

Historicity and theology, and the quest for historical Jesus¹

P A Geyser

Department of Biblical Studies (Sec A)

University of Pretoria

Abstract

The issue of history and historicity is reviewed in this article. The efforts of New Historicism is brought to bear on this question in an effort to find a way out of the impasse created by the modernist demand for objectivity and the postmodern resignation to radical relativism. The possibility of historiography is explored in conjunction with the pragmatic approach and leads to the conclusion that a kind of historical knowledge is attainable which can be described as useful even if not perfect. The author concurs with Crossan and his working definition of history as the past reconstructed interactively by the present through argued evidence in public discourse. The intersubjective nature of any historical enterprise leads the author to the conclusion that the search for the historical Jesus can only be done in the dialectical approach of a both ... and: both the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Historical Jesus studies” refers to, among others, aspects of history, historicity, historical questions and the like. But what exactly is understood by the term “history”. What kind of a discipline is historical research? Of particular importance is how theology utilises history in its own discipline of theological reflection. In this article I make use of Stephen Patterson’s views on these issues. Patterson (1998:251-582), in turn, discusses the insights of Appleby, Hunt and Jacob (1994) in their book, *Telling the truth about history*. In this regard the term “ history” refers to specific events that took place in the

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past. With reference to the New Testament this applies to events from a *distant past*. This may sound simplistic, but in our further discussion of the issue I hope it will become clear that it is in fact a rather complex issue. Referring to history in this way has the implication that what people of the past did and said, have consequences for the present. If this point of view is maintained it then becomes a legitimate venture for people of the present to have an interest in the past. In the particular case of the quest for the historical Jesus an interest in the past (history) could be said to originate from the desire to better understand one's contemporary historical situation.

The motives behind this quest may, of course, be those of self-interest and self-glorification. Historical research could be used to justify one's present self-understanding and to legitimise one's claims over against those of opponents. This constitutes the essence of the criticism brought in against historical research by postmodernism – an objection which should be taken seriously since it is not without substance. Stephen Moore (1997:299) refers as follows to this postmodern focus on the “New Historicism” :

I shall conclude by reflecting on the fundamental challenge that New Historicism poses for biblical scholars. At base the challenge is a hermeneutical one, needless to say, that of *understanding* New Historicism. But why bother trying? Because sustained engagement with New Historicism is calculated to carry us into the liminal zone between positivist historiography and postpositivist theory, a zone in which the future of our discipline may well be forged. How might we do history ‘after’ theory – poststructuralist theory, postcolonial theory, gender theory, cultural theory? How might we do historical biblical criticism after ideological criticism? Or how might we do historical criticism as ideological criticism.

The conclusion seems unavoidable that, in historical Jesus research, adequate attention had not been given to epistemic (methodological) issues. In the social scientific approach one does find efforts to enunciate aspects such as presuppositions, theories, models and methods. The finer details of underlying philosophical questions are, however, still lacking. In this regard pioneering work has been done by Ben E Meyer and Thomas Wright. Meyer (1979:132) made the following reference to historicity:

Historicity is one dimension of a satisfactory answer to a new historical question, but here the judgment of historicity is immediately guided (*sic!*), not by indices to the historicity of data, but by the argumentation that organizes and illuminates data by giving satisfactory answers to questions about the understanding of data ... Moreover, the network of relations that comes to light in the course of an investigation is likely to modify some of the inquirer's initial judgments on data, supplying new grounds for confirming or reversing them.

Thomas Wright (1992a:3 note 3) concurs with Meyer's programme of critical realism. He formulates the theory as follows: "This is a theory about how people know things, and offers itself as a way forward, over against other competing theories that have appeared in several fields" It is well known that Wright coined the phrase the "Third Quest". Wright describes its main features as:

One of the most obvious features of this "Third Quest" has been the bold attempt to set Jesus firmly into his Jewish context. Another feature has been that unlike the "New Quest", the [proponents] have largely ignored the artificial pseudo-historical "criteria" for different sayings in the gospels. Instead, they have offered complete hypotheses about Jesus' whole life and work, including not only sayings but also deeds. This has made for a more complete, and less artificial historical flavor to the whole enterprise

(Wright 1992b:13)

On this issue of *presuppositions* and *methodology* Sean Freyne (1997:91) is most probably correct when he states that none of the previous or present quests were ever conducted without presuppositions. He states:

Nor could it be otherwise no matter how refined our methodologies. If we are all prepared to say at the outset what is at stake for us in our search for Jesus – ideologically, academically, personally – then there is some possibility that we can reach an approximation to the truth of things, at least for now. Even that would be adequate.

Leif E Vaage (1997:181-182) agrees with Freyne in this regard when he says: "The more honest and precise we can be about exactly what makes 'the historical Jesus' worth discussing and what we hope to gain from our 'Jesus', the better the chance there is that our conversation about the historical Jesus will produce not just scholarly smoke but intellectual fire and human warmth."

Such an approach to historical Jesus research acknowledges that ideologies play a significant role and that the ideal of an ideology-free approach is not possible. Ideology is a relevant concern as far as the following are concerned: the "social grouping(s)" within which Jesus operated, the transmitters of the traditions, those who undertake the research of the traditions, and also the expectations these researchers hold. Aware of this, ideologies should constantly be under scrutiny and monitored. Consensus has long been reached that the "objective quality" accorded events of the past is misleading to say the least. It simply cannot be maintained. One of the most obvious reasons for this is the way in which the past becomes available to us. The past never is at hand as a pure object. It only makes itself available in the form of a memory of a human subject: "We have access to history only through *historical experience*" (Patterson 1998:256). Crossan (1998: 20) states: "History *matters*. And history is possible because its absence is intolerable. History is not the same as story. *Even if all history is story, not all story is history.*" The implication is clear: events of the past are over immediately after having taken place. All that remains is the memory of what happened and especially the impact it had on human subjects.

2. THE DISCIPLINE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Everything said thus far implies that historical research does not function in the same way as the natural sciences. This distinction between natural sciences and the humanities was depicted by Wilhelm Dilthey as a process of explanation (natural sciences) over against interpretation (humanities). Dilthey's contribution is described by Thiselton (1980:235) as follows:

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) saw that historical understanding is not a matter of "explanation" in terms of general laws which are relevant to the sciences.

The methods and laws of the *Naturwissenschaften* are to be distinguished from those of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. The latter concern the particularities of human life (*das Leben*) and understanding (*Verstehen*) ... Life, for Dilthey, included man's thinking, feeling, and willing

The natural sciences are "scientific" in the sense that the researcher strives to discover something "factual". In historical research on the other hand, there is no such an available "object" that can be handled, measured or manipulated in any way. In one respect there is similarity in that the historical researcher also makes use of reasonable inferential analysis of data to come to a credible representation of the past. In this (re)presentation of the data in order to create an acceptable scenario, it is inevitable that subjective decisions about people and their conduct will be made. This is indeed the case in historical Jesus research. One has to concede that Patterson is correct when he states that we are not dealing with pure science in historical Jesus research. Patterson (1998:259) describes this discipline as "... a humanistic discipline involving one subject's experience (the historian) of another (Jesus) as mediated through other experiencing subjects (the followers of Jesus, early believers, and others)." Should one follow an approach which confines historical research to the parameters of the natural sciences, the researcher would be looking for an objective starting point, for scientific control measures, for procedures that could be repeated in order to establish results that can be verified. Taking the hermeneutical insight of Dilthey seriously, this is not possible for historical research. In historical research (as humanistic discipline) decisions must firstly be made about what may and may not serve as evidence for an event in the past. Then a judgement has to be made as to which of these fragments of evidence could be regarded as trustworthy. This implies a decision concerning the portion of evidence that can be considered decisive for the understanding of the events. The explanations given for these decisions will have to be presented in such a way that their significance would become clear and acceptable to other researchers in the field.

Emmanuel Hirsch Jr (1967:3) justifiably said: "The text had to represent somebody's *meaning*" (my italics). Van Aarde (1985:554) pointed out that Hirsch concurs with Gottfried Frege in distinguishing between the concepts "meaning" (*Sinn*) and "significance" (*Bedeutung*). This expression "significance/*Bedeutung*" coincides with the

concept that Wimsatt (1968:222) describes as “value”. “The design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging either the *meaning* or the *value* of a work of literary art” (my italics). This distinction between *Sinn* (meaning) and *Bedeutung* (significance), when applied to historical research, correlates with what Rudolf Bultmann described as the distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte*. This distinction of Bultmann’s (in conjunction with Heidegger) constituted a transcendence of (positivistic) historicism (cf Pelsler 1994:44–49). Bultmann stressed that, contrary to historicism’s view that history consists of a presuppositionless reconstruction of past events, history should be seen as understanding events of the past (*Historie*) in such a way that it requires existential decisions in the present (*Geschichte*).

Historiography can be regarded as a discipline, but perhaps even more as a disciplined art. A great degree of insight is required in order to bring data to a useful synthesis. In the work of Dilthey such a synthesis found expression in his insight concerning the so-called “merging of horizons” between the world of the text and the world of the interpreter. He refers to this phenomenon as *Wirkungszusammenhang*. The awareness of this interrelationship withholds one from an idea of historicity as pertaining to the discovery of an object, of some “thing” we could name “history” lying in waiting in (the case of the Bible) authoritative texts. Historiography, and that refers to “history”, always requires reconstruction. This is just as true for the Bible as for all other texts from antiquity. Historiography can only be done by using the methods that are customary in historical research in general. It needs to be established that, without the subjective acumen of historical reconstruction, there would be no Bible/New Testament or historical Jesus. It makes no sense to play biblical theology off against historical Jesus theology as if Jesus theology would be too “subjective”, whereas biblical theology would presumably possess a clear and “objective” starting point in the text. Anyone who has taken cognisance of the text-critical apparatus in the Greek New Testament would also discard the idea of an “objective reality” as a given in the text (see Aland *et al* 1994:3).

3. THE MODERNISTIC VIEW OF HISTORY AND ITS DEMISE

The popular modern view of history with its ideal of objectivity developed out of the intellectual revolution of the seventeenth century which became known as the *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment). It hailed the dawn of the period that became known as the modern era. It was also the beginning of modern science with its accent on human reason (rationality), methodology and objectivity. The study of history also gained momentum in this period. The close connection between history and science had a great influence on how people viewed historiography and history itself. Within this framework history came to be seen as a “thing”, an object waiting to be discovered like other objects in the natural world that presented themselves for research (according to that paradigm). The historian had to comply with the notion of the scientist as an objective, neutral, unbiased observer of “facts”.

During the twentieth century, under the influence of philosophers and historians such as Collingwood, Dilthey, Popper and the later cultural historian, Geertz (see Patterson 1998:255), this view of history and historians collapsed completely. Karl Popper (1966:259-280) contributed the insight that one cannot be involved with history in any other way than from the perspective of one’s own subjective judgement. The victors in any given situation, for instance, would declare their victory to be the triumph of the ultimate good for humankind, and even as willed by God. The idea of *power* crept into historiography under the guise of “historical facts”.

Earlier critics of the notion of objectivity with their emphasis on the involvement of the observing subject did, however, not wish to totally discard the idea of history. In the more recent past critics such as Derrida and Foucault became less optimistic about the possibilities of historiography. These postmodern thinkers were very sceptical about the possibility of historiography as a viable discipline. Foucault (1980:16) maintained that there is no such thing as modern historical criticism. When postmodern critics evaluate historiography according to the criteria of modernistic ideals and demands for objectivity, they clearly indicate how historiography, measured by those standards, is not viable.

Suspicion against historical Jesus research did, therefore, not only come from a conservative ecclesiastical corner. The “new left” of intellectuals also saw in this type of

research an effort to ascertain the “truth” according to modernistic points of departure. Clive Marsh (1997:404 note 3) treats this suspicion in the following way:

I want, instead, to offer a reading of this latest activity in Jesus research in the context of previous Quests, and in the light of insights drawn from New Historicism. In other words, I want to see how New Historicism might offer a way for Jesus research to move beyond its now clichéd reference to contributors to the Quest seeing their own “face in the bottom of the well”, in its handling of matters of history, interpretation and subjectivity in the service of the construction of a picture of the Jesus of history ... The reference is to George Tyrrell’s comment on Harnack’s Jesus being “the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well,” sometimes attributed to Schweitzer because of the latter’s own perception of the extent to which 19th century liberals, in speaking about Jesus, also clearly spoke about themselves.

To this J Dominic Crossan (1998:20) reacted by giving his definition of history: “This is my working definition of history: *History is the past reconstructed interactively by the present through argued evidence in public discourse.*” In this definition one finds that a postpositivistic practice of science is deeply aware of the social position of the researcher. It also takes into account that certain pronouncements are of a more provisional nature than others, that some pronouncements are more soundly substantiated than others, and that the necessity of public scrutiny becomes evident.

4. A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO HISTORY

After the demise of the modernistic ideal of objective truth and the postmodern scepticism concerning the possibility of historiography, the question remains whether historical description is a viable undertaking or not. Patterson (1998:257) concurs with researchers such as Charles Pierce, William James and John Dewey and a movement that he calls “Pragmatism” in pleading a case for a kind of “historical knowledge” which presents useful information, even if not perfect. Patterson (1998:256-259) maintains the following view: “... I believe that it is possible through disciplined historical work to produce

useful, if imperfect, knowledge New pragmatists are finding a way around the impasse created by the modernist demand for objectivity and the postmodern resignation to radical relativism.” The Pragmatists clearly realised that knowledge is contextual. Uniqueness, newness and contingency characterise the human condition to a larger extent than the dream of a socio-cultural master narrative according to modernism. The Pragmatists emphasised that, to deal with the inter-subjective, communal and social nature of historical knowledge, need not be an insurmountable stumbling block. A clear distinction must be made between an *event* and someone’s *perception* of that event. Correspondence between different observers can be established in spite of the restricted nature of each individual’s perception.

When it comes to Jesus, a few remarks are imperative. As a consequence of his life, words and deeds we have certain traditions and texts at our disposal. These traditions, and especially the texts, can mislead the historian into treating Jesus as an object such as the text. This would imply that Jesus is objectively knowable. It needs to be reaffirmed that Jesus remains a subject whom one encounters in the same way as every other human subject. Jesus is, therefore, only knowable by way of the impact he has on us. The kind of knowledge for which we will have settled, is then the only kind of knowledge that is possible in interaction with someone else. We can listen to his words (as reported). We can learn about his deeds (as reported). And we can endeavour to understand him within the context of his own time and world. This requires imaginative creativity. It is also clear that we can only have a very restricted encounter with this person, Jesus. We are unable to penetrate his words and deeds in order to discover the person behind what others have witnessed about him.

The modernist heritage of treating things and people of the past as “objects” has done more to distort the past than to a fair presentation of the past. This tempted theologians to disregard the necessity of allowing people of the past to speak and act for themselves. The extent to which people of the past become *objects* correlates with the measure in which they are manipulated. This is probably more true of the Bible than of any other ancient source. We often forget that the Bible presents a point of view very different from our own. To the extent that it had become “our Book”, we lose sight of the fact that we are the recipients of ancient text coming from people with a totally different set of

interests than our own. We will only be able to learn from these ancient witnesses if we open ourselves to the impact that they and their message could have on us. This is a kind of knowledge that can only result from the interaction between two willing, acting subject.

Patterson (1998:259) pointed out that responsible historical Jesus research demands the reduction of potential distortion and falsifying of data. The fact of “objective” data with regard to events in the past (events that really took place) contributes to this demand. For any credible historical work two measures of control are imperative. The first is the witness itself. The witness from the past controls the bias of the historical researcher as long as the researcher treats the data according to the critical agreed standards and rules for historiography. The second equally important measure of control is other historians in the scholarly community. Their input restricts the subjective arbitrariness of the researcher by means of the *communis opinio* regarding the data. This, of course, implies that the community of historians will not keep privileged information to themselves. Public scrutiny requires that the community of researchers share their results amongst themselves and also inform the larger community. It has the added advantage that colleagues can be completely honest about their presuppositions and biases, and also about the results that need to be shared in the wider community.

The critical agreed standards and rules for historiography should at least include the following:

- Clarity concerning the sources utilised.
- Clearly defined methods of dealing with sources in order to distill information.
- Clarity concerning the process to be followed in order to (re)construct the information in a realistic, plausible and meaningful way.

5. THE TASK OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

It soon becomes apparent that it is one thing to utilise sources in trying to establish anything plausible concerning the words and deeds of a historical person. It is quite another to write the history of that person. It needs to be emphasized that the discipline of historical research belongs within the realm of the humanities. The art of imaginative creati-

ivity is required which, of course, does not mean that the historian can deal with data arbitrarily according to the whims of his or her own fantasy. Data of people and events of the past is never available in a verifiable form. This also holds true for the historical Jesus. The available witness about him is, at best, fragmentary. It consists of a few reported words and deeds, some prominent events, as well as solitary anecdotes and memories of deeds that he typically performed. This is also true for other important figures of the past. Nevertheless, there is still a viable possibility of writing a "history" of these persons that is meaningful and useful.

The task of the historian is not only to find the appropriate data, but also to create a synthesis that would construe a credible profile of the historical figure. In order to perform this imaginative creative act, the historian is required, according to Patterson (1998: 273-274) to utilise and integrate three sources of information:

- The context of textual witnesses of early Christian and non-Christian sources should be thoroughly investigated. These textual witnesses present us with a large body of information.
- The textual witnesses should be evaluated within the cultural context of the ancient agrarian world in which Jesus lived and had an impact. This area combines two of Crossan's (1991:xviii-xxix) three levels of investigation, namely the anthropological and historical dimensions. Given what we know of Jesus' cultural context and social status the task of the historian is to paint an imaginative picture of how a person such as Jesus would have experienced his environment.
- The historian should attempt to understand something of the view Jesus had of life, the world and God. This is the least tangible dimension of the historian's work and can only be inferred from the previous two steps.

Jesus is seen in various different ways, but one does find common denominators, for instance that he was regarded as a teacher, a visionary and a prophet (see Borg 1994: 28-36). He was remembered because of the impact he had on people. If we are to understand anything concerning Jesus, it clearly becomes indispensable to develop a sensitivity for the message he conveyed. This requires a degree of reflection in which the insights

and imagination of the historian are a prerequisite. This aspect of the historian's work is not accessible to someone who deals primarily with history as an objective reality. It inevitably leads to discomfort. The meaning of Jesus as historical figure, can, however, not be fully appreciated if this dimension of historical work is not taken seriously.

The challenge, therefore, is to integrate all three these sources of information. For this task of synthesis no clear objective starting point is possible. The historian will have the responsibility to choose a point of departure that can be substantiated within the framework of his or her understanding of the whole. Hard and fast rules for integrating these disparate snippets of information do not exist. It again requires the creativity of the historian which can be accounted for by reasonable inferential arguments. This process is not always fully grasped even if it seems to be indispensable to the task of the historian. Collingwood (in Bultmann 1958:133-134) describes it in the following way: "Das Object der historischen Erkenntnis ist ... nicht ein bloßes Object, das heißt nicht etwas, was außerhalb des Geistes steht der es erkennt; es ist viel mehr eine Aktivität des Denkens" Collingwood (1946:240-242) also called this: "... the historian's use of *a priori* imagination."

How others would evaluate the historian's work will largely depend on how convincingly the whole picture is presented. It again emphasises how important it is that the task of the historian is done within the circle of a *collegium* of peers. It serves as a control for the process of identifying, collecting, understanding and interpreting historical data.

6. CAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY BE HISTORICAL?

The Christian faith is grounded in the life of a historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. Crossan (1994:200) gave an apt and short description: "... (1) An act of faith (2) in the historical Jesus (3) as the manifestation of God." It can also be formulated in a different way: Christian faith is trust in God whom we got to know in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. This faith, rooted in a real person, a historical figure, gives expression to the primary incarnational aspect of Christian faith. We are confronted with the nucleus of Christology. God is known in the midst of the human experience of this person. It thus gives rise to a second incarnational aspect of faith, through which the significance of Christian faith for

people of our times can better be understood. Christian faith arose from a human existence (that of Jesus) and this implies that it came from the experience of a human life which has the potential to connect with our own understanding of human existence. In this understanding God is never far removed from us, but is as close as life itself.

The difficult aspect of this incarnational faith and the discomfort that some have in accepting it unconditionally, is that the human experience of life is always subjective. One never meets another human being as an object. People never present themselves as objectively or essentially knowable to others. We only know them through the experience of one subject in interaction with another willing and thinking subject whose essential depths can only partially be known. If this holds true in the case of contemporary people who can be observed, then it is even more so in the case of people from a distant past. We can only know them by creatively constructing a personality on the grounds of our knowledge of what they had said and done. We can only know Jesus of Nazareth in this subjective way. Historical research is, therefore, not impossible but to fulfil this task implies that we have to accept the (inter)-subjectivity of human existence and this will always form part and parcel of our historical investigation. The critical question in reaction to this is: can theology be grounded in such a subjective enterprise?

7. A THEOLOGICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

To those committed to the idea of faith grounded in some "objective truth" concerning life, the world and even God, the indicated subjective dimension of historical work would seem rather dubious and certainly not appropriate as the foundation for theology. People inclined to this way of thinking search for a definite, clear "objective" point of departure that could never depend on the willing subject of the theologian/historian. For some the canon constitutes such an "objective" starting point. In fundamentalist theology the first article of faith would be the inerrancy and infallibility of the canonical text. In this way the canonical text as available "object" becomes deified. To put this another way: the divine is objectified.

This strategy to turn away from history towards the text of the Bible is not restricted to fundamentalist movements. It was the subjectivity and uncertainty of historical work that brought Martin Kähler to his basic objection against what he termed "the

so-called historical Jesus” of the nineteenth century liberal theology. In his quest for the historical biblical Christ, Kähler (1964:57) attempted to eliminate all contamination by human constructs of Christ and his work. The preference of the generations after Kähler was for the so-called “pure” biblical text over against the subjective work of the historian (see Johnson 1996, 1998). Biblical and kerygmatic theology became the dominant paradigms for theology and historical Jesus research fell into disrepute. In truth, it is not possible to take the Bible as an untarnished, “objective” point of departure. The Bible is not free from “human obstruction”. We know far too much about the Bible – the writers and their circumstances, the reconstruction of the text by means of textual criticism, the development of the canon and different editions of the Bible – to maintain the assumption that we are dealing with a book completely free of human contamination. The danger of the inspiration theory – which served as the fundamentalists’ grounds for accepting the infallibility of the Bible – is that the work done by humans becomes so interwoven with the will of God that it could amount to nothing less than idolatry if one should cling to the assumption that the Bible presents us with an untarnished, godly point of departure.

Indeed, every attempt to find an “objective” point of departure for theology can result in idolatry. It aspires to objectify God as a “thing” that can be controlled and manipulated for one’s own purposes. The respect and reverence one feels for those ancient texts and the pious views one holds on these manuscripts can be mistaken for faith itself. When *faith in God* is replaced by *faith in the canon* the true nature of faith is drastically and fatally impaired. If one follows this route, a relationship of trust in the living God distorts itself into trust in an object, namely the Bible. This temptation should be resisted. The Bible never becomes God. God never becomes an object at our disposal.

If historical theology is undertaken with the aim of finding an objective point of departure it also runs the risk of degenerating into idolatry despite the critical nature of the methods employed in this process. In the same way the quest for the historical Jesus could draw us into the comfort zone of dealing with God as though God were an object. The approach of the “New Historicism” indicated that history and historiography can never claim such an objective point of departure. History is about one subject dealing with the heritage of other experiencing, witnessing subjects.

The claim of the Christian faith that we encounter God in the life of a real human being leaves us with no choice but to denounce the notion that we can know God in any objective way. Incarnational faith means that we simply have to accept the restraints that go hand in hand with human subjectivity. To have faith in God in this way will always retain the character of *trust* in contrast to an *object* that we own, control and can manipulate according to our preconceived ideological (theological) views. Faith is about a relationship. This relationship implies an unbreakable bond between historicity and theology.

8. THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Concerning the quest for the historical Jesus it thus becomes clear that one cannot eliminate the historical component. The view should not be maintained that historical questions could be irrelevant for theology. This would especially be valid when one has accepted that historical questions can be answered from the viewpoint of New Historicism and in a postmodernistic paradigm. The alternative for those who will not concede that historicity and theology go hand in hand can only be a one-sided concern for the so-called self-awareness of Jesus. We can, therefore, understand why Bultmann on the one hand came to the conclusion that the Christ *kata sarka* is irrelevant for theology. On the other hand it becomes equally clear why disciples of Bultmann felt compelled to establish a degree of continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ. This also represents my view. The beginning of Christology (theology) lies before the Easter events and cannot be restricted to the post-Easter kerugma as Bultmann did.

It is commonplace to say that the New Testament is the product of faith witness. Pronouncements concerning Jesus (in the New Testament and for that matter in the whole corpus of early Christian literature) were made only after the writer of a specific document had already entered into a relationship with Jesus. The people who proclaimed Jesus as the content of their message gave expression to their relationship with him. This relationship can be indicated by the concept "faith". In expressing this relationship with Jesus interpretation took place implicitly or explicitly. This brought me to the conclusion that all pronouncements of faith bear witness to a search for the historical Jesus. The image of the historical Jesus that surfaces in this way can never be a mere historical con-

struct even though it may have had the intention to present us with a picture of the historical Jesus. The combination of “faith” and “history” clearly presented no problem for the earliest Christians. They obviously had no notion of historical questions in the positivistic sense of the word. Faith and history stood in a dialectical relationship to each other. The beginnings of Christology are therefore to be sought in the sources that we study. These sources bear witness to the relationship between Jesus and the writers of Christian documents. Christology should therefore not be a matter of *either ... or – either* the kerygmatic Christ *or* the historical Jesus. Historical elements do not exist prior to kerygmatic pronouncements. We cannot attain the historical Jesus by moving *around* the christologically coloured New Testament. We can only reach that goal by moving *through* the presentation of the kerygmatic Christ in the New Testament. We are confronted with *both ... and* of the dialectical relationship between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ.

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