So far as it is desirable or possible to speak of a variation in faith before and after Easter, we can only say that out of the "once" came the "once for all" and out of the isolated encounter with Jesus, limited as it had been by death, came the presence of the exalted Lord, as described in the Fourth Gospel.⁴¹

Any understanding of Jesus as Risen Lord could not divorce itself from the earthly life of Jesus if it were to be a genuine understanding.

Käsemann finds in the Gospel of John another answer to the question "Why the Jesus of history?" Käsemann notes that John has practically

³⁹Ibid., p. 31.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 30.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 31.

emptied the life story of Jesus of any historical content and taken the information which he did have about the earthly Jesus and stylized it theologically so as to make it quite unlike the Synoptic accounts. Quite unabashedly John describes the life of the earthly Jesus as being one with the exalted Lord. There is no pretense of writing a Gospel of photographic objectivity, yet John does maintain relationship with the historical life of Jesus. Käsemann suggests that John has done this in order to protect the "condescension" of God's revelation in the earthly Jesus from charges of docetism or enthusiasm which were emerging in certain sectors of the early Christian communities.⁴² But more is at stake here for John than his own theological acceptance by his contemporaries. Revelation itself is being threatened. Käsemann writes of the Gospel of John:

Whatever violence it may have done to biographical history, it found it neither possible nor desirable to abandon history altogether, because with history stands or falls not only the divine condescension of revelation but also earthly corporeality as the sphere of revelation.⁴³

Therefore, John clearly understands that without the earthly Jesus the revelation of God, the intervention of His eschatological activity into the lives of men for their salvation hangs in the air as a docetic myth. The exalted Lord has to be understood as bound up with the humiliated Lord in one person and as one Gospel for John.⁴⁴

The Synoptic Gospels also give answer to the question, "Why the Jesus of history?" Käsemann points out they are much more faithful than is

⁴²Ibid., p. 32.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

John in their handling of the traditional material circulating about the Jesus of history even though they too have subjected the life of Jesus to the process of historification. The Synoptics, according to Käsemann, dwell on the history of Jesus because the subject of that history, Jesus, is responsible for bringing into the world a new kairos, a new age which at once qualifies and transcends all chronological time.⁴⁵ This is important for the Synoptic writers because they know that their own lives have been unalterably affected by this Jesus, and they now can understand their own lives only in relation to His life. Käsemann puts this well where he writes:

they [the Synoptic writers] want to draw attention to the kairos which began with Jesus, is determined by him and predestinates every subsequent situation and decision. They want, if I may so express it, to show that the extra nos of salvation is "given" to faith. To cleave firmly to history is one way of giving expression to the extra nos of salvation.⁴⁶

The life of Jesus is the concrete "given" upon which and because of which there was for the early Christians a Risen Lord whom they knew and confessed in faith. To lose the Jesus of history would be to lose the "given" of faith itself.

In addressing themselves to the history of Jesus in order to comprehend more fully the Jesus of history who was Lord, the Gospel writers were engaged in expressing their faith and their own history. In spite of the different versions of Jesus' life which the Gospels give they are all agreed on one basic point, Käsemann says:

They were agreed only in one judgment: namely, that the life history of Jesus was constitutive for faith, because the earthly

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 31.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 33.

and the exalted Lord are identical. The Easter faith was the foundation of the Christian kerygma but was not the first or only source of its content. Rather, it was the Easter faith which took cognizance of the fact that God acted before we became believers, and which testified to this fact by encapsulating the earthly history of Jesus in its proclamation.⁴⁷

To lose the earthly Lord would be to fall into docetism, and to substitute the earthly Lord for the exalted Lord would be to negate the truth of the kerygma. The Gospel writers clearly saw the need to keep both elements in balance, and it was for this purpose they composed their theological histories of Jesus.

Jesus and His Ministry

Given the variety of testimonies in the Gospels about the earthly life of Jesus, what can we conclude, if anything, concerning the form and function of Jesus' earthly ministry? Käsemann examines this question by surveying the New Testament evidence which seems to indicate that Jesus was either a rabbi or a prophet.

Was Jesus a rabbi? Käsemann cites the first (Matt. 5:21-22), second (Matt. 5:27-28), and fourth (Matt. 5:33-34) antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount as passages which scholarship generally agrees are authentic sayings of Jesus.⁴⁸ If these sayings were really spoken by Jesus, the possibility of understanding Jesus and His mission as that of rabbi is immediately undercut. No rabbi would ever speak as does Jesus in these sayings, claiming his own authority over that of Moses who was the law-giver in Judaism from whom all rabbis received their authority. It was

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

the responsibility of the rabbi to expound the great laws of Moses and to do so by the authority of Moses. If anyone would ever be so bold as was Jesus when He said, "But I say to you," he would be either ostracized or else looked upon as the bearer of the Messianic Torah. The fact that Jesus was eventually crucified by the Romans because of the Jewish conspiracy which demanded His death indicates the reception Jesus had from Judaism.

Käsemann readily admits that Matthew cast Jesus in the role of a rabbi, and had his own theological reasons for doing so. But because of the critical suspicion under which nearly all of the Gospel traditions fall with regard to their authenticity, Käsemann is reluctant to base any conclusions in this matter on the bald statements of the text as such. Rather than depend upon what Matthew says about the identity of Jesus, Käsemann examines what Matthew says about Jesus' activity and thinks this to be a more accurate barometer of truth about the earthly Jesus and His identity.

In examining Jesus' activity Käsemann comes up with further evidence which goes against the argument that Jesus was a rabbi. In addition to the argument that no rabbi would ever set his authority over that of Moses, is the argument that no rabbi would have anything to do with John the Baptist. Yet Jesus was baptized by John. Also no pious Jew, much less a rabbi, would break with his own family the way Jesus did.⁴⁹

Käsemann cites two more convincing arguments against the case for Jesus being a rabbi. The first is based on the suggestion which the

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 40.

Synoptics give that Jesus was a teacher of wisdom.⁵⁰ Käsemann presents Matt. 10:26f. as a probable authentic saying of Jesus which indicates the nature of Jesus' teaching. Käsemann believes this and numerous other sayings like it make a strong case for Jesus being understood as a teacher of wisdom more than as a rabbi. Käsemann says the two are incompatible:

the portrayal of the teacher of wisdom accords but ill with that of the rabbi, because the former lives by immediacy of contemplation, such as is familiar to us from the parables of Jesus, while the latter's existence is determined by meditation and by the bond which keeps him tied to Scripture.⁵¹

If Jesus did understand Himself as a teacher of wisdom, the full implications of that role become clear in the second argument Käsemann advances against the idea that Jesus was a rabbi.

In Matt. 10:28 Jesus says it is by the Spirit of God which fills Him that He is able to cast out demons. Again Käsemann does not take this saying in its present form as necessarily coming directly from Jesus' own lips. What is important is that in this saying Jesus indicates He regarded Himself as being inspired.⁵² Käsemann cites as further evidence of this the "Amen" sayings of Jesus. Prefacing His own words with what is usually a response spoken by others, Jesus gives evidence in a way that is peculiar to Him alone in the whole New Testament that He was more than a rabbi. All of this adds up to the conclusion for Käsemann that Jesus was not a rabbi.

It is by this immediate assurance of knowing and proclaiming the will of God, which in him is combined with the direct and unsophisticated outlook of the teacher of wisdom and perhaps lies behind

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

it, that Jesus is distinguished from the rabbis. It does not matter whether he used the actual words or not; he must have regarded himself as the instrument of that living Spirit of God, which Judaism expected to be the gift of the End.⁵³

If Jesus and His ministry do not conform to the normal patterns of the rabbinate but seems to be more like a teacher of wisdom, perhaps it can be said that Jesus was a prophet.

Was Jesus a prophet? Käsemann rejects this designation for the person and office of Jesus as readily as he dismissed the suggestion that Jesus was a rabbi. Just as no rabbi would go against the authority of Moses so would no prophet challenge the jurisdiction of Moses for fear of being called a false prophet.⁵⁴ In addition Käsemann says "no prophet could be credited with the eschatological significance which Jesus obviously ascribed to His own actions."⁵⁵ Here Käsemann cites Matt. 11:12⁵⁶ in support of his contention that Jesus is no mere prophet.⁵⁷

Käsemann calls Matt. 11:12 a much-puzzled-over saying which was already unintelligible by the time of the Evangelists, but which is believed to be authentic. In short, the passage says the Kingdom of Heaven from the time of John the Baptist until now has suffered violence and men of violence are trying to overcome it. Käsemann suggests this passage means the Kingdom of God or Heaven has already dawned with the introduction given it by John the Baptist, but it is still being obstructed. Only Jesus

⁵³Ibid., p. 42.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶The SCM Press edition incorrectly cites Matt. 11:25f here. The correct reference is Matt. 11:12f and is correctly given in the German edition.

⁵⁷Käsemann, Essays on New Testament Themes, p. 42.

can look back over the Old Testament as a completed record of salvation and include John the Baptist as the initiator of the new age.⁵⁸ If John was the last of the prophets, the one who ushers in the very Kingdom of God, then who is this Jesus? Käsemann answers that Jesus is "he who brings with his Gospel the kingdom itself; a kingdom which can yet be obstructed and snatched away, for the very reason that it appears in the defenceless form of the Gospel."⁵⁹ Jesus was neither a rabbi nor a prophet but the one whose word itself was bringing the Kingdom to those who heard.

Furthermore, Käsemann says that when Jesus says, "But I say," as He did in the Sermon on the Mount, the only category which does justice to His claim (quite independently of whether He used it Himself and required it of others) is that in which His disciples themselves placed Him--namely, that of Messiah.⁶⁰

Käsemann does not go on to say that he believes Jesus thought of Himself as the Messiah. Käsemann says it is his conviction that all passages dealing with Messianic prediction are kerygmatic additions inserted by the community of faith.⁶¹ He holds that all Son of Man predictions are also the faithful reflections of the christology of the

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 43.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 43.

post-Easter community which were added by the Evangelists through the historification of the existent materials. It is Käsemann's conclusion that this is all consistent with what we know of Jesus' action and it is not surprising that Jesus Himself should not dwell on the importance of His own person. Käsemann says it is to be expected that Jesus

would have placed not his person but his work in the forefront of his preaching. But his community would have shown that they understood the distinctive nature of his mission precisely by responding to his proclamation with their own acknowledgement of him as Messiah and Son of God.⁶²

This leads us to Käsemann's own conclusions about how the Jesus of history is to be understood both in His person and His work.

Käsemann feels that "we must look for the distinctive element in the earthly Jesus in his preaching and interpret both his other activities and his destiny in the light of this preaching."⁶³ And what did Jesus preach? Käsemann says Jesus preached that the Kingdom of God was breaking into the world in His own words and calling those who heard to decide for either obedience or disobedience in the face of it.

For the most part Jesus' preaching is available to us in His parables which are in the Gospels. Käsemann says it is the parables to which the new quest for the historical Jesus must look for the most reliable information about the Jesus of history. When he says this, Käsemann knows full well that even the parables offer no absolutely reliable information about Jesus because many of them in their present form have been theologically edited by the early community and the context in which the parables were originally spoken is generally unknown. Yet Käsemann is willing to say

⁶²Ibid., p. 44.

⁶³Ibid.

although we may be for the most part ignorant of the original circumstances in which the individual parables were spoken, we do know him who uttered them well enough to be aware of the eschatological orientation of his message and to realize that we may not abstract from it. For Jesus did not come to proclaim general moral truths, but to tell of the basileia that had dawned and of how God was come near to man in grace and demand. He brought, and lived out, the liberty of the children of God, who only remain the Father's children and only remain free so long as they find in this Father their Lord.⁶⁴

Käsemann has not given us a fully developed picture of the Jesus of history. He has shown how the traditional categories of rabbi and prophet do not apply to Jesus even though He is made to look like both rabbi and prophet by the Evangelists. Käsemann has not taken it upon himself to give an all-inclusive label to Jesus and His ministry, but he has directed us to the preaching of Jesus which he considers the only source available to us today for determining who Jesus was and what He did. The preaching of Jesus and His activity while on earth all give clear indications as far as Käsemann is concerned that Jesus of history and the Risen Lord whom the post-Easter kerygma proclaimed are one and the same. To have the one is to be concerned with the other for they cannot be separated. Therefore concern for the Jesus of history is both justified and essential in the Christian faith.

Suggested Directions for Future Inquiry

This chapter suggested in the opening paragraph that in his programmatic essay of 1953 Käsemann provided the impetus for reopening the subject of the historical Jesus. This is true, with some important qualifications which we have tried to outline in the preceding pages.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 45.

Käsemann himself has not written a great deal in the new quest for the historical Jesus, but he has been an important source of methodological orientation for the quest. Scholarship has produced new insights which have been stimulated by Käsemann's invitation of the early 1950's to reopen the quest. However, much of what has resulted in the new quest has not been received favorably by Käsemann and he has also become one of the new quest's sternest critics. What Käsemann has had to say critically about the new quest of the historical Jesus we shall reserve for the final chapter after some examination of the fruits of the new quest have been presented in Chapter III. At this point we wish now to summarize the position of Käsemann as of 1953 when he first outlined the restrictions and directions with which any future inquiry into the life of Jesus must work.

Without mincing words Käsemann says in straight-forward language that any hope of writing a modern life of Jesus is futile and based on a misunderstanding of the whole issue. He writes:

In writing the life of Jesus, we could not dispense with some account of his exterior and interior development. But we know nothing at all about the latter and next to nothing about the former, save only the way which led from Galilee to Jerusalem, from the preaching of the God who is near to us to the hatred of official Judaism and execution by the Romans. Only an uncontrolled imagination could have the self-confidence to weave out of these pitiful threads the fabric of a history in which cause and effect could be determined in detail.⁶⁵

Käsemann is of this opinion because of the light modern scholarship has shed upon the make up of the only sources we have about the life of Jesus, the Gospels.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Although the Gospel writers themselves honestly believed their work to be a faithful portrayal of the life of Jesus, modern textual criticism has shown that much of the material they drew upon was borrowed from other literary sources extant in the first century and applied to Jesus.⁶⁶ Form Criticism has so thoroughly cast in doubt those words and actions which in the Gospels are attributed to Jesus that Käsemann says the present task of the modern scholar is not to establish the unauthenticity of individual units of tradition but to show, if possible, their genuineness!⁶⁷

Käsemann is not suggesting that what is required for the new quest of the historical Jesus is a newer and more intense attempt to show the form critics to be wrong. This is a backward step into the nineteenth century which the vast evidence of modern research will not permit to the responsible scholar. Yet Käsemann is not advocating complete despair either. Although it is true that radical scholarship has set up standards which rule out various passages as possibly being authentic Jesus traditions, scholarship has as yet no "conspectus of the very earliest stage of primitive Christian history,"⁶⁸ and no "satisfactory and water-tight criteria for this material"⁶⁹ which could establish authenticity. There-

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 36.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 37.

fore Käsemann concludes all we can say with reasonable certainty is that a given tradition may well be authentic when

there are no grounds either for deriving a tradition from Judaism or for ascribing it to primitive Christianity, and especially when Jewish Christianity has mitigated or modified the received tradition, as having found it too bold for its taste.⁷⁰

Because this is an argument from the negative, it might seem of little value. Käsemann does not share such pessimism, and declares that "the frontiers here lie wide open to the most diverse hypotheses."⁷¹ Those who wish to pursue a so-called new quest for the historical Jesus are only restricted by the boundaries of responsible scholarship, and these are boundaries which do not restrict freedom but grant it.

Käsemann is not at all willing to relegate the Jesus of history or the study of that history to pious declamations or irresponsible scholarship. If the present day Christian faith and its theologians were to abandon interest in the earthly Jesus this would signal a failure to recognize the reality of the primitive Christian concern with the identity of the exalted and the humiliated Lord. It would also be a failure to recognize that there are in the Synoptic tradition pieces of tradition which are authentic and which legitimately claim the attention of the historian. Käsemann summarizes his own position in the matter:

My own concern is to show that, out of the obscurity of the life story of Jesus, certain characteristic traits in his preaching stand out in relatively sharp relief, and that primitive Christianity united its own message with these. The heart of our problem lies here: the exalted Lord has almost entirely swallowed up the image of the earthly Lord and yet the community maintains the identity of the exalted Lord with the earthly. The solution of this problem cannot, however, if our findings are right, be

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

approached with any hope of success along the line of supposed historical bruta facta but only along the line of the connection and tension between the preaching of Jesus and that of his community. The question of the historical Jesus is, in its legitimate form, the question of the continuity of the Gospel within the discontinuity of the times and within the variation of the kerygma.⁷²

Käsemann has outlined the problems and pointed the direction for any new quest of the historical Jesus. It remains now to evaluate the response which has been made by others in the quest.

⁷²Ibid., p. 46.

CHAPTER III

ALTE MARBURGER: THE NEW QUEST

Günther Bornkamm

Validity of the New Quest

In view of the failure of the old quest for the historical Jesus, it is legitimate to ask Bornkamm and the other Alte Marburger what validity there is in taking up the quest again, and what is truly new in the new quest. Bornkamm himself is quick to point out that the new quest is not simply the old quest resuscitated. The "Life of Jesus" research that was carried on in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, largely by positivistic theologians, is dead and buried and responsible scholarship will not bring it back to life. Bornkamm makes this judgment on the basis of what we know today through modern form-critical scholarship as to the way in which the Synoptic Gospels were first put together, and on the basis of a new view of history which has its orientation in existential philosophy.

Bornkamm's perspective on mainstream New Testament research in the twentieth century leads him to conclude that all attempts to filter out the "real" Jesus of history from the Christ of dogma are doomed from the start. This is simply because the New Testament writers themselves never made this distinction and did not write with it in mind. Throughout the Gospels the Jesus of history and the Jesus of faith are so intertwined as to be indistinguishable. Likewise all attempts to find absolutely certain words of Jesus that are uncorrupted by tradition or editorial

redacting will only lead to disappointment and failure, according to Bornkamm. Bornkamm warns those who would approach the quest for the historical Jesus with such hopes:

Mathematical certainty in the exposition of a bare history of Jesus, unembellished by faith, is unobtainable, in spite of the fact that the critical discernment of older and more recent layers of tradition belongs to the work of research. We possess no single word of Jesus and no single story of Jesus, no matter how incontestably genuine they may be, which do not contain at the same time the confession of the believing congregation or at least are embedded therein. This makes the search after the bare facts of history difficult and to a large extent futile.¹

Thus the new quest is no attempt at constructing a biography, psycho-analysis, or chronicle of the earthly Jesus as was so often tried by those involved in the old quest. For Bornkamm modern scholarship simply rules this out as an impossibility.

If then the quest as traditionally conceived is ruled out, what enables Bornkamm to take it up again? It is a new view of history as it exists in the New Testament that both enables a new quest and validates it for present day scholarship.

To approach the Gospels with the question "what really happened?" is to misunderstand the New Testament view of history. This analytical, impartially objective approach to history is a relatively recent development in the history of man, and although it may be a legitimate concern today, the Gospels do not respond to this kind of probing. Bornkamm suggests that the Gospel writers were concerned with who Jesus is, and not

¹"Günther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, translated by Irene and Fraser McLusky with James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 14.

who He was.² They were not concerned with preserving the words and teachings of Jesus with the exactitude of a modern archivist, but they freely incorporated and remodeled the information they had about Jesus to fit their confession of faith in Him as both Jesus of Nazareth and Risen Lord. History is viewed theologically and not photographically for the Gospel writers, and therefore facts and faith are interwoven in such a way that they express the post-Easter church's faith in Jesus as Christ and do not simply present a personality sketch of Him. For Bornkamm then the new quest is to seek the history of Jesus as it is embedded in the kerygma of the church and not apart from it, because it does not exist apart from the kerygma. The Gospels in which this history is recorded are themselves written from a kerygmatic viewpoint.

Yet in spite of this overwhelmingly kerygmatic approach to history that predominates in the Gospels Bornkamm still maintains the Gospels are concerned with the pre-Easter, pre-Good Friday history of Jesus.³ They have this concern because faith must always begin with history, since faith is not something hanging in the air or spun out of dreams. Bornkamm maintains the Gospels were written to show precisely that the faith of the early community was not myth but was based on physical, historical events.⁴ This was always done with an eye toward faith, and not toward history in itself. The history about which the Gospels speak is always past history but with a meaning that is always present. Because

²Ibid., p. 17.

³Ibid., p. 23.

⁴Ibid.

the Gospels take this approach, the new quest is a valid concern of scholarship today.

Bornkamm sees the new quest as both valid and instructive because it asks the right questions and looks in the right places for the answers. To ask again today about the Jesus of history is to ask who He is for the New Testament writers. Since they conceived the answer to that concern in terms of faith, their answer will be our answer too, says Bornkamm. And the place to look is in the kerygma which is the early community's expression of faith. We do have access to the kerygma and in it is found the Jesus of history. The new quest is valid as long as it remembers that

The Gospels do not speak of the history of Jesus in the way of reproducing the course of his career in all its happenings and stages, in its inner and outer development, nevertheless they do speak of history as occurrence and event.⁵

This emphasis of history as "occurrence and event" must be closely considered.

Means of Access to the Historical Jesus

So-called secular history of the first century gives us no historical facts concerning the person and life of Jesus. For this information we are totally dependent upon the New Testament accounts. Even casual students of the Bible can observe that in the New Testament it is only the four Gospels which deal in a direct way with the history of Jesus.

In view of Bornkamm's belief about the pervasive influence of the kerygma on the composition of the Gospels one might initially despair to find anything in them which might be called historical. Bornkamm

⁵Ibid., pp. 24-25.

counsels against such despair. He says the Gospels

bring before our eyes, in very different fashion from what is customary in chronicles and presentations of history, the historical person of Jesus with the utmost vividness. Quite clearly what the Gospels report concerning the message, the deeds and the history of Jesus is still distinguished by an authenticity, a freshness, and a distinctiveness not in any way effaced by the Church's Easter faith. These features point us directly to the earthly figure of Jesus.⁶

As soon as he has said this, Bornkamm reminds us again that he is not stumbling back into the pitfalls of the old quest. The history of Jesus which is transmitted in the Gospels is transmitted in the form of individual pericopae that have been editorially linked together. The linkage itself is of secondary interest as Bornkamm's attention is not directed to an outline of a chronology or itinerary of Jesus' ministry. Each pericope is complete in itself, each one contains the total impact and knowable "history" of Jesus completely.⁷ The Sermon on the Mount, the Commissioning of the Disciples, and the Parables are examples of these pericopae which have been strung together, using historical events to encase the kerygma.⁸

Valuing the contributions of modern historical criticism which display the form and function of the Gospel pericopae, Bornkamm goes on to insist it is in the pericopae that the history of Jesus is discerned. For the pericopae, even though trimmed and shaped by tradition, give evidence in word and deed of the character and impact of Jesus and His ministry. It is through a study of various pericopae that we can now discuss the purpose of Jesus' ministry according to Bornkamm's evaluation.

⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

⁷ Ibid., p. 25.

⁸ Ibid.

The Purpose of Jesus' Earthly Ministry

It is perhaps worthwhile to note that in the 191 pages of his famous book Jesus of Nazareth, which is Bornkamm's chief contribution toward the new quest, Bornkamm devotes only ten pages to what would normally be considered the biographical facts about Jesus. It is surprising that given his attitude toward such endeavors in the past, Bornkamm should even attempt a bare outline of Jesus' life. The fact that Bornkamm is willing to include an outline, even if in a sketchy, qualified fashion, shows that he does believe something can be known about the Jesus of history which transcends the nuances of tradition.

What can be known in this factual way is at best superficial. The birth and infant narratives in Matthew and Luke are too overladen with Christian and Judaistic messianic conceptions to be of any literal historical value, says Bornkamm. We do know that Jesus' native home was in Nazareth, that He grew up in Galilee, that His father was a carpenter and that He had brothers and sisters. We also know from scanning the Synoptic accounts that His native tongue was Aramaic, that He began His ministry after His baptism by John, and that after John's arrest Jesus' ministry was carried out in the small villages in the hill country around the Sea of Galilee. We know that eventually Jesus went with His disciples to Jerusalem where He suffered death on a cross.⁹

Bornkamm's purpose in highlighting these facts of Jesus and His life is not to shape a picture of His personality. Nor is it to show Jesus' inner and outer development, nor to build a case for Jesus' messianic

⁹Ibid., pp. 53-54.

consciousness. Concerning this last point Bornkamm makes it his special emphasis to indicate that messianic consciousness was not the dominant characteristic of Jesus around and under which all His activity and words are subsumed.¹⁰ Bornkamm purposely structures his book in such a way as to place the small section on the messianic question in the next to last chapter, because he understands Jesus' messianic consciousness as something which the post-Easter faith superimposed on the tradition of Jesus' teaching and activities, and is not to be found in Jesus Himself. Concerning Jesus and this question of messianic consciousness, Bornkamm writes:

The very nature of his teaching and his actions, so vulnerable, so open to controversy and yet so direct and matter-of-fact, doom to failure any attempt to raise his Messianism into a system of dogma through which his preaching, his actions and his history would receive their meaning.¹¹

All of this leads Bornkamm to the conclusion that neither the synoptic writers, nor Jesus Himself is interested in building a personality cult around Jesus. These facts of Jesus' life provide the context in which the words and activities of Jesus are based. It is the words and activities of Jesus that give us the clues concerning His purpose and His ministry.

To put this in the simplest terms we could say the purpose and reality of the mystery that surrounded the historical Jesus was and is to make the reality of God present in that age. Bornkamm has observed that the age in which Jesus lived had little sensitivity to present time

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 169-178.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 61.

but lived with an eye toward either past or future.¹² Some reveled in the glory of Israel's past and held that biological connection with the chosen people was sufficient for securing God's blessing. Others trusted in a future military or political victory which would re-establish the glories of David and once again make Israel supreme. In either case there was no concern for the present moment; but it is exactly the present where Jesus made contact!

Jesus Himself never talked of His calling in any traditional way. He never gave proof of who He is or by what right He did as He did. Yet He was one who taught with authority. He was called a prophet, yet He was never known to have prefaced His teachings with the traditional prophetic formula, $\text{כֹּה אָמַר ה'$, "Thus says the Lord," which gave the prophet his authority. He was also called a rabbi, but a rabbi's authority is always derived from Moses and is second to the law of Moses whereas Jesus was so bold as to say, "But I say unto you."¹³ Although He bore similarities to the prophet and the rabbi, Jesus was different.

Jesus always dealt with the immediate present, and in every activity and teaching He called those about Him to take cognizance of the present. What is so important about the present? For Jesus, according to Bornkamm, it was this present moment into which the Kingdom of God was breaking. The past no longer afforded security and the future was no longer assured. Through His actions and words Jesus was saying, in a sense, "The Kingdom of God and His will are very near. Those who have ears, let them hear!"

¹² Ibid., p. 55.

¹³ cf. Matt. 5:18,22,28,32.

Bornkamm suggests the purpose of Jesus and His ministry was to usher in the Kingdom itself and to call all those who will see and believe.¹⁴

Bornkamm says Jesus Himself is not the center of attention, but rather what He does and teaches to show the importance of the nearness of the Kingdom of God and the Will of God.

Bornkamm devotes nearly one third of his book to the general topics "The Kingdom of God," and "The Will of God." The substance of Jesus' ministry was Jesus' declaration that the Kingdom is near at hand and therefore the Will of God has inserted itself into the present. It is Jesus' actions and words which convey this news of the Kingdom and Will of God, and which provide a possibility to come to some understanding of the Jesus of history. We need to remind ourselves again that the history of Jesus in Bornkamm's view is occurrence and event and not cold facts. The history of Jesus which is stylistically carried along in the kerygmatically motivated Gospels is always dynamic calling for reaction, and never static calling for speculation. Bornkamm, along with the Gospel writers, suggests the history of Jesus is the word and activity of His ministry. The pericopae themselves are the living encounter with Jesus. Jesus' history is not to be seen as an extract squeezed from ancient sources. With this in mind it is not difficult to see why Bornkamm carries on the new quest and how he places the Jesus of history in the framework of activity and teaching.

The purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry was to announce that the Kingdom of God was at hand.¹⁵ This is the core of His message! What

¹⁴Bornkamm, p. 67.

¹⁵cf. Mark 1:14-15; Matt. 4:17.

is this Kingdom of God? We know that many of those who heard Jesus' words understood the Kingdom to be the essence of all of Israel's political and nationalistic hopes and dreams. The kingdom was to come in a future age and was to bring the end of time. It was to re-establish Israel in glory and victory over all her enemies. It was to be a Golden Age, grander than the age of David and Solomon. But Jesus' preaching was from the very first something quite different. He did not dwell on the hopes of Judaism for the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom. His words and deeds all pointed to a Kingdom which was of cosmic apocalyptic definition. Yet Jesus did not dwell at great length on the way things will be when the Kingdom does come, nor did He predict exactly when it will come. His message was simply, "It is coming, so be ready."

To ask questions about the nature of this kingdom and when it will come so that one might be ready is to misunderstand Jesus. He who asks this question

not only wants to know too much, but is fundamentally in error about God and himself. He is running away from God's call, here and now; he is losing himself and at the same time has lost the future of God by this very attempt to possess it.¹⁶

Through His words and deeds, Jesus accented the need for response on the part of those who heard, and He was not calling for intellectual inquiry! All that is needed is to know that the Kingdom is already breaking in, the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed.¹⁷ In so stressing the immediacy of the Kingdom of Jesus implied directly that all this was

¹⁶Bornkamm, p. 75.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 67.

happening with and in His own words and activities, and nowhere else.¹⁸ Jesus entered the battle against Satan and all the foes of the Kingdom, and in so doing fastened upon the present moment as decisive for the future. Yet the emphasis is still upon the Kingdom and not Jesus Himself, says Bornkamm.¹⁹ Jesus' preaching and actions were signs of the coming Kingdom just as Jesus Himself was a sign. "But the sign is not the thing itself. He himself in his own person neither replaces nor excludes the Kingdom of God, which remains the one theme of his message."²⁰

Speaking paradoxically, one can say that Bornkamm believes the Kingdom is revealed in hiddenness. Jesus does not baldly assert the presence of the Kingdom. Through the use of parables Jesus reveals the essence of the Kingdom, but in a manner which always veils the meaning. The rabbis used parables to illustrate their teachings. The parable was Jesus' teaching and He told it so that those who heard might comprehend and respond accordingly. The parable was directed toward the hearer, calling and challenging him to acknowledge the presence of the Kingdom and in so doing involve himself in it. It is consistent with Bornkamm's position to interject at this point that to "hear" a parable did not mean intellectual, theoretical or formal comprehension, but existential understanding in which the hearer's life in relationship to God was revealed and renewed in that moment. In this way both the hiddenness and the revelation which denote the parable are brought together.

The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, spelled out in

¹⁸ cf. Matt. 11:2-6.

¹⁹ Bornkamm, p. 68.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 69.

Matthew 13:31-33, are good examples of what the Kingdom of God is like. Bornkamm offers a summary of these parables which captures the way they direct man to the impending Kingdom:

We are always brought back to this same feature: the hiddenness, the insignificance of the beginning, in which the promise of what is to come is nevertheless embedded. No one is to think that he can or should help out the small beginning, and no one should think that he can discover visible signs of what is to come. So the beginning of the Kingdom of God is an insignificant event in this time and world. Within this time and world it sets an end to both. For the new world of God is already at work.²¹

The meaning of the Kingdom is straightforward: God comes to you! The Kingdom is neither an earthly place nor a distant wonderland. Every attempt to describe it or possess it turns to grief. It is not a place, but an event, an occurrence, the gracious action of God himself.²²

The man who truly "hears" the parable and responds to the hiddenness and nearness of the Kingdom of God is in reality responding to the call to salvation. He will joyfully respond to the call to repentance. He will be ready to renounce all he has and sacrifice all he owns if need be.²³ He will be a man of wisdom and watchfulness, for he will know that to discern the present age means to lay hold of the very hour of salvation itself. The man who sees in the deeds of Jesus and hears in His words the signs of the imminence of the Kingdom will understand time in a new way. Time will no longer be "now" and "later," "present" and "future." It will be qualitative, not quantitative, *καιρός* not *χρόνος*. Bornkamm says the following about time in relationship to the Kingdom of God which Jesus brought:

²¹Ibid., p. 74.

²²Ibid., p. 77.

²³cf. the parable of the Treasure Hidden in the Field, Matt. 13:44; and the parable of the Pearl of Great Price, Matt. 13:45.

We must not separate the statements about future and present, as is already apparent from the fact that in Jesus' preaching they are related in the closest fashion. The present dawn of the Kingdom of God is always spoken of so as to show that the present reveals the future as salvation and judgment and therefore does not anticipate it. Again, the future is always spoken of as unlocking and lighting up the present and therefore revealing today as the day of decision. It is therefore more than a superficial difference, more than one of degree, concerned, so to speak, only with the quantity of colour employed by the apocalyptic painter, when one notes that Jesus' eschatological sayings do not describe the future as a state of heavenly bliss nor indulge in broad descriptions of the terrors of the judgment. Hence in Jesus' preaching, speaking of the present means speaking of the future, and vice versa.²⁴

The man who accepts the present as God's present acknowledges the Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaims is breaking in upon the times. The Kingdom means salvation to this man. He who does not acknowledge the present moment as the veritable hour of his salvation understands the Kingdom and the future as judgment. Man either lives in his own time or he lives in time as described by the Kingdom of God. To choose between these two kinds of time is the choice which Jesus brings before all men.

Because of the imminence of the Kingdom of God, the Will of God is also present in a new and radical way. To bring man into a new relationship with the Will of God is the thrust of Jesus' ministry which is one with his announcement of the Kingdom.

Bornkamm understands that the Will of God is so much present in Jesus' words and deeds that everything, especially the law, must be re-evaluated in terms of it.²⁵ Jesus was no antinomian. Rather he insisted that the law must be kept, but in a new and radical way. Those who rejected the law or separated it from God were opposed by Jesus. He said

²⁴Bornkamm, pp. 92-93.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 99-100.

of Himself that He came not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them.²⁶

Those who recognize the presence of the Kingdom will also recognize that the Will of God calls for obedience of the heart and mind as well as obedience in actions. This is not to say that Jesus simply called for more and better ethical behavior. He called for an awareness that one is in the presence of God and is enjoined to be perfect as the Father is perfect.²⁷ This is carried out by accepting the relationship that the Kingdom of God offers, but not by achieving a set of ethical or legal principles. It is at this point that Jesus united His preaching about the Will of God in the Sermon on the Mount.

According to Bornkamm the Sermon on the Mount contains pericopae which are meant for the end time which is also the time of Jesus. Bornkamm says, "Those called to the new righteousness are liberated from the world, and yet put into the world again in a new way. . . ."²⁸ The Sermon is not to be taken as a platform for the social reform of the world, but rather is to awaken in those who hear a thirst for the Kingdom of God. It is hoped this will lead one to seek the righteousness which Jesus proclaims and the Kingdom offers.

We might summarize this section briefly. Bornkamm understands one central purpose in Jesus' earthly ministry: to bring men into a new and immediate relationship with God. To do this, Jesus' whole life, His preaching, His teaching, His healings, His daily actions were spent in manifesting

²⁶ Matthew 5:17.

²⁷ Bornkamm, p. 108.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 109.

the nearness of the Kingdom of God and the Will of God which accompanied it. Bornkamm sees in the earthly Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels a sign of the Kingdom which was breaking into the present time. Everyone who was confronted by the sign was called to a decision. Thus the earthly Jesus, in all that He did and said, was the occurrence and event by which God revealed Himself and called the world to Himself.

The messianic secrecy which pervades the Gospel of Mark is the work
Relationship of the Historical Jesus to the Kerygmatic Christ

In this section it is appropriate to deal with the difficult question of Jesus' messianic consciousness. At the outset Bornkamm tells us that we are asking a question about which the New Testament itself has no concern. The New Testament operates with the assumption, informed by faith, that Jesus is the Messiah. The witness which we have in the Gospels and tradition does not concern itself with Jesus' own view of the matter.

This explanation of the New Testament view gives an indication of Bornkamm's own position. The whole subject of Jesus' messianic consciousness is treated in a brief ten pages in the next to last chapter of Bornkamm's book. This shows his personal estimation of the value of the messianic question for the new quest.

Bornkamm's emphasis is always upon the words and actions of Jesus. The question of Jesus' messianic consciousness is not prerequisite to understanding the historical Jesus. If anything, it is just the opposite. Bornkamm writes of Jesus' words and actions:

It is the special character of his message and work, that Jesus is to be found in his word and in his actions and that he does

not make his own rank a special theme of his message prior to everything else.²⁹

Bornkamm asserts that Jesus Himself never makes the claim of being the Messiah, but in all His words and deeds up to the crucifixion claims of messiahship are only found indirectly in those words and deeds and absorbed by them.³⁰

The messianic secrecy which pervades the Gospel of Mark is the work of the post-Easter church. It is not to be maintained that this messianic secrecy motif actually came from the lips of the historical Jesus.³¹ According to Bornkamm the whole idea of the messianic secret so presupposes the experience of Good Friday and Easter that it can only be taken as a theological-literary device by Mark.³² This is not to suggest that Jesus did not awaken messianic hopes in those who saw and heard Him.³³ Bornkamm believes that among the people who encountered Jesus there were many who held Him to be the promised Savior.³⁴ Bornkamm sees the pre-Easter life of Jesus, not as nonmessianic, but as a series of broken messianic hopes when seen from the perspective of the first century Jew and his expectations of what the Messiah should be and do.³⁵ In any event Jesus' preaching of the nearness of the Kingdom of God and His desire to make the

²⁹Ibid., p. 169.

³⁰Ibid., p. 170.

³¹Ibid., p. 171.

³²Ibid.

³³cf. Luke 24:21.

³⁴Bornkamm, p. 172.

³⁵Ibid.

will of God a reality proceeded unhindered by this modern messianic question.

Bornkamm does recognize that there are clearly many messianic passages in the Gospel. These passages, however, form the confession of the early church and constitute the theological expression of that confession.³⁶ Bornkamm says that the hope of finding historical "kernels" in regard to the messianic question is slight,³⁷ and the very search for such truth runs counter to the approach of the new quest. What is important is to see that the early community saw the earthly Jesus and the Risen Lord as one and the same and therefore were not troubled when they mixed the words of Jesus spoken after the Resurrection with those which He spoke during His earthly life. Bornkamm states this succinctly:

Just because the resurrected and risen Christ was for the believers no other than the earthly Jesus of Nazareth, it was possible for exalted titles to find their way into the words of Jesus spoken before Easter, titles which in reality anticipate the end of his life.³⁸

Finally it is not essential to establish that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. Bornkamm says we have no proof that Jesus ever made this claim or that He thought of Himself this way. We do have the confession of the early church though, and we have the traditions in the Gospels about Jesus' earthly ministry. From these Bornkamm says we can conclude that "the Messianic character of his being is contained in historic appearance."³⁹

³⁶ Ibid., p. 173

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 174.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 178.

It has already been mentioned how the early community identified the earthly Jesus with the Risen Lord. This is also Bornkamm's position. After the resurrection the community of faith carried on the work of Jesus, but with a major shift in emphasis. The early community did not merely repeat the teachings and preachings of Jesus, but preached Jesus Himself. That is, "the preacher Jesus of Nazareth enters into the message of faith and himself becomes the content of the preaching: he who called men to believe is now believed in."⁴⁰ Bornkamm shows this is the primary emphasis which he has accepted as normative in his article, "Faith and History in the Gospels."⁴¹ In this article Bornkamm says that the equation "Jesus equals Christ" is the fundamental theme and motive for the Gospels. He summarizes this when he says

As to the question concerning the Evangelists' interest in the faith of the pre-Easter history of Jesus one would have to say first of all that in their presentation nothing else is expressed than the fundamental confession 'Ἰησοῦς - Χριστός, Jesus of Nazareth, then and there, "a man identified by God among you through deeds of power, wonders and signs which God through him has done in your midst"; surrendered according to God's council, nailed to a cross by the Jews through the hand of the heathen, he is resurrected by God and elevated to be Lord and Christ."⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 179.

⁴¹ Günther Bornkamm, "Glaube und Geschichte in den Evangelien," in Der Historische Jesus und der Kerygmatische Christus, edited by Helmut Ristow and Karl Matthiae (Berlin: Verlagsanstalt, 1962), pp. 281-288.

⁴² Ibid., p. 284. The German text reads as follows: "Man wird auf die Frage nach dem Glaubensinteresse der Evangelisten an der vorösterlichen Geschichte Jesu erstlich zu antworten haben, dass sich in ihrer Darstellung nichts anderes als das christliche Urbekenntnis überhaupt ausspricht 'Ἰησοῦς - Χριστός: Jesus von Nazareth, damals und dort, 'ein Mann, von Gott ausgewiesen bei euch durch Krafttaten und Wunder und Zeichen, welche Gott durch ihn getan hat in eurer Mitte,' nach Gottes Ratschluss dahingegeben und von den Juden durch die Hände der Heiden ans Kreuz geheftet, der ist von Gott auferweckt und zum Herrn und Christus erhöht."

What at least in part leads Bornkamm to this position are accounts of the post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus (Erscheinungsgeschichten).⁴³

Bornkamm interprets the emphasis of the Gospel of John as the earliest attempt to struggle against the heresy of docetism. All the Gospels show a strong rejection of any attempts at "making the faith in Christ anonymous and mythical,"⁴⁴ by separating and excluding the Jesus of Nazareth from the Risen Lord.

This, however, does not end the matter. Bornkamm says that the Gospels were not content with merely establishing the "Dass"⁴⁵ of the identity of the earthly and resurrected Jesus. Nor was their intention to give simply an historical profile to the name of Jesus. Borrowing a phrase from Ernst Käsemann, Bornkamm says that the history of Jesus is bound up in the revelation of God Himself and that this history is "the intersection of the eschatological events."⁴⁶ Building on this idea, Bornkamm says that it is not just the cross and resurrection which mark the point of intersection, but it is every word, deed, and pericope of

⁴³ cf. Luke 24:13,39,42; John 20:16,27.

⁴⁴ Bornkamm, "Glaube und Geschichte in den Evangelien," in Der historische Jesus p. 285. The German text reads as follows: "Anonymisierung und Mythisierung des Christusglaubens."

⁴⁵ The term "Dass" was coined by Rudolf Bultmann in his address to the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences in 1959. It is published in English translation under the title, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ, edited by Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 15-42. When Bultmann uses the term "Dass" he means we can only know "that" there was a Jesus of history. We cannot go behind the givenness of his historical existence to discover the particulars of his earthly life.

⁴⁶ Bornkamm, "Glaube und Geschichte in den Evangelien," in Der historische Jesus p. 285. The German text reads as follows: "Schnittpunkt der eschatologischen Ereignisse."

Jesus that literally reveals the heavens and the history of God Himself!

Bornkamm's quest for the historical Jesus cannot really be separated from any quest he might make for the Christ of faith. "It is the resurrected Christ, therefore, who first reveals the mystery of his history and his person, and above all the meaning of his suffering and death."⁴⁷ For Bornkamm, as for the early Christian community, the two are identical: Jesus is the Christ and the Christ is Jesus. It is impossible to look for a Jesus of history apart from the kerygma because it is precisely in the kerygma that we have any knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth. The linking and equating of the historical Jesus with the Christ of the kerygma, is, according to Bornkamm, not done out of pure historical interests but always done with an eye toward the faith. The quest has been taken up anew in order that the Christ of faith might be more fully manifest through the words and teachings of the historical Jesus.

Bornkamm's concern for the new quest is never purely noetic. In back of all his scholarly concern for the Jesus of history lies his professed assumption that the new quest will show that the Jesus of history, as we know Him in word and deed, is indeed indispensable to the Christian faith. When asked how this is so, Bornkamm answers

Obviously this, that the one-time event has become for the community essentially the Word, no longer just the telling of the event but challenge--affirmation in the sense of "Blessed are you" of the Beatitudes, but at the same time a call to obedience.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Bornkamm, Jesus, p. 185.

⁴⁸ Bornkamm, "Glaube und Geschichte in den Evangelien," in Der historische Jesus p. 288. The German text reads as follows: "Offenbar dies, dass das Geschehen von einst für die Gemeinde erst eigentlich zum Wort geworden ist, nicht mehr nur Mitteilung von einst Geschehenem, sondern Anruf--Zuruf im Sinne des 'Heil euch' der Seligpreisungen, aber zugleich Aufruf zum Gehorsam."

Gerhard Ebeling

Validity of the New Quest

Ebeling, like Bornkamm and the others engaged in the new quest, rejects the attempts of the earlier "Life of Jesus" researchers because, in his opinion, their basic assumptions and means of approaching the whole project were wrong from the start. In the first place such research hoped to go behind the picture of the dogmatic Christ to find the "real" Jesus of history who would be untainted by the influence of tradition and faith. Secondly, the historical-critical approach to the Jesus of history hoped by outlining the "pure facts" of the Jesus of history that a more trustworthy and therefore more believable Christian faith would be possible. And thirdly, this research was doomed to failure from the start according to Ebeling because it asked of history the wrong questions.

The first intention of the old "Life of Jesus" research was to go behind the dogmatic Christ as pictured in the early Christian kerygma and to reconstruct a "real" historical Jesus. This attempt failed to realize that no such endeavor is possible and that the New Testament through and through is written from the standpoint of faith. The New Testament never deals with a "historical" Jesus as nineteenth century historicans wished to see Him. The New Testament is more onion than apple. There is no "hard core" of believable, historical facts at which one can arrive by peeling back the layers of tradition! This holds true of the Gospels as well as the other books of the New Testament. For Ebeling this view is axiomatic. Any attempt to know the Jesus of history apart from the

christological confessions which we have about Him is impossible. In a somewhat enigmatic statement Ebeling says that Jesus is never to be seen as pure fact, but always as the Word of God. This always involves and assumes the kerygma. Ebeling writes:

When one gets involved with Jesus he does not get involved with pure facts, but with sheer Word. To ask back behind (beyond) the primitive Christian kerygma is therefore--if done appropriately--not at all to ask back behind the Word for facts attesting it, but rather to ask back behind a Word in need of interpretation for a Word-event which is being presupposed in this Word.⁴⁹

Ebeling sees any attempt to find the real Jesus of history by setting aside the kerygma in which the history of Jesus is wrapped as a task which will meet with frustration. In another place Ebeling makes it quite clear that the historical questions in the Gospels are always raised and discussed in the context of the christology which is found in the kerygma. He says: "The nature of what has been handed down about Jesus makes it quite impossible to pursue the question of the historical Jesus without any knowledge of the connection between Jesus and Christology."⁵⁰

Ebeling says the second hope of the old quest for the historical Jesus was equally ill-conceived. The hope was that the real "facts" of Jesus and His life, once made known, would make the Christian faith more

⁴⁹Gerhard Ebeling, Theologie und Verkündigung (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1962), p. 56. The German text reads as follows: "Denn wenn man es mit Jesus zu tun bekommt, bekommt man es nicht mit puren Fakten, sondern mit lauter Wort zu tun. Das Zurückfragen hinter das urchristliche Kerygma ist also, wenn es sachgemäß geschieht, gar nicht ein Zurückfragen hinter das Wort auf beglaubigende Fakten, sondern ein Zurückfragen hinter ein interpretations bedürftiges Wort auf ein darin vorausgesetzte Wortgeschehen."

⁵⁰Gerhard Ebeling, "The Question of the Historical Jesus and the Problem of Christology," Word and Faith, translated from the German by James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 289. This essay was first published in 1959.

plausible because the truth of Jesus would have been historically and scientifically demonstrated. Even if such indisputable facts could be put together, Ebeling asks, what would be proved? He maintains the validity of the faith and the reliability of its record would not have been advanced one bit. Suppose for example that it was established through research that Jesus thought of Himself as the Messiah. Would this prove that He actually was the Messiah? Ebeling answers, "A messianic consciousness does not say anything about being a Messiah."⁵¹ The same holds true for the other particulars which are objects of the scientific research into the life of Jesus; for example, Jesus' Sonship, death, and resurrection. Even if such facts could be determined, Ebeling believes they would in no way "prove" the Christian faith. The kerygma in which our knowledge of the historical Jesus is found never speaks of Jesus as an historical figure whose history validates the faith. The emphasis is elsewhere in the kerygma's view of Jesus and this is decisive.

One cannot appeal to the fact that the kerygma did not with historical interest speak of Jesus as a historical figure. But it does speak of God in relation to Jesus who was a historical figure. This is so decisive for the kerygma that we have to take it at face value even if the way in which this must happen today was alien to the primitive Christian kerygma.⁵²

⁵¹Ebeling, Theologie und Verkündigung, p. 54.

⁵²Ibid., p. 62. The German text reads as follows: "Man kann sich auch nicht darauf berufen, dass das Kerygma allerdings nicht in historischem Interesse von Jesus als historischer Erscheinung spricht. Aber es spricht von Gott in bezug auf Jesus, der eine historische Erscheinung war. Das ist für das Kerygma so entscheidend, dass es dabei zu behaften ist, auch wenn die Weise, wie das heute geschehen muss, dem urchristlichen Kerygma fern lag."

If the failure of these first two hopes of the previous research is not enough, Ebeling now points out that the whole enterprise was ill-fated from the beginning because it did not even ask the right questions of history. It is the failure of the old "Life of Jesus" research at this point which also marks the advance of the new quest.

Ebeling feels that the past attempts at finding the historical Jesus failed precisely because they asked of history the wrong questions. Perhaps it was natural and acceptable that nineteenth-century historiography asked the questions it did. It is not our place here to make a value judgment. Ebeling does warn against repeating past mistakes. The proper questions which we can now rightly address to history are not, What happened?, What were the facts?, How are they to be explained?, or something of the kind. Rather, the question is, What came to expression?⁵³ This simple little question which Ebeling now asks is the key to his whole understanding of history, the historical Jesus, and the nature of faith. Before we treat these matters we must first say something about the validity which Ebeling sees in the new quest.

Ebeling is quite clear that just because the attempts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to uncover the real historical Jesus failed, we are not thereby exempt from the historical task. If we were not properly concerned with the Jesus of history, our faith would end up as a christological myth built upon someone and something that might never have happened. This would mark the end of Christianity. But

⁵³Ebeling, "The Question of the Historical Jesus" Word and Faith, p. 295.

contrary to previous interest in the historical Jesus, Ebeling says that today we are not interested in the historicity of Jesus as such, nor are we interested in the mere fact of a man named Jesus. We are concerned to discover that the historical Jesus is not only the object of the faith of the kerygma but is also its source. Ebeling believes the Jesus of history and the christology of the kerygma are indivisibly bound together. Speaking to the vital connection of these two, he writes:

In view of this question we cannot by any means consider ourselves emancipated from historical research. If the quest of the historical Jesus were in fact to prove that faith in Jesus has no basis in Jesus himself, then that would be the end of Christology.⁵⁴

Ebeling's support of the new quest goes beyond his desire that christology not be reduced to a myth floating in the air. The kerygma itself gives reason for our concern for the historical Jesus.

The kerygma,⁵⁵ which is the early Christian community's formulation of its faith, itself speaks of the historical Jesus and therefore permits our present-day concern with the matter. The fact that the kerygma speaks of Jesus stems from the fact, says Ebeling, that it understands itself as continuous with Jesus. This means that the Jesus of history is not just the content of the kerygma, not just the object of the kerygma, but is bound up in the kerygma as its very ground. Ebeling puts it thus:

The reference to Jesus in the kerygma evidently has the function not only of denoting content of the kerygma but also its basis. . . . The reference to the name of Jesus is the common factor within the variety of the kerygma. The kerygma itself names Jesus as its criterion.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 205.

⁵⁵ cf. I Cor. 15:3-8.

⁵⁶ Ebeling, Theologie und Verkündigung, p. 64. The German text reads: "Die Nennung Jesu im Kerygma hat offensichtlich die Funktion, nicht nur den Inhalt des Kerygmas anzugeben, sondern auch seinen Grund. . . . Die

Therefore the kerygma which may have a variety of formulations in the New Testament has a greater interest in the historical Jesus than as a means of proof of its own position. The Jesus of history is the very basis and substance of the kerygma's position.

If Ebeling sees validity in the new quest of the historical Jesus, it is because of the oneness which the Jesus of history creates with the kerygma. Because the kerygma is our legitimate concern, so is the historical Jesus our legitimate concern. The question of the historical Jesus is raised in order to give expression to faith which came to expression in Jesus.⁵⁷ The means by which faith came to expression in Jesus Ebeling calls the "language event" (Sprachgeschehen) or "word event" (Wortgeschehen).⁵⁸ It is to this we turn in our next section.

Means of Access to the Historical Jesus.

In one sense we have already touched on Ebeling's response to this point. It is the kerygma of the early Christian communities of faith that provides the means of access to the historical Jesus. Yet as soon as this has been said we must raise a flag of caution lest Ebeling be misunderstood as having fallen back into the error of the old "Life of Jesus" research. Although it is the kerygma which leads us to the historical Jesus, it is not to be viewed in the same manner as the nineteenth

Berufung des Namens Jesus ist das Gemeinsame in der Variabilität des Kerygmas. Das Kerygma nennt selbst als sein Kriterium Jesus."

⁵⁷Ebeling, "The Question of the Historical Jesus" Word and Faith, p. 294.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 294, n. 1.

century viewed the Gospels, that is, as a theological gold field which has to be carefully mined, filtered and sifted to uncover the nuggets of historical truth about Jesus. To understand how Ebeling approaches the kerygma we must understand what he means by kerygma, historical (historisch), and by that elusive term "language event" (Sprachgeschehen).

What is kerygma as Ebeling understands and uses the term? At the risk of oversimplifying and harmonizing, it seems accurate to say that he understands kerygma as equated with christology, and christology is in the last analysis the expression of what has occurred in the historical Jesus!⁵⁹

Ebeling can interchange the two terms "kerygma" and "christology" because both point to the Jesus of history with the intention of communicating what has come to expression in Him. We draw this inference from two statements by Ebeling already cited.⁶⁰

Once the equation of kerygma and christology is made for Ebeling, it is an easy and necessary step to include the historical Jesus. Ebeling understands christology and statements about the Jesus of history as different ways of viewing the same person. The Christ of faith and the Jesus of history cannot be dichotomized without both also losing their meaning. This seems abundantly clear in two places where Ebeling writes;

Christology then would be nothing else but interpretative handing on what came to expression in Jesus. The historical Jesus would then, rightly understood, be nothing else but Jesus himself. And the right to believe in Jesus--and that is what Christology is concerned with--must then consist in the fact that faith is the particular relation to Jesus which is appropriate to the historical Jesus, because it corresponds to what came to expression in Jesus.⁶¹

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 295.

⁶⁰Supra, pp. 64-65, n. 56; p. 66, n. 59.

⁶¹Ebeling, "The Question of the Historical Jesus," Word and Faith, p. 295.

and also:

The success of christology depends upon the fact of whether it is shown convincingly that in Jesus God came to expression in such a way that faith remains dependent upon Jesus. The simultaneity of this reference to a certain historical figure and to God is the foundation of christological confessing: vere Deus--vere homo,⁶² and insofar as all along been scandal and foolishness to unbelief.

This understanding of kerygma in its intimate connection with christology and the historical Jesus is no isolated oddity in the thinking of Ebeling, but is integral to his whole approach to the new quest for the historical Jesus. It is this very understanding of kerygma which informs and is informed by the historical Jesus. Hopefully more light will be shed as we now treat Ebeling's concept of "historical" (historisch).

What is meant by the adjective "historical" when it is applied to the name Jesus?⁶³ Perhaps the answer seems obvious, but it is just the obvious traditional understanding and use of this term that caused the failure of the old "Life of Jesus" research. Ebeling suggests that what is usually meant by the term "historical" is the real Jesus, the Jesus as He actually was without the later faithfully intended dogmatic embellishments by the church's tradition. The historical Jesus is the one who emerges after the historian has scraped away the tradition and put back together those "facts" which give the objective picture of the way things were during Jesus' life.

⁶²Ebeling, Theologie und Verkündigung, p. 20. The German text reads: "Das Gelingen von Christologie hängt daran, ob in überzeugender Weise deutlich wird, dass in Jesus Gott so zur Sprache gekommen ist, dass der Glaube angewiesen bleibt auf Jesus. Dieses Zugleich der Beziehung auf eine bestimmte historische Erscheinung und auf Gott ist die Grundstruktur christologischen Bekenntens: vere Deus--vere homo, und insofern von jeher dem Unglauben Ärgernis und Torheit."

⁶³Ebeling, "The Question of the Historical Jesus," Word and Faith, pp. 290-295.

By strict definition this understanding of "historical" rules out as valid evidence all that the post-Easter faith says of Jesus. Also ruled out are all those purportedly historical and true statements by Jesus which are on the lips of Jesus in the Gospels but which were in fact attributed to Him long after His death by His faithful followers. Whatever is dogmatic or kerygmatic must be put in a category other than that which is held to be strictly historical, for historical in this view has only to do with the empirical facts and not attitudes or beliefs about those facts.

It is precisely this understanding of "historical" which Ebeling says clouds the issue of the historical Jesus and the propriety of the new quest. As has already been shown, such a picture of the real Jesus is just not available, and even if it were it would not be at all conclusive for faith in Him. If such a purely objective, historical picture of the Jesus of Nazareth were made available without the attendant interpretations and applications, such a picture would be so locked in the world-view of the first century, from which it was taken to be meaningless to those of us removed from that time by nearly two thousand years. Such an historically pure Jesus would also be relative to every age that looked at Him, and the interpretation of Him would change as often as the historical situation of the viewer changed, that is, perpetually. If this hypothetical situation could be realized, the necessity of historical relativity over against this true picture of the historical Jesus could not be avoided. Such a result could hardly be considered the desired goal of this attempt at finding the real Jesus.

What is to be done about this conflict between the historical and

the kerygmatic? It would seem that either the kerygmatic statements must be reduced to those which are historically verifiable, or they must be interpreted in such a way as to be commensurate with historical knowledge. But either solution is unsatisfactory because it does not resolve the tension but destroys it by doing violence to either one side or the other. Ebeling suggests a way out of this situation which will preserve the integrity of both the kerygma and the historical facts about Jesus which are embedded in it. Ebeling says that the real task is to let come to expression (zur Sprache kommen) that which comes to expression in Jesus.⁶⁴ If this can be done the historical Jesus and kerygmatic confessions about Him will be united in proper fashion. What Ebeling means by this will be evident in his explanation of the "language event" or Sprachgeschehen.

What Ebeling means by Sprachgeschehen or "language event" involves the whole subject of what has been called the New Hermeneutic.⁶⁵ A detailed analysis of this concept would go far beyond the scope of this study. Yet in at least a superficial fashion some understanding of this term Sprachgeschehen is necessary if we are to understand Ebeling's treatment of the historical Jesus in light of the new quest.

Jesus gives expression to faith. The full implications of what this means will come out in the next section which deals with the question of the purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry. At this juncture we can say that the articulation of this expression is called the "language event" or "word event" by Ebeling. These terms seem to be interchangeable. Sprachgeschehen connotes something verbal rather than substantial, and herein lies

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 294, n. 1.

⁶⁵ James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., editors, The New Hermeneutic, in New Frontiers in Theology, Discussions among Continental and American Theologians (New York: Harper & Row, 1964) II.

the shift in emphasis away from the traditional view of Jesus and what He means for faith. Ebeling sees Jesus primarily not as a teacher of faith; he was faith personified.⁶⁶ Jesus did not intellectualize the nuances of faith to the people He met, but confronted them with a living embodiment of it. This was always an active and never a passive confrontation. Jesus was faith happening in the midst of them, and was not one to be pondered or received as an object. The writer proposes the following analogy to aid the explanation. A husband says to his wife, "I love you." He is not giving her propositional information about his affection for her which she in turn must interpret in terms of the linguistic, social, marital, and historical meaning applied to the statement. Rather in the act of speaking the words "I love you," the husband is in that moment actively loving his wife and she understands it as such. The speaking of the phrase is the event of his love, and much more; the words "I love you" present the wife the very person of her husband which in this instance has been activated in a verbal expression. In short, the word event of the husband's profession of love confronts his wife with the very nature and presence of his being which in that moment is identical with his love for her.

It is this way with the historical Jesus. As God's Word "spoken" to man, Jesus is the event of faith. As "language event," Jesus is not to be intellectualized or scrutinized as an object which needs interpretation. To approach Jesus in this manner would be similar to the wife in the analogy asking, "what do you mean?," when her husband says he loves her. The

⁶⁶ Gerhard Ebeling, The Nature of Faith, translated from the German by Ronald Gregor Smith (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 56.

whole point and meaning would be lost.

Ebeling is calling for a new use and understanding of language⁶⁷ when dealing with the historical Jesus. The ramifications of this understanding of language go beyond the concern here, but it is true that when Ebeling calls Jesus God's "language event" he is departing from traditional interpretations of Jesus. All is focused in Jesus, as can be seen when Ebeling talks of the doctrine of God and how that doctrine is authentically implemented in the lives of men. He says:

For that reason the linguistic event which is constitutive of the knowledge of God is, rightly understood, not a word about God, but Word of God. For it is only as one who himself speaks that God can reveal himself as God. . . . Knowledge of God as word-event implies knowledge of God as Person. . . . Thus everything now⁶⁸ comes to this, that knowledge of God is knowing God as a Person.

⁶⁷From his essay, "Word of God and Hermeneutic" we quote the following as indicative of Ebeling's understanding of language and the "word-event":

The primary phenomenon in the realm of understanding is not understanding OF language, but understanding THROUGH language. The word is not really the object of understanding, and thus the thing that poses the problem of understanding, the solution of which requires exposition and therefore also hermeneutic as the theory of understanding. Rather, the word is what opens up and mediates understanding, i.e., brings something to understanding. The word itself has a hermeneutical function. If the word event takes place normally, i.e., according to its appointed purpose, then there is no need of any aid to understanding, but it is itself an aid to understanding.

Gerhard Ebeling, "The Word of God and Hermeneutic," The New Hermeneutic, in New Frontiers in Theology, pp. 93-94.

⁶⁸Ebeling, "Reflections on Speaking Responsibly of God," Word and Faith, pp. 352-353.

When all this is drawn together, the historical Jesus is made accessible as "word event," which is expressed in the kerygma. As "language event" Jesus gives expression to faith; it is through this faith that we are brought into relationship with God by confrontation with the historical Jesus.

The Purpose of Jesus' Earthly Ministry

Ebeling maintains the purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry was to give expression to faith. In the course of doing this Jesus preached the rule of God and the will of God. Yet as important as are Jesus' preaching the rule and will of God when any estimate is made of His earthly ministry, the decisive factor in His ministry is the faith to which He gave expression. Ebeling puts it succinctly when he says that faith was

the one absolutely decisive and all-determining characteristic in the life and message of the historical Jesus. . . . The encounter with Jesus as the witness to faith, however, is without limitation an encounter with himself. For the concentration on the coming to expression of faith--and that alone!--is the ground of the unity of 'person' and 'work,' but for that reason also the ground of the totality of the encounter.⁶⁹

If the person and work of Jesus are all bound up in the expression of faith which Jesus brought to the world, then exploration of what is known of Jesus in these areas will be rightly dealing with the purpose of Jesus' ministry as well as shedding light on the person of the historical Jesus in a way commensurate with the new quest.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 296, 298.

In his book The Nature of Faith, Ebeling includes a chapter titled "The Witness of Faith." Jesus is that witness, and He made that witness through His preaching. In this chapter Ebeling says that the rule of God was the very core of Jesus' message.⁷⁰ Here we find that Ebeling's exposition of the rule of God as preached by Jesus is quite similar to Bornkamm's view. Jesus preaches the "immediate temporal nearness of the rule of God,"⁷¹ and although there are occasional apocalyptic overtones the preaching in its main emphasis does not dwell on details of the last days, but stresses the rule of God who is near. It is the nearness of God and not the end time which Jesus wishes to bring home to His hearers. Ebeling cites Mark 9:1 as an example of a passage which speaks of the end time but which is to be primarily understood as an announcement of the nearness of God. In preaching the rule of God which is imminent and issuing a call to repentance which attends the preaching, Jesus is not trying to instill fear but is rather trying to instill courage and joy because the rule of God is to be a glad and wonderful event. Jesus never discusses the coming rule of God in the abstract but always in the context of some specific event. Such an event might be a healing, a parable, or simply a conversation in which the hearer is called to participate in some way. This does not mean to imply that Jesus was merely a good teacher who knew how to use illustrative material to make His point. This intends to show that Jesus in everything He did and said was always involving the other person in the fact of His own presence and the witness that He was making.

⁷⁰Ebeling, The Nature of Faith, p. 52.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 53.

In addition to the rule of God Jesus also preached the will of God which quite naturally was as near as the rule itself. In some ways Jesus resembled a wandering rabbi, but a rabbi always taught under the authority of Moses. In some ways Jesus resembled a wandering prophet, but a prophet always prefaced his words with the formula, "Thus says the Lord." Jesus in His teaching and preaching was neither rabbi nor prophet by ordinary definition, because He acted by His own authority,⁷² prefacing His words with the unprecedented "Verily I say unto you. . . ."⁷³ By acting and teaching in this manner Jesus freed those who heard Him from the tyranny of the letter of the law, and made it possible for them to realize and obey the will of God in its radical and original intent. It must not be thought that Jesus was an anarchist. The Gospel of Matthew 5:17-18 does not allow this construction to be placed on what has been said about Jesus. By radicalizing His call to those who heard to keep the will of God, Jesus was in fact calling men to faith. Such a call to faith was at the same time a call to participate in Jesus Himself, for

Jesus is the essence of faith and faith is the essence of the work of Jesus and consequently no 'organ,' no 'means to an end,' but the gift of Jesus himself. According to Gal. 3:23, 25, the coming of Christ is the coming of faith, and according to Heb. 12:2 Jesus is **τῆς πίστεως ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος**.⁷⁴

In effect Jesus was saying to those who heard that they should have faith such as they saw in Him, faith in the rule and will of God. As a witness to faith, Jesus became identified with faith itself.

⁷²Matt. 7:29.

⁷³Matt. 5:18.

⁷⁴Ebeling, "Jesus and Faith," Word and Faith, p. 205.

What is the nature of this faith which comes to expression in Jesus? Ebeling begins by pointing out that the word faith itself is almost exclusively a biblical word, found in a special context of time, religion and culture.⁷⁵ When so-called scientific studies of religion borrow the word, they usually use it in a sense that is untrue to its original meaning and context. For example, when looking through the Old Testament, Ebeling finds that there is not a single instance where the Hebrew root for faith, **אמן**, is used to signify belief in a fact. The usual misuse of this word treats faith like an empty sack which is to be filled with the right believable facts. But the situation in the Old Testament is strikingly quite different. In the Old Testament faith is never in a state of affairs or fact as objects of belief, but rests always in the person of God Himself. A good example of this is to be found in Genesis 15:6 where Abram's faith is in God, not what God promised. Ebeling says:

When God speaks, however, the content of the statement is identical with the will of God and therefore cannot be detached in any way from the person of the speaker. What God says, he also personally sees to, so that to believe the statements of God's Word--even if they should be statements of fact!--is not to believe 'something,' but by definition to believe God.⁷⁶

This belief in God as person and not as object is the faith to which Jesus gave expression. Ebeling, falling back on existential language, calls it an instance of abandoning one's self (Sich-selbst-Verlassen),⁷⁷ of grounding one's self on the only true ground of existence, which is God Himself.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 207.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 211.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 213.

This faith which is called forth is only possible when one is addressed by the One who calls for the faith. And it is the historical Jesus who is God's "language event" extending into time and history God's call to faith. Faith is therefore a total concern with God who issues the call. The Old Testament faith is a faith which trusts that God keeps His word and that His word is true. It is a faith which is not timeless or ahistorical, but which remembers the past and looks forward to the future with confidence because the God in whom this faith is grounded is the God of history.

Turning to faith in the New Testament, Ebeling finds a use of the term which is both similar and different from the Old Testament usage. The obvious similarity is that faith is a key concept in both Testaments, although the use is intensified and somewhat shifted in the New Testament. In the Synoptic Gospels Ebeling counts⁷⁸ some eighty-seven passages where words with the root $\pi\iota\sigma\tau$ -are found, and sixty-six of these are in speeches attributed to Jesus. Here the difference from Old Testament usage stands out boldly. With one single exception, Mark 11:22, which Ebeling says is secondary, all of these instances in the Synoptics where some form of $\pi\iota\sigma\tau$ - is used, the reference is never to faith in God, but faith is always used in the absolute sense. Even Jesus Himself does not speak of faith in God in the Synoptics. How then is this to be understood, especially in light of what we have just said about faith in the Old Testament, these instances in the New Testament are in fact a radicalization

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 224, n. 1.

of the call for a faith which is a personal trust in God. Although God is not explicitly mentioned as the object or ground of faith, it is inherent in the very nature of the faith that it deals with God and is the exclusive domain of God's concern and activity. Ebeling puts it briefly: "The whole point is to declare that faith is letting God work, letting God go into action, and that therefore it is legitimate to ascribe to faith what is a matter for God."⁷⁹ Although these references to faith which are found in the Synoptics are not explicitly directed to God in so many words, they are by nature even more radically reliant upon God as their source and ground.

Can Ebeling then say that the faith which is called for by Jesus in the Synoptics is faith in Himself? Ebeling says that "the concept of faith in sayings of Jesus is never related to Jesus as the object of faith."⁸⁰ Are we then dealing with the faith of Jesus? The Evangelists say nothing of the faith of Jesus and there are not explicit sayings of Jesus about His own faith. Yet Ebeling warns against a scriptural legalism and literalism at this point. He says that Jesus can not be dissociated from the faith which He manifests in His own person. Ebeling thinks rather that Jesus

identified himself so closely with it [faith] that he very properly did not speak of his own faith at all but devoted himself to awakening faith. For whoever is concerned to awaken faith will have to bring his faith into play without speaking of his faith.⁸¹

Wherever faith is mentioned, Jesus has a part in that faith.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 233.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 234.

⁸¹Ibid.

It is proper to ask just how Jesus is related to the faith which came to expression in Him. In the healing stories Ebeling finds examples of faith in the power of Jesus. Yet this faith is more than hope for a miracle, because it is faith which responds to Jesus, faith which Jesus has Himself awakened in the other. Thus Jesus has faith Himself and was also the occasion for it in someone else. He evoked faith and insofar as He did this He was a part of a concrete faith in the same way the Old Testament faith was concretely directed toward God.

Ebeling gives a persuasive example of Jesus' own faith when he calls attention to the instances where Jesus prefaced His speeches with the Hebrew (or Aramaic equivalent) word for faith, $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$.⁸² This word is used in an unprecedented fashion by Jesus. He Himself speaks it concerning His own words whereas it is traditionally spoken by the listener when appropriate, not by the speaker. Jesus does this before His speech is given and traditionally the is spoken after the speech is made as an acclamation of its veracity. What is the implication of this peculiar usage by Jesus? Ebeling suggests:

It gives expression to the fact that Jesus understood his statements, and wished to have them understood, as statements made before God, in which God himself is the guarantor of what is said and watches over the authentication of this word, i.e., sees to it that it comes about.⁸³

In so understanding and using these words, Jesus showed that He identified with them, and that

⁸²cf. Matt. 5:18, 6:2, where, of course, not the Hebrew but the Greek $\alpha\mu\eta\acute{\nu}$ is found.

⁸³Ebeling, "Jesus and Faith," Word and Faith, p. 237.

he surrenders himself to the reality of God, and that he lets his existence be grounded on God's making these words true and real. That means that he is so certain of these words that he stakes his whole self on that certainty.⁸⁴

The faith to which Jesus gives expression is His own faith in the Father, and this is the faith to which He is calling others. As the "language event," Jesus not only expresses faith, He embodies it.

The purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry was to bring faith to expression through His person and works. The subject and object of this faith is God Himself as miraculously manifested in the "language event" which is the historical Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth is both the witness to the faith and the basis of the faith. For Ebeling this conjunction is irrefutable: the historical Jesus is the Jesus of faith. This means that he who has faith is united with the Jesus of history who is the expression of faith. Ebeling writes:

Faith's view of Jesus must therefore assert itself as a furtherance to the historical view of Jesus. For faith itself is the coming to its goal of what came to expression in Jesus. The man who believes is with the historical Jesus.⁸⁵

The final question with which we must deal is that of the relationship between this Jesus of history who is the Word of God as "language event" and the kerygmatic Christ.

Relationship of the Historical Jesus to the Kerygmatic Christ

It is perhaps significant at the outset of this section to indicate that Ebeling's interpretation is not directed toward the relationship of the historical Jesus to the kerygmatic Christ as our wording suggests.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 298.

The subsection title suggests the attempt to bring into relationship and continuity those things which are fundamentally distinct and separate. Ebeling denies that this is the case. He would probably reword the title of the subsection to read as an indirect question. He would ask how Jesus, the witness of faith, became the basis of faith. To put the question in another form, Ebeling asks whether faith in Jesus Christ has any basis in Jesus Himself. This movement from the Jesus of history to the Christ of faith is easy and natural for Ebeling because right from the start he indicates that the historical question is neither separate nor different from the christological question. Now we must see just how these stand together.

Although Ebeling himself has no difficulty conjoining the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ, he does point out that, "The transition from the 'historical Jesus' to the Christ of faith is no more a matter of course than is the leap from death to life."⁸⁶ In suggesting the unnaturalness of the transition Ebeling points out both the continuity and discontinuity that reside in the early Christian tradition and the fact that the Resurrection is the focal point of the transition.

The case for continuity is made at one level by those of the historical-critical school who contend that the continuity begins quite naturally with Jesus Himself, whose own self image was the same as that held later by the church. This position is based on belief in Jesus' messianic consciousness, His foreknowledge of His death, and His deliberate action of founding the church. Yet within this striving for continuity there is the note of discontinuity. Many of the beliefs upon which this argument for

⁸⁶ Ebeling, The Nature of Faith, p. 58.

continuity is based have come under a heavy cloud of scholarly suspicion. In addition Ebeling points out that his particular attempt at establishing continuity between Jesus and Christ must leap over the death and resurrection in which there is no natural continuum, but rather a time gap or historical vacuum.⁸⁷

Another argument in favor of discontinuity is to be found in the events just preceding Jesus' arrest and the events subsequent to the crucifixion. The arrest and execution of Jesus seemed to stamp failure on everything that Jesus meant to His followers. The flight of the disciples and the denial of Peter ignominiously confirm the failure. It was only Jesus' words at the Last Supper, "This do in remembrance of me," which provide the slim thread of connection beyond the Cross. The commissioning of the disciples to preach and baptize and the establishment of the church are activities of the Resurrected One. In this view there is a radical breach between Jesus and the Resurrected Christ which is left open more than it is closed.

Yet again we find these signs of discontinuity opposed by other signs of continuity. In spite of individual arguments we can find for discontinuity, it is an obvious fact for the early Christians that the risen Lord was identical with the historical Jesus. Finally it was faith in Jesus, no matter how shaky at first, that took hold of the disciples, united and energized them. The post-Easter disciples lived with faith and Jesus intertwined in an unbreakable way. For the early community this commitment of faith to Jesus was a commitment to the fact of His resurrection. The resurrection becomes the rock upon which all rational

⁸⁷Ebeling, "The Question of the Historical Jesus," Word and Faith, p. 299.

arguments either for or against continuity between Jesus and Christ must shipwreck because the resurrection puts the whole matter beyond the reach of belief and into the realm of faith.

The resurrection marks the shift from Jesus as the witness of faith to the basis of faith. Yet the converse must be quickly added in the same breath, because Jesus as the basis for the faith of the post-Easter community is so only as He is remembered as the witness of faith during His earthly ministry. Ebeling says this well when he writes:

Hence what is so confusingly called the 'Easter faith' is really a case of nothing else but faith in Jesus. The faith of the days after Easter knows itself to be nothing else but the right understanding of the Jesus of the days before Easter. For now Jesus appeared as what he really was, as the witness to faith. But we recognize the witness to faith only when, believing ourselves, we accept his witness and now ourselves as witnesses to Jesus become witnesses to faith.⁸⁸

It is faith which extends over the chasm of discontinuity, faith which came into expression with Jesus of Nazareth who is the "language event" of God. This faith lived on in Jesus' disciples who had encountered faith first as event, as the event of the historical Jesus.

Faith in Jesus as the Resurrected One does not add anything to the pre-Easter Jesus. Those who knew Jesus of Nazareth as the witness of faith now know Him as the basis of faith, the very ground of faith, the Resurrected Lord, and these two are One. Again we fall back on Ebeling's own exposition of the matter:

That faith confesses Jesus as the Risen Lord, that faith in Jesus thus expresses itself as faith in him as risen, becomes understandable in the light of what is the whole point of faith. Faith as such is directed towards God as the act of entering into relation with (Sich einlassen auf) God. To believe in Jesus therefore means: to enter into relations with God in view of him, to let him give us

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 302.

the freedom to believe, to let him as the witness to faith to be the ground of faith and therefore to enter into relations with him and his ways, to participate in him and his ways and consequently to participate in what faith is promised participation in, namely, the omnipotence of God. . . . To believe in Jesus and to believe in him as the Risen Lord are one and the same thing.⁸⁹

Ebeling bases his support for making this equation between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith in the primitive understanding of faith.⁹⁰

Faith which was used in the absolute sense in the Gospels is now found to be related to Christ and as Jesus Christ! In Ebeling's view faith is not an empty form which can be given content even if that content is the Resurrected Christ. Faith is practically synonymous with Jesus. Faith is that which came with Jesus Christ, and is the content of revelation, the gift of salvation itself.⁹¹ The fact that faith and Jesus belong together provides the ground and continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ.⁹²

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 303.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid. "That the new thing that came with Jesus has to do with faith shows itself also in the new syntactical construction $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\iota\nu$ $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, which is primarily employed only in relation to Christ, as also in the unusual genitive construction $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ $\text{'}\text{Ι}\eta\sigma\upsilon\text{'}$ $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$ which, at all events if taken as objective genitive, as is shown by the parallel in Paul with $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ $\text{Α}\beta\beta\alpha\alpha\mu$ (cf., especially the parallel between $\text{ὁ ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ}$, Rom. 3:26, and $\text{ὁ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ}$, Rom. 4:16), but on the other hand it cannot be a pure subjective genitive either. This genitive construction to my mind expresses in a very characteristic way the fact that faith in Christ is a faith which derives from Jesus, has its source and ground in him and therefore clings to him, receives from him its life, its very being as faith. $\text{Ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν}$ (Rom. 1:17) could surely be interpreted as this movement in the event of faith $\text{Ἐκ (διὰ) πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν (εἰς πάντα πιστεύοντας)}$ (Gal. 3:22; Rom. 3:22)."

To say that Jesus is the ground of faith is to say that He is not a support for faith, not a substitute for faith, not an object of faith. Jesus as the ground of faith "is that which makes faith what it is and so maintains it that it really remains faith--in other words, that on which faith in the last resort depends."⁹³ This Jesus who is the ground of faith is the historical Jesus who is also the "language event" of God. Thus the historical Jesus and the Christ of the kerygma are bound up in and rightly live on as the Word of God which is present Event in time and history.

Ernst Fuchs

Validity of the New Quest

Any attempt to read, understand, and systematize Ernst Fuchs is not unlike confronting a theological collage. Normally unrelated ideas are juxtaposed in confusing relationships; thoughts are introduced and immediately disappear or become indistinct under the press of other new ideas; familiar words and concepts are used in new and different ways; and finally there seems to be no clear beginning, development, or ending to a particular train of thought. It seems as if the man is more poet than systematician. Perhaps for this very reason it is important to hear him out in the area of "the new quest," for where the rigor of the systematician may falsify, the indirectness of the poet may reveal.

Fuchs rebels against the restrictions of our schema much more so than Ebeling, and we will have to do some free translating of our questions to

⁹³Ibid., p. 304.

him if his answers are to be meaningful. Yet it is certainly legitimate to ask of him, as we have asked of Bornkamm and Ebeling, what validity he finds in the new quest which prompts him to participate in it. We receive a variety of answers from Fuchs, but none of them seems to contradict another.

In the first place, Fuchs says we can quite properly inquire after the historical Jesus because the Gospels themselves do.⁹⁴ The Gospels were written after Paul, and if the Pauline kerygma had been sufficient then the particular historical approach of the Gospels would never have found its way onto paper. Fuchs does not hereby fall into the trap of nineteenth century positivism. It goes without saying that for him as a pupil of Bultmann, any attempt at a biography of Jesus or a chronicle of His earthly life is impossible and would miss the whole point anyway. In this he stands one with the others of the new quest. Yet the Gospels are concerned with the Jesus of history to the extent that they narrate His words and deeds; it is at this point that Fuchs finds the new quest legitimate. This is not to say that he is concerned with establishing the authentic words (ipsissima verba) and sayings of Jesus. This would be but a refinement of the nineteenth century approach. Rather Fuchs is concerned with the fact that Jesus' words and actions were preserved and narrated at all. The very fact of their telling is significant for Fuchs.

Fuchs is well aware that in many circles the quest for the historical Jesus, whether new or old, is looked upon with disfavor. Bultmann has

⁹⁴ Ernst Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus, Studies in Biblical Theology, XLII translated by Andrew Scobie from the German (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 19.

said that all that is necessary, indeed possible, for faith is the Kerygma. Jesus Christ is Lord: this is the touchstone for the Christian faith, and we cannot know for sure anything but the "that" of Jesus' existence.⁹⁵ Fuchs starts from this point and says it is because the "so-called Christ of faith is none other than the historical Jesus,"⁹⁶ that we have a legitimate concern in the Jesus of history.

Fuchs develops this idea when he says he is not concerned in the new quest for the nearness or the factualness of the historical Jesus as such, but with the nearness of God.⁹⁷ In fact, "The object of the quest is to find out what, according to Jesus, is to be thought of God."⁹⁸ For Fuchs the prime goal in the quest for the historical Jesus is not to find, isolate and identify the Jesus of Nazareth, as if that were an end in itself. The goal of the quest is also not to prove that the Jesus of history is also the Christ of faith. This is the assumption with which the whole quest is undertaken. The quest for the historical Jesus is directed beyond itself to the relationship which man has with God, and which he only has through this historical Jesus.

To put the matter another way, Fuchs maintains that we are concerned with the historical Jesus because it is through Jesus that God chose to speak to man and wishes to be encountered by man. It is Jesus who reveals God's word, and therefore anyone who wishes to hear God speak must listen to Him through His chosen word, the Jesus who was and is historical. Fuchs

⁹⁵ Supra., p. 58, footnote 45.

⁹⁶ Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus, p. 31.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 105.

says:

Jesus himself had been God's word to which all clung, for Jesus did not want to be or to be understood as anything other than God's word, which entered into his daily life and began here its work. He was this word, for he let himself be heard at precisely that place where God himself had begun to speak. Jesus was God's word, if at that time the time for this word had come. And that is what faith in Jesus believes, by believing in the historical Jesus. This alone is the true meaning of "Easter faith."⁹⁹

The quest for the historical Jesus when approached in this way is both valid and essential for Fuchs. What makes the new quest appropriate will be the subject of the next section where we deal with the means of access to the historical Jesus.

Means of Access to the Historical Jesus

Quite simply it is the Synoptic Gospels which provide us with access to the historical Jesus.¹⁰⁰ More specifically the sayings and the parables of Jesus within the Synoptics are where we find the historical Jesus. But as suggested above Fuchs does not treat these sayings and parables as if they were a priori authentic words of the historical Jesus which would permit us to build the "true" picture of the historical Jesus. In many cases Fuchs would accept the possibility that a certain passage might actually have been spoken by Jesus. However, he is not concerned with authenticity. In fact it makes no real difference to him whether authenticity can be established or not, when he writes:

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

the question of authenticity is not so important as one supposes. It is enough that a saying becomes recognizable as a model of faith, so that we have the right to regard the saying as characteristic for Jesus, if this is not excluded by other considerations.¹⁰¹

This is not to suggest that Fuchs is either ignorant of historical criticism or irresponsible in the face of it. As a pupil of Bultmann he could hardly be either. This attitude does suggest that Fuchs understands history and language in such a way that he approaches the parables and sayings of Jesus with questions which are for him more important than that of authenticity.

Fuchs recognizes that history is generally thought of in a developmental line of cause and effect associations.¹⁰² He admits the validity of this approach to history because it at least "makes clear the nature of our action as decision."¹⁰³ Yet the causal approach to history is inadequate in at least two regards: (1) it does not take proper account of the future; and (2) it does not take proper account of those things which do not fall neatly into a cause and effect scheme, but which nevertheless are influential and are part of history. The use of language would be an example.

The causal approach to history is equipped to recount past phenomena in such a way as to provide no necessity for involvement or commitment on the part of the historian or exegete. For Fuchs history is more demanding than that, and requires the individual to see himself over against history in a way that involves and informs his whole self. This means that history is more than a sequential outline of the events of the past.

¹⁰¹ Ernst Fuchs, "The New Testament and the Problem," The New Hermeneutic, in New Frontiers, p. 123.

¹⁰² Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus, p. 41.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 42.

History must also show how those events made a claim on the people of that age, and in the case of the Christian faith how those events continue to make a claim on the hearer in every age. It is with this understanding of history that Fuchs investigates the historical Jesus, not with the intention of culling facts, for facts as such prove nothing, but with the hope of discovering the way in which those facts involved and claimed those who first heard and came in contact with Jesus of Nazareth. Thus the task of history is existential and not reportorial.

Fuchs puts it this way:

What matters is the task of transferring a "succession" (Nacheinander), which is historically developed by the power of causality, back to the "relation" (Beieinander) which is demanded by the situation that determines the nature of our texts. . . . For existential interpretation examines the possibilities of existence not simply on the plane of the succession but on the plane of the relation, and balances these two possible aspects of an event; and this is because it understands man primarily on the basis of language rather than of nature.¹⁰⁴

This existential approach to history overcomes the inadequacy of the causal approach with regard to future and even present time, because it lifts history out of the category of succession and places it in the context of relation. This means that all of time is seen as being bound together for the purpose of the meaning which it has for the individual. This also means that those things which fall outside the ken of the causal view of history but nevertheless are key factors in understanding and appropriating the meaning of history are now taken account of in the existential view. Fuchs maintains that a right understanding of language is essential for a proper inquiry of the historical Jesus for it is only in and through language that Jesus is made available to us.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 46-47.

Raising now the question of Fuchs' understanding of language, we must remember that it is done under the primary concern of this section, "Means of Access to the Historical Jesus." It is the "language event" (Sprachereignis) which makes Jesus available to faith, and it is in and through language that Jesus is encountered.

Jesus is God's word spoken to man.¹⁰⁵ This is to say that Jesus is "language event." Jesus is the means which God has chosen to address man. In the eyes of God and man Jesus is address, communication; that is, he is language. Jesus is event because he is not an abstract ideal, but a living being who came in time and addressed man there. Jesus came as man to speak to man the Word of God. Jesus as God's "language event" is perhaps made clearer in Fuchs' use of the metaphor of the brother.¹⁰⁶ When a man addresses another as brother he would not be his brother in a true sense. But by calling him brother neither does he make him a brother, but rather the man admits that he is indeed a brother and by addressing him as such the man himself enters into a relationship of brotherhood with him. This is "language event." It is more than just bringing into being that which is latently present. "Language event" is concrete shape and form; it is the encounter and involvement of the other person in the event itself which is dynamic and never static. When Fuchs talks of Jesus as "language event" he is talking of God's encounter with man and man's response to God. This form of expression encompasses that relationship for Fuchs.

¹⁰⁵ Supra, p. 86.

¹⁰⁶ Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus, p. 209.

If Jesus Himself is the "language event," how did Jesus use language that we might, through language, come face to face with Him? Fuchs does not attempt to give a philosophical analysis of language, but wants only to describe its use in the New Testament. In doing so he presupposes that the language of the New Testament is "family language."¹⁰⁷ This means that Jesus, as God's "language event," spoke to and in the context of the "family" of God, the chosen people of Israel. Because Israel was God's family, the context was right for understanding. Of course Jesus was misunderstood by the family. But the context was right for the understanding to take place. Fuchs suggests that we too, as family, are confronted by Jesus and His words, and this is because we listen through faith which makes us family. All of which is to say that God spoke in Jesus and Jesus spoke in parables, not in order that people might understand, but because people did understand. This may sound cryptic but it is essential to understand that in Fuchs' view language points beyond itself and calls primary attention not to its content but to context. Fuchs puts it succinctly:

What is distinctive about language is not the content of the individual words, not the thought or the designation, but rather its use, its application, its concentration upon the time and thus upon the distinction of times.¹⁰⁸

This understanding of time and its importance in Fuchs' quest for the historical Jesus shall be dealt with later. Here it is only suggested that the parables of Jesus are important for Fuchs in his attempt to deal

¹⁰⁷ Fuchs, "The New Testament and the Problem," The New Hermeneutic, in New Frontiers, p. 125.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

with the historical Jesus. When saying this it must be understood that Fuchs is not concerned with the parables so much for what they contain but for what they say. There is a subtle difference, but an important one, here. The parables of Jesus are always spoken to family and as such they reveal the conduct of Jesus.

With regard to the parables we have already established that Fuchs is not concerned with the authenticity of them nor is he primarily concerned with their content. It can also be said that Fuchs is well aware that the Gospels are written, or rather edited, with a theological viewpoint in mind. Fuchs is thoroughly familiar with the work of higher criticism. Because, however, of his existential understanding of history and his particular understanding of language, he feels it is necessary to approach the historical Jesus from a stance which does not so much reject higher criticism as suspend it.¹⁰⁹ This is especially seen in Fuchs' interpretation of the parables of Jesus and the use Jesus made of them.

The use of parables was not uncommon to the people of Jesus' day. The rabbis of His time often used a parable to illustrate a particular teaching. Jesus did not use the parable as an illustration of a teaching, but rather used it as the teaching itself which then pointed beyond itself for application and relevance. Fuchs suggests the parable of the Prodigal Son¹¹⁰ as a good example of how Jesus used parables and how it is possible to comprehend something of the Jesus of history from this parable.

The story is well known. The younger of two sons squanders his

¹⁰⁹Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus, pp. 84-90.

¹¹⁰Luke 15:11-32.

inheritance in a foreign land while the older son stays home and works hard. When the repentant younger son comes home and is welcomed by his father with love and forgiveness, the older son is angry because of his father's unusual action and because his own fidelity has not been duly recognized and rewarded. The father then reminds the older son that he should be glad that the family is together again. Now the usual interpretation of this story suggests the father's conduct of love and forgiveness is an illustration of God's divine love and forgiveness to all who return to Him in repentance. Fuchs suggests a different interpretation. He submits that the story is to be seen as an explanation and defense of Jesus' own conduct because He Himself rejected no sinner and based His life on the will of God. Jesus cited the parable, not to illustrate a teaching about the proper attitude of God, but to explain the will of God which Jesus had already manifested in His own life. When we look at the parable in this light, Fuchs suggests the parable tells us of Jesus' conduct when He encountered the family of God. In His conduct Jesus "dares to affirm the will of God as though he himself stood in God's place."¹¹¹

We will have more to say about parables in the next section. Suffice it to say at this point that Fuchs finds in the parables and sayings of Jesus information about the conduct of Jesus, and for Fuchs it is the conduct of the historical Jesus that is all important. When the parables are surveyed with the hope of discovering clues to the conduct of Jesus, the picture that results is one which shows that:

¹¹¹Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus, p. 21.

This conduct is neither that of a prophet nor of a teacher or wisdom, but that of a man who dares to act in God's stead, and who, it must always be remembered, draws to himself sinners who, but for him, would have to flee from God.¹¹²

This view of Jesus as one who dares to act in God's stead should be kept in mind with regard to the last two sections.

The Purpose of Jesus' Earthly Ministry

If we are to meet the historical Jesus in the context of His parables and see in them the nature of His conduct, what shall we conclude is the purpose of this conduct? Was it perhaps to call sinners to repentance in a manner similar to John the Baptist? Perhaps. But Jesus could hardly have been more radical or uncompromising than was John, and so Jesus would then be doing nothing new but merely extending and continuing the work of John along a set pattern.¹¹³ Was the conduct of Jesus intended to teach about the Kingdom of God? Again this is a possibility, but Fuchs would dismiss this with the argument of speaking to the "family." Fuchs maintains that when one speaks in the context of one's family, one does not speak in order to be understood, but simply because one is understood already.¹¹⁴ This means that when Jesus told the parables of the Kingdom of Israel, He did not do it in order to inform Israel about the nature of the Kingdom of God. Every devout Jew already knew about the Kingdom. Jesus, therefore, could assume this knowledge when He spoke to the family of God, and use the parables to say other things. This is in fact what He did.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 22.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 23.

¹¹⁴Fuchs, "The New Testament and the Problem," The New Hermeneutic, in New Frontiers, p. 124.

The main thrust of Jesus' earthly ministry as manifest in the conduct which surrounds His use of the parables was neither to preach repentance nor to teach about the nature of the Kingdom of God, but to call people to decision!¹¹⁵ Fuchs says that this is more than a simple call to a "yes" or "no." It was a call which demanded recognition that with Jesus there was a new time and situation, and that obedience was required. It was a call which was in itself a miracle. Fuchs writes:

What has emerged is that neither the Basileia itself nor repentance make up the content of Jesus' proclamation, of what Jesus said; instead it is the miracle--the miracle of the calling in the present, which corresponds to the miracle of God's coming in the future.¹¹⁶

and again: "Since a new time has dawned, the time of the final revelation of God, Jesus desires true obedience in a new situation and for this new situation."¹¹⁷ Fuchs cites as examples of this call to decision¹¹⁸ the parables of the farmer who found the unexpected treasure and the merchant who sold all he had in order to buy the pearl of great price.¹¹⁹ The saying about not looking back once one has put the hand to the plow and the saying that the dead should bury the dead are also cited.¹²⁰ We note that this emphasis on the call to decision is consistent with Fuchs' view of time and language.

¹¹⁵Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus, p. 22.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 143.

¹¹⁷Fuchs, "The New Testament and the Problem," The New Hermeneutic, in New Frontiers, pp. 127-128.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 128.

¹¹⁹Matt. 13:44-46.

¹²⁰Luke 9:62,60.

Jesus as God's "language event" to men encountered men in such a way that they were forced to respond. Jesus was saying, in His person and in His parables, that a new time had come which was the time of God. This is the nature of language as used by Jesus. Language tells the time, just as a mother says, "It is time to get up!" or "It is time to eat!"¹²¹ When Jesus announced that the time of the Kingdom is here, it was no longer appropriate to decide for or against the one who announced it. Jesus Himself had already made the decision in His own life. His conduct gave witness to that.

This all sounds simple enough. Yet many in Jesus' day did not understand the call and the living example He presented to them. Those who did understand were offended, and rejected Jesus. Why? One should imagine it would have been quite glorious to throw down the drudgery of daily living and to have followed the charismatic Jesus into the day of the imminent Kingdom. Because this is exactly what Jesus did not offer, His call was offensive. Jesus called each who heard Him to decide in the context of His own life, whatever that may have been, and to let that decision revolutionize the conduct within that life, even if no miraculous changes of estate were forthcoming. This supplements our understanding of how Jesus used the parables. The parables urge belief that the Kingdom comes in the midst of everyday life, in the midst of everyday folk, and demands that they let their everyday existences be changed internally if not externally. How is this decision to be made? In and through faith!

What Fuchs means by faith and the ramifications this meaning has for the historical Jesus we must examine in the last section. In this

¹²¹Fuchs, "The New Testament and the Problem," The New Hermeneutic, in New Frontiers, p. 125.

context it is sufficient to say that faith is no abstract principle, but "quite simply a practical obedience that is willing to be told that now the time has come in which God comes forward as God."¹²² What is meant here is a concrete revelation of God which is the "language event" of Jesus Himself. The arrow of time points not to some future coming but to Him who has already come and who, acting in the stead of God, called the decision. The nature of the faith which responds to the call and which shifts the attention to the Caller Himself must occupy us now in the last section.

Relationship of the Historical Jesus to the Kerygmatic Christ

When we reached this point of the discussion with Ebeling, we discovered we had to alter our wording of this subsection. With Fuchs we are nearly forced to throw out the whole matter! Nowhere in the material of Fuchs covered for this study do we find any extensive attempt to show the correlation and connection between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. At best Fuchs makes only passing reference to this theme as at the end of his essay, "The Quest of the Historical Jesus," where, speaking of the Resurrection, Fuchs writes: "Then faith knows that in the proclamation of the resurrection the historical Jesus himself has come to us. The so-called Christ of faith is none other than the historical Jesus."¹²³ This equation of the historical Jesus with the Christ of faith is assumed by Fuchs. What does occupy Fuchs' attention is his concern with the relationship between faith and Jesus.

¹²² Ibid., p. 129.

¹²³ Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus, p. 31.

There are perhaps at least three questions that can be raised at this point. What is faith? What does faith believe? What is the relationship of faith to Jesus? We shall consider them one at a time.

What is faith? At the close of the last section we suggested that Fuchs sees faith as no abstract principle but active obedience which recognizes and embraces the present time as the time in which God has called to man in the "language event" of Jesus. The Apostle Paul is an example of one who lived such faith. Fuchs says that Paul held fast to the resurrection as a firm fact, but always saw it in the context of the crucifixion and the future coming.¹²⁴ Faith was always an event, informed by "facts" but not bound by them. This is to say that for Paul:

Faith remained obedience in face of a message, and the message continued to be a claim to this obedience, which was founded solely on God. In spite of confessional refinements, we can say that faith itself remained a decision and a risk.¹²⁵

Faith is risk, obedience, and decision in the face of a message which both informs it and sustains it. What is this message, what is it that faith believes?

Faith believes in Jesus' preaching.¹²⁶ At first this may sound surprising. One would expect the answer that faith believes in Jesus Himself. This is what in fact does happen.¹²⁷ If, however, we imagine

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 27.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 28.

¹²⁶We have omitted several intermediate steps. Faith believes in Jesus' own decision with respect to God (Ibid., p. 28). This decision is manifest in Jesus' conduct. The only means of ascertaining information about Jesus' conduct is his preaching as preserved in parables and sayings in the Gospels. Thus it can be said that ultimately faith believes in Jesus' preaching.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 29.

ourselves in the place of those who actually heard the preaching of Jesus and came to believe, then Fuchs maintains we can see how the object of faith is the preaching of Jesus. This is not to suggest that in the content of Jesus preaching was the object of faith. As we said earlier, those who first heard Jesus already were familiar with the concept of the Kingdom of God. What was new was the call to decide in this moment for the Kingdom of God, and it is this that the faithful believed when they responded in obedience to Jesus' message. Hearing Jesus, faith believed "in the present as the new time of the kingdom of God";¹²⁸ it believed that "Jesus preached that God the creator enters into the present there, that he wishes to bring his divine power into action precisely where we have to live our life."¹²⁹ Faith takes the risk of commitment and obedience because it has been confronted with the message of the historical Jesus and it has believed in spite of the offense. The message which offends but which cannot be ignored is that God has chosen to speak to man and to call man as he is found in the decrepitness of his earthly existence. And it is the conduct of Jesus which bears and ratifies this message.

Finally, what is the relationship between Jesus and faith? Speaking cautiously, for Fuchs is elusive at this point, we can say that Fuchs understands Jesus as both the subject and object of faith. Jesus is the subject of faith means that Jesus Himself was the first to respond to the call of God and was the first to believe that the Kingdom of God was at hand and required a decision in that very moment. Jesus' conduct as

¹²⁸Fuchs, "The New Testament and the Problem," The New Hermeneutic, in New Frontiers, p. 131.

¹²⁹Ibid.

manifest in the parables and sayings give witness that Jesus obediently risked the decision in response to God's call. Fuchs says to this point: "We must then say that just as Jesus was the representative of faith, so faith became the representative of Jesus. To have faith in Jesus now means essentially to repeat Jesus' decision."¹³⁰

Jesus is the object of faith means that Jesus' own decision and His conduct, conduct which was faithful even to the point of death on a cross, become now the word with which God confronts all men. Again Fuchs says:

Jesus' person now indeed became the content of faith. This happened entirely in God's name: for God had acted toward Jesus and in Jesus, and as the confessional formulations, their Pauline exposition, and later the Gospels all show, he would act along with Jesus all the more in the future. All this always has the implication that God has acknowledged Jesus and will acknowledge the believers who have faith in this.¹³¹

Fuchs believes that Jesus, as both the subject and object of faith responded in His life to the question which lies at the heart of faith.

That question is: "Is it God's will that we should summon up the freedom in face of him to appeal directly to him, despite our well-rounded fear of his judgment, which we have all long since recognized in secret?"¹³²

This is the question which faith asked of Jesus and which He answered faithfully. This is also the question which faith asks of us, says Fuchs.

Raising the question of the relationship between faith and Jesus, Fuchs is well aware that there exists a difference between the faith of Jesus which we can extrapolate from the Gospels, and the faith in Jesus

¹³⁰Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus, p. 28.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 29.

¹³²Ibid., p. 30.

which we find in the confession of the early church. The key difference is the early church's knowledge of the resurrection and the fact that Jesus was already Lord, whereas the pre-Easter preaching of the earthly Jesus did not make this claim, or have this knowledge. Fuchs does not wish to obliterate the fact that there can be a distinction made between the language of Jesus and the language of faith in Him, both of which can be found in the Gospels. But in the last analysis Fuchs says such a distinction merely is academic, for

Jesus and faith in him do not conflict at all, but are one and the same: the event of the coming of God into a world hostile to God. One must not believe in Jesus if he wants to believe in God, but one is invited to believe in him, since God speaks with us in the person of Jesus, in that he also makes us persons and thus keeps us by his side. Then our life is not idle talk but a conversation with God.¹³³

For Fuchs the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith are indeed one and are confessed to be so. Yet in his study of the new quest for the historical Jesus, Fuchs does not look upon knowledge of the historical Jesus as merely a prior step to a christological formulation, a step which then can be forgotten as a means to an end. Fuchs sees the historical Jesus as the beginning and ending of faith, and the kerygma is seen in light of the historical figure of Jesus. Concluding this section on Fuchs, the following quotation from Fuchs is offered. It capsulizes the total drama of the historical Jesus, the Christ of the kerygma, and the

¹³³ Ernst Fuchs, "Must One Believe in Jesus If He Wants to Believe in God?," The Bultmann School of Biblical Interpretation: New Directions?, in Journal for Theology and the Church, edited by Robert W. Funk and Gerhard Ebeling (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) I, p. 168.

centrality of faith under the concept of prayer.

That early declaration about Jesus interceding for us before God (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; I John 2:1) is precisely what gets to the root of the historical life of Jesus. Is it nevertheless fantasy or mythology? It can be, if it is misused in the form of a conception about Jesus. But faith in Jesus, in so far as it is faith, really refers only to the one conception--that God has listened to Jesus' prayer for his own. Is this conception also mythology? This is at any rate not true of faith when faith holds fast to Jesus' prayer and intercession. The result is that by no means of this prayer faith keeps the future open. For then we no longer really bring ourselves to the fore; instead we present ourselves along with the historical Jesus before God. . . . To believe in Jesus means to believe like Jesus that God grants prayer. . . . But our faith is distinguished from Jesus' faith, because since Easter we have been told in Jesus' name that God has granted prayer. . . . Faith in Jesus confesses that God has granted and will therefore continue to do so in the future (John 16:23ff).¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus, pp. 63-64.

CHAPTER IV

A SAMPLING OF SCHOLARSHIP'S REACTION TO THE NEW QUEST

Although the new quest is only thirteen years old at the time of this writing, if Käsemann's lecture to the Alte Marburger in 1953 is accepted as the modern birthdate of the quest, the literature which has come out in this short time is vast. In addition to the original monographs, books and articles which have appeared there is a plethora of critiques, reviews, and general reaction to the quest. Needless to say any hope of presenting a representative sampling of this literature which is still coming off the presses at this moment is futile. This chapter shall attempt, therefore, to indicate some of the major types of reaction which the new quest has received, and especially to cite the observations of some scholars who themselves have been either sympathetic to the Bultmann school or even part of it.

James M. Robinson has been one of the most articulate and supportive scholars who has reacted to Käsemann's invitation to take up the quest anew. Robinson is a firm believer in Bultmann's existentialist exegesis, and combines this methodology with the conviction that the historical Jesus cannot be set aside by kerygmatic theology. In one of his early essays concerning the emerging new quest, Robinson wrote in 1956:

What is important is that the kerygma is not talking about a person who never existed (i.e., it is not completely foreign to Jesus' own existential thinking), but rather it stands in a positive relation to the viewpoint of the historical Jesus.¹

¹James M. Robinson, "The Historical Jesus and the Church's Kerygma," Religion in Life, XXVI (Winter 1956-57), 49.

As his thinking began to solidify concerning the new quest of the historical Jesus, Robinson wrote two years later in 1958 why the old quest could no longer be a valid form of inquiry. He said at that time:

The [old] quest ought not be continued, for the kerygma calls for existential faith in the meaning of Jesus, not for an attempt to avoid the commitment of faith by supplying objective proof to legitimize the kerygma.²

Turning his attention to the new quest which had already produced a considerable body of literature, Robinson in 1959 produced a monograph which has been received in America and on the Continent and in England as the definitive statement on the new quest up to that time.

The title of the monograph is simply A New Quest of the Historical Jesus; in it Robinson gives an introduction to the whole study of the historical Jesus, a chapter on the demise of the old quest, and three full chapters on the new quest and its development. Robinson's main concern in this heavily documented little book is to show the validity of the new quest in the form it has taken in the Bultmann school. Trying to hold together both the validity of kerygmatic theology and historical research Robinson writes: "A new quest must be undertaken because the kerygma claims to mediate an existential encounter with a historical person, Jesus, who can also be encountered through the mediation of modern historiography."³ Robinson's last sentence in the book says this

²James M. Robinson, "The Quest of the Historical Jesus Today," Theology Today, XV (February 1958), 185.

³James M. Robinson, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, in Studies in Biblical Theology, XXV (London: SCM Press, 1959), p. 94. The German edition, revised and enlarged, appeared under the title Kerygma und historischer Jesus (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1960).

in another way which has since caused some confusion among his readers as to what he means. He says: "The selfhood of Jesus is equally available to us--apparently both via historical research and via the kerygma--as a possible understanding of our existence."⁴ Since publishing the monograph, Robinson has come under heavy fire from two quarters. Bultmann himself has criticized Robinson, and so has Schubert Ogden of the Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, Texas.

Bultmann, in his address to the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences in 1959,⁵ answers the criticism he has received from his former pupils and takes this opportunity to react to the new quest. After saying some complimentary things about Robinson's existential approach to New Testament exegesis, Bultmann then accuses Robinson of confusing and losing the place of the "Christ-kerygma" by his inclusion of the historical Jesus in statements pertaining to faith.⁶ It is Bultmann's contention that only the "that" (Dass) of Jesus' historical existence can be known or needs to be known for faith. Bultmann says Robinson has said too much in his monograph about the possibility of knowledge of the historical Jesus.

Robinson responds to this criticism and defends his scholarship in an article in 1962 entitled "The Recent Debate on the New Quest."⁷ In addition

⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ, Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus, translated and edited by Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 15-42. Hereafter this volume will be referred to as Braaten-Harrisville, Essays.

⁶ Ibid., p. 38.

⁷ James M. Robinson, "The Recent Debate on the New Quest," Journal of Bible and Religion, XXX (July 1962), 198-207.

to summarizing the developments of the research in the new quest since his book came out in 1959, Robinson makes the following defense for his positive stance in the new quest over against Bultmann's criticism:

In the situation in which the synoptic authors found themselves, one could no longer maintain, as Paul could, the "dass," the historicalness of the worshipped Lord, merely by repeated assertion of the fact of his historicalness. In their situation--and ours--an emphasis upon the "dass," indispensable as it is for the kerygma and for Bultmann, could only be made in terms of the Jesus-tradition and not by ignoring that tradition through an exclusive proclamation of the Easter gospel. In their situation, the synoptic writers could retain the "was," i.e., only by making corrective use of the Jesus tradition, by replacing the un-Christian understanding of existence which has invaded the Jesus-tradition with a Christian understanding of existence.⁸

The difference between Bultmann and Robinson on this issue is not their private affair but has become one of the major dividing points in the whole new quest. When confronting the new quest, one is immediately forced to take a stance in relation to Bultmann's "Dass," for the "Dass" is a fork in the road which divides those of the new quest from Bultmann and the strict kerygmatic theologians.

Ogden's attack on Robinson began with an article in which Ogden is the co-author with Van Harvey entitled "How New Is the 'New Quest of the Historical Jesus'?"⁹ In it Ogden and Harvey criticize Robinson's understanding of Bultmann's position regarding the new quest. Ogden and Harvey claim that Robinson has misunderstood Bultmann when he accuses the latter of being against the new quest and of denying the possibility of any knowledge whatsoever of the historical Jesus. Ogden and Harvey maintain that

⁸ Ibid., p. 204.

⁹ Van A. Harvey and Schubert M. Ogden, "How New is the 'New Quest of the Historical Jesus'?", Braaten-Harrisville, Essays, pp. 197-242.

Bultmann's book of 1926, Jesus, represents Bultmann's position that some limited knowledge of the historical Jesus can be ascertained, but that it is of little ultimate significance for the faith. The concluding point in their defense of Bultmann suggests that the new quest is not new after all because Bultmann was already saying forty years ago what is now being said by Robinson and other new questers. Who is right in this matter seems a moot point. It is important to note Ogden and Harvey's challenge to the new quest and Robinson in particular because it calls into question the very starting point of the new quest.

In another article Ogden seems to support and discount the new quest in the same pages. In an extreme statement which denies the need for a new quest or any quest at all Ogden says:

All that is absolutely necessary for Christian faith is already present in the kerygma of the Church, and, moreover, it is there with an explicitness and fullness which, as Bultmann rightly points out, is not to be found in the proclamation of Jesus.¹⁰

This clearly flies in the face of Robinson and others of the new quest. Yet one page later in the article Ogden supports Robinson and the new quest for rightly seeing the identity between the historical Jesus and the kerygma!¹¹ We conclude from the apparent contradiction in Ogden's loyalties that no one involved in the new quest beyond the superficial level is able to take a clear-cut stand on all issues without qualifications. The whole fabric of the quest is too intricate for the lines to be neatly drawn once and for all.

¹⁰Schubert M. Ogden, "Bultmann and the 'New Quest,'" Journal of Bible and Religion, XXX (July 1962), 214.

¹¹Ibid., p. 215.

The new quest has not gone unnoticed by Roman Catholic scholars. Raymond E. Brown, S. S., has given an excellent survey of the direction of New Testament research in what he calls the present period of the post-Bultmannians. Included in this article is a perceptive summary of the purpose of the new quest. Brown writes:

If the purpose of the old quest was to get behind the kerygmatic Christ to the historical Jesus, the new quest may be characterized as an attempt to show that the kerygmatic portrait is a faithful representation of the historical Jesus.¹²

Although seemingly sympathetic to the goals of the new quest, Brown is not uncritical of the quest. He raises objections at three points.

The historiography of the new quest is not concerned enough with facts which are in the New Testament and "reflects a too one-sided existentialist preoccupation."¹³ Brown is also unhappy with the methodology of the new quest as proposed by Käsemann¹⁴ regarding authentic material in the Gospels. Brown writes:

Since Jesus was proclaiming a message himself, we would expect many of his words to have a kerygmatic ring. Since Jesus was a Jew, we would expect many of his words to have parallels in Jewish literature.¹⁵

Brown suggests the scholar should presume that New Testament documents are authentic unless they are inconsistent with other known facts about Jesus and His ministry.

¹²Raymond E. Brown, "After Bultmann What?--An Introduction to the Post-Bultmannians," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XXVI (1964), 8.

¹³Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁴Supra, p. 38.

¹⁵Brown, "After Bultmann What?," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XXVI, pp. 26-27.

Finally, Brown is critical of the new quest's attitude toward the Fourth Gospel. He says there is more truly historical material in John than the new quest is willing to grant.¹⁶ Brown's criticisms are not those of a Roman Catholic reactionary and are well taken.

On the continent the new quest has met a variety of responses which fall on a continuum stretching from enthusiastic support to enthusiastic condemnation. Eduard Lohse is among the supporters. He writes of the new quest: "Therefore the New Testament science in its research concerning the historical Jesus performs an outstandingly important and indispensable service for theology and Church."¹⁷

Peter Biehl is another who is favorably disposed toward the new quest. He notes that the historical-critical method has created for modern scholarship the problem of determining authentic material in the New Testament. Biehl says this method cannot be abandoned, but must be used to make clear how the transition from the preacher to the preached was made in the New Testament. Once this question is successfully answered the theological question concerning the significance of the historical Jesus can be raised. Biehl cites Fuchs as one example of a new questor who tried to solve the problem of continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁷ Eduard Lohse, "Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus in der gegenwärtigen neutestamentlichen Forschung," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXXVII (1962), 174. The German reads as follows: "Darum leistet die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft in ihrem Forschen nach dem historischen Jesus einen überaus wichtigen und unerlässlichen Dienst für Theologie und Kirche."

by identifying the Jesus of history with the content of the kerygma.¹⁸

Paul Althaus is greatly concerned to hold the Jesus of history in an equally important position beside the Christ of faith. In his book, Fact and Faith in the Kerygma Today¹⁹ Althaus is primarily determined to show the imbalance which kerygmatic theology has brought about in present day New Testament studies. His corrective for this imbalance is to give a renewed importance to the historical Jesus. It is particularly at this point that Althaus welcomes the contributions of the new quest. He says the historical Jesus shines through the layers of tradition, and that "The genuine historicity of the picture of Jesus in its fundamental characteristics forces itself upon every one who lives with the picture."²⁰ As for the kerygma, Althaus says quite strongly that the kerygma without the historical Jesus is only dogma, and dogma has never compelled anyone to believe!²¹

Nils Dahl supports the new quest and yet sees the lasting value and necessity in the contributions of Bultmann and kerygmatic theology. Dahl writes of the new quest that "even without a clear differentiation between pure history and the Church's theology the Gospel tradition permits us to

¹⁸Peter Biehl, "Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus," Theologische Rundschau, XXIV (1956-1957), 76.

¹⁹Paul Althaus, Fact and Faith in the Kerygma Today, translated by David Cairns from the German Das sogenannte Kerygma und der historische Jesus: Zur Kritik der heutigen Kerygma-Theologie (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959).

²⁰Ibid., p. 75.

²¹Ibid., pp. 45-46.

draw a very clear picture of what was typical and characteristic of Jesus."²² According to Dahl the new quest can determine

quite a clear picture of the manner of Jesus' appearance as well as of the content of his proclamation and his teaching, and of the impression which he made on the adherents and opponents among his contemporaries. The sources do not permit us to say much regarding his inner life, since they were not interested in it.²³

Dahl sees great value in these contributions of the new quest, but warns the historian that his findings can never show that Jesus died for our sins that we might be forgiven. This knowledge is in the resurrection and that is beyond historical investigation. Historical research is valuable, but must never lose the corrective tension which is provided by the kerygma.

Dahl does raise one danger sign for the new quest, which involves the quest's existential presuppositions. Dahl warns that the new quest, being oriented to its task by existential philosophy, risks becoming so personalistic that the unity of the earthly Jesus with the church is lost. This is a key criticism which will be treated more fully in the concluding chapter of this study.

Bultmann's position in the new quest has already been mentioned in a cursory fashion. His evaluation is of prime importance because Bultmann is the pivotal point around which the whole debate is presently centered. We shall return to his more specific evaluations of the new quest when we consider some current comments directed to the Alte Marburger of our study.

²² Nils A. Dahl, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," Kerygma and History, edited by Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 153.

²³ Ibid., p. 157.

Ernst Käsemann, who really started the new quest with his programmatic lecture of 1953, began to have doubts within a few years as he observed the direction the new quest was taking. In 1957 he published an essay entitled "New Testament Questions of Today," ("Neutestamentliche Fragen von heute"), in which he reaffirmed the possibility of a new quest along the lines which he laid out in his essay of 1953. In this article Käsemann also warned against the developments he saw in the new quest as it was beginning to take shape. Käsemann says that the claim by some that the Easter event was the foundation of the Christian kerygma must be tempered with an inquiry into the significance of the historical Jesus for faith. He says that any reconstruction of a "life" (bios) of Jesus as Ethelbert Stauffer seeks to do is still an illegitimate procedure from the view of responsible scholarship. Writing a life of Jesus or presenting Jesus as an example for faith will inevitably result in rationalism, moralism, or mysticism. Käsemann reiterates his basic premise that it is only in the preaching of Jesus that the historical Jesus can be found, and that this must be the area in which the new quest is carried out. Scholarship must direct its attention to finding any connection which exists between the preaching of the historical Jesus and the preaching of the early Christian community about Him. Käsemann insists the whole success of the new quest hinges on the relationship between the preaching of Jesus and the proclamation about the Crucified and Resurrected One.²⁴

²⁴ Ernst Käsemann, "Neutestamentliche Fragen von heute," Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen, Zweiter Band (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1964) p. 21.

As time and scholarship moved onward, Käsemann became more and more disenchanted with the fruit produced by the new quest. He became so much against what he saw happening in the new quest that several of the Alte Harburger whom he had previously supported now came under his criticism. Reviewing the previous ten years of scholarship in the area of the new quest, Käsemann in 1964 wrote an essay which is titled "Blind Alleys in the Dispute Over the Historical Jesus" ("Sackgassen im Streit um den Historischen Jesus"). The very title shows Käsemann's disillusionment with the new quest.

Käsemann begins this critique of the quest with the observation that the results of the new quest's findings are in inverse ratio to the passion and energy expended.²⁵ In his estimation the returns are meager and the general result of the quest has been an unprofitable confusion in the whole study.

Käsemann first takes to task Joachim Jeremias. According to Käsemann, Jeremias cannot rightly be called a new quester but is in reality a twentieth century old quester. Jeremias is not a disciple of Bultmann nor is he sympathetic with the existential approach to the new quest. In fact he is one of the staunchest critics of the new quest. Jeremias is well schooled in the historical-critical methods and believes that the historical Jesus is a legitimate object of New Testament research. Jeremias believes that the Jesus of history is the call to faith and the kerygma is the early church's response to that call. Therefore attention should be directed to discovering the real Jesus of history, unencumbered

²⁵ Ernst Käsemann, "Sackgassen im Streit um den historischen Jesus," Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen, II, 31.

by the faithful additions of the church's tradition. He believes this is possible through diligent use of historical-critical tools and the extra-biblical knowledge we have of first century languages, society, and religions. Jeremias sees no value in the kerygma other than the fact that it is the historical response of the early church to the call of Jesus. Therefore the preaching of the early church is of little value for Jeremias' quest for the historical Jesus. The call which is articulated by the historical Jesus is the important object of study because it is in the Incarnate Word that God has revealed Himself.²⁶

Käsemann's response to Jeremias is unequivocal. He accuses Jeremias of falling into liberalism and pietism. He means by this that Jeremias, dwelling on the ipsissima verba of Jesus and the picture of the man Jesus, is in danger of relegating the Christian faith to a historical curio that has no life or meaning for present day Christians. Quoting Luther in defense of his position, Käsemann says that Luther's explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles Creed clearly shows that belief is not to reside in the message of Jesus but in the preached word about Him.²⁷ Furthermore, when Jeremias says the locus of interest is in the call of Jesus and not the community's response, Käsemann says he has set up a false dichotomy which does not see the unity of the preaching of Jesus with

²⁶ Much of this summary of Jeremias' position can be found in Käsemann's article "Sackgassen" in Exegetische Versuche, pp. 32-41. For Jeremias' own development see his "The Present Position in the Controversy Concerning the Problem of the Historical Jesus," The Expository Times, LIX (1957-1958), 333-339.

²⁷ Käsemann, "Sackgassen im Streit um den historischen Jesus," p. 38. The German reads: "Wenn Luther in der Erklärung des dritten Artikels den Geist durch das Evangelium berufen usw. lässt, versteht er unter Evangelium ja nicht wie Jeremias die Botschaft Jesu, sondern das Wort der am Sonntag

the preaching of the early community.

The rest of the article Käsemann devoted to a discussion of Bultmann's reactions to the work of his pupils, of whom Käsemann is one. Reviewing Bultmann's evaluation of the new quest, Käsemann defends his own commitment to the quest, although he acknowledges that Fuchs is one example of an Alte Marburger engaged in the new quest whose thinking has developed beyond the point of acceptability for himself as well as Bultmann.

It is Käsemann's conclusion that the quest for the historical Jesus as manifest in the work of Jeremias is a dead end from which scholarship must return. Käsemann is still convinced over against Bultmann's stress on the kerygma and the mere "Dass" of the historical Jesus that there exists a legitimate continuity between the preaching of Jesus and the preaching of the early church and this continuity justifies a concern for the Jesus of history. Käsemann is opposed to extremes at either end of the academic spectrum whether they be represented by Jeremias or Fuchs. One reason why Käsemann is willing at this point of the discussion to continue to accept the validity of the new quest is that the theological relevance of historicity (des Historischen) still remains an acute and unanswered problem.²⁸

Hans Conzelmann, like Käsemann, is a Bultmann pupil who was at first quite in sympathy with the new quest but has become disenchanted with its development. Conzelmann agrees with Käsemann and other of the

von 10 bis 11 Uhr gehaltenen Predigt, und wenn er beginnt nich aus eigener Vernunft noch Kraft, so weist er damit zweifellos auf Offenbarung hin. Ist doch auch im ganzen Neuen Testament der Geist die Kraft der Offenbarung."

²⁸Ibid., p. 31.

new quest that the fundamental problem (Grundlagenproblem) of the new quest is how the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth can become the content of today's preaching.²⁹ Also consistent with the approach of the new quest is Conzelmann's use of the parables as the primary source of information about the Jesus of history. Conzelmann contends that Jesus' eschatological statements are indicative of His own self-awareness. Conzelmann warns against letting historical findings pose as a substitute for faith. This point is clearly made in Conzelmann's article "Jesus Christus" in the third edition of Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, where he writes: "Doctrines cannot be the object of faith, but only its explication."³⁰ For Conzelmann and others of the new quest the revelation of God can never be a doctrinal system, but is always "a historical and historically encountered deed, (eine geschichtliche und geschichtlich begegnende Tat)."³¹ This historical deed appears in this day as the Word (Wort) of preaching.³²

Oscar Cullmann's criticism of the new quest focuses on its methodology. He is concerned over the alliance which form criticism has made with existential philosophy. He says the two are not necessarily bound together and he would personally rather see the existentialist approach dropped from

²⁹Hans Conzelmann, "Zur Methode der Leben-Jesus-Forschung," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, LVI (Beiheft 1 1959), 2-13.

³⁰Hans Conzelmann, "Jesus Christus," Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft, Dritter Band (Dritte Auflage; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959), p. 648.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., p. 650.

New Testament research because its presuppositions color the outcome of the scholarship. Cullmann writes:

The use of form criticism cannot offer a guarantee of absolute "objectivity" in our quest for the historical Jesus. However, we must proceed from it alone and not from the existentialist interpretation if we want at least to near the goal.³³

The way the new quest seeks to establish the connection between the church's portrait of Christ and the historical Jesus is more the product of existential presuppositions than it is the legitimate result of careful form critical study, says Cullmann.³⁴ For that reason Cullmann says the new quest is no different from the studies of the nineteenth century which were finally discounted because they also traded too heavily on their own philosophical presuppositions.³⁵

Turning now to the English-speaking scholarly world, we find that the new quest has caused as great a stir within it as on the continent. Many of the same observations and criticisms are being made. The English-speaking world must endure one notable disadvantage. Precisely because they are English speaking, America and Great Britain find access to many of the intricacies of the new quest and its continuing debate, within and outside of the Bultmann school, barred by the German language. American and English scholars are often suspicious of form criticism linked with existential philosophy. This is not to suggest that American and English scholars are theologically naive. It is to say that the new quest has not

³³Oscar Cullmann, "Out of Season Remarks on the 'Historical Jesus' of the Bultmann School," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XV-XVI (January 1961), 145.

³⁴Ibid., p. 135.

³⁵Ibid.

yet had the extensive coverage in the English language that it needs if it is ever to receive general acceptance. One practical result of the language barrier is that the studies of the historical Jesus which have been carried out in the English-speaking scholarly world are for the most part continuations of the old quest of the nineteenth century.³⁶ This is especially true of American scholarship.

Hugh Anderson's book, Jesus and Christian Origins, contains a fine evaluation of the new quest. Among his many favorable comments about the new quest he includes two important criticisms. Anderson first asks if the quest has really avoided the nineteenth century error of trying to write a biography of Jesus. He suggests that perhaps the old quest has only been dressed up in new existential clothes. He says of the new quest:

With the best will in the world to avoid speaking objectively about Jesus or laying a concrete historical ground for faith, are we not on the verge of reviving the old biographical interest by holding up Jesus' "existence" as an objectively observable phenomenon the moment we give the impression that, by a somewhat strange amalgam of objective historical analysis and "existential openness," the historian qua historian can lay hold of the selfhood of Jesus?³⁷

Anderson's second criticism is leveled against the "wedding" of historical analysis and existential openness. He says this union is misleading

when it produces the impression that the historian has at long last overcome the problem of kerygma and historical events by holding up before our eyes what purports to be a historically well-established basis for the kerygma in the ministry and message of Jesus. Indeed, what the historian, in this case the "existentialist historian," is

³⁶ Roy A. Harrisville, "Representative American Lives of Jesus," Braaten-Harrisville, Essays, pp. 172-196.

³⁷ Hugh Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 175-176.

offering us is not so much a picture of historical events in the life of Jesus but rather a "kerygmatic" account of the event Jesus of Nazareth that has more to do with the response of faith and theologizing than with the question of facts of past history.³⁸

Both of Anderson's criticisms thus have to do with the influence of existentialism on the quest.

Amos Wilder has taken just the opposite view of the new quest. He writes:

The new quest inquires into the reality of Jesus in this sense of his will and personal act, his self-understanding and not his self-consciousness. . . . What is new here is our recognition that the image of the person so grasped is, indeed, historically valid and in a true sense "objective."³⁹

Agreeing with Käsemann and the other new questers, Wilder sees the link of Jesus with the early church as "the fundamental life-orientation, self-understanding and world-understanding"⁴⁰ of the Christian community.

Morton Scott Enslin, one of the most famous of the American scholars who has written about the historical Jesus, appears to offer a mid-twentieth century version of the nineteenth century quest for the historical Jesus which sought so unsuccessfully to extricate Jesus from the Christ of dogma. Enslin, seemingly oblivious to the failure of the old quest, writes nevertheless:

The real Jesus, that is, what is so commonly styled "the historical Jesus" is not the same as the Christ of faith, and, it appears to

³⁸ Ibid., p. 182.

³⁹ Amos N. Wilder, "The New Quest for the Historical Jesus," *Christianity and Crisis*, XIII (1962-1963), 246-247.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 247.

me, all attempts to make or continue that identification are unwise, if not actually perverse.⁴¹

These remarks are directed right at the new quest although Enslin does not designate them specifically for that purpose. In a way Enslin can be taken as one prototype of American opinion.

Another American scholar, William D. Davies, (originally of England) takes a position the exact opposite of Enslin's when he says there is "no incongruity between the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith."⁴²

Davies puts a high premium on extra-biblical studies which shed light on the New Testament world and therefore on the Jesus of history. Therefore his stance in relation to the new quest is to renew the old quest which he feels had the right approach to the subject of the Jesus of history. Davies writes: "I prefer to advocate resumption of the old quest on a new level, because the recovery of the intention of Jesus and His understanding of existence . . . is inseparable from the recovery of what He did and said."⁴³ Quite obviously this approach is totally unacceptable to those in the new quest.

Reginald H. Fuller is one of those rare exceptions, an Englishman who has received a favorable comment from Bultmann although he is not a disciple of Bultmann's. Fuller was cited favorably by Bultmann in his

⁴¹ Morton Scott Enslin, "The Meaning of the Historical Jesus for Faith," Journal of Bible and Religion, XXX (July 1962), 219.

⁴² William D. Davies, "A Quest to be Resumed in the New Testament Studies," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XV-XVI (January 1960), 98.

⁴³ Ibid.

Heidelberg address because of Fuller's position on the issue of continuity between Jesus and the kerygma.⁴⁴ In his own book The Mission and Achievement of Jesus,⁴⁵ Fuller makes another statement which Bultmann would support, and which could be clearly aimed against the new quest. Fuller writes:

The proclamation of Jesus and the kerygma of the Church are by no means identical, but neither are they incompatible. The proclamation of Jesus proclaims that God is about to act decisively and eschatologically in him, the Church's kerygma proclaims he has so acted.⁴⁶

Yet Fuller's contention that Jesus' life was "pre-messianic"⁴⁷ suggests that he is not quite a full-blown Bultmannian.

Paul Achtemeier has given one of the best summary and supportive statements of the new quest to appear to date. In addition he has raised a criticism which warns of a subtle tendency in the new quest to lapse into the very docetism the quest hopes to dispell.

In favor of the new quest and those who have embarked upon it Achtemeier lists four presuppositions of the quest which he holds to be valid:

1. The form-critical method . . . is the only legitimate method on the basis of which to proceed.
2. There is general agreement that the most fruitful place to begin in an attempt to recover the thrust of the preaching of the earthly Jesus is the parables.
3. It is possible to demonstrate, within the scholarly presuppositions accepted, that the kerygma does have its roots in the historical Jesus.

⁴⁴Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," Essays, p. 39.

⁴⁵Reginald H. Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1954).

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 116.

⁴⁷Ibid.

4. The renewed quest is unanimous in the conviction that knowledge of the historical Jesus cannot, indeed dare not, destroy the necessity for faith.⁴⁸

On the critical side Achtemeier says that the view of faith which is prevalent in the new quest borders on docetism because it tends to replace the fact of Christ with the idea of Christ. He writes:

It is clear in Paul that our faith is not in the announcement of the risen Christ, but in the risen Christ himself. What else could Paul mean when he writes to the Corinthians: "if Christ be not risen from the dead, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain," except that faith depends, not on the announcement, but on the fact that Christ rose from the dead? This idea of faith, then, based on the idea that God reveals himself in reports, not acts, contains within itself, as Joachim Jeremias has observed, the danger of lapsing into docetism by emphasizing the idea of Christ rather than Jesus Christ.⁴⁹

So far we have been examining the reactions which scholarship has made to the new quest in general. What reception has been given to the work of our four Alte Marburger in particular? The literature is quite extensive even in this limited area. The following coverage is by no means complete, but only a sampling which will give an indication of the general reaction.

Ernst Käsemann as the initiator of the new quest has received both praise and rebuke. John W. Duddington, who in many respects is critical of the new quest in its development, is nevertheless laudatory of Käsemann for once again bringing the whole matter to the attention of scholarship. He writes approvingly of Käsemann's stress on the unity of Jesus of history with the Christ of the church: Käsemann sees

⁴⁸ Paul J. Achtemeier, "Is the New Quest Docetic?," Theology Today, XIX (1962-1963), 361-362.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 364.

that there is enough evidence that Jesus acted and taught in "the days of his flesh" in such a way as to make the Messianic interpretation of him the only one which is possible and valid."⁵⁰

Bultmann, Käsemann's old teacher, on the other hand, has been quite critical of Käsemann and all of the new questers. In his Heidelberg address Bultmann says that Käsemann understands the nature of existentialist interpretation but fails to use it in his exegesis and study of the historical Jesus. He says that when Käsemann describes the uniqueness of the mission of Jesus he does not give "an existential interpretation but rather describes Jesus' uniqueness as a historical phenomenon."⁵¹ Any effort directed to Jesus as a historical phenomenon is wasted and invalid for Bultmann who says we can only know the "Dass" of Jesus' historical existence, and more knowledge than the "Dass" is not necessary for faith anyway.

Günther Bornkamm, Duddington says, "speaks as though a human contact with Jesus in the days of his flesh did have something of the effect which after the Resurrection was experienced in an encounter with the kerygma."⁵²

Bultmann criticizes Bornkamm because he does not seriously ask if the history in the Gospels goes beyond the "Dass" of the historical Jesus.

Bultmann says of Bornkamm's work that:

⁵⁰ John W. Duddington, "The Historic Jesus," Anglican Theological Review, XLIII (February 1961), 176.

⁵¹ Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," Essays, p. 35.

⁵² Duddington, p. 177.

his description is to a certain degree obscure, because he draws the picture of a history perceptible to an objectifying view, which at the same time putting all the emphasis on interpreting Jesus' preaching existentially; that is, on making clear the understanding of existence which it contains and demands.⁵³

Criticism at another level is raised against Bornkamm by Hugh Anderson and Otto Piper. Anderson says that the picture of Jesus which emerges in Bornkamm's book, Jesus of Nazareth, is such that Jesus appears "only as 'preacher,' only as a sign heralding the coming kingdom of God that is detached from his person."⁵⁴ Anderson goes on to ask how then Jesus was received by those who first heard Him. Anderson cannot imagine they saw Jesus only as a preacher or sign of the Kingdom. Piper shares Anderson's criticism and has titled his review of Bornkamm's book, "A Unitary God with Jesus as His First Theologian."⁵⁵ Piper has at least one kind word for Bornkamm in an otherwise scathing review. He says that Bornkamm's stress on the theocentric elements in the evangelical narratives is justified and is a welcome corrective to the usual heavily Christocentric interpretation which is given the Gospel.⁵⁶ Yet Piper is critical of Bornkamm because he has not taken into account the part played by revelation in the faith of the church and the writing of the Gospels. Piper says that

⁵³Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," Essays, p. 34.

⁵⁴Hugh Anderson, p. 173.

⁵⁵Otto Piper, "A Unitary God with Jesus as His First Theologian," Interpretation, XV (1961) 473-484.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 481.

the Jesus who emerges from the German theologians' historical research is a rabbi or prophet who proclaims the dawn of God's reign and who enjoins everybody to accept the new law if they want to enter into the divine Kingdom.⁵⁷

Piper is critical of this picture of Jesus when he asks, "what significance does Jesus have for our faith, if He was only the preacher, or prophet, of the coming Kingdom?"⁵⁸ Piper suggests it is extremely odd if this is the only view Jesus had of His work and that He did not know what He was really doing.

Stephen Neill⁵⁹ has criticized Bornkamm at two points. First, Neill says Bornkamm has allowed himself to be influenced by his philosophical presuppositions, and that what Bornkamm has given us in his Jesus of Nazareth is not history but philosophical investigation.⁶⁰ Again on the historical issue Neill says Bornkamm's view that the title "Son of Man" is never used by Jesus of Himself runs counter to the evidence. He writes "it is the remarkable fact that this title, in all our Gospels as we have them, is used by Jesus of Himself a great many times."⁶¹ Neill's plea is for real historians to take over the quest of the historical Jesus that we might have a report which is untainted by philosophical presuppositions.

Gerhard Ebeling, like the other Alte Marburger, receives a critical word from Bultmann. He says that Ebeling "still believes he can establish

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 474.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 481.

⁵⁹ Stephen Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961 (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 281.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 282-283.

the continuity at a decisive point: He states that this continuity consists in the fact the 'witness of faith'--that is, Jesus--because 'the basis of faith.'⁶²

Bultmann challenges that belief because he says, "The gospels do not speak of Jesus' own faith, nor does the kerygma make reference to it."⁶³ Bultmann says that Ebeling, like Bornkamm, has confused the existentialist encounter with an objectifying view of Jesus. He says Ebeling "deduces the personal attitude of the historical Jesus from an understanding of existence present in His activity and becoming audible in His words."⁶⁴

James M. Robinson explores the possibility of seeing Ebeling in the light of the nineteenth century liberal theology of Schleiermacher. The focus of this observation is Ebeling's book The Nature of Faith. Robinson points out that Ebeling builds on two suggestions of Schleiermacher's: (1) Begin with christology and then move to the doctrine of God; and (2) An understanding of existence subsumes a doctrine of God under it and also includes awareness of one's own subjective feelings about God so that separate categories for these matters are unnecessary.⁶⁵ This observation of Schleiermacher coupled with the observation that Ebeling begins with the historical Jesus leads Robinson to draw a connection between nineteenth century liberalism and Ebeling's approach to the new quest. Robinson simply makes the observation and leaves the reader to make his own value judgments

⁶² Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," Essays, p. 33.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 34.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ James M. Robinson, "Neo-Liberalism," Interpretation, XV (October 1961), 484-485.

of the matter.

Samuel Laeuchli reviews Ebeling's work Theologie und Verkündigung and at one point concentrates on Ebeling's protest against Bultmann's kerygmatic theology which only allows the "Dass" of the Jesus of history and therefore becomes docetic. Evaluating Ebeling's protest against Bultmann, Laeuchli says:

But now Ebeling ties this protest to the quest for the historical Jesus and fails thereby--fails miserably, as a matter of fact, because the Jesus of this christology has under no circumstances freed himself from the problems of the nineteenth century "Jesusology," it is still the theologians' own wish-construct when it comes to any interpretation. This Jesus of Ebeling is obviously a twentieth-century existentialist Lutheran who searches for security. . . . Such a "Jesus" is historically just as phony as any other type of psychological interpretation of Jesus and really throws us right back into the nineteenth century. Actually, Jesus thus interpreted is again docetic because Ebeling does not dare to go the historical way to the bitter end by assuming (historically speaking) that the certainty itself is as hypothetical and questionable as the whole explicit kerygma of the New Testament.⁶⁶

It is apparent that one of the major criticisms of the new quest is that it really has not shaken itself free of the nineteenth century quest and so is in the last analysis not new at all but only more sophisticated.

Ernst Fuchs, the most enigmatic of the Alte Marburger, has drawn more abusive comments than any of the others engaged in the new quest. Duddington, however, looks favorably on Fuchs' attempts to see Jesus as a person who was at least aware of His own messianic characteristics. He writes:

Thus Fuchs' historical research is bringing him nearer than the other kerygmatic theologians to a belief that the earthly career of Jesus included a growth both in Messianic consciousness and in

⁶⁶ Samuel Laeuchli, "Unsolved Contradictions," Interpretation, XVII (1963), 325-326.

increasingly conscious decision to fulfill the role of the Suffering Servant.⁶⁷

Bultmann says of Fuchs that he has not carried out the existential interpretation consistently, but has fallen into a historical-psychological interpretation because he understands Jesus' own attitude to be a phenomenon perceptible to an objectifying view. Bultmann says:

In the statements that the kerygma has retained the "self-understanding" of Jesus, that the post-Easter faith has "repeated" Jesus' decision, the self-understanding and decision of Jesus are viewed as phenomena perceptible to the objectifying historian.⁶⁸

Bultmann accuses Fuchs of doing the same thing in his quest for the historical Jesus that the nineteenth century liberals were guilty of doing, confusing a psychological view with a historical view.

Albert C. Moore has written an excellent article on Fuchs in which he sketches a picture of Fuchs the man which helps us understand Fuchs the theologian. Moore is favorably disposed toward Fuchs and says that the distinctive feature of Fuchs' contribution to the new quest is his understanding of Jesus. Fuchs interprets Jesus neither eschatologically nor psychologically but linguistically, claims Moore. This means that Jesus is understood as the very "language event" of God Himself. As such the Jesus of history is continually present in the preached word.⁶⁹

Hugh Anderson presents yet another reaction to Fuchs, and in his comments dwells on Fuchs' emphasis on the conduct of Jesus and Fuchs'

⁶⁷Duddington, p. 177.

⁶⁸Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," Essays, p. 32.

⁶⁹Albert C. Moore, "Ernst Fuchs: A Poetic Approach to New Testament Hermeneutic," Religion and Life, Winter (1965-1966), 106-121.

view that Jesus was a man acting in God's stead. Although critical of the new quest and Fuchs, Anderson gives a fair if short summary of Fuchs on these two points.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Hugh Anderson, "Existential Hermeneutics; Features of the New Quest," Interpretation, XVI (February 1962), 131-155.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Because the Alte Marburger are all pupils of Rudolf Bultmann and all have been highly influenced by his theology, it is not surprising that they exhibit a great deal of similarity in their approach to the new quest of the historical Jesus. Yet because they are all independent and competent theologians, it is not surprising that there also are points where their views diverge. It will be the purpose of the first half of this final chapter to sketch in broad strokes the similarities and differences in the new quest of the historical Jesus among the Alte Marburger of Rudolf Bultmann.

The theological basis which all four Alte Marburger have in common is the kerygmatic theology of Bultmann. Reaching theological maturity under the watchful tutelage of Bultmann, the Alte Marburger show Bultmann's conviction that the kerygma of the early church is the backbone of the expression of the Christian faith. It is in the kerygma that the church confesses her Lord and comes to faith in Him. Starting from this point, it is natural for the new quest to approach the Jesus of history with the expectation of finding information about Him embedded in the kerygma of the early church. The new quest looks upon Scripture as the kerygmatic preaching of the early church, and does not try to find in Scripture, especially the Gospels, an accurate historical and chronological portrayal of the earthly Jesus.

With this view of Scripture's kerygmatic formulation, the Alte Marburger think it is nevertheless possible to learn from Scripture of

the historical Jesus. At this point they all disagree with Bultmann. Yet they agree with Bultmann that it is impossible to resume the old quest. The biographies and chronologies of Jesus which the old quest produced are no longer a legitimate or helpful object of inquiry. The New Testament does not contain that kind of information. In their rejection of the old quest, the Alte Marburger echo the sentiments of their teacher, but as to the possibility of a new quest they stand against Bultmann.

Concerning methodology, the pupils of Bultmann are united with him. New Testament studies are properly carried out when all the tools of the historical-critical method are employed with a special priority given to Form Criticism. Coupling this technical approach with what is generally called existential philosophy, the new questers have tackled the quest of the historical Jesus in a manner which is characteristic of the Bultmann school. Form Criticism and an existential understanding of life is the approach to the new quest shared by all the Alte Marburger under consideration in this study.

Another similarity which binds the Alte Marburger together is their common concern to show the undeniable unity and identity which exists between the historical Jesus and the Christ of the kerygma. Because they all feel that Bultmann's kerygmatic approach to the faith leans toward docetic heresy, the Alte Marburger rallied around Kusemann's 1953 essay and accepted his invitation to show that the Jesus of history was more than just the "presupposition" (Bultmann) of the faith but the indispensable author and object of it. Desiring to walk the line between the errors of the nineteenth century and the overemphasized kerygmatic

theology of their teacher, the Alte Marburger set out arm in arm to restore the Jesus of history to His proper place in the church's christology.

The Alte Marburger are united in at least one more major area and that deals with the New Testament sources of information which make the new quest possible. All agree that the Gospels, particularly the Synoptics, provide the brief available information about the historical Jesus. In itself this is not a new observation. Every quest of the historical Jesus has turned to the Gospels for its information about Jesus. What is distinctive about the new quest is its use of the New Testament material. All the men of the new quest agree that the parables, acts, and sayings of Jesus are the specific and only reliable sources within the Gospels to which the new quest can turn for help. As we shall see below, the Alte Marburger are not single-minded as to how the parables and sayings are to be treated.

In general it can be said of the Alte Marburger that they share a common concern to learn as much about the Jesus of history as can be known from the Gospels. They also share a common methodological approach and theological motivation.

What of the differences which exist among the Alte Marburger? In spite of the factors which unite theologians of the new quest, there are differences among them at some key points which seem to be undermining the unity with which the new quest started. This is clearly seen in the case of Käsemann who has become quite critical of the new quest as it has taken shape in the work of Fuchs and to a lesser degree in the work of Ebeling. What in some instances were only differences of

emphasis now seem to be developing into irreconcilable differences of meaning. The present picture suggests that the new quest is becoming fragmented even within the ranks of the Alte Marburger.

The first point at which an important difference is noted is in the approach to the parables and sayings of Jesus. Käsemann is still concerned to find the authentic sayings of Jesus as much as this is possible, and is greatly concerned to find some positive criterion by which we can tell what is genuine. At present he says the only true test of authentic material is a negative test which rejects anything that is Judaistic or a product of the early Christian community. Bornkamm shares Käsemann's view although he is not as concerned as Käsemann to find a criterion for determining authentic sayings. He, like Käsemann, accepts the fact that the Gospels have been redacted theologically, but says that each parable itself provides a total statement of who Jesus was and what He did.

Ebeling and Fuchs approach the matter differently. They do not treat the parables and sayings as sources which contain information about the historical Jesus or His teaching, but see the parables and sayings themselves as the language framework in which Jesus is met. Fuchs even goes so far as to say it does not really matter whether the parables are authentic or not because what they tell about Jesus is not biographical information. Rather the parables and sayings of Jesus or even those later attributed to Him all show how Jesus conducted Himself, and it is the fact of the confrontation with people which the parables afforded Jesus and not their content which is important. At this point Ebeling and Fuchs understand the use of the New Testament material in a

manner quite different from K semann and Bornkamm.

The second difference which is manifest among the Alte Marburger involves their respective views about the person of Jesus. Both K semann and Bornkamm dismiss the suggestions that Jesus was either a prophet or a rabbi. K semann sees Jesus as a teacher of wisdom who dealt with the immediate present in such a way as to be called Messiah by the early church. Bornkamm is cautious at this juncture and we can only deduce his view of Jesus by noting that for Bornkamm Jesus is neither a prophet nor a rabbi but is simply Jesus of Nazareth, a wandering preacher who is later identified by the church as the Christ.

Ebeling and Fuchs do not even dwell on the biblical suggestions that Jesus was a prophet or a rabbi, but lapse into their own existentially couched descriptions of Him. Ebeling calls Jesus the witness of faith who became the basis of faith. Fuchs says Jesus was the expression of faith, the man who acted in God's stead.

These differences concerning the person of Jesus may not seem significant in themselves but become so when taken together with the Alte Marburger's respective views as to the purpose of Jesus' ministry.

The third and final point of difference which we will cite regards the purpose of Jesus' ministry as seen by the Alte Marburger. Again K semann and Bornkamm seem to be quite similar. K semann says the purpose of the earthly Jesus was to announce that the Kingdom of God had broken in among those who heard Him. The Kingdom was not fully accomplished, but was in the process of becoming. Jesus was the one who announced the Kingdom and in His announcing drew near to God the people who heard. Bornkamm sees Jesus as the sign of the Kingdom but not the

Kingdom itself. It was Jesus' ministry to announce the imminent will and rule of God and to call those who heard to decision.

Ebeling says Jesus' mission was to give expression to faith and to be God's "language event" in the world through which God Himself could act on behalf of His world. Fuchs says Jesus' mission was to live in faith toward God in such a way that His own life and witness to faith challenged those who met Jesus to decide for or against the faith.

The Alte Marburger are united in their goals regarding the new quest, but disparate in their assessment of the findings. Because they do not agree regarding the results they find, each of the Alte Marburger in his new quest for the Jesus of history has gone his own way, leaving behind the original solidarity of their quest.

It is a precarious undertaking to write a conclusion. There is always the danger of leaving the impression that the study is over. Such is not the case with the new quest. The unity of the Jesus of the Gospels with the Christ of faith was once a matter of simple, unquestioned faith. It is still a matter of confession, but it is no longer either simple or unquestioned.

Our conclusion is composed of criticism and affirmation of the new quest. Critically we have two comments to make of the new quest and two questions to address to it.

First, desiring to counterbalance the kerygmatic theology of Bultmann, the new quest has given us a historical Jesus who is little more than a pious Jew. This is especially true of Ebeling and Fuchs. By talking of Jesus as the witness to faith and the man who acted in place of God, Ebeling and Fuchs present the earthly Jesus as a religious

eccentric who preached, taught, and lived the life of a pious man who had a peculiar relationship with His God. It is only after the crucifixion and resurrection that Jesus is made the Christ at the right hand of God the Father. This view of Jesus' earthly life, together with the adoptionist christology which attends it seems inadequate in view of the witness of Scripture and the church.

Küsemann and Bornkamm also have drawn a picture of the earthly Jesus which makes Him little more than an itinerant preacher who is a sign of the Kingdom of God which is breaking into time and history. By stressing Jesus as a preacher of the will and rule of God and yet denying Jesus' messianic consciousness, Küsemann and Bornkamm present us with an earthly Jesus who is an extremely peculiar individual. How is it possible that Jesus could preach, teach, heal, and be crucified without knowing who He was and what He was doing? We do not wish to indulge in psychological speculation on this issue in view of the New Testament evidence. Yet we cannot help raising this question. Perhaps in their zeal for fidelity to the written word as viewed from critically, Küsemann and Bornkamm have given us a picture of the Jesus of history which is accurate in what it says, but inaccurate because of what it is unable to say.

Second, if the picture of the person of Jesus as presented by the new quest is inadequate, the picture of the purpose of Jesus' earthly life and ministry also leaves something to be desired. Küsemann and Bornkamm say that Jesus' mission in life was to announce the Kingdom of God and to call people to make a decision in face of that announcement. Ebeling and Fuchs say that Jesus was the perfect example of

faith and was a model for all to emulate. As God's "language event" Jesus in person and word was the expression of faith. Ebeling and Fuchs say that Jesus cannot be separated from His work, but Bornkamm says that Jesus was not concerned with His own person but only His teaching. Despite the different shades of meaning which we find among the Alte Marburger the result is a view of the purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry which is fleshbound and timebound to Jesus of Nazareth of the first century.

Is this all that can be said of Jesus' historical ministry? Did He come only to be a preacher of the Kingdom or a teacher of wisdom or an example of faith or the catalyst for decision. If so, then what does this Jesus have to do with Christ? If Jesus was only God's representative on earth, then where is the atonement? This view of Jesus' earthly ministry does not talk of His pre-existence, His atoning death, or His earthly Lordship. It cannot, because these are matters of faith and not historical research. We do not fault the new quest for sticking strictly to the evidence available. Yet, as with our first objection, we cannot help but wonder if the picture of the historical Jesus is falsified because it follows so closely the written accounts of Him. The picture is not inaccurate for what it says but inaccurate for what it cannot say. Information not provided by the Gospels, but which the faith maintains is nevertheless historically factual and necessary, must therefore be included if there is to be a completely accurate picture of the historical Jesus. Anything less than the total historical truth is a truncated truth and to that degree false. We doubt that the truth of Bornkamm's contention that each individual parable contains all that

can be known of the historical Jesus. When Fuchs tells us our faith is to be the faith of Jesus who was the faithful one of God, we do not hear Gospel but a new law that tells that we do not believe.

The first question we ask of the new quest concerns its philosophical presuppositions. Is the existential approach to the new quest and to history a priori the only way to go about the quest? There is certainly some doubt if this approach has any greater internal worth than other philosophical or historical methodologies that are available to scholarship. Will New Testament exegetes be asking existential questions of the historical Jesus in the year 2000? Perhaps that is an unfair question, yet it does suggest that the existential approach to the quest is not necessarily a valid approach for all time.

The second question we ask of the new quest stems from a criticism of the new quest which has been raised by Nils Dahl. He warns that there is danger in the existentialist approach of the new quest becoming so personalistic that the unity of the earthly Jesus with the church is lost. The question is therefore: what is the role of the historical Jesus with regard to the church? The new quest has not considered this issue; we feel it must do so if it is to avoid reestablishing a Jesus of history who is solely the object of privatistic devotion.

The affirmative part of our conclusion restricts its attention to the chief value in the new quest. We have saved this for last because we feel the positive contributions of the new quest outweigh its inadequacies. The major value of the new quest lies in what it has set out to do, namely, restore the historical Jesus as a proper concern of scholarship and the church's preaching and confession. There seems to

be no doubt that the old quest's debunking, along with the rise of form criticism and the kerygmatic theology of Bultmann, seriously jeopardized the church's historic confessions concerning the person of Christ. The Alte Marburger recognized that the faith was in danger of dissolving into a docetic Christ-idea unless some steps were taken to restore the tension in which the faith has always lived, the unavoidable tension created by the coming of the God-man Jesus Christ. The kerygmatic Christ without the Jesus of history is an impossible thought for the Christian faith. It is to the everlasting credit of the new quest that the Jesus of history has been reinstated with the Christ of faith, even if somewhat imperfectly.

The Alte Marburger do not use the language of the Lutheran confessions. Yet what they have accomplished by renewing the quest for the historical Jesus is similar to the Formula of Concord's Article VIII on the "Person of Christ." The historical situations are entirely different yet the concern for the unity of the person of Christ is the same. On this narrow point, at least, Article VIII, paragraph 6 is a fitting and accurate statement of the motivation behind the new quest and the accomplishments of the work of the Alte Marburger.

We believe, teach, and confess that although the Son of God is a separate, distinct, and complete divine person and therefore has been from all eternity true, essential, and perfect God with the Father and the Holy Spirit, yet, when the time had fully come, he took the human nature into the unity of his person, not in such a manner that there are now two persons or two Christs, but in such a way that Christ Jesus is henceforth in one person simultaneously true eternal God, born of the Father from eternity, and also a true man, born of the most blessed virgin Mary, as it is written, "Of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever." (Romans 9:5)¹

¹"Formula of Concord," The Book of Concord, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 592.

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