

**THE PARADOX OF BULTMANN'S HISTORICAL JESUS
FOR FAITH: A QUESTION OF HISTORY**

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Abstract

Rudolf Bultmann created an individualist theology of existentialism to replace the ethical-moral theology of the liberal tradition. The impact of Bultmann's theology, which privileged post-Easter church kerygma over the historical Jesus, is the core of the problem and is situated in Bultmann's existentialist view of history, derived from Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*. His theology derived additional, important support from the findings of Hans Jonas' dissertation on Gnosticism. Bultmann divided history into two components, positivist history (*Historie*), and individualised history (*Geschichte*). The study examines strengths and weaknesses in Bultmann's historical epistemology, with respect to conflict between the historical Jesus and the post-Easter kerygmatic faith of the disciples, the social and cultural spin-offs of alienation and anti-Judaism, and the resulting conflict with former students and foreign scholars. The conclusion is that Bultmann was so opposed to liberal historiography that he was willing to construct a theology of individual existence, devoid of social responsibility to the world at large, and replete with inconsistency regarding continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygma. Nevertheless, Bultmann is credited with awakening the need to examine the authenticity of the gospels and New Testament message in a new light.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

Rudolf Bultmann was born in Wiefelstede, northern Germany, on 30 July, 1884. The German countryside would be in the full bloom of mid-summer and this might explain the tremendous affection which he felt for the German countryside and its farming people and his preference for the cloistered campus of Marburg, where he lectured until his retirement in about 1950. He had his feet firmly planted in theological soil, since his father was a Lutheran minister, while he himself was an admirer of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).

Schleiermacher's hermeneutics are important for understanding why Bultmann broke away from the liberal tradition because he was the first theologian to argue that the basis of theology lay not in philosophy, but rather within the sensory experience of the individual's belief system and Bultmann's existentialist theology echoes the sensory-experiential hermeneutics of Schleiermacher. It took Bultmann from around 1904 until the 1920s to crystallise his ideas about the nature of the divine, and the role that the christological Jesus played in the encounter with the divine. But it was form critical research which convinced him that the liberal search for an authentic Jesus based on the gospels would not yield the objective historical results desired. Consequently, he broke with the liberal historical tradition and embarked on a mission to develop a theology while devoid of dogma and orthodoxy it would be relevant to the German believer.¹ The

¹ See references to letters from Bultmann to his friend Fischer in which he expresses his views that the church needs to become more modern in "Bultmann's Papers: Antje Bultmann Lemke," in *Bultmann: Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. Edward C. Hobbs; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 3-12. See also William D.

results of form criticism established Bultmann as a leader in German theology. It raised important, new questions for the historical interpretation of the gospels and the role of faith, and ultimately, the role of history as an epistemological means of establishing whether the historical Jesus had a significant place in the kerygmatic faith of the post-Easter followers of Jesus.

Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) and Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) are located on opposite poles of the theological spectrum. Yet, in several respects, they are similar. Harnack is an important influence on Bultmann because he was at the pinnacle of his fame in the early 1900s, when Bultmann was a young student. Harnack had published the *History of Dogma* (several volumes) in 1888 and he followed this with *What Is Christianity?*, in 1900. Bultmann followed Harnack in the 1920s with *History of the Synoptic Tradition* and *Jesus and the Word*.² Both were reformers. The *History of Dogma* threatened church authority to the extent that Harnack was punished by the evangelical church leaders who tried, but failed, to deny him a university appointment.

Dennison, *The Young Bultmann: Context for His Understanding of God, 1884-1925* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 48-62. Dennison explains the theological contribution of Schleiermacher to Bultmann's thinking and provides a stepping stone to understanding how Bultmann made the transition from his love of the German countryside to a position whereby he recognised that it was a culturally constructed artefact, which must be made to take second place to his search for a theology, which placed God uppermost and beyond cultural meanings. Dennison explains the neo-Kantian foundation of Bultmann's evolution and shows how it can be traced to Hegel and Schleiermacher.

² Harnack and Bultmann shared the distinction of leading the theological field in a controversial way. Both fought against church orthodoxy, but that is where the similarity ends because Bultmann's two books decried the uses of history for understanding the gospels, whereas Harnack promoted the idea that history was essential for faith in the gospels. Harnack supported research into the historical Jesus, whereas Bultmann, after 1925, when he had begun to formulate his existential theology, rejected cultural history as positivist, cultural, objective and even sinful, if it was used to treat the divine as a phenomenon.

Harnack's liberal thinking shone in his argument that the gospel needed to be freed from dogmatic ecclesiasticism where it had become embodied in the cultic practices of the church. He argued that the Reformation begun by Martin Luther must continue in its work to free the gospels from dogma, and he protested that the Reformation had not gone far enough in this respect, since many catholic remnants were still evident in the reformed churches of Calvinism, Anglicanism, and Lutheranism, which reflected an intellectual servitude, incompatible with the message of Jesus in the gospels. The core of Harnack's argument is that the dogmatic method must be replaced by the historical method. The historical method incorporates change, he argued. Christianity is not to be viewed as a permanent, unchanging, phenomenon because early Christianity changed as it progressed, and for this reason, we need to be aware of how cultural components have changed the interpretation of the gospels. The gospels need to be studied from the way they were interpreted throughout history, but Bultmann did not agree. One of his criticisms of the historical method was that it was too subjective and subject to change, while Harnack argued the opposite, citing change as central to understanding theology, and thereby defending the use of history for the opposite reason to Bultmann. Harnack supported the traditional liberal view of history in its acceptance of change, while Bultmann was looking for a permanent view of theology. His goal would direct him to an abstract Hegelian theology without outside cultural influences where Bultmann would be well and truly outside the liberal fold.

Unlike Bultmann, Harnack sees the earthly Jesus as central to an understanding of the gospel message. He argued that Christianity must be defined alongside the teaching of Jesus. The New Testament, to use his words, "cannot be absolutised as eternally valid."

Harnack, like Bultmann, argued against the metaphysical interpretation of the church, but unlike Bultmann, he centralised the importance of Jesus for the liberal tradition by emphasising three elements of Jesus' teaching: the kingdom is coming, God is Father to the Son, and the command is to love. He saw in liberal tradition, a gospel addressed to man's conscience, which required an inner decision for or against the message of the gospel, and Jesus was instrumental in the transmission of God's message. In *What Is Christianity?* Harnack emphasised that Jesus did not act by himself: it was not the son acting alone. He made a significant contribution by arguing that only historical research into the conditions surrounding and governing Christianity could maintain freedom from the dogmatic authority of the church.³

Where Harnack centralised the importance of Jesus in the gospel message, and linked Jesus with changing social and cultural conditions needing constant reinterpretation, Bultmann took a different approach. He argued that because of the fact that social conditions changed, it was impossible to get an authentic interpretation of the gospels. Harnack and Bultmann agreed therefore, that cultural factors were at work in shaping the interpretation of Christianity, but they differed over how to deal with the problem of change, and over what constituted authentic interpretation. Where Harnack made a plea for an on-going examination of historical change in Christianity, Bultmann retreated to an existential framework. He labelled cultural objectivity inappropriate for

³ See Gregory W. Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Quest: Landmarks in the Search for the Jesus of History* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2001), 245. Dawes is citing Harnack writing to Barth, to argue that historical analysis is the only way to forestall the substitution of a mythical Christ for the real Christ. The implication that I have drawn from Harnack's letter is that historical analysis will safeguard the church from dogmatic imposition.

faith. Under Bultmann, Jesus became a casualty of cultural history, removed from the scrutiny of historical research. Yet, while both Harnack and Bultmann had similar goals, namely, to free the believer from dogmatic control by a demanding metaphysical faith, Bultmann retreated to the Pauline epistles and the Gospel of John to find support for his existential theology.

Bultmann argues that Paul's thinking was influenced by the historical Jesus through the primitive Christian community. Jesus' teaching, according to Bultmann in 1929, becomes irrelevant because the church became Hellenised.⁴ Looking for evidence of the influence of Jesus' teaching on Paul, according to Bultmann, would not be productive because Paul was influenced by the needs of the primitive church, which was not concerned with the work of Jesus. What was of central importance to Paul was the coming of a new age in Christ: therefore, the proclaimed Christ became central. Bultmann argued that Paul's theology was not dependent on Jesus' message, although Jesus and Paul probably agreed on the same interpretation of Jewish law. Bultmann had been subjected to the influence of the History of Religions School which was evident in his searching for plural origins of Christianity. Several of Bultmann's teachers had promoted the idea that Christianity was a syncretist religion and its origins must be sought in other cultures.⁵ His search for theological permanence and a counter rejection

⁴ See Rudolf Bultmann, "The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul" (1929), in *Faith and Understanding* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 220-246, 221.

⁵ Johannes Weiss (1863-1914) and Wilhelm Bousset (1865-1920) are two formidable names with responsibility for Bultmann's education. Weiss and Bousset, although belonging to the History of Religions School, interpreted Christian origins differently: Weiss introduced the notion that Jesus' Jewish heritage must be kept in mind in order to understand his teaching about the kingdom of God and Jewish eschatology. Bousset emphasised the Hellenistic aspects of primitive religion. So Bultmann had some

of cultural phenomena in locating the divine presence may owe its origin, ironically, to the influence of the History of Religions School.

The evidence of continuity from Jesus to Paul was critical for Harnack and the liberal school. But for Bultmann, it was not an issue. How Paul derived his belief system about Jesus spawned a literature of its own, which fitted nicely with the timing of the work of Bousset, one of Bultmann's teachers, who promoted a hegemony emphasising the greater importance of Hellenism over Palestinian influences in the formation of early Christianity. William Morgan argued in support of the History of Religions School that Paul was influenced by the mystery religions in Antioch, Damascus, and Tarsus, and that the cosmic Christ idea of Paul could be traced to Hellenistic sources, which may account for Paul's conversion and his ultimate projection of a Jesus Christology.⁶ One idea, that attained the status of common sense, held that Paul had failed in his missionary work in Athens, but since Jews in the Diaspora were adapting to the Gentiles, Paul decided to Hellenise the gospel.

On the contrary, J. A. T. Robinson argued from 2 Cor. 5:1-10⁷ that Paul was more interested in forming a church than he was in preparing a theology for individual

decisions to make about his theological direction: would he follow Weiss, and look for Jewish origins in Jesus' teaching, or would he veer towards the syncretist-Hellenist direction of Bousset. He chose the latter.

⁶ William Morgan, *The Religion and Theology of Paul: The Kerr Lectures, Delivered in the United Free Church College, Glasgow, During Session 1914-15* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark), 47.

⁷ "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling – if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked for while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at

consumption, thereby refuting Bultmann's individualistic centred theology in Paul.⁸ Both H. A. Kennedy and W. D. Davies argued in opposition to Bultmann that Paul was not controlled by Hellenistic thought and practice to the extent that he ignored Jesus' words or terms from the Hebrew Bible. Davies assumed that Paul does not separate the Jesus of history from the exalted Christ, and uses as evidence the fact that Paul draws from first century Judaism: Jesus' teaching is the new Torah. That is not to say that when Paul makes references to sacrifice that he is extolling its virtue, but it does show his familiarity with Judaic practices and his willingness to extend the link to Hellenism. Davies is arguing that 2 Cor 5:1-10 is not a Hellenisation of the doctrine of the resurrection by Paul. Rather it is the reverse where Hellenistic conceptions of immortality were clothed with Judaic tradition. Consequently, any attempt to make Paul hostile to the earthly Jesus and his Palestinian context appears questionable.⁹ The issue of Paul's connection with Jesus is important and it was raised during Bultmann's tenure.

home in the body we are away from the Lord – for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. for all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil” (NRSV).

⁸ John Arthur Thomas Robinson, the controversial Bishop of Woolwich in England, later supported Bultmann's theology in *Honest to God*. But see idem, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: SCM, 1952), 78, for a position more supportive of a Judaic interpretation by Paul, in opposition to Bultmann's existentialism.

⁹ W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1955), 89, argued that Schweitzer interpreted Judaism too narrowly by giving recognition only to the eschatology component thereby depriving Judaism of its full richness. For a fuller treatment of Davies' argument that, unlike Bultmann's position on Judaism, it is far richer and diverse than either Bultmann or Schweitzer acknowledge, see Davies' "Introduction," xiv. Davies concluded that, while Bultmann emphasised Paul's affinities with the Hellenistic world to the detriment of Paul's important connection to

Research Focus

Bultmann veered strongly to the view that primitive Hellenistic Christianity was the determining factor in deciding that neither Judaism nor the historical Jesus was of any consequence for Christianity. Bultmann's existential philosophy, derived from Heidegger and symbolic of Kant in its abstractness, limited an encounter with the divine to an anthropomorphic experience. There are echoes of Hegel, Kant, and Schleiermacher in Bultmann's existentialism. Despite his assertion that the Jewish Jesus is not relevant, and that he represents objectified cultural Jewish history, Bultmann was enthusiastic about finding support for his existentialist kerygmatic philosophy in the letters of Paul and the gospel of John: he cannot eliminate the historical Jesus entirely because both Paul and John are concerned with him even in a transformative manner.

Bultmann was inconsistent in his treatment of Paul, even to the point of misinterpreting Paul's messages to his advantage while he searches in John for evidence to support the History of Religions School's syncretist theories. But his findings are socio-cultural in nature and support the notion that John is used for anti-Judaism rhetoric. Evidence is gathered from pre-1950 sources to argue that Bultmann has constructed a mythical Jesus, based on his reading of Paul and John, to reject the need for any serious

Judaism, he has tried to show that the Paul of the Epistles was far more complicated and diverse than could be explained in the manner of either Bultmann or Schweitzer. On page 230, Davies cites W. L. Knox, in support of his argument that dividing Judaism into the categories of Hellenistic and Palestinian is purely conventional, implicitly meaning that they are no longer helpful categories. Writing in the 1950s, thirty years after Bultmann's promotion of his Hellenistic influences on the formation of Christianity to the exclusion of Judaism, Davies reflected the generation of British scholars who did not accept Bultmann's de-emphasising of the Jewish Jesus.

historical evaluation of the earthly Jesus.¹⁰ But why should Paul, a mere man, be chosen by Bultmann, over another man, Jesus? The method of how Bultmann defines divinity is at stake. The debate both inside and outside Germany extends the criteria for historical validity and questions his existentialist theology. Questions are raised over whether Bultmann has tried too hard to fit his theology to meet political goals since he was exposed to the ideas of Weiss and Bousset, but he chose the anti-Judaism focus of Bousset over the pro-Palestinian view of Weiss. It is important to examine why.

The final part assesses the utility of existentialism with respect to the Jewish Jesus under National Socialism. Many of Bultmann's anti-Judaism motifs are drawn from John and are used to justify his Christologised, existentialist view of eschatology. Eschatology is a Jewish construct about the intervention of God in human affairs, which Bultmann has individualised. The individual believer experiences his/her own eschatology in the process of resolving internal dilemmas. Bultmann harmonised individual eschatology within his theology by de-Judaising it. The debate over the relative Jewishness of Jesus was a dilemma for Bultmann. But his theology permitted him to reject the Jewish Jesus while straddling the line of anti-Judaism.

Bultmann began to achieve theological prominence in 1920 with the publication of historical gospel research using a form critical method. He followed with a small book entitled *Jesus*, about five years later.¹¹ In his form critical research, he questioned the

¹⁰ Sources used from the post-1950 era in Germany portray the dissent from his former students to his interpretation of the uses of history.

¹¹ See Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. Paul Blackwell; New York: Harper & Row, 1976); idem, *Jesus and the Word* (trans. Louise Pettibone Smith; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934).

historical authenticity of the gospels. This was not a completely new phenomena since there was a scholarly post-Enlightenment history of biblical scepticism beginning with David Friedrich Strauss in 1835 and culminating with a chorus of dissent at the turn of the nineteenth century.¹² *Jesus* described Bultmann's view that the Jesus of the flesh was less important than the post-Easter Jesus. A German challenge to Bultmann's interpretation of the historical Jesus had to wait until his students had matured and achieved theological prominence. But debate had been stimulated in the United Kingdom by Bultmann's form criticism, and it is a matter of speculation on the degree to which English scholarship influenced later anti-Bultmann dissent in Germany. In any case, minutes of the 1927 England Canterbury Conference list the presence of German New Testament scholars.

Rudolf Bultmann lists in his biography, his most influential teachers as Karl Müller (1852-1940), a church historian, in Tübingen, Herrmann Gunkel (1862-1932) and Adolf von Harnack in Berlin, Adolf Jülicher (1857-1938), Johannes Weiss (1863-1914),

¹² See David Friedrich Strauss (1835), *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (Philadelphia: Fortress 1972); Martin Kähler (1896), *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964); William Wrede (1901), *The Messianic Secret in the Gospels* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1971); Johannes Weiss (1892), *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); Albert Schweitzer (1901), *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (London: A. & C. Black, 1925); idem (1906), *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (New York: Macmillan, 1954). The significance of level of scepticism in this scholarship lies in the conviction that liberal scholarship had exploited the historical method to describe an ethical Jesus to synchronise with an idealised German society. Ernst Renan incurred Schweitzer's contempt for his *Life of Jesus* (1863), which Schweitzer claimed was more poetry than historical fact. This work gives some idea of the theological climate that permeated Bultmann's development since he was over twenty years of age, when Schweitzer wrote his *Quest*, which was a scathing account of nineteenth century liberal literature. Bultmann's letters between 1905 and 1912 illustrate his concern for a new theology to replace the liberal historical tradition. See *Bultmann: Retrospect and Prospect*, 3-12.

and Wilhelm Herrmann (1846-1922) in Marburg. He wrote his dissertation entitled, *Der Stil der paulinischen Predigt und die kynisch-stoische Diatribe*, under the guidance of Johannes Weiss. Loosely translated it means “An examination of the style of the Pauline Sermon: the Cynic-Stoic diatribe” and illustrates Bultmann’s interest in combining history with dogmatics. Weiss left Marburg for Heidelberg before Bultmann had finished his dissertation and was replaced by Wilhelm Heitmüller (1869-1926).¹³ Helmut Koester illustrates how the young Bultmann, as a student in the first decade of the twentieth century, was being exposed to new insights from the History of Religions School. The work of the History of Religions School is important for assessing how Bultmann formed his theology because it held that there were several influences involved in the formation of Christianity. This led Bultmann to search for evidence of cultural influences in Christianity beyond the historical Jesus, and he considered that he had found it in the Fourth Gospel and in the writings of Paul. He also considered Paul extremely important for the formation of his Christology.

Judaism ought to have sparked his research interests. Yet, Bultmann considered Judaism a dead religion, and drew on Paul and John to argue that it had nothing important to say to Christianity. The corollary for the historical Jesus is that since he was Jewish, he could be expected to play only a minor role, which led Bultmann into a cul de sac. How he dealt with the dilemma is important because it highlights not only how he argues his hermeneutical case, but why he chose to do so. Why was he so motivated? Dennison and Hobbs show his concern to eliminate liberal tendencies in the church and to give the

¹³ See Helmut Koester, “Early Christianity from the Perspective of the History of Religions: Rudolf Bultmann’s Contribution,” in *Bultmann: Retrospect and Prospect*, 59-74.

German people a theology which spoke to their reality. His letters show that he was concerned for the welfare of the church because the effects of war and the rule of National Socialism had created a national despondency with the result that the church was not seen as having truthful answers: the liberals promised an ethical Jesus, but their research tools were found to be lacking. Bultmann felt driven to look for a new framework for his theology and he found it in the existentialist, individualist philosophy of Martin Heidegger.¹⁴

The study describes the influences which shaped Bultmann's theology and its abstract, existential direction. Adolf von Harnack was singled out by Bultmann as a major influence upon his thinking. Harnack, while at the University of Berlin, has been described as the high point of liberal thinking in the tradition of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889). Harnack and Bultmann appeared to be in opposite camps, yet Bultmann wrote a foreword to a new edition of *What Is Christianity?*, published after Harnack's death in 1950.¹⁵ Harnack de-emphasised the importance of doctrine and claimed that the message of Christianity was about constant renewal using the person of Jesus as a model. Bultmann sees vagueness in Harnack's unwillingness to be specific about what he

¹⁴ See Dennison, *The Young Bultman*, 28-30, 63. Note the references to Bultmann's friend Fischer, to whom he pours out his heart. Note also the organizations he joins and the journal *Die Christliche Welt*, a liberal paper published by Martin Rade (1857-1940). There is evidence that Bultmann was liberally inclined and this may help to explain his paradoxical statements regarding the relationship between the historical Jesus and the Kerygma.

¹⁵ Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

believed about dogma: he was particularly vague in his treatment of miracles, but he believed in the historical value of the Synoptic Gospels.¹⁶

It is understandable that the young Bultmann would find Harnack's vagueness on specific dogmatic components in the gospels to be frustrating. Nevertheless, Harnack was educated in the Ritschlian mould, which taught that Christianity must be related to culture. Harnack believed that this could only be done through the use of the scientific historical method, where the essence of Christianity was separated from dogma. By the use of source study, linked to the study of cultural factors which shaped historical events, metaphysical speculation could be avoided. *What Is Christianity?* made a sensational impact when it was first published in 1901, but it was *History of Dogma* which ran to seven volumes, that was recognised as his most brilliant piece of work. The important inference to be drawn here is that, while they both shared a distrust of dogma, Harnack was prepared to use research into cultural foundations to support faith, while Bultmann was not. Harnack and Bultmann shared a great deal in common: both despised dogmatic control by the church, both recognised the humanity of Jesus, and both accepted the need for individual decision making. Where they differed was over the importance of history and culture for faith and the role of the individual in communication with the divine. Where Harnack saw Jesus as central to individual decision making in a liberal sense, Bultmann saw the individual as central to communication with the divine without the necessity of intervention by a historical Jesus.

¹⁶ See Rudolf Bultmann, "Liberal Theology and the Latest Theological Movement" (1924), reprinted in *The Historical Jesus Quest* (ed. Gregory W. Dawes; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001), 242-270. Bultmann criticises Harnack for his "stumbling block" in not recognising the true relationship between God and the world (257).

Discussion

Around 1925, the identification of the Jesus of history with the Christ of faith had been established, and in particular, it had become the hermeneutics of the proponents of dialectical theology, which included Rudolf Bultmann. Dialectical theology was a reaction against the reduction of the historic Jesus to his ethical teaching. Liberal theology, personified in the teaching of Harnack at the beginning of the twentieth century, held that it was possible to separate the kernel of the basic teaching of Jesus from the outer layers, or husk, which had been culturally imposed upon it. The difference between Harnack and Bultmann was that, while Bultmann had turned away from historical Jesus research, Harnack had not. Harnack was prepared to use the historical method to peel the husk away, while Bultmann agreed with Albert Schweitzer that the historical method was too unreliable and ended up creating false images from the biases of the researcher. So Bultmann, looking for authenticity in permanence, turned to existentialism and dialectical theology.

It is important to realise that after the end of the First World War there was a cultural malaise in Germany and it corresponded with the publication of Karl Barth's very pessimistic commentary on the Epistle to the Romans in 1919. Hence, Bultmann and Barth seemed to be more in tune with the reality of post-war German culture than the optimistic views expressed in *What Is Christianity?* and *The History of Dogma*. Here, the historical method was advocated by Harnack as a means of release from the dogmatic, confining, anti-rational control of the church, while preserving Jesus' timeless message. Bultmann's approach, on the other hand, was to reject the positivist approach of history

in favour of an interpretive, individualist history which would be more suitable in his mind, to the requirements of faith. However, since Bultmann was a product of the History of Religions School, he was trained to interpret the origins of religion broadly, which included the use of eastern mystical conceptual apparatus.

Bultmann's reliance on Paul's mystical Hellenism, at the expense of Palestinian, nationalist eschatology, illustrates his training in the school. Bultmann's primary purpose was to interpret the gospels in an existentialist manner. He argued that the message behind the gospel is really a message about humanity trying to find God by striving to move from an inauthentic to an authentic existence. With his dependence on Heidegger, and given Bultmann's inclination to Hegelian principles, he was leaving himself open to charges of creating a theology of anthropomorphism and subjectivism which excluded an earthly Jesus and created a mythical Jesus in the form of the kerygma, and which depended too much on the existential framework of Heidegger. The language of existentialism polarises states of mind as authentic or inauthentic.¹⁷ It was probable that Bultmann would be drawn into a polarised interpretation of Judaism, by Paul and John, as inauthentic. With his emphasis on anthropomorphic existentialist history, coupled with his rejection of cultural history as important for faith, Bultmann has sided with Hegel over Harnack, and by so doing, has eliminated a historical tradition basic to Christianity.

However, it would be a mistake to proceed on the assumption that Bultmann had not considered various uses of history. Whether he came to the realisation that historical interpretation can be diverse is not totally clear as he dealt with this issue late in his

¹⁷ See especially Shawn Kelley, *Racialising Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* (London: Routledge, 2002), 145-146.

career. He gives credit to R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (1946) in his 1955 Edinburgh Gifford Lectures.¹⁸ However, it is Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) who seems to have influenced Bultmann the most. Dilthey propounds the view that the goal of history is to create a meaningful understanding of a unique individual rather than follow a set of interpretive laws. It means trying to re-live the experiences of the individual. It is interesting that Dilthey should write this and be rewarded by Bultmann's making this view his own. In the *Idea of History*, Collingwood looks at what kind of knowledge should be sought, and concludes that the object is a thinking process, involving a re-enactment that is recognised by the mind.¹⁹ If he had added, "authentic," he would have cohered closely with statements made by Bultmann on the topic of individual encounter with the divine.

There are inevitably, paradoxes, conflicts, and contrived motifs in Bultmann's thought, which an analysis of the debate brings out. But the focus of the research is to assess whether Bultmann could harmonise paradoxical notions about the historical Jesus. Jesus is Jewish, but Judaism is irrelevant for Christianity in Bultmann's mind. Yet he supports the Christology of the post-Easter kerygma. In Nazi Germany, Jesus' Jewishness was an important issue and many prominent personnel in the German Christian church wanted to expunge his Jewishness. How did Bultmann react? Is Jesus an important theological issue or not? The debate, therefore, revolved around two poles: the value of the kingdom teachings of Jesus carried on largely outside of Germany before Bultmann's retirement, and the debate over Bultmann's use of Heideggerian language to assess Jesus'

¹⁸ See Rudolf Bultmann, *History and Eschatology: The Gifford Lectures* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1955), 130.

¹⁹ Ibid.

place in Christianity. Bultmann continued to promote his existentialist message until his death, less than a decade before the publication of Ed Parish Sanders' *Jesus in Judaism* that marked the beginning of the Third Quest, which emphasised the importance of the Palestinian context of Jesus' ministry.²⁰ It can only be concluded that Bultmann's theology did not withstand scrutiny beyond 1960, and that it was widened to include the importance of the historical Jesus. Nevertheless, it must be conceded that this progress would not have been made without Bultmann's dedicated scholarship.

Bultmann's determination to create a theology which superseded cultural determinants is obvious in his willingness to label his romantic view of the German countryside a cultural artefact which must not be allowed to intervene between the believer and his/her search for communication with the divine. When we appreciate this viewpoint of Bultmann, we can understand how he is able to designate cultural history as cultural production which stands in the way of communication with the divine and which ought to be labelled sinful. Bultmann was searching for a theology of permanence and he believed that he had found it in the Hegelian construction of the self. It is only a step to tie Heidegger's existentialist philosophy within a Hegelian constructed self. By creating a theology where the individual locates the divine within the self without any connection to socially constructed phenomena Bultmann can claim that he has achieved permanence. This theology allowed Bultmann to reject positivist implications for social action since he had created an anthropomorphic theology. He had not renounced history. He had created an anthropomorphic history which is dependent on the ability of the individual believer to

²⁰ E. P. Sanders' *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). See also, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1977), by the same author, as well as Ernst Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1964), cited in Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question*, 276-279.

resolve his/her internal dilemmas. Bultmann created a theology which achieved permanence in Hegelian abstraction. In Bultmann's view, the historical Jesus had become an aberration and his kingdom theologically irrelevant.

Sources

Sources fall into two categories: primary and secondary.²¹ My primary sources are the original work of Rudolf Bultmann, selected writings of Bultmann's former students in Germany, and the original writings of selected Anglo-American scholars, who were concerned about the reduced theological status of the historical Jesus by Bultmann. The German sources chosen have all been translated into the English language, usually by Oxford scholars.

²¹ Among the latter, I found especially useful R. A. Johnson's *The Origins of Demythologising* (Leiden: Brill, 1954); G. Miegge, *Gospel and Myth in the Thought of Rudolf Bultmann* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1960); S. Ogden, *Christ Without Myth: A Study based on the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (London: Collins, 1962); C. H. Thompson, *Theology of the Kerygma: A Study in Preaching* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1962); O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963); H. Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville, eds., *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964); V. A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer: The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief* (New York: Macmillan, 1966); P. Althaus, *Fact and Faith in the Kerygma* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978); A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980); J. Painter, *Theology as Hermeneutics: Rudolf Bultmann's Interpretation of the History of Jesus* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982); James M. Robinson, *A Quest of the Historical Jesus and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Hobbs (ed.), *Bultmann: Retrospect and Prospect*; David Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann* (London: Continuum, 2000).

Bultmann published the following books which attained prominence mainly in Germany, on account of their break from traditional church orthodoxy. The significance of this first book, entitled *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921), is that it argued from form critical research results that the gospels ought not to be taken literally, and thus supported earlier work by Strauss and Kähler. Bultmann sub-divided the gospels into a number of forms (apophthegms, exorcisms, miracles, for example) from which he was able to argue that, since the forms reflected particular narrative styles, they provided evidence that the evangelists had been influenced by other forms of narration. From his analysis of gospel forms Bultmann was able to argue convincingly that the evangelists were trying to create Christology at the expense of historical accuracy. This idea regarding what constitutes historical authenticity was to emerge later at a critical juncture for Bultmann. This book attracted a great deal of negative attention in England and established a basis for the debate over the authenticity of Bultmann's claims regarding the historical Jesus.

His second book entitled *Jesus and the Word* (1926) was equally traumatising. Bultmann's interpretation of the teaching of Jesus was at odds with the traditional, nineteenth century, liberal view that Jesus taught a universal moral ethical code which could be deciphered by investigating his innermost thoughts and even his personality. There was a psychological focus to liberal studies of the historical Jesus, which Bultmann, in the mode of Albert Schweitzer, rejected. The American translators of the book admit that Bultmann's work was relatively unknown in the United States when

Jesus and the Word was published in 1934.²² Bultmann had published it in Germany under the title simply as, *Jesus*. It was thought that creating the title of *Jesus and the Word* would do more justice to what Bultmann was trying to say about Jesus to an American audience. However, the same reservation should not be expressed about knowledge of Bultmann's work in England, as this study will show. This book is an important book, coming so soon after Bultmann's first major publication. If the reader keeps Bultmann's existentialist philosophy in mind, while reading *Jesus and the Word*, he/she will see evidence of Bultmann's re-interpretation of Schweitzer's eschatology. The failed eschatology of two thousand years ago is reinterpreted as an individual eschatology more relevant to the modern believer.

Bultmann claimed to have been misinterpreted in his procedures of adapting the past to the present (demythologising). *Jesus and the Word* provides evidence that he was grappling with how to take history and adapt it theologically to a modern era. But the seeds of Bultmann's theological paradox are also evident here.

His following books can be categorised as sequels to his first two books: *Jesus Christ and Mythology* was a small book containing the Shaffer Lectures delivered in 1951 at Yale University Divinity School and the Cole Lectures delivered in the same year at Vanderbilt University.²³ *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting* was published close to the former one in date and covered, among others, two important

²² Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962). See the translators' preface to the new edition, page v.

²³ Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

topics: Jewish Legalism and Hellenistic Judaism.²⁴ Bultmann demonstrates an awareness of Palestinian history and Hellenistic Judaism, but he also shows a positive bias towards Pauline interpretation of Jewish legalism, for which he is severely criticised by E. P. Sanders.²⁵ Placing the content of these two books together illustrates Bultmann's preoccupation with the Pauline hermeneutic that the age of Judaism is over and a new era has opened up with Jesus Christ. A corollary here appears that the Jewish Jesus is also a spent force and the issue is one of faith in a post-Easter Jesus. Finally, *History and Eschatology* (1957) is where Bultmann grapples with the problem of historical interpretation, a theme similar to his Cole and Vanderbilt lectures, where the Pauline hermeneutic was clear. What is interesting is that these publications are examples of Bultmann's answer to the post Bultmannian students' concerns about the relevancy of the historical Jesus to the kerygma.

Rudolf Bultmann wrote a number of essays on the meaning of faith at a time when he was beginning to synthesise his ideas in tune with the existential philosophy of Martin Heidegger. Bultmann and Heidegger had formed a friendship as colleagues at Marburg between 1923 and 1927. It is not surprising, therefore, that Bultmann should dedicate his first volume of collected essays to Martin Heidegger. These are important essays for this study on account of the fact that they portray his shift from liberalism to existentialism and illustrate his developing theology.²⁶ For example, in "Liberal Theology

²⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1956).

²⁵ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 3-4.

²⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, "Liberal Theology and the Latest Theological Movement" (1924), in idem, *Faith and Understanding* (ed. Robert W. Funk; trans. Louise Pettibone Smith; New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 28-

and the Latest Theological Movement,” Bultmann states: “the subject of theology is God, and the chief charge to be brought against liberal theology is that it has dealt not with God but with man.”²⁷ Bultmann was defining the boundaries of his theology. In the same article, Bultmann discusses a question put by von Harnack to Barth about the merits of historico-critical research being essential for establishing that the real Christ is not substituted for an imagined Christ. Bultmann’s answer is to the effect that “we cannot any longer know Christ after the flesh,” and therefore we must discard historico-critical research since it cannot perform faith oriented research.²⁸

One of Bultmann’s best articles for explaining his need to demythologise is “New Testament and Mythology,” and can be found in *Kerygma and Myth*.²⁹ Other useful articles by Bultmann , include, “Religion and Culture,” “Ethical and Mystical Religion in Primitive Christianity,” “The Question of Dialectic Theology,” which can be located in *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology*.³⁰ There are also numerous letters written by

52; idem, “What Does It Mean to Speak of God?” (1925), *ibid.*, 53-65; idem, “Historical and Supra-Historical Religion” (1926), *ibid.*, 95-115; idem, “The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul” (1929), *ibid.*, 220-246; idem, “The Christology of the New Testament” (unpublished), *ibid.*, 262-285. See also the “Autobiographical Reflections of Rudolf Bultmann,” in *The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (ed. Charles W. Kegley; New York: Harper & Row, 1966), xix-xxv.

²⁷ See Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, 29.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁹ Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate by Rudolf Bultmann, Ernst Lohmeyer, Julius Schniewind, Helmut Thielicke, and Austin Farrer* (ed. Hans Werner Bartsch; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 1-44, 191-211.

³⁰ James M. Robinson, ed., *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1968), 257-276.

Bultmann to his friend Fischer, some of which are maintained in the Antje Bultmann Lemke collection.³¹

Methodology

The problem which links the historical Jesus to Bultmann's kerygmatic Christ is political in nature. Bultmann was driven to find an antidote to liberal theology and he found it in a privileging of an abstract kerygma at the expense of the historical Jesus. The historical Jesus represents worldliness and Judaism, which are remnants of liberalism, and which must be eliminated. Yet, if he obliterates the Jesus of history completely, he will have no Christian substance for belief. Therefore, he faces a political dilemma, and a useful framework for a political study of this nature is the input-output model developed by David Easton.³²

Description of the Model

Visualise three linear rectangles where the theology of Bultmann occupies the centre. The rectangle preceding Bultmann's evolving theology consists of inputs into the second rectangle (Bultmann). Inputs can be of two kinds: support and demand. However, when they mingle in the second rectangle they become subject to a process of aggregation. This means that they compete for dominance. The third rectangle comes into play when the middle rectangle emits outputs into the political system. The process continues as inputs

³¹ See Dennison, *The Young Bultmann*, 21, 28, 34, 37, 39, 43, 62, 87, 169, 171-175, 183-184, 190-191.

³² See David Easton, "The Analysis of Political System," in *Comparative Politics* (eds. Roy Macridis and Bernard Brown; Pacific Grove, Ca.: Brooks/Cole, 1977), 93-106.

compete for dominance to become new inputs into the first rectangle, and so the process continues into the Bultmann rectangle in the form of new demands or supports.

Applying the Model

The model can be viewed as supplying competing information to Bultmann's evolving theology (second rectangle) from the Enlightenment, from liberal theologians, and from liberal sceptics, for example. Some will support Bultmann's extreme scepticism while others will defend the need to retain the historical Jesus. The period of aggregation will highlight the issues facing Bultmann: the war years, the alienation being felt and reflected in the theology of Karl Barth could prove to Bultmann the need for a break with the old theology. These inputs raised questions in Bultmann about what should be maintained and what needed to be changed. The period of aggregation is vital to an understanding of why Heidegger's existentialist philosophy synchronised with Bultmann's state of mind in the early twenties.

The conflict between support and demand inputs is an important means for determining the output into the political system and can be used to explain how Bultmann formulated an existentialist philosophy which took more from the work of Hegel and Strauss and leaned ultimately in the direction of the History of Religions School at the expense of Judaism and the teachings of Weiss. The place of the historical Jesus in the German political system, and Bultmann's own feelings towards Judaism, can be explained, and documentation can be gathered around the notion of conflict between support and demand inputs at various stages to explain his political orientation.

The model is useful for comparing argument in the historical intellectual discourse. Argument in the Anglo-American world was different to Germany. The hegemony of Bultmann was not strong in England, but somewhat stronger in America. Yet some arguments superseded geography: argument about the mission of Jesus and its role in the preaching of the kerygma helped to illustrate how existentialism was devoid of social and political responsibility since it concerned itself only with the faith of the individual and not society.

These arguments become evident when placed in juxtaposition to each other as competing inputs and outputs. Support and demand inputs are mutually hostile to each other and can be described as functional or dysfunctional in the political system of theology. Bultmann was bent on destroying the liberal system which relied on cultural history for its argument. The question of how to define history became critical and led to Bultmann defining history in anthropomorphic terms. The axis point was the historical Jesus who had to be sacrificed for an ideology, the ideology of the preached kerygma. Consequently, Bultmann had too much invested in the idea of the kerygma to be able to return to the historical Jesus, despite fervent pleas to do so. An important part of the political process was to define a history appropriate to faith. The conflict that never disappeared during Bultmann's mandate was over the ministry of Jesus: he was unable to bypass Jesus and his epistemological argument that faith history was anthropological and not societal, was ultimately seen to be lacking.

Social and Cultural Parameters of the Model

The framework of the study is historical and anthropological. Epistemological issues revolve around the question of what constitutes history. Bultmann viewed history differently to the liberals: Harnack and Troeltsch are on different sides of the fence to him with respect to the importance of the Jesus of history for faith. The inputs provide argument around whether Jesus' ministry is important or not for faith. Conflict is evident between a positivist view, which supports the cultural importance of Jesus' ministry, and an anthropomorphic view, which sees Jesus as unimportant in the individual's encounter with the divine. However, competing elements can change one another. The liberal view must be examined for changes of direction: Troeltsch suggests that we may have many Christ ideas in place of the traditional one. New ideas about Jesus' humanity emerge and his role in faith. The end result is a changed theological outlook from both sides.

The anthropological component is evident in the distinction between the Jesus of history and the kerygma. Bultmann defined faith as an individual encounter devoid of social and political responsibility. The fate of the Jews, over which Jesus' ministry would have had something to say, was not at the forefront of his concern. The model guides us as to where to look for Bultmann's argument: Paul and John provide the pathways where Bultmann argues for an abstract Jesus without cultural importance. Nationalism issues, defined alienation, the place of Judaism relative to Christianity, and the implicit place of a Jewish Jesus become dominant demand inputs in Bultmann's evolving existentialism.

The model justifies itself by completing the circle. Demand and support inputs achieve a degree of harmony when the former Schüler unite to challenge the premise that an abstract ideological theology is enough for faith. Meanwhile, in England and America,

positivist cultural appraisal of the historical Jesus had continued unabated. The anthropomorphic demand inputs of Bultmann ultimately had to give way to the positivist demand inputs of a wider audience.

Scope of the Study

There are five stages: post-Enlightenment attitudes, positive and negative, continued to influence Bultmann, through his father and his university teachers, during his formative years, and played an important part in shaping his attitude to liberal scholarship. Bultmann was a child of conflict, tethered between orthodoxy and scepticism. It was inevitable that his exposure to the conflict of ideas would have an impact on his theological formation. How and why he rejected the tenets of liberal historiography and produced his own version of history, in the guise of Heidegger's existentialist philosophy, forms the first two stages of the study.

Context, sociological, political, and psychological, provides a key to understanding decision-making. The First World War and its aftermath provided Bultmann with the stimulus needed to formulate a new theology which would be responsive to the needs of the pew. This is the context for examining the "how's, and the why's" of Bultmann's evolving theology. It is in this theatre that clues are to be found about why Bultmann made such a dramatic switch from orthodoxy to a kerygmatic abstraction more in tune with Hegel than Jesus. It could be argued that Barth and Heidegger just happened to be there at the right time, ready to be appropriated by Bultmann into his theological conundrum. The ideas of Barth and Heidegger were not operating in a vacuum: orthodox, positivist history was still evident in the work of

Troeltsch, Harnack, and Ferdinand Christian Baur, in addition to the work of the History of Religions School. Bultmann maintained his liberal inclinations and this meant that he was susceptible to swings between opposing sets of ideas. The problem that Bultmann faced during this transitional phase of the early to mid-twenties was how to eliminate liberal historical hegemony, which implied a reduction in the importance of the historical Jesus and orthodox beliefs, without sacrificing Christianity. Heidegger provided the answer with an anthropomorphic approach to salvation. Bultmann seized on existentialist philosophy and began to legitimate it with evidence collected from the Fourth Gospel and the letters of Paul.

In stage three, Bultmann needs legitimation for his theology. He draws on both the Fourth Gospel and Paul to legitimate his anthropomorphic view of salvation. But there was a cost to his existentialist theology. While he used Heidegger's authentic-inauthentic criteria of fulfilment, he was susceptible to the sociological spin-offs, which became evident in his use of the Fourth Gospel and Paul. Bultmann found himself entangled in a web of anti-Judaism prejudice, no matter how much he argued for an individual theology of salvation. The study describes and evaluates the nature of this dilemma facing Bultmann.

Having established that a sociological dilemma existed within Bultmann's theology, the next stage is to examine responses to it in order to assess the ability of Bultmann's theology to withstand challenge. The German problems can be categorised in two ways: the problems of theological anti-Judaism and the dilemma of a Jewish historical Jesus on the one hand, and the emergent response to Bultmann's anti-positivist, historical approach to Christology, on the other. The first question must deal

with the conflict in the divided German church's response to Nazism and its demands on the church. The second part of the equation is the response of the former students of Bultmann, who knew his theology very well, and who knew its weaknesses. There is a political framework which joins the two questions together and which has implications for the epistemology of the historical method. While Bultmann has emphasised an individualistic history of existentialism, at the expense of positivist history, the political situation in Germany led to questions about the legitimacy of such a position by Bultmann. The work of Troeltsch and other positivist historians allied to the political studies of Dorothee Soelle³³ have opened the door to questions about the validity of an anthropomorphic theology. Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom and America, discussion continued unabated over the meaning of Jesus' Kingdom, which Bultmann had rejected as orthodoxy and, therefore, illegitimate. The work of C. H. Dodd in the United Kingdom, added to the work of American scholars, raised a new awareness of the importance of the historical Jesus and its relation to the kerygma.

The focus of the study is political, while situated in an historical and anthropological matrix. The method uses the Easton model to collect historical and anthropological data which are juxtaposed within an intellectual history of ideas framework. Bultmann was pursuing an agenda which was in conflict with those supporting the value of a Jesus of history ministry for faith. The data is collected to illustrate the nature of Bultmann's epistemology while providing argument in response from opposite quarters. Bultmann's Achilles heel lies in the need to harness the historical

³³ See Dorothee Soelle, *Political Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 49. Soelle is critical of the inability of existentialism to respond culturally. She is concerned that the voices from the ghetto are ignored and the church remains silent.

Jesus to the kerygma while denying his ministry any credibility. Bultmann needed Jesus, but he was unwilling to loosen his grip on the kerygma. The political relationship between the kerygma and the historical Jesus remained tense until Bultmann was forced to loosen his grip. The political component is evident in his unwillingness to loosen his grip on the ideology of the kerygma and to embrace the historical Jesus, to at least, some degree. His political intent led to his downfall, and ironically, it was cultural data which ultimately destroyed his theology.

Extrapolation

The tradition of liberal Protestantism, as it emerged from the Enlightenment under the influence of Schleiermacher, emphasised an ethical, moral dimension over orthodox belief in supernatural phenomena. It is necessary to examine the impact not only of Schleiermacher, who introduced an individualist centred hermeneutic, but also the ideas of Albrecht Ritschl, Adolf von Harnack, and William Herrmann. The significance of Schleiermacher's work was that it grounded Christian theology on the experience of the believer, thereby removing it from the metaphysical constraints of philosophy. The notion of individual responsibility is found later in the theology of Rudolf Bultmann, but with the proviso that the believer chooses to abandon security and embrace faith in the divine.

The challenge to Schleiermacher, over what constituted a valid religious experience, had begun with the ideas of Albrecht Ritschl who argued that the individual believer must recognise the validity of the gospels, and that he/she could not be capable

of creating his/her own contact with the divine since faith must be grounded in the gospels.

Rudolf Bultmann had been exposed to these ideas, and to the ideas of leading German theologians, so that he was able to compare the ideas of the History of Religions School with liberal theology. Consequently, he had a comparative basis for forming a theology capable of explaining the social conflict facing Germany during and after World War I. He was persuaded that Harnack's liberal theology was too out of touch with the pessimistic mood of the day and Barth's *Epistle to the Romans* seemed to echo the dialectic of Kierkegaard and capture the pessimistic and alienated mood of Germany. Barth's work led Bultmann to see the value in the existentialist philosophy of Heidegger, where the believer looks inside of himself/herself to resolve conflict in a synthesis of the self. These secular ideas of Heidegger's philosophy erupted and led to criticism that Bultmann had abandoned Christianity in his search for God through the Hegelian autonomy of the self, in place of the historical Jesus.

The impact of post-Enlightenment philosophy is examined to assess the influence of Schleiermacher and other liberals who promoted Jesus as a model of moral-ethical behaviour. The demise of liberal theology came about because positivist history was questioned as a legitimate means of theological research. Schweitzer captured the nature of the problem, in his metaphor of the well, when he accused liberal historians of looking for a pre-determined image of Jesus.

The end of the nineteenth century witnessed an increase in scepticism over the authenticity of the gospels. The 1835 work of Strauss introduced the idea that the gospels were myth rather than history. Subsequent work by Kähler and Wrede popularised this

viewpoint. Weiss and Schweitzer introduced the eschatological argument that Jesus was teaching about a divine kingdom that was due to arrive imminently in judgement form. Consequently, the premise of historical gospel authenticity, on which liberal theology was built, collapsed.

The research compares and contrasts arguments surrounding the demise of liberal theology and the rise of scepticism to explain the formation of Bultmann's outlook: the arguments of Kähler and Herrmann are described in some detail, in order to learn their impact on Bultmann's hermeneutics. Bultmann's formative years at university as a student and as a teacher in the early 1920s, are considered, since they are critical years in the formation of his main ideas. He questions how to communicate with the divine, the nature of the role of the earthly Jesus in matters of faith, and the formation of Christianity in the early church. His reasoning leads him to reject the earthly Jesus in favour of Paul, as the true founder of Christianity. A dilemma surfaces that if faith in the divine is the main focus of theology, and if this faith is the expressed post-Easter faith of the kerygma, does Jesus have a role to play in that faith, and if so, how?

Debates occurred in Germany and in the United Kingdom and America over whether the historical Jesus ought to be abandoned in the manner argued by Bultmann. The scholars leading the debate are examined to learn the substance of their arguments. It is necessary to learn whether they had an answer to a two headed historical, epistemological problem. Two forms of history have emerged: Bultmann's faith history (*Geschichte*) in response to the positive history which was argued by Bultmann to be inauthentic for determining faith. Epistemological questions need to be asked such as can

objective, culturally based historical research deliver essential answers that relate to faith. Is there a political dimension to faith?

The historical break with Bultmann occurred over the significance of the historical Jesus in the kerygmatic post-Easter faith of the community. Methodology examines the two groups of debaters: the post Bultmannian students, who were in the process of forming a new quest, and Anglo-American scholarship. British scholars under the leadership of C. H. Dodd, T. W. Manson, W. Manson, D. E. Nineham and A. M. Hunter, to name only a few, were conversant with the arguments in Bultmann's form criticism regarding the authenticity of the gospels. They were informed of his view of the relevancy of the historical Jesus from as early as the 1927 Canterbury conference. However, American scholarship was less knowledgeable about Bultmann's theology. The methodology will compare and contrast the arguments used against Bultmann's replies, many of which were published in *Kerygma and Myth*.

The discussion pivoted around the legitimate uses of history to assess an article of faith. Bultmann had decreed that positivist history could not make decisions affecting matters of faith. Contemporary history suggests that the content of the post-Easter kerygma was attainable as expressions of faith, which reflected the Jesus of history. Some of the new questers and the Anglo-American community believed that it was theologically necessary to retrieve the selfhood of Jesus. The problem lies in the definition of selfhood, or, what is this quality called selfhood. Admittedly, it is difficult to define, but is it any more difficult than trying to discern the selfhood of an individual through an existential exercise? If the historian is trying to refute the mythical element in Bultmann's formless kerygma, he/she can only achieve it by the use of objective means,

to establish the necessary continuity. If the continuity cannot be established, then the kerygma is perceived as mythical and in need of demythologising. Such are the arguments to be looked for. The terrain of the debate holds the answer to whether Bultmann ought to concede defeat and acknowledge that he has left the door open for the re-emergence of the liberal Jesus.

In the end, Bultmann acted as a catalyst for the re-examination of the historical method as a means of authenticating the kerygma. His theology of existentialism coupled with demythologisation became questionable. However, his contribution was significant in that he showed a need to re-examine what was meant by authenticity applied to the gospels. If the gospels were faith documents, but the evangelists were trying to present an authentic picture of a historical Jesus in a non-positivist way, perhaps another view of history was required. Van Harvey has called this an interpretive approach to history which concentrates on a Gestalt picture as opposed to a collection of details.³⁴ When this method is applied to the gospels, the historical Jesus becomes creditable again as instances of his self appear in the gospels. The argument used by critics, both left and right, is that it is a Gestalt view of Jesus that the faith community remembers. Bultmann's existential view of life is now applied to the historical Jesus and transferred to the faith community in a direct manner. Harnack had argued for the importance of the historical Jesus as a man, not as a divine creature. The new history recognises this and the link is complete, from Jesus the man to the proclaimed Jesus of faith.

³⁴ See Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer*.

Hypothesis

Bultmann adapted Heidegger's existentialist philosophy to create an abstract theology devoid of the historical Jesus. His goal was to finalise the end of liberal scholarship and life of Jesus biographies which he argued were historically inauthentic. By using Heidegger's anthropomorphic framework he also took on board the anti-Judaism inherent in existentialism and Heidegger's re-definition of history as an individualist enterprise. The corollaries were enormous. Cultural history was defined as objective and even sinful. Authentic history was individualistic. The implications for the Jews were that they were inauthentic and worldly. Christianity was placed in a superior position to Judaism. By taking on Heidegger's existentialism Bultmann, perhaps unwittingly, played into the hands of the Nazis. The Jesus of history was also labelled inauthentic on account of his links to positivism. Bultmann came to have so much invested in the ideology of an abstract kerygma that he was unable to even consider the opposing argument that Jesus' ministry had something of importance to say. His existentialist theology drew on popular German sentiment with respect to the make-up of a nation-state, the negative demographics of Galilee and the dejudaisation of Jesus. A general anti-Judaism tenor was evident in his writings, which became stronger as the Second World War progressed. Bultmann had a vested interest in rejecting the historical Jesus as important for faith and replacing him with an abstract kerygma, devoid of cultural meaning. His anthropomorphic theology gave him a reason not to involve himself with Jewish support at the state level. The rejection of the historical Jesus as theologically meaningful, and the embrace of Heidegger's anthropomorphism, led him into a cul de sac of anti-Judaism, from which he had no retreat without abandoning his existential anthropomorphic

existentialism, which he refused to do. But the issue of Jesus' ministry reappeared with support from his former students and from abroad with a mandate to re-examine the Jewish context of Jesus' ministry. Bultmann can be credited with trying to reform liberal scholarship, but his anti-Judaism impeded his ability to rehabilitate the historical Jesus, even when demand inputs to do so became deafening.

Bultmann became a highly motivated theologian determined to super-impose his theology on late nineteenth and early twentieth century liberalism. His letters and articles written in his young adulthood reflect this strong reformist tendency.³⁵ And his friendship with Martin Heidegger provided the opportunity to see how existentialist philosophy could serve his theological goals. He became determined to use existentialism as a basis for his theology at any cost, since he refused to modify it, even after Heidegger abandoned his anthropomorphic focus. But his steadfastness is most apparent in his drive to reinterpret tradition: the liberal tradition of positivist history, which undergirded liberal support for the historical Jesus, was reinterpreted as anthropomorphic, individualised, faith history. Cultural history was designated as sinful and objective phenomena had to be discarded. But his about turn from liberal scholarship was most evident in his re-interpretation of Jewish eschatology as an individual event. Positive history was discarded in favour of subjective anthropomorphism, with the result that any sense of political responsibility to vulnerable members of the state was eliminated. This allowed him to take an ambivalent stand on the fate of the Jews. His re-interpretation of cultural history as individualised history permitted him to abstract the historical Jesus as

³⁵ See the letters to Fischer cited above, 8, n. 1, and 18, n. 14.

phenomena belonging to post-Easter faith and kerygma, and allowed him to deny the importance of Jesus' Palestinian culture and his teaching about his kingdom.

Such an existentialist view of authentic history enabled Bultmann to reinterpret Paul and the Fourth Gospel as support systems to his existential theology. However, his existentialist theology, with its Heideggerian constructed poles of authenticity and inauthenticity, forced him into the cul de sac of having to label both Judaism and Jesus as alien and inauthentic. Jesus became a casualty of Bultmann's existentialist and antithetical approach to liberal historiography. There was too much at stake for him to promote continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygma. The importance of the historical Jesus was limited to the fact of his existence only, but by eliminating the political messages in Jesus' ministry Bultmann was depoliticising the gospel with a resulting aftermath.

Bultmann dogmatized the kerygma at the expense of Jesus' ministry. The result is an ideological superstructure, abstract and unresponsive to outside situations, and more removed from Jesus' teachings and worldliness. The kerygma is silent to threatening conditions, while appearing to support them. The want of Jesus' presence in the kerygma led to a questioning of Bultmann's theology and the emergence of the second and the third quests.

Bultmann's unwillingness to compromise is evident in his debates with his post-1950 critics. Despite strong argument to the contrary and the debate widening beyond Bultmann's constructed anthropomorphic faith history, he refused to submit and modify his existentialist theology. My hypothesis concludes that his intransigence reflected his antithesis to Judaism and the Jewish Jesus. The debate over the historical Jesus led to a

new evaluation of the narrative of John and the letters of Paul. This could be described as an unintended legacy of Bultmann. A further unexpected legacy was the post 1970 literature reflecting the need to re-examine the Palestinian context of Jesus.

The problem to be resolved is: why did Bultmann create a paradox where he disputed the relevance of the historical Jesus to the kerygmatic Jesus? And why was he so reluctant to adapt his theology, in the light of strong opposition? He could have accepted the teaching of Jesus, equally with Paul. Yet he was adamant. His correspondence illustrates his concern for a theology over which the laity in a troubled Germany would have some control. But he did not have to abandon the historical Jesus to do so. My hypothesis holds that Bultmann was politically motivated to abandon the earthly Jesus because he was Jewish. While others were denying Jesus' Jewishness in Germany, Bultmann was defending it, not theologically, but as a statement of fact, therefore he was under no illusions about it. Yet his writing maintained a consistency that Judaism had no real meaning for Christianity.³⁶ His definition of the boundaries of Christian faith was a masterpiece. He excluded Judaism and Jesus as irrelevant because they were alien to Christianity. His existentialist language was narrow and exclusionary. It echoed the pessimism of Kant and Hegel. The cultural origins of Christianity were rejected. But it was inevitable that there would be a backlash because of the paradoxical nature of his theology: he needed to recognise Jesus and Judaism, but his existentialism prevented him from so doing.³⁷

³⁶ See Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*, and *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting*. Both books reflect the same pedagogical attempt to reinforce his idea that Jewish eschatology is really an individual matter. The corollary he is presenting is that Judaism is a dead religion.

³⁷ See Kelley, *Racialising Jesus*, 129-164.

Bultmann did forge individual relationships with Jews, and Hans Jonas is one example, yet he was careful to state a viewpoint which favoured the state in its position on the Jews. His language, put in an existential framework and derived from the work of Paul and John, showed that he could not afford to rehabilitate the historical Jesus in Germany. Supporting a Hellenist Christianity was much safer. Two debates occurred: one is the debate about the connection between the historical Jesus and the christologised post-Easter Jesus, which also took place in the United Kingdom and America, while the other is about Jesus' Jewishness as a formidable barrier to faith and the new Christianity of Bultmann. Because of the paradoxical nature of Bultmann's existentialist theology, it was inevitable that Jesus' Jewishness ultimately would become theologically acceptable and demand an extension of Bultmann's theological boundaries: it occurred with the advent of E. P. Sanders' work. Bultmann's research focussed on Hellenism to the detriment of Judaism and the Jesus of history. His book *Jesus*, compared to *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, was short and lacked depth. His research into Judaism is not viewed as comprehensive. Consequently, it appears that he was certainly motivated for reform, but his existentialist, Heideggerian framework steered him in the direction of Greece over Palestine to the detriment of the historical Jesus, and Heideggerian language made the rehabilitation of the historical Jesus theologically impossible. Bultmann's anthropomorphic history designation was bound to be incompatible with the need to incorporate the earthly Jesus into a historic relationship with the kerygma.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 1. **Introduction:** The study is introduced with its objectives, methods, and hypothesis. Some discussion is presented on the research focus, the reasons for the chosen methodology, and the consequent hypothesis. An overview of chapter outlines is included.

Chapter 2. **Background to Bultmann:** The nature of nineteenth century Liberalism is described with a view to understanding the conflicting ideas which the young Bultmann was exposed to, and the role they played in his theological formation. Particular attention is paid to the arguments of the sceptical fringe, which questioned the historical legitimacy of the gospels and their role in defining the limitations of orthodoxy, particularly with respect to the historical Jesus. This chapter lays the foundation for Bultmann's receptivity to the 1920's ideas of Barth and Heidegger, which provided the basis for his existential theology.

Chapter 3. **Hermeneutics of Bultmann:** Bultmann's existentialism and demythology are examined with respect to the historical Jesus. His view of history is examined to show how his view of history determined his negative view of the role of the historical Jesus in matters of faith and how existentialism created a dilemma over the Jewish nature of Jesus. Importantly, Bultmann is situated in the History of Religions School traditions, and comparisons are drawn between supporters of orthodoxy, on the one hand, and the sceptics, on the other hand, to explain Bultmann's theological evolution and his resulting dilemmas. This chapter establishes the connection between existentialism and Jewish inauthenticity in Bultmann's theology and its detrimental effect on an interpretation of the theological validity of the historical Jesus.

Chapter 4. **Dissent in Germany:** Bultmann enjoyed a period of theological hegemony from around 1920 until his retirement in 1950, at which time dissent against his view of history and the historical Jesus began to appear. This chapter describes the arguments presented by several of his former students in favour of a need to demonstrate continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ. Political events in Germany are examined, with respect to Bultmann's existentialist theology and his wish to avoid political involvement over the treatment of the Jews. The role of the historical Jesus and its relationship to the kerygmatic Christ is discussed politically and sociologically, as it functions within the existentialist, anthropomorphic theology of Bultmann.

Chapter 5: **Anglo-American Dissent:** this chapter is divided into two parts, British and American scholarship. Selected leading scholars present the issues regarding the relationship of the historical Jesus to the kerygma. The general view is that Bultmann's use of history is too narrow. He has "stacked the deck" in his favour, theologically speaking, so that his kerygma is beyond criticism. The English scholars particularly, argued against his premises, which were derived from form criticism, to justify his need to demythologise. The Jewish question does not surface in this debate, but the question of Bultmann's interpretation of the historical method is still debated over the historical Jesus.

Epilogue: The major conclusion is that Rudolf Bultmann has performed a service to theology by creating a need to re-examine the historical foundations of the earthly Jesus with implications for faith. If Bultmann's goal was to eliminate supernatural dogma, he appears to have succeeded. Yet Harnack did not support a divine Jesus. Consequently, the liberal view of Harnack was presenting a human historical Jesus, devoid of miracles, as

important for faith. Troeltsch has added a sociological dimension to Bultmann's theology. He has raised a critical question pertaining to the need for a theology of political involvement when ethically demanded. Troeltsch strikes at the heart of Bultmann's anti-liberal disposition. But he weakens Bultmann's case, and supports the Anglo-American view that his existentialism is too narrow. Bultmann's view of history, which outlawed any objective study of faith, has been questioned with the result that a new Gestalt history has come to the fore to explain the memories of Jesus and his ethics, embedded in the faith of the post-Easter followers. It can be argued that Bultmann, while trying to eliminate dogma by arguing for a disconnect between the earthly Jesus and the kerygma, set in motion dissent which succeeded in creating an authenticity for the earthly Jesus and legitimation for the way he was portrayed by the evangelists. Implicitly, Bultmann created a movement to search for more evidence of the earthly Jesus devoid of orthodox supernatural trappings. The earthly Jesus has come into his own, without a dependency on church dogma for support: Harnack would be satisfied.

Chapter 2

Background to Bultmann

This chapter will examine the formative stages of Bultmann's theology. In chapter III, Bultmann's radical theology is situated within the contexts of Pauline writings, the Fourth Gospel, and Heidegger's authentic-inauthentic taxonomy. In this chapter, the formative influences on Bultmann's theology are discussed in order to understand how he developed a commitment to a kerygmatic Christ in place of a human Jesus, with his version of God's kingdom. It will become evident how Bultmann's existential theology led him into a theological framework of anti-Judaism with a corresponding rejection of the historical Jesus. Chapter II provides the framework, while Chapter III examines these issues in depth.

But first it is necessary to illustrate why Bultmann rejected liberal theology to understand the manner in which he constructed an existentialist theology to replace it. Bultmann's theology evolved from the liberal school, so that it is reasonable to examine the liberal influences which permeated Bultmann's theological environment and his responses to them, in order to understand what he was rejecting, and why. The foundation of Bultmann's theology will be understood, and why he decided to incorporate elements from outside of orthodox Christianity, such as the existential ideas of Heidegger and Hegel. From this descriptive analysis, I establish how Bultmann selectively appropriated portions of liberal philosophy to the existentialist philosophy of Heidegger in order to bring about a new epistemology of history. Positivist historiography was dispensed with and replaced with what could be called Bultmann's version of faith history. He defined

positive historical research as sinful because it was objective. It was labelled objective by Bultmann because it created cultural artefacts. It was labelled sinful because it tried to research the divine as a cultural phenomenon. To Bultmann, the divine was a mystery and beyond research. He narrowed the faith terrain to one of an individual encounter with the divine where outside cultural phenomena were considered irrelevant. But in so doing Bultmann incurred a social cost, which may be measured in the social application of Heidegger's concept of authenticity to the exclusion of Judaism and the historical, Jewish Jesus from any meaningful relationship with Christianity.

Bultmann provides no evidence that he was aware of the cultural costs of Heidegger's authentic-inauthentic taxonomy when he began to formulate a hermeneutics of theological reform. He began with the premise that liberal theology was using positivist-cultural history inauthentically to validate the historical Jesus. But he was not alone in this view as there was enough scepticism in the air to encourage him to conduct his own form-critical research into the gospels and the historical Jesus in particular. He concluded that positivism could not authenticate the gospels and that those sceptics who had questioned the relevance of positivist research into the gospels were correct. This belief was the turning point in Bultmann's search for a faith-centred gospel and New Testament theology, and it had a devastating effect on German theology. Bultmann constructed a new meaning for eschatology, which under traditional Jewish law meant the expectation of divine intervention in the temporal affairs of the state. Bultmann's re-interpretation of the gospels replaced Jewish nationalism with an anthropomorphic theology which centred the eschaton in an individual encounter with the divine.

The history of Bultmann's journey from orthodox liberalism to dialectic existentialism was not one of smooth sailing. This chapter anticipates some of the important questions which Bultmann faced from the 1920s until the 1960s. These questions are related to the relationship between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ of faith. A second set of questions deals with the ethnic background of the Jewish Jesus and its political consequences. A further sub-set of anticipated questions deals with the adequacy of a theology which focuses on objectivity to the extent that it is able to ignore what the state is doing to the Jews in Nazi Germany. Consequently, this chapter constitutes the hub of the thesis because it sets out how Bultmann's theology was formed and anticipates the repercussions which followed.

The Liberal Legacy

Liberal theology traces its origins to with Schleiermacher in response to the challenge of the Enlightenment. It reached its pinnacle under the leadership of Albrecht Ritschl and lasted until its demise after the publication of Bultmann's *History of the Synoptic Tradition* in 1921.³⁸ The Enlightenment was a period of challenge to authority, particularly clerical authority, and the first challenge came from Hermann Reimarus (1694-1768). He was the first proclaimed sceptic to advance the notion that the resurrection was a deliberate fraud. He doubted the gospels gave authentic accounts of Jesus' teachings, yet Reimarus accepted Jesus' ministry as authentic, because it provided a universal, moral reference point. He introduced the idea that the kingdom of God was central to Jesus' teaching and, while he placed Jesus in his Jewish environment, he

³⁸ See Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 8.

ascribed a higher moral status to Jesus than the Pharisees. Reimarus may have been the first to argue for a superior Jewish status for Jesus. This argument was to surface during the Third Reich in an attempt to rescue Jesus from his Palestinian culture. To prevent a huge outcry, Reimarus' work was not published until after his death, but his ideas are important because he laid the foundation for a sceptical view of the historical authenticity of the gospels,³⁹ while maintaining the view that Jesus ought to be accepted as a model for behaviour. The ideas advanced by Reimarus were still being debated in the early 1920s both by Bultmann, and later by the National-Socialists, who were trying to rationalise Jesus' Jewishness.⁴⁰

The founder of theological, liberal thought was Friedrich Schleiermacher, who taught that the realm of feeling was the essential part of the religious impulse.⁴¹ Bultmann held Schleiermacher in high regard and, while studying at Berlin, he wrote that "theology will fall apart unless someone like Schleiermacher takes the lead."⁴² Schleiermacher's ideas figure prominently in Bultmann's anthropomorphic theology, where the individual believer, rather than an institution, is the site of a meaningful relationship with the divine, but Bultmann has some reservations about the sensory component of Schleiermacher's theology.

Hegel is an important adjunct to Schleiermacher's hermeneutic and ultimately to Bultmann's thinking, also. Bultmann was accused of promoting an abstract theology

³⁹ See Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question*, 54-56.

⁴⁰ See Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel, *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 69.

⁴¹ See Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 9.

⁴² See Dennison, *The Young Bultmann*, 21.

which marginalised the historical Jesus in favour of a mythical kerygma. There is a connection here between Hegel's *Geist* and the Heidegger encounter theory of self-resolution. Bultmann was forced to tread a thin line between the atheism of Hegel and his own Christian belief system as his hermeneutic of a spiritual encounter takes place only within the consciousness of the individual believer. Nevertheless, Bultmann's first steps to theological freedom are evident in Hegel and in Kant, with whom Bultmann shares a rejection of the "feeling element" in Schleiermacher's theology.

Schleiermacher was important for individualising religious meaning, but Bultmann followed Hegel in rejecting Schleiermacher's romanticism of feeling. However, the subjective nature of the religious experience is a topic that Bultmann was forced to confront in his application of Heidegger's philosophy, since Hegel's warning against the dangers in Schleiermacher's romantic theology was not heeded until the 1920s, under Wilhelm Herrmann, in the school of dialectical theology.⁴³ Bultmann captured the essence of Hegel's philosophy in the title of the publication of his essays, *Faith and Understanding*. He encapsulated the message of the Enlightenment that, "reason will set man free." Yet, Bultmann's existential philosophy held that reason alone would not suffice: faith in an encounter with the divine could only arrive from the divine as a gift. This precept was to influence Bultmann's reading of the Fourth Gospel and Paul and lead to a negative interpretation of salvation by effort or by conformity to the Jewish law. Sociologically, this meant that Judaism was designated as inferior to Christianity and contributed to a racialising of the New Testament message when it was deconstructed through the lens of existentialism's authenticity criteria. Bultmann drew on nineteenth-

⁴³ See J. C. O'Neil, "Bultmann and Hegel," *Journal of Theological Studies* 21 (1970): 388-400 (395).

and early twentieth-century traditions of anti-Semitism to label Judaism inauthentic due to its perceived reliance on the Law and the Old Testament, and the corollary was that the inferiority of Judaism implied a superior status for Christianity.

Hegel's stages of enlightenment are similar to Bultmann's. When a believer passes from an inauthentic stage to one of authenticity as in Hegel's unfolding spirit, or *Geist*, it is described by Hegel followed by Bultmann as death and resurrection.⁴⁴ Bultmann promoted a theology which privileges the abstract over the concrete in matters of faith. He argued that the concrete is objective and cultural: Jesus as a human being is irrelevant to faith because he is a cultural product of history. But the Christ image, proclaimed by the church, is the word of God which was found in the kerygma or proclamations of post-Easter faith. Proclaimed faith is not objective and cannot be researched scientifically, although Bultmann argued that each believer possesses his/her own history which plays an important role in the encounter/resolution process. He protected his version of faith history by creating a boundary around it. Since it cannot be researched in a positivist manner, it remains outside the purview of theological critics. This hermeneutic principle explains why the premise underlying the kerygmatic Jesus remained in place for so long, at the expense of the historical Jesus: it was historically untouchable. The theology of Schleiermacher, which was linked to cultural formation and objectivity by his emphasis on sentiment, had to be rejected. We know that Bultmann had a sentimental attachment to Schleiermacher in his developing years because his letters betray a young man enduring homesickness, while away from the farming community

⁴⁴ Ibid., 396. O'Neil emphasises that Bultmann speaks disparagingly of Hegel: "his slighting references are patently meant" (ibid., 397). Which raises the question why he would want to disparage a philosopher of similar kin?

and the romantic countryside.⁴⁵ Nevertheless he came to realise that his professors, who were teaching the romantic Schleiermacher theology, did not have the answer to the crisis which Germany was experiencing in the lead-up to war and in its aftermath. The fact that Bultmann was able to push Schleiermacher aside in favour of a non-cultural theology along the lines of Hegel and Kant speaks volumes for his dedication to a search for a theological antidote to Germany's crisis.

The ghost of Albrecht Ritschl was still an influence at Göttingen in the early 1920s. Ritschl ultimately moved more towards Kant and away from Schleiermacher, although he maintained with Schleiermacher that faith must begin with the individual believer's ethical and moral experience: philosophy alone could not undergird theology. This approach appealed to Bultmann and supported the substance of his letters to his friend Fischer that reform of nineteenth century Enlightenment theology must be rejected.⁴⁶ Ritschl held that the primary focus of theology must be on Jesus and the community he established. The moral dimensions of Ritschl's theology are apparent through his commitment to the study of Jesus. They proved to be instrumental in convincing Bultmann that liberal theology was unable to validate the teachings of Jesus as moral reference points for believers, based on historical research. Consequently, the ideal of Jesus as a moral teacher came under scrutiny when historical authenticity was questioned.

Wilhelm Herrmann was very influential in Bultmann's formation. He followed the Enlightenment trend of marginalising the role of philosophy and science in religion.

⁴⁵ See Dennison, *The Young Bultmann*, 23-24.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

While science could help to explain the physical world, it was up to theology to promote the inner transformation of the individual. As with Ritschl, Herrmann emphasised the importance of Jesus' person in the inner transformation process. The liberal tradition emphasised the kingdom of Jesus as the means of encountering God's love and mercy. Therefore, the role of the historical Jesus as the dispenser of God's love was central. But a step towards the existential theology of Bultmann is evident in Herrmann's emphasis on faith being an inner transformation of the believer based on experience, not philosophy. Herrmann emphasised the importance of faith being free from science or philosophy and it is here that we can see the influence of Herrmann on Bultmann very clearly.⁴⁷ However, Herrmann was a stronger believer in the importance of historical analysis and he echoed both Luther and Melanchthon in his emphasis on a personal knowledge of Jesus through history. The problems associated with Herrmann's view of history become evident in Wrede and Kähler.

Liberalism came to fruition under Ritschl, which created a debate over the relationship between faith and history. Schleiermacher, by grounding Christianity in the testimony of the believer, marginalised the importance of science and philosophy. He individualised the meaning of Christianity by grounding it in the experience of the believer, yet he maintained the centrality of Jesus in the experience.⁴⁸ By implication, he continued to validate the importance of the historical method in authenticating Jesus'

⁴⁷ See Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 10, 12.

⁴⁸ Hegel and Kant provide an adjunct to Schleiermacher by placing a responsibility on the individual to attain salvation from within the self as opposed to ritual in the church. They do differ from Bultmann in the amount of emphasis they place on Jesus as a role model. See Murray Rae, *History and Hermeneutics* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 13.

message. Bultmann continued for a time with Schleiermacher's theology, but it created a paradox for him as he argued for an abstract encounter with the divine in the mode of Hegel, while continuing to demand an experience of Jesus, although a Jesus devoid of his earthliness. The strength of the liberals' hold on belief in Jesus is evident from Reimarus' attack on the authority of the church, while holding onto a belief in the validity of Jesus as a moral reference point.⁴⁹

Liberal theology believed in the value of historical research for finding and identifying the original, earthly Jesus. Jesus was seen as a moral and ethical leader who taught about his kingdom and the coming of the divine. The differences between the orthodox and the sceptical fringe were not always pronounced, particularly in the middle of the nineteenth century. Strauss knew Ritschl at Bonn.⁵⁰ Both Ritschl and Strauss influenced Bultmann, but in different ways: the scepticism of Strauss reinforced Bultmann's scepticism of gospel authenticity, while Ritschl, who was a strong historian concerned with the study of the historical Jesus, influenced Bultmann, as a student, negatively, and pushed him towards Herrmann.⁵¹ Bultmann took from Herrman the Lutheran principle that to know Christ was to know his benefits, and that justification by works was sinful and must give way to unquestioning faith. The common factor uniting the liberals was recognition of the value of history and a conviction that, even though Jesus was human, his ministry was important for faith. Harnack, as shown earlier, was an important liberal, who shared these values.

⁴⁹ See Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, for an excellent description and evaluation of the ferment on this topic. Cf. W. Barnes Tatum, *In Quest of Jesus* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 93-94.

⁵⁰ See Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Quest*, 151-152.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

The Sceptics

The sceptical fringe, which was mainly active towards the end of the nineteenth century, began with David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), who created a storm of protest with his book *The Life of Jesus* (1835), despite the fact that he was presenting a scholarly and analytical view of how the gospels should be interpreted. He challenged the belief that the gospels were authentic historical records. And he challenged Schleiermacher's theology that religion consisted of an acknowledged feeling of dependence on the divine.⁵² Strauss objected to Schleiermacher's belief in miracles, which to Strauss were myths created for biblical effect. These ideas lay dormant until they were revived at the end of the nineteenth century by the sceptical fringe of Wrede, Kähler, Weiss, and Schweitzer.

Strauss was a Hegelian, and given his influence, it is not surprising to see in Bultmann's hermeneutic a dependency on Strauss' theory of biblical myth. Bultmann's exegetical method of demythologising shows all the hall-marks of Strauss' arguments: the language of myth is the way that the ancients expressed their understanding of the world and man's role in it.⁵³ The Hegelian influence can be seen in the implication that

⁵² Strauss made a huge contribution to the work of Reimarus and opened the door to the subsequent work of Martin Kähler, Wilhelm Wrede, Johannes Weiss, and Albert Schweitzer. Bultmann's hermeneutic of biblical scepticism is clearly evident in the work of this fringe group which owed its existence to the earlier work of Strauss.

⁵³ According to Bultmann, "Myth is here used in the sense in which the History of Religions School understands it. Mythology is the mode of conceiving the way in which the unworldly, the divine appears as the worldly, the human; the other side appears as this side" (*Kerygma und Mythos I*, 22). See Roger A. Johnson, *The Origins of Demythologising* (Leiden: Brill, 1974). Strauss was much kinder than Reimarus in his attempt to understand the use of myth in the gospels. Where Reimarus castigated the gospel narratives

man has evolved from a mythical representation of reality through the application of science to a modern day understanding of existence. Bultmann defended the use of demythologising (his word) on the premise that the ancients were expressing their notions of existence. Since the concept of existence is universal, he argued that there is a universal meaning behind mythical representation, which has to be uncovered by the exegete. Johnson argues for conceptual continuity between Bultmann and the Enlightenment tradition: the Enlightenment regarded myth as sharing a commonality with science in that it explained the causes of worldly phenomena.⁵⁴

Strauss was the first scholar, after Reimarus' published work by Lessing, to reopen the question of the relation between orthodoxy and scientific investigation. His timing was inopportune and the publication of his monograph led to his removal from his university post. Naturally, he felt that he had been unjustly judged. And the fact that it took another half century before many of his ideas were taken up and developed by the "sceptical fringe" illustrates just how strong orthodoxy was in the nineteenth century. Strauss was a radical in the sense that he criticised Schleiermacher's lectures in Berlin as an attempt to harmonise orthodoxy and rationalism.⁵⁵ Yet, was not that what Strauss was doing: arguing in the *Life of Jesus* that the gospels were mythical and needed to be deconstructed?⁵⁶ However, when he referred to the gospels as "unconscious fiction," he

as fraud, Strauss interpreted them in a positive light. Bultmann also makes the case that he is interpreting myth, not condemning or eliminating it, thereby following in the example of Strauss.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 146.

⁵⁵ See Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 63.

⁵⁶ See Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 82-83.

was punished with the loss of his university career.⁵⁷ Interestingly, Strauss, like Reimarus, did not disparage either the person or the ministry of Jesus.⁵⁸

Scepticism began in earnest with the work of Martin Kähler.⁵⁹ Kähler was followed by Johannes Weiss,⁶⁰ Wilhelm Wrede,⁶¹ and Albert Schweitzer.⁶² Kähler writes in an antithetical manner, reminiscent of Strauss. Both were advocating adversarial positions. Kähler was taking on the formidable orthodoxy of Ritschl and Herrmann. Although there were hermeneutic differences between them, they agreed on the importance of the historical Jesus. Kähler argued that the gospels do not yield the kind of information that Herrmann required for his trust in Jesus.⁶³ In Kähler's opinion, the earliest Christians were mainly interested in promoting a faith in Jesus' resurrection rather than a historical narrative. In this sense, Kähler and Ritschl agreed that, since faith was the primary focus of the gospels, any interpretation became a value judgement, and involved the theologian and not the scientist or historian.⁶⁴

The debate over the role of historical investigation begins here with the orthodox wing moving imperceptibly towards the left, represented by Kähler. This topic will be explored later in Troeltsch, who was a stalwart figure in the History of Religions

⁵⁷ See Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Quest*, 151.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁵⁹ Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus*.

⁶⁰ Johannes Weiss (1892), *Jesus' Proclamation and the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

⁶¹ Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*.

⁶² Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*.

⁶³ See Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus*, 46.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

School.⁶⁵ Troeltsch argued that faith is not independent of historical research, and he is supported by Pannenberg, who argued that the problem is one of bridging the gap between early Christianity's understanding of social phenomena and modern man.⁶⁶ This argument plays very well into Bultmann's later demythologising programme. Kähler is very important for understanding Bultmann's distinction between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. The negative value of history for faith is not original to Bultmann. Kähler's monograph, *Die Wissenschaft der christlichen Lehre* (1883), set out very clearly the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith over justification by works. Paul Tillich, in his preface to Kähler's *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ*, stated that it was Kähler who "developed his ideas under the principle of the Reformers-justification through faith by grace." This principle became the bedrock of Bultmann's hermeneutic of objectification with its association with worldliness, alienation, and sin. Kähler advanced his ideas in 1902 to argue that the real Christ is not the Jesus of Nazareth: the real Christ is the Christ who is preached.⁶⁷ Thiselton argues that Kähler is important from a historiographical point of view because he distinguished between historical methodology in a way that was useful to Bultmann: Kähler separated faith history (*Geschichte*) from positivist history (*Historie*). Ebeling, a former student of

⁶⁵ The History of Religions School was focussed on the social and psychological origins of religion. Bultmann had had training in this genre, but his existentialist leanings after the influence of Heidegger lead to his abandoning it, although its influence shows through in his treatment of the Fourth Gospel and the origins of the Redeemer Cult.

⁶⁶ See Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Revelation of God in Jesus," in *New Frontiers in Theology. 3: Theology as History* (eds. J. M. Robinson and J. B. Cobb, Jr.; New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 126.

⁶⁷ Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus*, 66. Cf. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 215, where Thiselton gives two famous quotations from Kähler: "The historical Jesus of modern life conceals from us the living Christ... I regard the entire Life-of-Jesus movement as a blind alley."

Bultmann, writes that a major difference between Bultmann's view of history and Kähler's is that "Bultmann faces the problem of the historical Jesus, while Kähler attempts to unmask the "so-called historical Jesus as a pseudo-problem."⁶⁸ Thiselton thinks that Ebeling is salvaging the importance of the historical Jesus from Kähler. Kähler thinks it possible to maintain a link with the historical Jesus for faith, while Bultmann rejects it completely. It can be argued that Bultmann is leaning further away, even from those who have influenced him against liberalism. This is an example of Bultmann's determination to destroy liberalism and the historical Jesus together.⁶⁹

The salvage operation in Kähler's mind revolved around the notion of a divine-human exchange. Both Kähler and Bultmann agreed that the early church played a critical role in interpreting Jesus, and that is our main source of information. However, Bultmann distanced himself from Kähler's argument that the New Testament, "far from obscuring Jesus as he really was, brings the facts of Jesus properly into view."⁷⁰ Bultmann argued against Kähler in "The Question of Christology" that "the inner relationship between the Word and the bearer of the Word is irrelevant to the claim of the Word."⁷¹ He defended himself against the criticism that he had been forced to take refuge in the dialectical theology of Gogarten and Barth.⁷² He wrote, "I have never felt

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ See Bultmann, "Liberal Theology." I have selected this essay because it underlines Bultmann's conclusion that the main problem with the liberal movement is that they have forgotten that the major focus of theology ought to be the divine, or, God, as Bultmann prefers.

⁷⁰ See Rae, *History and Hermeneutic*, 24.

⁷¹ Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, 131.

⁷² I shall deal with Barth and Gogarten later in the study as we approach more contemporary issues confronting Bultmann, just prior to his alignment with Heidegger. It is important to realise that Bultmann had no qualms about disregarding the significance of the historical Jesus for faith.

uncomfortable with my critical radicalism; on the contrary, I have been entirely comfortable with it.”⁷³ Bultmann criticised his colleagues for their salvage operations of the historical Jesus, but said that he calmly let the fire burn, “for I see that what is consumed is only the fanciful portraits of life of Jesus theology, and that means nothing other than ‘Christ after the flesh.’”⁷⁴ The negative tone of this particular quotation of Bultmann was questioned in 1953 by Ernst Käsemann, a former student, who questioned whether Bultmann was correct in his interpretation of Kähler that the historical Jesus could become so disconnected from the preached Christ of faith.

Kähler was writing at a time when debate between history and theology was heating up. Those staking out the socio-historical domain were represented by Troeltsch, who helped to found the History of Religions School, along with Wrede, Weiss, and Bousset, who had become friendly with Max Weber (1864-1920). Troeltsch shared the view that religion was a cultural phenomenon. Bultmann did not share Troeltsch’s view on account of his cultural premise related to religious origins. Troeltsch emphasised the importance of historical interpretation and rejected an over-reliance on facts to speak for themselves.⁷⁵ There was clearly a gulf between Bultmann and Troeltsch. But Bultmann shared a rapprochement with Kähler against Troeltsch’s principle of analogy, both of whom agreed that the use of Troeltsch’s historical analogy was inappropriate for studying Jesus since he was presumably unique.⁷⁶ Kähler also rejected the view that the earthly

⁷³ Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, 132.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ See Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question*, 187, for an account of how Troeltsch perceived the historical Jesus.

⁷⁶ See Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus*, 68.

Jesus was identical to the risen Christ.⁷⁷ The later words of Bultmann appear first in Kähler's work: "the real Christ is the Christ who is preached."⁷⁸ But no mention is made of the source of the early Christian's faith. The answer to the question of why the earthly Jesus was chosen for emulation lies in his ministry, which provided the source of the disciples' emulation and inspiration. Bultmann, who also had benefited from training in the History of Religions School, looked for an explanation in cultural roots, not to find faith, but to find an explanation for the origin of early Christianity. Troeltsch also held definite views on this topic to be discussed in due course. This question of Christian origins did not die, since it remained dormant in the minds of some former students to be resurrected when they began to achieve theological prominence. However, it maintained a life of its own in the Anglo-American community.

Strauss had made the Fourth Gospel the object of his study and he concluded that John, the evangelist, was not presenting a historical account of the life of Jesus, but rather a theological message. Ferdinand Christian Baur, a tutor to Strauss, agreed that the Fourth Gospel was different in tenor to the other three gospels. Consequently, from the time of Strauss and Baur in the mid nineteenth century, orthodoxy held Mark to be the most historically reliable gospel. It was Wilhelm Wrede, from his study of Mark's Gospel, who changed this perception.⁷⁹ Wrede gave more credence to the fact that the early church attributed the titles to Jesus, which orthodoxy had assumed were part of Jesus' divinity statements about himself. The messianic secrecy motif was developed by Wrede as an explanation for why this was not known during his life. Jesus kept this secret from all,

⁷⁷ Ibid., 65.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 66.

⁷⁹ See Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*.

except his disciples, and the gospel was written back into the life of Jesus, to support this claim. Hence, Wrede argued in the vein of Strauss that Mark was as apologetic as John in his presentation of a faith document rather than an historical one. Bultmann uses Wrede's argument to support his findings.⁸⁰ On the first, introductory page of his *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, Bultmann pointed out that "it was Wrede's work on the Messianic Secret which did most to call into question this traditional attitude which went far beyond what could be established by a cautious analysis of Mark."⁸¹

Wrede and Kähler helped to establish the foundation for Bultmann's research which culminated in form criticism. Two books outlined his theology of Jesus and the gospels: the book just mentioned, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921), which was followed by *Jesus* (1926, in German) and *Jesus and the Word* (1934, in English).

Albert Schweitzer wrote around twenty years before Bultmann published his two landmark conclusions to the controversial history of the life of Jesus. Schweitzer in 1906 surveyed the historiography of the lives of Jesus.⁸² His arguments discredited the life-of-Jesus movement and Bultmann made several references to Schweitzer's work, praising him for being honest in not creating a heroic Jesus. He wrote that, "interest in the personality of Jesus is excluded."⁸³ The writing of both Wrede and Schweitzer helped to

⁸⁰ Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 1.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² See Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

⁸³ See Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, vi, 47, 52. In Bultmann's opinion, Jesus was proclaiming the "crisis of decision" which supports his own re-interpretation of eschatology.

convince Bultmann that “we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus.”⁸⁴

Eschatology

Eschatology is a Jewish term which refers to the expected advent of divine intervention. The term carries implications of a victory of Judaism over opposing forces. It has political and economic implications. Albert Schweitzer hypothesised that Jesus viewed the eschaton differently. His idea of a kingdom went beyond any nationalistic and economic association.⁸⁵ Schweitzer put forward the idea that Jesus expected the arrival of the eschaton within his lifetime and he prepared for it accordingly. He saw himself as God’s messenger and, consequently, he believed that he could speak authoritatively about its arrival. When it did not arrive as planned, Jesus took it upon himself to suffer in an attempt to force the kingdom’s arrival. Schweitzer emphasised that Jesus was anchored in the Jewish environment and that he was as much dominated by the eschatology dogma of his day as any Jew. Consequently, one major difference between Jesus and his contemporaries was that he held a different perception of his own role in the eschaton.⁸⁶

There was an intense reaction to this hypothesis. The main criticism was that Schweitzer had interpreted the gospels too arbitrarily and imposed his interpretation on the gospel texts instead of allowing them to speak to him. But another reason was that Schweitzer had grounded Jesus solidly within his Jewish environment making him indistinguishable from other Jews, except for his teaching. Sanders, however, praises

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 23.

⁸⁶ See Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, chapter 19, cited in Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 23.

Schweitzer's work for trying to find "an inner connection between the intention of Jesus, his death, and the church's subsequent expectation of the parousia."⁸⁷ But Schweitzer was not the first scholar to situate Jesus firmly in Judaism, thereby distancing him from the ethical-moral image that existed of him existing in a supra-Judaism environment. In 1892, Weiss also argued that Jesus' conception of the kingdom of God could only be understood in a Jewish context. The Sermon on the Mount could only be explained as preparation for divine intervention. It was not the universal code of ethics which had been assumed by the liberal life of Jesus scholarship.⁸⁸ The message of Jesus now appeared less like "the moral code of nineteenth century intellectuals and more like the claims of an ancient prophet belonging to a strange and alien culture."⁸⁹

Thus, the 1890s represented a significant turning point in liberal history and it was due largely to the ideas of Weiss and Schweitzer and their interpretation of Jesus as belonging to the Jewish culture, and his teaching as an ethic of preparation for forthcoming divine intervention. Why should the Jewish component cause so much controversy? Sanders argues that Schweitzer's hypothesis had been influenced by the writing of Weiss, writing a decade earlier. Although Kähler and Wrede had published sceptical accounts of the gospels, they had not focussed directly on the teaching of Jesus. Weiss laid the foundation for Schweitzer's hypothesis by questioning the premise of Ritschlian liberalism that Jesus was a superior person teaching a universal ethical precept. Weiss maintained that the kingdom of God was very near, transcendental in nature, and

⁸⁷ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 23-24.

⁸⁸ See Johannes Weiss (1892), *The Preaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

⁸⁹ Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 18.

dependent on God's sole intervention. Jesus taught that the Jewish people would need to repent and become obedient to God's will. Ben Meyer emphasises the distinction in Weiss' proclamation: the centre of gravity in liberal theology was a timeless ethic.⁹⁰ Weiss and Schweitzer, by rejecting Jesus as the promoter of a timeless ethic, and by situating him in a cultural Palestinian context, pulled the rug from under the feet of the liberal idealists. Jesus was teaching traditional Jewish precepts, not appealing to a universal code of ethics. Albert Schweitzer criticised the liberal movement in no uncertain terms:

The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and who died to give His work its final consecration, never had existence in an historical garb.⁹¹

When Bultmann paid homage to his former professors, he listed them as Harnack, Herrmann, Gunkel, Weiss, and Bousset.⁹² It is interesting that he did not mention Troeltsch, who was also a member of the History of Religions School. What is equally interesting is that Bultmann draws on the work of Bousset to the exclusion of Troeltsch, who presents a more historico-cultural assessment of the rise of Christianity. Bultmann's treatment of Judaism has been criticised by Sanders for an uncritical acceptance of the work of Bousset and Schürer.⁹³ Although this topic will be examined later in more depth,

⁹⁰ See Ben Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 39.

⁹¹ Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 396.

⁹² Bultmann, "Autobiographical Reflections," in *Existence and Faith* (London: Collins, 1964), 335-336.

⁹³ See Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 43-44.

it is appropriate to introduce the impact of the History of Religions School by comparing briefly the ideas of Weiss and Bousset.

Weiss broke with the Enlightenment and liberal tradition and opposed the ideas of Bousset, which reflected the idealist positions of Strauss, Baur, and Ritschl. Anders Gertmar gives a reasoned and coherent account of the similarities and differences between these two members of the History of Religions School.⁹⁴ Bearing in mind that Bultmann was also a member, it is interesting to see the direction which Bultmann ultimately took. Weiss was a historian who wanted to portray the New Testament on its own terms without bias. He drew a continuity between Jesus and his Palestinian Jewish background by placing Jesus within Judaism, “which marks a new phase compared to Baur and Bousset.”⁹⁵ According to Gerdmar, both Weiss and Bousset were politically conscious and were writing at a time when Judaism was being questioned politically.

There is a marked difference in how each writer treats the issue of “the Jews.” Bultmann was influenced more by Bousset than by Weiss. Weiss grounds the cult of Jesus in Palestine, while Bousset situates him in the Kyrios theology of Greece. Part of the debate in Germany over the source of Volkisch nationhood argued from the standpoint that Greece was more of a natural ancestor to Germany than the Orient, which included Palestine. Consequently, the issue of Jesus’ Jewishness was an inflammatory topic during the period of Bultmann’s theological hegemony between 1920 and 1960. The ideas of Bousset appear in several of Bultmann’s publications, despite evidence that

⁹⁴ See Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 171-188.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 172

Bousset's historical analysis is less trustworthy than Weiss'.⁹⁶ Dennison illustrates how in the year 1905, which ended a period of social ferment, while drastically affecting liberal scholarship, the young Bultmann was enrolling at Marburg to begin a long theological apprenticeship. Dennison cites letters to Bultmann's friend Fischer, how he was demoralised by liberal scholarship in its inability to bridge the reality of the ancient gospels with the modern era for the lay person.⁹⁷ The account by Dennison, taken from Bultmann's letters to his friends, demonstrates a young mind in the process of idealist formation, but already with ideas about how theology should proceed.

We have arrived at the point where Jewish eschatology has eclipsed the liberal historical method.⁹⁸ Schweitzer has endured criticism for adopting the same method as the liberal historians he criticised.⁹⁹ Yet, although many of the criticisms of Schweitzer's apocalyptic presentation are legitimate, they cannot obscure the fact that he was able to focus on the problem of liberal historians having an agenda in mind and then confirming it. Schweitzer's famous metaphor about "looking in the well and seeing one's own image" is pertinent.

The contribution of Weiss and Schweitzer to at least an acceptance of a Jewish milieu for Jesus' ministry was enormous. It provided an antithesis to the traditional historiography of Baur and Bousset which placed Jesus in an idealistic setting removed

⁹⁶ See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*; idem, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*; Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*; idem, *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1956).

⁹⁷ See Dennison, *The Young Bultmann*, 34, 37, for his attack on Bousset's ideas in *Jesus*.

⁹⁸ See T. Francis Glasson, "Schweitzer's Influence: Blessing of Bane?" *Journal of Theological Studies* 28 (1977): 289-302. Glasson criticised Schweitzer's "consistently apocalyptic interpretation of Jesus."

⁹⁹ See Gregory Dawes, "The Challenge of Apocalyptic," in *The Historical Jesus Question*, 152, where he suggests that Schweitzer did not understand the complexities of Second Temple Judaism.

from his reality. The work of Kähler and Wrede questioned the legitimate uses of the historical method applied to the study of the gospels. Kähler identified the division between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of faith with respect to historical method. The assumptions of the liberal tradition had been questioned and found wanting. The young Bultmann, meanwhile, was debating with his friend Fischer about how the church could bridge the gulf between the mythical world of the early Christians and the modern German laity. He had a basis for comparison between the hermeneutics of his professors who subscribed to the views of the History of Religions School. But they were not all in agreement with each other. The ideas of Troeltsch were at variance with those of Herrmann, for example. There was the eschatology of Weiss to compare with the Hellenistic views of Bousset, yet they were members of the same school.

Obviously, this was a seminal time to be a theological student, and the constant and critical reflections of Bultmann's letters meant that he was no ordinary student. The clash of ideas to which he was being exposed between 1905 and 1916, meant that he had choices about how to formulate a theology to meet a designated need for the layperson.¹⁰⁰ It has been suggested that Bultmann published his first essay shortly after the publication of the books of Weiss and Schweitzer.¹⁰¹ There is some indication that Bultmann has been more influenced by Wrede than by Schweitzer. The argument used holds that Wrede used source criticism in his study of Mark, which was forerunner of Bultmann's form

¹⁰⁰ See Rudolf Bultmann, "On the Question of Christology" (1927), in *Faith and Understanding*, 132. Bultmann singles out Herrmann for helping him distinguish between fact and fiction. Bultmann is referring to the Lives of Jesus publications as fiction and he is aligning Schweitzer with Herrmann.

¹⁰¹ Paul S. Minnear, "Rudolf Bultmann's Interpretation of New Testament Eschatology," in *The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann*, 65.

criticism, therefore, Bultmann was more disposed to Wrede's method than to the apocalyptic framework of both Weiss and Schweitzer: eschatology and Judaism were not central issues in Wrede's study of Mark. As we have noted already, Sanders has emphasised that Bultmann has not shown any real interest in researching Judaism.¹⁰²

Bultmann has been criticised for drawing a hard and fast line between Palestinian Judaism and the Diaspora. Painter has argued that this distinction has serious implications for Bultmann's reconstruction of primitive Christianity where the earliest church is in Palestine with the Hellenist church outside. Painter argues that if Jews of the Greco-Roman world constituted Hellenist Judaism, this must include Palestine.¹⁰³

Although Bultmann has criticised the liberal tradition, he is still viewed as part of it. He criticised the liberal traditions of Scheiermacher, Ritschl, Herrmann, and Harnack because of their support for the historical method. Yet he employed the form critical method to substantiate the claims of Kähler and Wrede. He was determined to find historical truth, even if it meant that he had to re-define the uses of history, in the manner of Kähler. Bultmann was now ready to begin formulating his new theology. His starting base was an anti-liberal premise and a neo-Kantian philosophy from Marburg. He was ready for Barth and Heidegger.

¹⁰² See Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 91.

¹⁰³ Painter, *Theology as Hermeneutics*, 96.

Chapter 3

Bultmann's Hermeneutics

In 1917, Bultmann gave a sermon to celebrate Pentecost. Dennison has devoted a whole chapter to this sermon because of its importance in clarifying where Bultmann stood with respect to his theological priorities.¹⁰⁴ He was thirty-three years of age, four years before he published the *History of the Synoptic Tradition*. We have seen how his theology developed amidst swirling controversy over the historical authenticity of the gospels and of the historical authenticity of the earthly Jesus. Bultmann, as a theologian dedicated to helping the lay-person understand the biblical texts, was forcing himself to find an alternative to orthodox beliefs. His 1917 sermon was an important indication that he had begun to focus on the divine as his priority. In 1925, after some impetus from Heidegger's existentialist philosophy, he published "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?"¹⁰⁵

God, not Jesus, had become the central focus for Bultmann's theology. Bultmann had been influenced by Wrede's thesis that Mark had written the messianic story of Jesus backwards into Jesus' life. Therefore, the church had misunderstood the mission of Jesus and had mistakenly conferred upon him the title of Messiah.¹⁰⁶ Bultmann disputed the divine nature of Jesus as it is presented. He declared that Jesus was not responsible for the announcements of divinity attributed to him by the evangelists. The notion of human

¹⁰⁴ Dennison, *The Young Bultmann*, 73-97.

¹⁰⁵ Bultmann, "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?"

¹⁰⁶ See Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; New York: Scribner's Sons, 1951), 1:26-27. Bultmann argues the life of Jesus was not messianic.

divinity was unknown in Palestinian culture, but it became applied to Jesus in Hellenism.¹⁰⁷ Bultmann alleged that an explanation of the divination of Jesus could be found in Greek heroic literature.¹⁰⁸ He rejected the orthodox teaching of the church and adopted the belief that Jesus has been mythologised by the early Christians and that Jesus' ministry was not a historical reality. In so doing, he has created a dilemma by advancing a theology of faith in Jesus lacking any historical basis.

Bultmann attempted to rectify this situation by turning to the Hebrew Bible to extract the metaphor of the kingdom of God. He turned to the 1892 work of Weiss to argue that Jesus did not create the concept of the Kingdom of God, since it was a common conception in Judaism, which expressed the idea of waiting for intervention by the divine. Jesus believed that divine intervention was evident in his own actions of healing. The Jewish concept of the eschaton, or divine intervention, was rescued from oblivion in the sense that Bultmann adapted it to his search for individual freedom. He did not reject Jesus' teaching completely, since he used Jesus' call to obedience as a foundation for his individualised eschaton of freedom through the word of God, and Jesus was important as the messenger of the Word of God.

This hermeneutic fits nicely with his 1917 sermon and illustrates that Bultmann had taken the ideas of the sceptics to heart and had moved forward with a vision of God becoming uppermost over the orthodox, divine Jesus. Bultmann credited Jesus' belief in expected divine intervention by retaining the eschaton in principle, and adapting it to the Hegelian notion of individual conflict resolution. Had Bultmann created a dilemma for

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 35.

¹⁰⁸ See Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 228.

himself by accepting that Jesus was teaching a Jewish tradition of the eschaton and then adapting it to his own existential theology? Bultmann was not rejecting Jesus' teaching since he was making use of it. He defended himself from charges of inconsistency by arguing that he was distinguishing between the church's claim for a divine Jesus and his own claim that, since Jesus was not making orthodox claims about his own person, he was only acting as a messenger for the Word.¹⁰⁹

Bultmann had taken to heart the argument of Albert Schweitzer that Jesus' belief in his kingdom had come to nought, because history was supposed to end with the eschaton, and it had continued.¹¹⁰ Bultmann labelled Jesus' interpretation of the eschaton mythical, because history has refuted it,¹¹¹ and he turned to Paul to bridge the gap between the salvation significance of the occurrence of Jesus' death and his mythical eschaton.¹¹² Bultmann writes: "The deed of divine grace consists in the fact that God gave Christ up to die on the cross; Christ is preached as 'the crucified' (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2; Gal. 3:1)."¹¹³ He argued that Jesus' death (and resurrection) is the decisive element in the person of Jesus: Paul is interested only in the fact that Jesus became man and lived on earth. It only interests him that he was "born of a woman under the law." Jesus' life, ministry, personality, and character, play no role, and neither does Jesus' message. Paul, therefore, is not thinking of the historical Jesus, Bultmann argues.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Bultman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 1:9.

¹¹⁰ Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 368-369.

¹¹¹ Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, 14.

¹¹² Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 1:292-293.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 295.

According to Bultmann, the kerygma functions without the life of the historical Jesus. Any positivist history from that period cannot be recovered and the church's orthodoxy must be relegated to the category of myth, which Bultmann dismissed as legend. Therefore, he argued that an objective, positivist history of Jesus is lost. Yet the dilemma continues to surface in the argument that the kerygma, which proclaims a crucified and risen Christ, appears to be citing history. The kerygma is using objective history from the earthly Jesus to proclaim its faith and it appears likely that Paul would have accepted this argument. While the historical nature of the earthly Jesus is different to that proclaimed in the kerygma, both are interwoven within a dualistic meaning. Bultmann has designated a commonality between the proclamation of the kerygma and the ministry of Jesus as a call to individual decision. His method of deconstruction, or demythologising as he referred to it, has led to an existentialist re-interpretation of the Jewish eschaton.

The Need for Demythologising

Bultmann was looking for a method to separate objective cultural forms of human existence from the ontic divine. Heidegger helped him to resolve a dilemma of how to deconstruct alien, "inauthentic" matter from an encounter with the divine. His labelling of most of the gospels as mythical presented a problem because Christianity was derived from a scriptural source. How then could he bridge the gap between scriptural authenticity and its mythical representation? In 1920, shortly before he met Heidegger, Bultmann wrote "Religion and Culture" which was published in *Die Christliche Welt*, a

leading liberal publication.¹¹⁵ He extended Kantian dualism to distinguish between reason and existence within a cultural context. He described culture as the product of reason in three forms: science, law (morality) and art. Culture is man-made and therefore objectified and non-divine. The encounter with the divine is explained by what happens inside the individual believer and not outside. Bultmann has created an ideological boundary where the individual's existence is removed from outside cultural interference. We can see Bultmann's reliance on Schleiermacher and Hegel at this point, but his demythologising hermeneutic is still hazy, and he needed Heidegger's input. Nevertheless, the essential idea was evident: the next step would be to include Heidegger's notion of authentic existence. It is at this point that Bultmann runs into serious difficulty on account of the fact that Heidegger had incorporated antithetical cultural matter into his philosophy, which was not purely anthropomorphic, like Bultmann's. Hence, there was a likelihood of cultural fallout, which Bultmann did not plan for. But before looking at Heidegger, I would like to examine more of the antecedents of Heidegger, not of Heidegger per se, but factors which help to explain Bultmann's choice of a path to Heidegger's philosophy and its cultural fall-out.

Bultmann argued that since New Testament myth contradicted modern science, it needed to be deconstructed in order to be understood by a modern laity. But the practice was not new because, as Schweitzer had argued, nineteenth-century liberal historians had constructed a Jesus of history in their image.¹¹⁶ Bultmann argued that liberal orthodoxy had reduced the kerygma to a set of idealistic ethics, thereby removing the essential

¹¹⁵ See J. M. Robinson, *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1968), 205-220.

¹¹⁶ We have seen this already in the description of Albert Schweitzer's work.

decisive act of God in Christ.¹¹⁷ He argued that the New Testament ignores Jesus as a teacher and proclaims him as the decisive event of salvation.¹¹⁸ The liberals had ignored the significance of myth, whereas he was arguing that myth needs to be re-interpreted. Bultmann's major premise is that the New Testament is challenging human existence.¹¹⁹ Here is the clue to why Heidegger's existential philosophy is paramount. The liberal tradition is evident in Bultmann's argument: the premise is that the gospels are saying something that is universally valid and that they have a message which needs to be interpreted. This argument supports his premise that the original gospel narratives were objective, scientific portrayals of truth as the ancients saw it. We need to re-interpret what they are saying in order to preach the word of God. But the bridge constructed by Bultmann to cross the mythical divide is derived from the premise that the gospel writers are appealing to our individual authentic existence. It is here that Bultmann was forced to draw on Heidegger to clarify the notion of individual authenticity.

In his 1950 essay entitled "The Problem of Hermeneutics," Bultmann wrestled with how to explain the problem of textual interpretation. He admitted it is full of contradictions, and cited Dilthey as an example of how interpretations of art and poetry were oriented towards the understanding of one particular existence in history. All historical documents can be subordinated to this question.¹²⁰ Bultmann was as adamant in his 1950's writing as he was in the 1920s, regarding the gospel message of individual

¹¹⁷ In "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?" Bultmann argued that the liberals had ignored God in their search for Jesus.

¹¹⁸ See Rudolf Bultmann (1941), *New Testament and Mythology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 12-13.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹²⁰ See Rudolf Bultmann, "The Problem of Hermeneutics" (1950), in *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, 248-249.

existence. The fact that he had not seen the need to change his view convinced him that he was on the right path. His deconstruction of the New Testament illustrates that Jesus is being proclaimed as “the decisive event of salvation.”¹²¹ To understand myth in Bultmann’s language is to realise that it is presenting a reality of existence which cannot be objectified.¹²² Bultmann has clarified the need to demystify the ancients’ language on the premise that they are presenting a version of the divine, which has importance for determining authentic individual existence.

Before I continue to the source of Bultmann’s existential philosophy in Heidegger, I wish to glance at some of the writing of Ernst Troeltsch, followed by Karl Barth. Troeltsch is important because he illustrates an opposite view to Bultmann, and because he was one of Bultmann’s professors. It is reasonable to expect Bultmann to have paid some attention to the views of Troeltsch. But there were political reasons why Bultmann ignored the work of Troeltsch.

E. Troeltsch

Ernst Troeltsch was a leading member of the History of Religions School and a peer of Wilhelm Herrmann who had taught both Barth and Bultmann. Both Bultmann and Barth were more influenced by Herrmann than by Troeltsch because of academic rivalry between Herrmann and Troeltsch. Sarah Coakley has documented how Troeltsch has been unfairly characterised.¹²³ Bultmann accused Troeltsch of turning Christology into a

¹²¹ Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology*, 12-13.

¹²² See Rudolf Bultmann, “On the Problem of Demythologising” (1952), in *New Testament and Mythology*, 95-130.

¹²³ Sarah Coakley, *Christ without Absolutes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 188-189.

reflection about a contingent past hero, namely Jesus. Coakley argues, however, that Troeltsch does not represent a dead end for the German liberal “historical Jesus.” He was writing from 1911-1913, when a crisis was being experienced about the meaning of religion generally by liberal scholarship, and about how the historical Jesus ought to be understood. Coakley catalogued a list of the most common complaints against Troeltsch, which she was able to refute.¹²⁴ She argues that although Troeltsch inherited the liberal mantle of scholarship, he presented a novel and unique position to Ritschl, Harnack, and Hermann. Yet Coakley is not defending Troeltsch from inconsistency. Inconsistency and paradox were characteristic of leaders trying to fill the void created by sceptics when discussing the relation of history to faith. Coakley is arguing that Troeltsch made a valuable contribution to the field not only by supporting the value of historical enquiry into the earthly Jesus for matters of faith, but also by providing an extra dimension to Christology. Troeltsch supported historical Jesus research, but he did not make it an either-or question. His *History of Religions*’ expertise allowed him to be open to a broader interpretation regarding the consistence of religion and where Christianity fitted in the equation.

The History of Religions School attempted to understand the origins of Christianity within its cultural context. Troeltsch was suspicious of the manner in which Herrmann’s ideas about Jesus’ ethical behaviour had been influenced by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German idealism. The irony is that Bultmann also shared the same background as Troeltsch, but chose to go in a different direction.¹²⁵ Troeltsch

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 14.

recognised in Bultmann and Herrmann a commitment to permanence, through an interpretation of scripture. But, in Troeltsch's view, historical criticism must recognise that interpretation changes constantly as the historian uses the three principles at his/her disposal: criticism, analogy, and correlation,¹²⁶ which guarantee varied responses. Robert Morgan argues that Bultmann had been immunised (socialised) against Troeltsch's thinking by Herrmann, and consequently never became disposed to consider Troeltsch's ideas useful. Morgan is suggesting that Bultmann's existential theology became hardened at the juncture where historical research had been found wanting by the sceptics, and where Herrmann's ideas, while important, were not completely convincing to Bultmann. Bultmann could have assessed the validity of Troeltsch's work regarding the philosophy of history, but he turned away. His reason for turning away from Herrmann was that Herrmann was seen as too idealistic in his interpretation of Jesus' spirit.¹²⁷

Ironically, both Morgan and Coakley have concluded that both historians shared a view of history which complemented each other.¹²⁸ Bultmann was familiar with Troeltsch's "The Significance of the Historical Existence of Jesus for Faith,"¹²⁹ but he had already become determined to move in the direction of dialectical theology at the expense of Troeltsch, after consulting with Dilthey and Gogarten.¹³⁰ Fergusson suggests that Bultmann refused to follow the relativist path identified by Troeltsch and retreated into the narrow confines of dialectical existentialism, where revelation is not tied to the

¹²⁶ Ibid., 13-14.

¹²⁷ See Robert Morgan "Troeltsch and the Dialectical Theology," in *Ernst Troeltsch and the Future of Theology* (ed. John Powell Clayton; London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 48.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 48, n. 72.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*, 123 -137. Note how he implies a dismissal of Troeltsch.

past and discerned through historical investigation because it is limited to a dynamic encounter with the existential present.¹³¹

Bultmann was more definite in his treatment of existentialism than Troeltsch was in his treatment of the historical Jesus. Troeltsch shows his dependence on Max Weber to some extent, in his assessment of why Jesus matters. His arguments reflect his History of Religions' training, and his friendship with Bousset underlines this. In "Significance of Historical Existence for Faith," Troeltsch examined the social and psychological reasons for the importance of Jesus. His arguments appear to be more sociological than theological, since he takes the view that communities need an archetype as a model. Prophets can serve as a rallying point as in the case of Muhammad.

Early Christianity was cultic in its formation, and Jesus fulfilled the need for a reference point to unite the members and provide a rallying point. Troeltsch sounds very much in the vein of Émile Durkheim's "Elementary Forms of Religious Life." But this argument leaves itself open to the criticism that, if a cult requires a rallying point for its stability, why does it have to be Jesus? Troeltsch argued that each cult is unique in its foundation around a belief system which draws on a particular figurehead. Jesus happened to be that figurehead, and therefore, he is essential for maintaining cultic cohesion.

The gist of Troeltsch's argument is that theology requires history to provide the infrastructure to interpret implications for faith. Since we are focussing on Christianity, we need a historical Jesus as the foundation for faith. We must pay attention to what history says about Jesus, namely, that he must be viewed as belonging to Israel in an

¹³¹ Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 14.

apocalyptic way. But he also belongs to the church.¹³² Coakley has devoted a chapter to examining Troeltsch's view on Christology, and she has concluded that he was flexible enough to accept the existence of many Christs. In other words, the various interpretations of Jesus, which found their way into church Christology, are equally valid, historically speaking.¹³³ The problem which Troeltsch faced was in trying to show a connection between the historical Jesus and the Christ of Faith. What is the common denominator? Is there one? Accordingly to Coakley, Troeltsch tried to solve the problem with use of a Hegelian approach. He was coming close to Bultmann's kerygma at the point where he argues that the spirit of Jesus is the important premise, not a set of details regarding his teaching and ministry. According to Coakley, Troeltsch was reverting to the mode of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Herrmann, who have been rejected by the liberal critics. A second approach was to identify with the gospel of Paul. But, as Coakley argues, "this method is fraught with difficulty because the connection of the spirit with Jesus' earthly life is not clear since the spirit is variously described as being released by the death of Jesus, or by his suffering, or rather differently and more subjectively, by the faith of the primitive Christians."¹³⁴ Neither Bultmann, nor Troeltsch, are clear in their presentation about the connection between the earthly Jesus and the Christ of Faith. Bultmann was more definite than Troeltsch, but he was working on a much narrower terrain, devoid of sociological and psychological phenomena, which he had outlawed as worldly, objective and, ultimately, sinful.

¹³² See Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question*, 192.

¹³³ See Coakley, *Christ without Absolutes*, 164-187.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

Morgan surveyed the combative terrain between Bultmann and Troeltsch over Christology, and concluded that the difference between the two theologians is less than expected. He argues that Bultmann's insistence on God not being objectifiable was well expressed through dialectical theology. However, Troeltsch's account of "how the believer's acknowledgement of revelation or religious truth was related to his historical and scientific study of religious tradition," was in substance, the same.¹³⁵ Morgan concludes that Bultmann was ignorant of the way that Troeltsch correlated revelation and faith, because of the way he claimed that he had "sold Christian theology out to the social sciences and gained universal validity at the cost of no longer mattering to anyone."¹³⁶

This somewhat badly framed discussion, particularly on the part of Bultmann, highlights the nature of the problem, namely, how to reconcile the empirical with a non-objective faith, as determined by Bultmann's dialectic theology. The problem is centred in the definition of what constitutes objectivity. Bultmann has defined worldliness as the boundary for faith. To cross that boundary is sinful. Yet worldliness includes the field known as religion, which in turn, includes cultic manifestations referred to as religious phenomena. Bultmann's theology teaches that God is not to be found in the cultic. Does historical study have any faith benefits? Troeltsch was prepared to search for God in worldly apparatus. Morgan concludes that Herrmann and Bultmann have paid a heavy price by severing links between Christian theology and the cultic world of religion.¹³⁷

The distinction between Troeltsch and Bultmann lies not in their theological focus, but in the way they each intended to reach their objective. Bultmann has narrowed

¹³⁵ Morgan, "Troeltsch and the Dialectical Theology," 62.

¹³⁶ Ibid. Cf. Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, 118.

¹³⁷ Morgan, "Troeltsch and the Dialectical Theology", 63.

the theological terrain and protected it from scientific scrutiny, while Troeltsch has entered the arena, prepared to do battle to validate the employment of the historical and its links to the sociological and psychological in finding faith in God. Troeltsch has shown that he was willing to meet Bultmann on his “search for meaning terrain” in the kerygmatic Christ by widening the concept of Christology, while Bultmann has anthropomorphised faith to an existential encounter, but without explaining what such an encounter really means. So if Bultmann condemns Troeltsch to anonymity for selling out to social science, he stands equally condemned from Troeltsch’s perspective for not explaining why the individual encounter is the only means of reaching God. The corollary to the argument would be that the world was created by the divine and there is no reason why it should be ignored theologically. For Bultmann to claim that it is objective, and therefore sinful to rationalise about God, is to place himself on the winning side of a power relationship.

Troeltsch is an important figure. His contact with the History of Religions School is important for his understanding of the cultural inputs to religious formation. We know that Bultmann’s Barthian-Heideggerian commitment led him to reject most of the tenets of the School, but he was forced into a strait jacket, as Barth has said, by his theology of anthropomorphism, and, although Bultmann did not agree, into theological subjectivity.

Consequently, for Bultmann, there was no room for Troeltsch’s socio-historical programme. But to what degree could Bultmann sustain his demythology and objectivity in the light of German National-Socialist control? The role of the historical Jesus becomes an axis of contention when measured against the claims of the authenticity-inauthenticity pole. The arguments of school members like Bousset and Schürer about the

superiority of the West (Greece) over the East (Palestine) influenced interpretation of the historical Jesus and his relation to the Christ of faith. Barth's arguments look convincing, while Troeltsch had something important to say about the important role of culture in understanding religion generally, and Christianity in particular. I shall examine this question in the next chapter on dissent in Germany. Meanwhile, we need to look at a theologian, who had more influence on Bultmann than Troeltsch, despite Troeltsch's obvious utility to Bultmann, but without the appeal of Barth.

K. Barth

Karl Barth was a contemporary of Rudolf Bultmann.¹³⁸ Both shared a concern for the breakdown of German society after the First World War, coupled with the rise of nationalism, and both turned to dialectical theology as a form of exegesis. However, Barth has protested against Bultmann's demythologising hermeneutic. Fergusson interprets it as a defence of "the unalterable objectivity of God's revelation in Christ."¹³⁹ Barth argued that the events of revelation in Jesus Christ are significant in themselves and demand recognition of the objectivity of the "incarnate Christ, his resurrection and ascension."¹⁴⁰ The fact that Barth was allowing for some objectivity in faith opens the door to a place for the historical Jesus. I am not arguing that Barth was promoting the historical research of old, but he was saying that the link with the historical Jesus must be recognised more: "the anthropological strait-jacket into which Bultmann forces his systematic theology, and unfortunately his exegetical theology as well, represents a

¹³⁸ Bultmann was born in 1884 and died in 1976, while Barth was born in 1886 and died in 1968.

¹³⁹ Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 127.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

tradition which goes back to W. Herrmann and even further to Ritschl and Schleiermacher.”¹⁴¹

Barth is joined with Ebeling in the fear that Bultmann’s inconsistency is identifying God with human existence. Barth’s view was that Bultmann had instituted too narrow a theological terrain for interpretation. In the correspondence between Barth and Bultmann, Barth argued, like Troeltsch, that a theologian needs to use a wide variety of concepts so that the message of the Bible can be clearly heard. In response, Bultmann criticised Barth for his “obsolete conceptuality.”¹⁴² Fergusson sees Barth’s theology as constituting the background to “post-liberal theology,” where the emphasis is on scriptural narrative, shaping belief, value, and practice. This theology illustrates Barth’s sensitivity to the importance of Christian dogma.

Dawes provides a model to assess Barth’s work. He has identified four issues: biblical interpretation, divine revelation, God’s action in human history, and finally, Barth’s comparison of religion with revelation.¹⁴³ Interpreting biblical texts has a long tradition. Barth, in the radical tone of Bultmann’s *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921), opposed the liberal historical positivist tradition. Like Bultmann, Barth was disillusioned with the liberal premise that historical research could provide a basis for faith. He also disagreed with the 1914 German war policy.¹⁴⁴ This ahistorical focus may

¹⁴¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics III.2* (ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; Edinburgh, 1960), 446.

¹⁴² Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 148, n. 6.

¹⁴³ See Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question*, 204.

¹⁴⁴ See Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (London: SCM, 1976).

have led to Barth's sharing with Bultmann the label of being opposed to historical biblical research while retaining his sympathy for the biblical message.

Dawes argues that Barth's attitude to historical criticism was ambivalent,¹⁴⁵ because he was arguing for a certain amount of historical investigation to account for the differences between the time period of the writers and our modern age. So a certain amount of interpretation is necessary. In his *Second Preface to the Romans*, Barth distinguishes between the role of the positivist historian and interpretive exegesis. The historian's job is to ensure that historical problems are ironed out so that the exegetical process can begin. Both Bultmann and Barth were conscious of the power implications in exegetical work. Barth stated that the historian is not qualified to interpret the message of a text.¹⁴⁶ But he accepted that because the words of the text are delivered by human beings, they do not magically appear on the paper; therefore, a historian is needed for interpretation.

The next stage requires the skill of the theologian. Both Barth and Bultmann placed a great deal of confidence in human criteria for ascertaining divine meaning. Bultmann argued that the Logos is channelled by means of preaching. Yet preachers differ with respect to their training, competence, motivation, and ability. Bultmann was confident that the divine would respond accordingly. Barth likewise was arguing for unique competence on the part of the theologian over and above the historian. Both were using human competence to advance a metaphysical argument, and both were motivated by an opposition to the tradition of historical liberal theology. Barth recognised the

¹⁴⁵ See Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question*, 207.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 209.

importance of historical criticism because the bible is “human speech uttered at particular times, in particular situations, in particular languages, and with a particular intention.”¹⁴⁷ But Barth distinguished between revelation transmitted in a human form, but with unique meaning: his emphasis is on God speaking through Jesus Christ but through human witnesses. What is not clear, at least to the layman or laywoman, is how a theologian can go beyond the historian in knowing what these ancient witnesses are really saying. Bultmann’s answer was that we have to demythologise, or deconstruct the ancients’ message. But he was not clearer than Barth in explaining how the exegete can improve on the historian’s interpretation.

Barth was definite in his exposition that divine revelation cannot be found in the historian’s reconstructed account: the content of revelation cannot be reduced to historical judgment. And he goes further: divine revelation is not to be found in the events of historical analysis, but in the testimony of witnesses, which includes the apostles. Here he was on similar terrain to Bultmann, who wrote that he was trying to situate the gospels in their *Sitz im Leben* (social context). Bultmann’s premise was that the true meaning of the gospels lay behind the text in the ideas of the members of the early Jesus communities. They transformed their ideas about Jesus into an oral history, which ultimately became gospel.

Barth was saying something similar with respect to a hidden meaning in the text, which can only be deciphered by an experienced exegete. Bultmann and Barth, therefore, shared the same terrain with respect to the implications about the theological value of the historical Jesus. Both Barth and Bultmann, in their rejection of the validity of historical

¹⁴⁷ Cited by Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question*, 213.

research for faith, agreed that the historical Jesus is a reconstructed version of Jesus. The true revelation is found in the faith images which the early community constructed about Jesus. However, neither Barth nor Bultmann can explain the difference between a historically constructed image of Jesus by a trained historian and a constructed image of Jesus by a group of early supporters of Jesus. Implicitly, the inference to be drawn is that the earliest members of the Jesus movement drew on witness accounts to construct historical images of Jesus which became faith images of Jesus.

Barth was trying to distinguish between positivist history and faith history. He was claiming that in one kind of history, the work of the divine is evident, whereas it is not in secular, positivist history. He used an historical term, which is not used by Bultmann: “primal history.” This term is found first in Romans 1:3-4. He was using this term to distinguish between Jesus as Christ from Jesus as “the” empirical, historical figure. In empirical history, Jesus is only myth.¹⁴⁸ But the Christ is primal history: cutting through history, but not touching positivist history. Bultmann called primal history, faith history or, *Geschichte*. But it is hard to understand Barth’s imagery of two histories of Jesus acting independently of each other. Barth accepted that the faith images constructed by early Christian followers are historical occurrences. But the substance of their creation defies positivist evaluation. Therefore, the creation of the Christ, via the imagination of Jesus’ followers, is non-historical in the positivist sense, and belongs in the primal history category. Consequently, the writing about these images is a primal historical event and cannot be evaluated positively, which supports Bultmann’s thesis that positivist history cannot access faith texts. Both Barth and Bultmann have succeeded in removing faith

¹⁴⁸ See Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question*, 224.

artefacts like the resurrection, the empty tomb theory, the incarnation, and the ascension from scientific scrutiny: Christ becomes timeless.¹⁴⁹ The eternal word exists in its own right. Jesus is God become human, but not human become God.¹⁵⁰ Christology does not imply a theology of the human Jesus. Barth wrote, “The historical Jesus of modern Protestantism falls to the ground as the object of faith and proclamation.”¹⁵¹

The substance of Barth’s theology is that one is forced to accept the teaching that although scripture is divinely inspired, to try to defend it rationally is a mistake and doomed to failure. You either accept the authority of the Bible or you do not. Consequently, faith and positivist history do not cohere. Bultmann rejected the culturally constructed argument of Troeltsch in the same manner as he rejected von Harnack’s arguments. He was closer to Barth, but even Barth did not support Bultmann’s theology completely. To avoid capitulation to cultural components in his theology he turned to the dialectical approach.

Dialectical Theology and Bultmann

Dialectic theology emerged after the publication of Barth’s *Epistle to the Romans* (1919), and Gogarten’s *Between the Times* (1920).¹⁵² These publications were landmarks in Bultmann’s theological formation because they confirmed his conclusion that liberal theology had focussed on human endeavour rather than on God. He found in Barth and

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 226.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Cited by Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question*, 230.

¹⁵² See Busch, *Karl Barth*, 106, and Friedrich Gogarten, “Between the Times,” in *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, 277-282.

Gogarten apparent soul-mates in the sense that they shared his view that God must be the primary purpose of theology and they raised the question of how this was to be formulated. Barth's theology of crisis appealed to Bultmann's own sense of crisis, while Gogarten's expounding of a philosophy, which rejected the importance of culture, was also useful. Both Barth and Gogarten helped Bultmann to formulate a dialectic which harmonised with the Kantian philosophy of Marburg. However, while Barth and Bultmann seemed to be in agreement, Bultmann was not convinced that Barth was sufficiently opposed to objectivity.

Bultmann's neo-Kantian faith made him wary of anything which impeded the inner consciousness of the individual in the search for an encounter with the divine. He considered that Barth supported the cultic aspect of religion over the total commitment to individual faith. He drew this conclusion from what Barth had written in support of Paul's Hellenistic Christ cult as embodying the essence of Christianity. This was anathema to Bultmann's neo-Kantian faith, which made the foundation of religion an individual matter. Bultmann interpreted Paul's view as promoting an objective view which obscured the true meaning of Christianity. However, while Bultmann disagreed with Barth on what he considered to be a psycho-social view of religion, he retained from Barth the idea of the dialectic, which taught that the relationship with God was dialectic, in the sense that God could not be accessed via reason or effort.

There is a strain of Lutheranism running through Bultmann's theology, which emphasises the total dependence of the believer on God, and that grace arrives as a gift. This view helps to explain Bultmann's interpretation of "objectivity" and how later in National-Socialist Germany he was able to separate church and state functions. This

distinction is evident in Bultmann's dealings with the Nazi elements in the church. Both Barth and Bultmann shared an antipathy to liberal theology, but they did not agree totally on how to develop a theology to replace it.

Bultmann's writings in the early to middle 1920s helped him to formulate the true nature of Christianity.¹⁵³ His "Religion and Culture" was written in response to Barth's *Romans*, while "Liberal Theology" and "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?" showed how his thinking was developing. He was opposed to liberal theology because of its focus on man as its subject: the liberals did not see the negative side of the God-man relationship. To understand the true nature of the God-man relationship, man would have to deny the world. This becomes the corner stone of Bultmann's theology: that an authentic relationship can only be achieved through a rejection of worldliness.¹⁵⁴

Bultmann rejected liberalism for its aura of unreality in a period of harsh reality in Germany. He felt that it did not interpret Christianity in a manner which connected the lay person with the gospel. Liberalism placed too much emphasis on ethics and created a

¹⁵³ Bultmann, "Religion and Culture" (1920), in *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology*, 205-220; idem, "Liberal Theology"; idem, "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?"

¹⁵⁴ See Bultmann, "Religion and Culture," where he dissects the meaning of culture and argues that the liberals, by their use of the historical method, were unable to separate culture from religion. This argument is expanded in his 1924 article, and explains why he felt so strongly against any theologian who found a place for culture. I argued above that he broke with Barth over this issue. And it partly explains his disdain for Troeltsch. His 1925 article expands on how God is the major focus of Christianity and he discusses the limits on how to approach the subject of God. The important lesson to be learned here is that there are a number of attributes connected with the subject of God: he is inscrutable and mysterious, he cannot be won over by good works, and he is almighty and powerful, but most importantly for Bultmann's theology, God exists in the innermost depths of our consciousness. Bultmann has been accused of an anthropomorphising of God. However, all of this calculation has been made on the basis of precedent and argument. He started with Schleiermacher and wound his way through liberalism, rejecting Ritschlism but accepting a good part of Herrmann, until he arrived at Barth. Barth became a stepping stone to Heidegger.

number of historical Jesuses which could not be upheld in Bultmann's view. His form criticism provided the death knell to the liberal tradition. Barth responded to the political crisis in Germany in a manner similar to Bultmann, except that Barth led the way with his publication of *Romans*. Bultmann was quick to realise that Barth's *Krisis*, ostensibly derived from Kierkegaard, appeared as the answer to his hermeneutical problem. From that point on, it was only a question of harmonising Barth's theology of crisis and looking for a way to put the issue of culture into theological perspective. Bultmann claimed in his autobiography that he had remained faithful to liberalism and that he had just extended it. And it is true. Schleiermacher was still visible: God had been removed from the outside and was now to be found in the innermost recesses of the conscience. Under Bultmann's anthropological theology there was no longer any need to consider the role of culture in accessing God. But this juncture was not reached until the influence of Heidegger had fully materialised.

M. Heidegger

Dennison has provided a good account of the young Bultmann, at heart a romantic in his love for the north German countryside, but at war with the built-up urban environment. Dennison makes the case that Bultmann experienced a sense of crisis in himself, which he projected onto the need for a reformation of the church.¹⁵⁵ Dennison is arguing that Bultmann formed acquaintanceships with Barth and Heidegger for similar reasons. Barth's 1919 *Epistle to the Romans* illustrated his determination to fight liberal

¹⁵⁵ See Dennison, *The Young Bultmann*, 56-57. Dennison is not arguing that this was the only reason. Bultmann was convinced that liberal theology did not present the scriptures in a realistic light for the laity.

orthodoxy. In 1923, when Heidegger joined the faculty at Marburg, Bultmann was impressed with his determination to overthrow the old order.¹⁵⁶

Heidegger left Marburg in 1927, but in the intervening period Bultmann and Heidegger met weekly for discussion, they held joint seminars with doctoral students to formulate their ideas, and they offered a seminar together.¹⁵⁷ Hans Jonas arrived at Marburg in 1924 and was impressed with the tenor of excitement from the followers of Bultmann and Heidegger.¹⁵⁸ The period from 1919 to 1927 proved to be a productive period for theological reform in Germany. When Heidegger became impressed with the rise of National Socialism in the 1930s, it led to a straining of the relationship with Bultmann, although it did not lead to a complete break in the relationship, despite Heidegger's unwillingness to abandon the tenets of National Socialism.¹⁵⁹ Bultmann needed Heidegger's philosophy of *Being and Time* to provide a framework for his reformed liberal theology.¹⁶⁰ It is important to note that Heidegger never maintained his initial commitment to the concept of existence because he abandoned the extreme anthropomorphic focus of his philosophy. But Bultmann did not follow Heidegger in this respect. The question which must be asked is why Bultmann would continue to adhere to an anthropomorphic philosophy when the founder had abandoned it?

¹⁵⁶ See Kelley, *Racialising Jesus*, 134.

¹⁵⁷ See Dennison, *The Young Bultmann*, 132.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ See Walter Schmithals, *Introduction to the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (London: SCM, 1968), chapter 1. See also Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, 9. Notice Bultmann's dedication of the first volume to Martin Heidegger.

¹⁶⁰ See L. Malevez, *Understanding Existence: The Christian Message and Myth* (London: SCM, 1958), 37.

Bultmann and Heidegger approached the question of human understanding and existence from different directions. Heidegger saw the problem of the world in different terms to Bultmann: he wrestled with the Cartesian view of the world, which he ultimately rejected. Fergusson argues that Heidegger saw the Cartesian model as distorted because it centres on the human subject trying to escape from the world in order to focus on itself in a barren environment, whereas Heidegger wanted to give more credence to the world as a set of social and cultural relations which influence the individual sense of existence.¹⁶¹ Bultmann's interpretation of Heidegger was the opposite. Where Heidegger was confronting the issue of accommodation to worldly ontology, Bultmann was removing the world as an issue by ignoring it. However, both Bultmann and Heidegger shared the view of the fallen state of man, which is to be interpreted as a desperate cry for the love of God. Bultmann saw in Heidegger the promise of forgiveness inherent in the gospels. Therefore the divine saving event could be accommodated from a different direction than from the nihilism implied in Heidegger. So Bultmann was straddling a divide: Heidegger was not promoting a Christian philosophy, but Bultmann was convinced he would be able to use this framework to fit an interpretation of the kerygma.

Existentialism is a difficult and abstract set of ideas that revolve around the terms ontic and ontology. Ontic refers to things and includes God in Heidegger's thinking. Ontology is the expression of things which includes those expressions of the world which

¹⁶¹ See Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 60. Although I am citing Fergusson because of his bringing attention to the Cartesian aspect of Heidegger's problem, I assume responsibility for the interpretation. See also Charles B. Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), and Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958).

have been constructed and are therefore the products of human reason.¹⁶² Heidegger was trying to accommodate the ontological to the ontic, whereas Bultmann decided to outlaw the influence of the ontological by describing these elements as objective constructions which alienate the human from the divine. The problem in Bultmann's theology here is that ontology has been created by God and ought not to be considered alien. Heidegger decided that this anthropomorphic centred approach did not lead him to unfathom the meaning of existence, and so he abandoned it after leaving Marburg. The common issue between Heidegger and Bultmann was over man's role in achieving authenticity: Heidegger took a less anthropomorphic approach which suggests that he was finding an authentic place for ontological (cultural) experiences. Bultmann eulogised: "Lay hold on divinity; make it your own: Down it will climb from its heavenly throne."¹⁶³

Bultmann was expounding his theology that the old idealism is no longer valid. He used this opportunity to denigrate the glorying of the Jews over their faithfulness to the law and the glorying of Gnostic wisdom. These are examples, he says, of the dominant attitude of man, of his independence and autonomy, which will lead in the end to frustration.¹⁶⁴ The emphasis on the authentic-inauthentic divide is taken from Heidegger and ensures that the Christian message of salvation is linked to Heidegger's existential philosophy. Bultmann's hermeneutic teaches that human beings are totally dependent on God's mercy. Any attempt to influence God by (Jewish) "works" is

¹⁶² See Malevez, *Understanding Existence*, 19-27, 37. Malevez quotes Bultmann, "classical ontology is not up to the task of modern theology. We need to shake off the domination of objectivising thought and present a new ontology. He cites *Kerygma and Myth*, 209. However my search did not find it.

¹⁶³ Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, 30.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

doomed to frustration and inauthenticity. Consequently, Bultmann was able to label anyone, or any denomination which engages in “works,” as inauthentic. This also led him to place an emphasis on Paul’s rejection of the law and to interpret it as a rejection of the Jews.

The acute difference between Bultmann’s and Heidegger’s philosophy is that while Heidegger was moving in the direction of de-centralising individual experience in his philosophy of human existence, Bultmann was intent on centralising the believer, while objectifying, or placing out of bounds, the individual’s cultural experiences. The relationship of the believer to God becomes the central focus of Bultmann’s theology and must not be sidetracked by cultural baggage.¹⁶⁵ Bultmann argued that an authentic relationship with the divine is achieved in a moment of decision. However, these moments follow a pattern of re-occurrence, so that an experience of crisis is constantly maintained. Bultmann did not explain the nature of this decision-making: he side-stepped the discussion by referring it to the history of the individual, which, because it is an individual experience, is unfathomable. Kähler’s distinction between faith history and cultural, positivist history, was being recalled and applied by Bultmann to buttress his existentialist theology. Bultmann argued that the New Testament speaks of crisis and Heidegger has provided a framework for understanding this dialogue.¹⁶⁶ Kelley asserts

¹⁶⁵ See Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 149-150 (141-172, for a description of Bultmann’s interpretation of Paul’s theology).

¹⁶⁶ Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology*, 23. Bultmann says two things, here: that critics were wrong to repeat that he was utterly dependent on Heidegger’s philosophy, and that philosophy already sees what the New Testament says. The implication is that he cannot be criticised for using a philosophy anyway, and Heidegger is the most useful at this time, since it is only a “profane philosophical presentation of the New

that Bultmann had inadvertently raised the issue of ideological contamination by his use of Heidegger's existentialist philosophy, in addition to the problem of how to reconcile the historical Jesus.¹⁶⁷ In his search for individual communion with God he had embraced Heidegger's taxonomy of authenticity, which had led him to abandon links with Israel and with constructed cultural artefacts, to narrow the theological terrain so that it lies beyond the scrutiny of liberal research. He had reinterpreted liberalism to create a new version of history: anthropomorphic faith history devoid of cultural meaning.

There are a number of themes in Bultmann's existential philosophy,¹⁶⁸ but the notion of pre-understanding causes confusion since it is based on the history which the individual brings to the encounter and the moment of decision. How could the individual avoid the bringing of cultural baggage, labelled objective, to the encounter? Bultmann replied that the moment of decision permits the believer to choose the Christian route and turn to the divine embedded within him/her. Yet Bultmann was not speaking of conscience, because he argues that true existence goes deeper. But what did he mean? Fergusson concludes that Bultmann faced a problem between theology and philosophy and needed to give philosophy a lower profile in order to explain his theology.¹⁶⁹ Kelley argues that the core of Bultmann's hermeneutic is eschatology. Bultmann has

Testament view of who we are." See also Kegley, "Philosophy and Theology in Bultmann's Thought," in *The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann*, 130.

¹⁶⁷ Kelley, *Racialising Jesus*, 138.

¹⁶⁸ See Bultmann's *Essays*. See also Rudolf Bultmann, "The Historicity of Man and Faith," in *Existence and Faith*, 107-129, where Bultmann refutes his critics, particularly Gerhardt Kuhlmann. The themes were an emphasis on pre-understanding and an historic approach to faith, as existence before and after faith. Bultmann was referring to the moment of individual decision as the historical axis point.

¹⁶⁹ See Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 69.

transformed the eschatology of Jesus, as it is expressed in the New Testament, into an individual experience. Hence, the moment of decision in Bultmann's theology is a present eschatology, in distinction to the future eschatology of Jesus.

In Bultmann's terms, eschatology means a victory over evil, or objectivity. Bultmann, according to Kelley, was following an existential morality tale and pursuing a narrative of Christian authenticity versus one of Jewish inauthenticity.¹⁷⁰ Between Fergusson and Kelley, the case is being made that Bultmann's appropriation of Heidegger's existentialist philosophy was leading him into a corner. On the one hand, his delimiting of authenticity to a de-objectivising mode pits philosophy against theology in the interpretation of authenticity, while on the other hand, Bultmann's anti-liberal tendencies, when added to the influences he has been subjected to, had made him susceptible to describing the birth of Christianity in ideological terms.¹⁷¹

Kelley concludes that Bultmann was describing a morality tale around the pole of authenticity-inauthenticity¹⁷² where he sees three possibilities of existence: live inauthentically, while being blissfully unaware of the possibilities of other forms of existence, or encounter an opening up of future possibilities by means of a jolt, or be lost in the present, after an enlightening moment of encounter, before choosing to drift back to inauthenticity. This construct requires that new positive encounters must be made constantly to maintain authenticity and avoid the slipping back into inauthenticity.

¹⁷⁰ Kelley, *Racialising Jesus*, 142.

¹⁷¹ See Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism* (in particular, "Ferdinand Christian Baur," 97-120). See also Kelley, "Jesus and the Myth of the West," 64-88.

¹⁷² See Kelley, *Racialising Jesus*, 140.

The core of Bultmann's readiness principle to embrace the moment of decision rests on the principle of exegesis preparation. Readiness requires a pre-understanding of the text or the sermon (proclamation) to enable the voice of God to speak. Bultmann rejected cultural objectivity as an authentic part of individual pre-understanding and left himself open to the charge of self-description by the believer.¹⁷³ Barth raised an important point where he said, "It is the risen Jesus Christ who should be the objective, not the individual's own self-history."¹⁷⁴ This insight by Barth is critical to understanding Bultmann's Achilles heel, where he claims to be focussing on the kerygmatic or proclaimed Christ, while at the same time, he is emphasising the importance of the individual's history, minus cultural objectivity. There is a tangle of confusion here described by Barth, who sees Jesus as cultural activity.

To Bultmann the theological issue is freedom: "anxiety belongs to the structure of being human thought, it is known predominantly in man's flight from it in fear."¹⁷⁵ He was close to Kierkegaard in this view of fear and hopelessness, but while the Heideggerian construct of authenticity-inauthenticity widens the understanding of who can attain authenticity, and therefore salvation, it would appear that certain individuals, or even ethnic groups, could be beyond the pale, at least in Bultmann's interpretation, where the Jews, by their nationalist exclusivity, have outlawed themselves from universal salvation. Bultmann must be credited with widening the scope of salvation through Jesus

¹⁷³ Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 127.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Painter, *Theology as Hermeneutics*, 35 (Painter quotes *Existence and Faith*, 305, but my edition, at least, does not show it).

Christ, but his emphasis was Hegelian and not Christian, even though he used Paul to support his pro-Christian stance.

Judaism and Inauthenticity

Bultmann has interpreted Paul's criticism of Jewish legalism as an existential critique of Judaism. Most of the tenets of Christian anti-Judaism can be found in Bultmann's use of Heidegger's philosophy of an authentic existence.¹⁷⁶ There is a certain tenor running through Bultmann's commentary on the Jews: words like "shrill," "proud," "boastful," "judgemental," for example, permeate the discourse and the literature in Germany on the subject reflected the same vocabulary.

Bultmann argued that there was a time when the Jews were in communion with God, but this connection was broken "once the idea of God's transcendence was lost" and performance in the form of ritual and legal practices replaced the original idea of God.¹⁷⁷ Consequently they became slaves to what Bultmann would describe as objectivity and worldliness: "these regulations went into detail to the point of absurdity."¹⁷⁸ Implicitly, Bultmann was arguing from a Lutheran perspective: salvation can only be achieved by faith, not by legal prescription, and faith demands an acceptance of God's mercy as a gift. In his treatment of Jesus, Bultmann acknowledged that "the proclamation of Jesus must be considered within the framework of Judaism," but also that "Jesus preache[d] radical

¹⁷⁶ See Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting*, 59-79, where Bultmann presents an historical overview of Jewish history.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

obedience in place of ritualism.”¹⁷⁹ Jesus is interpreted as speaking polemically against ritual, by emphasising the Love principle. Bultmann ultimately deconstructed Jesus’ teaching to mean that he was teaching an existential message: do not store up goods as a means of security. This message of Jesus coheres with the existentialist dogma of not seeking security through the world. Jesus was portrayed as a hero for bringing God out of a false transcendence. Bultmann concluded that “the judgement he [i.e. Jesus] speaks of is the judgement of the individual.”¹⁸⁰

The Fourth Gospel

Bultmann adopted the Gospel of John to explain his existential theology of Jesus. In the *Gospel of John* he traced Christian origins to a Gnostic cult operating around the time of John the Baptist.¹⁸¹ The Gnostic redeemer myth was alive in the History of Religions School between 1923 and 1925, a seminal period for Bultmann’s existentialist formation. In 1925 Bultmann published “What Does It Mean to Speak of God?”¹⁸² This essay reflected his conviction that the liberals had ignored the question of revelation by the divine and supported his need for a search into the mysticism of John to focus on the nature of divine revelation.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 71-72.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 79.

¹⁸¹ See Michael Waldstein, “Evolution of Bultmann’s Interpretation of John and Gnosticism,” *Lateranum* 70 (2004): 313-352, an excellent article which illustrates the evolution of Bultmann’s thought around the topic of John.

¹⁸² Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, 53-65.

Bultmann's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* has been described as a masterpiece,¹⁸³ even if, according to Koester, Bultmann drew on the History of Religions School, and in particular, on the work of Wetter, Reitzenstein, and Bousset.¹⁸⁴ Waldstein takes issue with Koester's praise of Bultmann by arguing that Bultmann did not remain constant to his pre-1925 position, since he did a one-hundred-and-eighty-degree turn due to his existential hermeneutic.¹⁸⁵ The issue is described by Wetter, another member of the History of Religion School:

Characteristic for the Gospel of John is the influence of the concept of a personal God, the presence of ethical aspects, the linking of religious mysticism with orthodox faith, the importance of the historical person of Jesus and his uniqueness in the faith of the community.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 94. Fergusson sees a parallel in John's Gospel to Bultmann's hermeneutic: it is devoid of sermons and parables and has a simple message. However, I do not agree with Fergusson that Bultmann has a simple message. I think Fergusson is saying that John's focus on a redeemer who lacks any explanation as to why he has been sent is characteristic of Bultmann's emphasis on an uncritical faith. Bultmann has moved from an acceptance of John's cosmic divine man to a Jesus whose only uniqueness is to be found in the faith of the community, known as the kerygma. But Bultmann retains John's Gnostic imagery of contrasted light with darkness as a metaphor for authentic versus inauthentic decision: an authentic decision will encounter the divine, whereas the opposite will not. The person of Jesus is now part of John's equation: an encounter with the divine will occur through an acceptance of faith through Jesus Christ.

¹⁸⁴ Koester, "Early Christianity from the Perspective of the History of Religions," 68.

¹⁸⁵ Waldstein writes: "it is difficult to imagine a greater distance from Bultmann's later existentialist interpretation of John in which virtually the only point left from both the negative side of this comparison is the uniqueness of Jesus in the faith of the community" ("The Evolution of Bultmann's Interpretation of John," 315).

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 314. I have not given the whole quotation of Waldstein because I think what I have selected emphasises Bultmann's later concern, namely, the linking of the person of the historical Jesus to faith is no longer the issue.

Bultmann's 1925 essay, "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?" clarified the direction he was taking. On the basis of that essay it is clear that he interpreted John as speaking of a redeemer who would not say what his mission was. The only interpretation open to Bultmann is that, although John is speaking of Jesus as the redeemer, he is coming to bring a revelation based on faith. He is sent by God, but he himself has no theological importance: hence, the about turn.¹⁸⁷

Indication that Bultmann re-interprets the message of Fourth Gospel as a call for decision can be found in his statement that "John has made the cosmological dualism of Gnosticism into a dualism of decision."¹⁸⁸ Bultmann by retaining the Gnostic, Johannine dualism, illustrates that he was moving in Heidegger's direction as early as the early twenties, prior to cementing his relationship with Heidegger's existentialism. His certainty appears in his statement that "the idea of the incarnation of the redeemer has in some way... penetrated Christianity from Gnosticism" and that early Christianity "appropriated this myth and made it fruitful."¹⁸⁹ But there is a question mark against Bultmann's confidence: if he was arguing that the basis of faith in God through Jesus is mythical, then he had no need of the earthly Jesus for faith. Yet he persisted in stating the

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. Bultmann believed that John adopted the Redeemer myth from the Mandaean community, a pre-Christian sect. John then transformed the mythical, cosmic redeemer into Jesus, using dialectic familiar to Bultmann. Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 96, suggests that Bultmann interpreted John as promoting two opposing modes of existence reflected in light for life and darkness for death. Fergusson then extrapolates to showing how a corollary to this hermeneutic was the principle of alienation as a by-product of inauthenticity. John was able to argue that any group or person who refused the offer of faith in the messenger of the divine, Jesus, was alien. It followed, logically, that since the Jews had rejected faith in Jesus, then they were alien, inauthentic, and subject to the darkness and the deprivation of the mercy of the divine.

¹⁸⁸ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Theology*, 2:21.

¹⁸⁹ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 26.

need for Jesus, even to the point of developing a strong reliance on Paul, as we shall see. Hegel, undoubtedly, provides an avenue of consistency to this apparent paradox: with the use of Heidegger's Hegelian existence philosophy Bultmann was able to build a bridge from the mythical hermeneutics of John to the individual believer. The development of his hermeneutic labelling of objectivity as worldly, and therefore alien and inauthentic, enabled Bultmann to by-pass the historical Jesus, while emphasising the role of encounter with the divine, thus satisfying mankind's need for love and recognition. But this argument still leaves the question open concerning the role of the earthly Jesus.

How could the earthly Jesus be made to serve Bultmann's hermeneutic where God comes first? One hypothesis is that Jesus opens up the question of Jewish authenticity: Jesus is Jewish, but Bultmann has argued that Jesus rose above the tenets of Judaism.¹⁹⁰ Since Jesus was the one to make this eschatological proclamation, and since the church proclaimed it, then, to Bultmann, it followed that proclamation was the key to understanding the significance of Jesus. Jesus was indispensable in this respect.

Bultmann appears to have successfully bridged the dilemma within a Hegelian context. But Bultmann's hermeneutics do not stop at this point. He established the need for salvation by faith and his Lutheran theology forced him to take a further step: to label those who try to find security and escape, from choosing between light and darkness, as destined to experience inauthenticity, dissonance, and the loss of the gift of mercy

¹⁹⁰ Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting*, 92-93. Bultmann argues that Jesus was proclaimed by the church ("the church proclaims him") because the early Christians believed him when he said that the destiny of men is determined by their attitude to him and his word. This belief led to his being proclaimed "Messiah." The early church expected him to come on "clouds of heaven" bringing salvation and judgment. This teaching became specifically "Christian preaching."

forthcoming from the divine. His hermeneutic of objectivity leads to a labelling of seeking salvation by works, as sin. This particular aspect of Bultmann's salvation ethics was obviously derived from Luther's anti-Catholicism, coupled with distaste for indulgencies and Purgatory.

The anti-Judaism evident in John is manifest, equally, in Bultmann. Bultmann has drawn on the history of ideas to help in the formation of his theology. He saw in the cosmic dualism of John a way to reject liberal positivism without rejecting Christianity completely. However, when he accepted the theology of John, he accepted the hermeneutic that went with it, namely that those who rejected the claim of Jesus rejected the implicit faith that went with it, and that implied a rejection of Christianity. It would follow that such dissidents could be labelled "inauthentic," and given the tendencies in human nature to take sides, and given German anti-Jewish sentiments, it was inevitable that Judaism would be on the outside. Bultmann was unable to escape the political repercussions of his theology in a Germany undergoing dramatic political change, based on a need to find self-respect after the war. The hostile anti-German Treaty of Versailles (1919), enforced largely by the French government, contributed to a culture which became hostile to those labelled outsiders. Given the political climate in Germany, it was inevitable that the Jewish people would be labelled outsiders, or at the best, "guests," and this would create political implications for Bultmann's existentialist theology.

Bultmann's theology was a theology of decision in the present. The traditional understanding of a futurist eschatology taught by Jesus was deconstructed by Bultmann to mean a decision through the preached word of Jesus. Jesus' words had a link with the Father: that is what the church proclaimed. Bultmann, writing about judgement says,

“judgement is not a specially contrived sequel to the coming and the departure of the Son.”¹⁹¹ He explains the message of John: Judgement is not a future cosmic event. The mission of the Son (Jesus by implication) has been completed, because he has descended. He then asserts the corollary: the earlier naïve eschatology of Jewish Christianity and Gnosticism has been abandoned to favour a radical understanding of Jesus’ appearance as the eschatological event. He can separate the authentic from the inauthentic, believers and unbelievers. Those who do not believe are lost. His argument is that Christianity has become a universal religion unlike Judaism, which was a religion confined to its ethnic membership. Since the mercy of the divine is extended to all, not to accept this gift is to ask for death. Bultmann reiterates the message of John as,

Taking the *Jewish Religion*, as an example, John makes it clear through it how the human will to self-security distorts knowledge of God, makes God’s demand and promise into a possession and thereby shuts itself up against God.¹⁹²

The paradox of authentic historical interpretation was a dilemma which Bultmann was forced to confront. Heidegger’s existentialism was major step, and the deconstructing of John and the Pauline letters placed him beyond criticism for a while, at least. Eve-Marie Becker suggests that Bultmann saw in John a “historicising of the unhistorical.” John has anthropomorphised the eschaton. He has removed the nationalist, Jewish interpretation and replaced it with a human face signifying the essence of crisis which demands decision to attain authenticity. Becker interprets John as saying that

¹⁹¹ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 155.

¹⁹² Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2:27 (Bultmann’s italics).

under this new interpretation, the eschaton of the old world is being replaced by a new world order.¹⁹³

This idea is Hegelian in the sense that a national spirit is at work replacing and renewing, and may help to explain the attractiveness of the interpretation to Bultmann. History has found a place in human, individual history. The individual believer brings an individual experience to the encounter where preaching will open the opportunity to follow the Word. Implicit in the development of Bultmann's theology is a theology of power. Bultmann gives power to the preacher in preaching the word. The individual believer is forced to submit to the power of the preacher's word. Hegelian labelling of what constitutes authenticity has ethnic implications as it places Christianity in a politically superior position to those who reject it. Bultmann's tone reinforces this assumption.¹⁹⁴ Bultmann invoked the Hegelian spirit to argue for Judaism being elevated only after an encounter with the Greek spirit: Jewish ethics are but superficial ethics of obedience.¹⁹⁵ Gerdmar argues that Bultmann's attitude to the Jews hardened with time. In the 1920s he gave credit to Jewish law as not being a burden to them.¹⁹⁶ By the beginning of World War II, in 1940, his attitude had hardened, which might be explained by the fact

¹⁹³ E.-M. Becker, "Hermeneutik und Geschichte bei Rudolf Bultmann," in *Geschichte und Vergangenheit. Rekonstruktion – Deutung – Fiktion* (ed. U. H. J. Körtner; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2007), 53-65.

¹⁹⁴ See Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 383. Bultmann was critical of what he called later Judaism, where he saw great differences between Jesus and the rabbis. He spoke of a contrast between the Hebrew Bible, ethical law, and prophets, on the one hand, and a legalistic later Judaism in Palestinian Judaism, on the other. According to Bultmann, Palestinian Judaism observed a great amount of unintelligible and useless commandments and it did not reinterpret these morally as "the Hellenistic Judaism under the influence of Greek thinking did."

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 384.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 381.

that the country was at war and the Jews were labelled, by the state, an economic and cultural problem.

In 1928, before the rise of Hitler to power, Bultmann supported a critical response by Gerhard Kittel to the work of Bousset who supported the syncretist view of the origins of Christianity at the expense of Palestine. Bultmann agreed that rabbinic material had been ignored.¹⁹⁷ Yet, when he had the opportunity to formally agree with Kittel, that Christianity originated in Palestine, he backtracked, since Kittel's thesis was the opposite of Bultmann's Christology premise, based on the emergence of a Christ cult in the Greek diaspora.¹⁹⁸ Consequently, Bultmann argued that Judaism and Jesus were unimportant for understanding the origins of Christianity.

Gerdmar's perspective is that Bultmann does not have a committed point of view: he is closer to Weiss than Bousset in the question of continuity between Jesus and Judaism. He sits on the fence over the idealistic portrayal of Jesus as representative of a superior form of Judaism: here he was closer to Bousset.¹⁹⁹ Bultmann was inconsistent in his theology, and when his position on the Jews is considered in more detail, he appears ambivalent enough to avoid being labelled anti-Semitic while retaining an anti-Jewish image, due to his reducing the theological importance of the historic, Jewish Jesus. It is important to remember that Bultmann refused to be swayed, despite arguments to the contrary by eminent scholars like Harnack and Troeltsch, and some measure of disagreement by Barth.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 382.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. Bultmann opposed the continuity between later Christianity and its Palestinian origins, which is opposite to what Kittel was claiming.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 384.

F. C. Baur

Ferdinand Christian Baur is being placed here, as opposed to an earlier chronological position, because he is central to understanding how Bultmann inherited an anti-Judaism position from the Enlightenment era. Baur acted as a catalyst for Bultmann's orientation to existentialism and needs to be understood in closer proximity to Bultmann's emerging ideas of Hegel.

Heidegger and by implication Bultmann, as a practitioner of existentialist philosophy, did not invent anti-Judaism: it was alive and well over a hundred years at least before their time. Baur is described as a true exegete whose influence has been immense. He was known as the founder of the Tübingen school and a follower of Hegel's ideas. It is well known that Hegel possessed racial ideas, which were reflected in his view that the *Geist*, as a spiritual force was felt in particular peoples, at a given time. This idea was attractive to the idea of a German *Volk* struggling to define itself. Baur, as the founder of the Tübingen School, instituted an idealistic dialectical history, which became the model for the rest of the nineteenth century.²⁰⁰

In the struggle to identify itself, the newly evolved German state looked to the lessons learned from the Enlightenment, which, in turn, reconstructed the history of antiquity in its political fight with church authorities. The leaders of the Enlightenment realised that they were fighting myth and superstition, and so they enlisted the support of Rationalism, derived from the Greco-Roman culture.²⁰¹ Kelley argues that Hegel

²⁰⁰ See Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 97.

²⁰¹ See Kelley, *Racialising Jesus*, 43.

developed a philosophy which illustrated how Western culture ultimately eclipsed the East. The implication for Judaism was that it was part of an oriental wasteland left behind as the spirit of the West triumphed over it. Kelley argues that Hegel's philosophy found a willing partnership in Christianity's traditional anti-Judaism.²⁰² Hegel's philosophy of the *Geist* depicts the Jews as separating from mainstream culture. Kelley argues that the separation of the Jews from nature and spirit is "the axis around which Hegel spins his own version of anti-Jewish hostility."²⁰³ Hegel saw Greece as the first truly spiritual culture.²⁰⁴ Baur's historical context was derived from Hegel's world history narrative.²⁰⁵

Baur was the first historian to see Jewish Christianity playing an important role in the development of Christianity in the first two centuries.²⁰⁶ The view that a struggle ensued between Pauline and Jewish Christianity owes its nascence to him. Baur pictured a struggle between narrow, Jewish adherence to biblical laws, on the one hand, while he argued that Christianity was universal, reforming and spiritualising.²⁰⁷ Baur's influence was extended throughout, by the influence of the Tübingen school.²⁰⁸

²⁰² Ibid., 52-57.

²⁰³ Ibid., 58.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 59.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 68.

²⁰⁶ Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 112.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. Heschel points out that Baur was different to Schleiermacher in his view that there was no discontinuity between Christianity and Judaism. However, the relationship was not equal, because the relationship is one of negation.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 107. Heschel says that Geiger should be recognised as aligning himself with the Tübingen school. He approved of its historiography, but disagreed with its depiction of Judaism in early Christianity where it used negative stereotypes to depict differences between Jews and Gentiles.

The Tübingen school dominated between 1830 and 1860, and it would be expected that such sentiments would arouse anti-Christian feeling on the part of German Jews. However, Heschel shows that although Abraham Geiger, a mid-nineteenth-century Jewish historian, detested the negative stereotyping of Judaism, he was sympathetic to the scholarly approach used by the Tübingen school. This was also the period of Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, which, according to Heschel, influenced Geiger in his historical approach.²⁰⁹

Christian-Jewish scholarship was civilised for the most part during this period, but it was the rise of Ritschl to prominence in the Tübingen School, which changed the nature of the dialogue on Jesus in Judaism. Where historians had been left to their own devices to investigate the role of the Jewish Jesus as the founder of Christianity, this changed under Ritschl, who introduced four governing principles which determined the direction of Christian scholarship. In Ritschl's opinion, Jesus had not only transformed Judaism, he had condemned it. The affinity which Baur had cultivated with Geiger, where Judaism was seen as a creative force involved in the shaping of Christianity, had to be eliminated. The work of scholars like Geiger, who had played a role in the historical reconstruction of Christian origins, had to be excluded. Finally, historical evidence for Jesus existed, which could be provided by his earliest followers.²¹⁰

The divide between Baur and Ritschl was huge, particularly in their treatment of the historical Jesus. Where Baur, in the manner of Strauss, had portrayed Jesus in his Palestinian setting, Ritschl had exaggerated Jesus' role as an extreme critic of Judaism.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 110.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 123.

²¹¹ Ibid., 123-126. Heschel argues that Ritschl was responsible for sidelining the responsible work of the earlier Tübingen school together with the work of Jewish scholars like Geiger, and for introducing a move

Ritschl proved to be a dangerous omen for Judaism in its skirmishing with Christianity. Heschel summarises his influence to the extent that he privileged theologians over historians in interpreting Christian history and he exercised enough hegemony to the extent that Jewish scholarship was marginalised.²¹²

There was a political dimension to Ritschl's theology which was lacking in Baur's. Germany had become unified under Bismark and was undergoing an identity crisis. Theology had an important role to play in this venture. Ritschl's teaching, which emphasised the marginal role of the Jewish-Christian, undoubtedly played an important role in determining the ultimate, social placement of the Jews under the Third Reich, when citizenship became an important topic for discussion. Gerdmar argues that neo-Kantian theology had begun to exert itself under Ritschl and the effect was to allow the Jews less space "keeping the Jew out of Christianity and its core, consisting of Jesus and the apostles, and limiting his influence in the national state, was a necessity."²¹³

It may be understandable that Bultmann, in his search for a theology that would make sense to the lay *Volk* in the pew, constructed one that focussed on the individual and his conscience, as the laity would most likely interpret it. But by adopting Heidegger's model, with its echoes of Hegel, Baur, and Ritschl, it was inevitable that the guidelines of authenticity would echo the historical concerns of research into early

away from the sceptical views of Strauss and Baur towards a view of Jesus as being historically recoverable, particularly with respect to his person. There is no doubt that he influenced Bultmann, who ultimately broke with this idealised view and embraced the more sceptical view of Herrmann. Ritschl introduced a new interpretive model of early Christianity which influenced Harnack, Herrmann, Bultmann, Barth, and the later students of Bultmann, beginning with Käsemann.

²¹² Ibid., 125.

²¹³ Gerdmar, *The Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 142.

Christianity in the search for clarification of theology. The amount of damage control by Bultmann, from the middle war years certainly until 1950-1960, illustrates how nagging the Jewish problem was, particularly with respect to the historical Jesus. A review of Bultmann's writings in *Essays: Philosophical and Theological, Faith and Understanding, Existence and Faith, History and Eschatology, Jesus Christ and Mythology, New Testament and Mythology* and *Theology of the New Testament II*, all point to a scholar who feels the need to cover the same ground over and over again, because the problem will not go away. The arguments are very similar to those of the Tübingen school regarding the inauthenticity of Judaism for Christianity. The political implications for the new German state were clear: if the Jews are not welcome in Christianity, why should they be welcome in Germany? At the most, they could be accommodated as guest people, only. Given the privileged position of university theologians, it was inevitable that theological questions carried political implications.

Paul

Bultmann writes, "How this act of decision took place in detail, how the Easter faith arose in individual disciples, has been obscured in the tradition by legend, and is not of basic importance."²¹⁴ Bultmann was describing the development of the kerygma in early Christianity and he was arguing that the early church was facing a dilemma after the crucifixion, "He who formerly had been the bearer of the message was drawn into it and became its essential content. The proclaimer became the proclaimed – but the essential

²¹⁴ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 45.

question is in what sense?”²¹⁵ Bultmann was working his way towards his existential hermeneutics of decision. The first decision was incumbent on the first Jesus communities to define their relationship to Jesus. We are still dealing with a Jewish community which shows all the hallmarks of a sect in transition. Consequently, they faced the dilemma of how to bridge the gulf between a crucified hero and his message. Bultmann’s explanation is that they proclaimed the bearer of the message.

When Bultmann examined the relationship of Paul to Jesus, he concluded that, “It is the Historical Jesus that makes Paul’s proclamation the Gospel.”²¹⁶ Paul proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah. Bultmann delegates to Paul the responsibility for making Jesus the bearer of a judgment of decision. Paul reinterpreted the community response to Jesus: “the meaning of the cross was not necessarily made explicit in the early community: but it does become explicit with Paul.”²¹⁷ Bultmann then lists the negative implications of Paul’s theology: Christ is not a teacher, he is not an exemplar man, nor a hero, and any evaluation of the personality of Jesus is wrong, since it would be knowledge after the flesh. The cross was then interpreted for Paul as a question: will man give up his secure self and his boasting, and allow himself to be saved by the cross?²¹⁸ In this essay Bultmann has managed to manoeuvre a one-hundred-and-eighty-degree turn from stating that Jesus and Paul are identical, particularly in respect to the law.²¹⁹

²¹⁵ Ibid., 33.

²¹⁶ Bultmann, “The Historical Jesus and the Theology of Paul,” 235.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 238.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 239-240.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 223.

By the end of the essay, Jesus and Paul remain identical inasmuch as they are both promoting the theology of individual decision. But Bultmann would not accept that the Christ-kerygma and the preaching of Jesus coincide: he made a clear distinction between the two. The place where Jesus belongs is in the preaching of the community as gospel, but not as the historical Jesus. Access to Jesus is through Paul, but it is not possible to flee Paul to return to Jesus.²²⁰ Bultmann has displaced the message of Jesus and replaced it with Paul's message that God has spoken in Christ. All that Bultmann required of Jesus is that he existed: Paul and Hellenism can do the rest.

Paul cuts adrift from Jewish teaching: there is no mention of Jesus as the apocalyptic Son of God, and he does not preserve Jesus' teachings and deeds. Paul is dialectical and anthropomorphic in his interpretation of God. In Paul's concept of God acting through Jesus, Bultmann was able to distinguish between existence in authentic faith and an inauthentic state before faith. Bultmann examined Paul's construct of the self,²²¹ and enlarged on the correspondence of sin with alienation and the body. He cited sinfulness as self-delusion and exemplified "unthinking recklessness among Gentiles and busyness among Jews."²²²

²²⁰ See Bultmann "Jesus and Paul," in *Existence and Faith*, 238.

²²¹ See Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 198. Paul uses the Greek term *soma* both to denote the physical body as well as psychological aspects of the whole self. This allows Bultmann to refer to the objective and subjective qualities of the self and strengthen the notion of decision implicit in the self. Bultmann was able to extend Paul's teaching of *soma* to include the concept of alienation before faith. The corollary is that, unless an individual comes to know Christ through faith, he is alienated from God. This is an indirect indictment of Judaism.

²²² *Ibid.*, 239.

In his attacks on Jewish law Bultmann was drawing a parallel with death: “the Law which was given for life has become the instrument of death” (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:56; Romans 7:5; 8:2).²²³ The Hebrew Bible becomes a foil for Christianity in Bultmann’s estimation: the grace of God in Jesus cannot be understood apart from the Hebrew Bible, which has to have existed in order to provide a pathway to Christianity. Bultmann did not dispute the place of grace in the Hebrew Bible since it represents God’s mandate with Israel and is the basis of their law. However, he dispensed with this generous assessment and replaced it with the view that a new age has dawned: “for Israel life was confined to this world, and the only future after death was the future of the people, God’s forgiveness and grace were seen or expected in a change of worldly fortune.”²²⁴ The Hebrew Bible has been superseded by the New Testament and by Pauline interpretations. Judaism stands condemned for being a religion of works as opposed to a religion of faith in Christ. Bultmann’s hermeneutics rest on the premise that salvation cannot be earned, as it can in Judaism, or Rabbinic Judaism.

Paul emphasises the present context of eschatology in the act of preaching.²²⁵ Jesus’ death and resurrection are the important issues for Paul, not the life and ministry of Jesus.²²⁶ Consequently, it follows that the quest for the historical Jesus is theologically irrelevant. But why do Paul and Bultmann share the view that it was the death of Jesus

²²³ Ibid. (for Bultmann’s assessment of the law as an instrument of death, see 267).

²²⁴ See Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting*, 56.

²²⁵ See Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 1:274-275. Bultmann argues that Paul is not teaching a new doctrine per se but simply alluding to the fact that the preached word or Logos gives the hearer the opportunity to turn to the faith in Christ, in the present.

²²⁶ Ibid., 89.

and not his ministry that was important for salvation. Bultmann answers this question as follows:

In order to describe the significance of the salvation-occurrence, Paul uses a series of terms originating in a number of different thought-complexes. One group is composed of the statements which understand Jesus' death in terms of Jewish sacrificial practice – and that also means in terms of the juristic thinking that dominated it – regarding his death as a propitiatory sacrifice by which forgiveness of sins is brought about; which is to say: by which the guilt contracted by sins is cancelled.²²⁷

Bultmann claimed that Paul had been influenced by a number of motifs: Gnostic images of ascent and descent by a redeemer, the vicarious nature of sacrifice common to many religions, and the linkage of the crucifixion with the death of Jesus as sacrifice.²²⁸ Bultmann, who was now on existentialist terrain, argued that Paul was moving beyond history.²²⁹ In his opinion, since Paul had removed the historical component, the event of Christ's death would continue to take place constantly, as an individual eschatological occurrence, through the proclaimed word and in the sacraments.²³⁰

The corollary Bultmann takes from Paul is that objective study, as Bultmann refers to positivist thinking, will not help in understanding the death of Jesus. He

²²⁷ Ibid., 295.

²²⁸ Ibid., 303.

²²⁹ Ibid. (citation by Bultmann of 1 Cor. 1:18-31; Gal. 6:1, where Paul admonishes the believer to “let himself be crucified with Christ” – from this Bultmann concluded that Paul moved outside of the historic *Dass* to a recognition that Christ's death must be understood in cosmic terms).

²³⁰ Ibid., 303.

reiterated that the salvation occurrence can be found only in the word of preaching.²³¹ We are now confronting a faith issue and positivist questions will not lead to an understanding; in fact they can be labelled worldly and, perhaps, sinful. The influence of Heidegger is apparent in Bultmann's treatment of Paul in the *Theology of the New Testament*: Bultmann achieves a dovetailing between his existentialist theology and a Pauline interpretation. Dominant constructs appearing in his theology have a dialectical relationship: authentic-inauthentic, alienation-freedom, love-hostility, historical-cosmic, flesh-life, slavery-power, static-evolution, past-present, dead-alive, spirit-world.²³²

Heidegger's Influence

Bultmann's theology represents the most significant attempt to understand the New Testament as constructed anthropology derived from Heidegger's understanding of existence.²³³ Käsemann argues that Bultmann has been unduly influenced by Heidegger's existentialist philosophy, but he suggests that it represents a distortion of Pauline theology. In particular, Paul does not attribute the existential self-interpretation to the *soma* (body).²³⁴ Käsemann is arguing that Bultmann, surprisingly, is paying too much attention to the individual and not enough to the role of God in the justification process.

²³¹ Ibid., 202.

²³² Ibid., 330 (for Bultmann's treatment of freedom of the spirit, see 330-352). It is easy to see Bultmann's bridge from inauthentic freedom to freedom through faith. The influence of Heidegger is clearly visible here.

²³³ See Udo Schnelle, *The Human Condition: Anthropology in the Teachings of Jesus, Paul, and John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 8.

²³⁴ See Ernst Käsemann, "On Paul's Anthropology," in idem, *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 18.

According to Käsemann, Bultmann has become preoccupied with the anthropological, person-centred part of the equation, and is neglecting Paul's words, "that God is active within us and Christ lives in us."²³⁵ An important aspect of this criticism is that Bultmann was concentrating on the existential present to the neglect of the historical. We are witnessing in Käsemann's criticism the fundamental critique which Bultmann was to become subject to, as he pursued his existential, anthropological agenda.

The argument forthcoming was that an individual's faith cannot be described in Hegelian terms only, but that social and political components are important ingredients, also.²³⁶ This topic will become very relevant in the chapter dealing with the Third Reich. Käsemann argues that Bultmann's exclusive focus on the human subject in a detached manner reflected an uncritical acceptance of Heidegger's anthropology. Käsemann sees Paul's emphasis on motifs like redemption, fallenness, and the resurrection of the dead as manifestations of reality, unlike Bultmann, who attributes these motifs to myth and not as

²³⁵ See Ernst Käsemann, "The Righteousness of God in Paul," in idem, *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 174.

²³⁶ See Dorothee Soelle, *Political Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974). For her enlightened analysis of existential theology within a political theology framework, see 41-54. One of the most damaging criticisms of Bultmann's Hellenistic approach comes from Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. The first part of the book gives a broad picture of Judaism including research from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and Palestinian Judaism. Part two, 431-552, is dedicated to the study of Paul. Topics include the Law, Grace, and Salvation. A comparison of Sanders' work on Judaism makes Bultmann's work on this topic look weak. For example, I did not see any reference by Bultmann to either Jubilees or Enoch, when he was looking at Paul's motifs of ascent or descent. Any reader of Bultmann's *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting*, particularly the section on Judaism, will find no reference to either Schürer or Bousset. Yet, they are most likely the major sources of Bultmann's information, biased though they may well be.

the reality which concerns Paul.²³⁷ Käsemann sees Paul writing anthropologically, in a similar manner to Bultmann, but Käsemann's concept of theological anthropology is wider than Bultmann's, and possibly more in line with with the political theology of developmental anthropologists like Dorothee Soelle.

Bultmann grew up in an environment of theological questioning. He was born into a family that gave him two sides: a conservative point of view from his mother and a sceptical, reformist viewpoint from his father, who influenced him in his career decisions. It is understandable that he lurched towards the reformist sector. The war and its post-war political climate convinced Bultmann to formulate his own anthropomorphic theology, which he developed with the existentialist philosophy of Heidegger and the dialectic of Barth and Gogarten. However, his rejection of the arguments supporting a historical Jesus by Harnack and Troeltsch must be kept in mind. No doubt Bultmann was unaware of the hidden dangers lurking within the existentialist philosophy of Heidegger when he sought legitimation for his anthropological centred theology in the gospel narrative of John and the letters of Paul. But the authentic-inauthentic criteria of Heidegger's existential philosophy forced Bultmann to label Judaism as inauthentic and the Jesus of Nazareth as irrelevant for Christian faith.

Bultmann was born into liberalism, and although it might appear that he rejected it, since he rejected orthodox images of the historical Jesus, he re-interpreted Jesus' eschaton by transforming it into Heidegger's anthropomorphic moment of individual decision: the positive history he rejected for theology was transformed as individualised history, which had to reject the worldliness of rationalised culture, in order to find the

²³⁷ See Käsemann, "On Paul's Anthropology," 19.

divine. Bultmann had re-interpreted Christianity as Christianity without a significant historical Jesus. Bultmann was now free to pursue his theology without the constraints of Jesus' kingdom or Jewish history.

Chapter 4

Dissent in Germany

In 1938, *Kristalnacht* ended the calm that pervaded Germany during the interlude of the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. Between 1920 and 1928, Bultmann was formulating his existentialist theology without any particular notice from the state. After Hitler's rise to power, the political situation changed, and the National-Socialist state became very interested in all matters which impinged on Judaism. Theology was not exempt from scrutiny. Bultmann found himself in a much different political situation after 1933, when *Kristalnacht* did not merit condemnation from the pulpit, than during the period when he was formulating his existential theology.²³⁸

Rudolf Bultmann cannot be held wholly responsible for the depth of anti-Jewish feeling engendered by the rise of Nazism, but his existentialist theology, which privileged Hellenistic culture over the Palestinian origins of the historical Jesus, played an important role in promoting a spiritualised Jesus at the expense of Judaism.

Bultmann's anthropomorphic, existentialist theology has created a need to examine Christian-Jewish dialogue over the hegemonic claims made by Christianity, with its resulting spin-offs. I shall discuss some of the important literature on anti-Judaism in the German church, followed by an examination of Bultmann's constructed theology within this milieu: church versus state boundaries and implications for social action, for example, and his dependence on the Gnosticism of Hans Jonas, followed by a critique of some of Bultmann's work by notable scholars. Within this discussion I am arguing that

²³⁸ See Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal*, 6-7.

Bultmann's theology of existentialism was dependent on his de-judaising of the historical Jesus and a privileging of Hellenistic culture. A major spin-off was that his hermeneutic of objectivity placed historical-cultural questions outside the boundary of social action, which prevented him from actively supporting Judaism. Bultmann had created a theology which spiritualised Jesus at the expense of his Judaism and enabled him to remain outside the orbit of state scrutiny.

The second part of this chapter examines responses from some of Bultmann's former students to his existentialist theology. This is important criticism from students who became strong enough academically to mount criticism against his view of history, which spiritualised the historical Jesus at the expense of his earthly Palestinian ministry. There is not total agreement among the students, as one would expect. However, there is enough agreement that the role of cultural history must be re-visited to place the historical Jesus in juxtaposition with the kerygmatic, or spiritualised Jesus.

There are two major components to this chapter: the first examines the impact of Bultmann's existentialism on Judaism, while the second focusses on responses to his negative treatment of the historical Jesus. The important thread, which runs through both sections, and ultimately joins them together, is the motivation of Bultmann to create a theology which spiritualises the Jesus of history at the expense of liberal historiography, but which climaxes in historical inconsistency and paradox, while severing connection between Christianity and Judaism. Because Bultmann felt an overwhelming need to extinguish the liberal flame of cultural history tied to Jesus, he was led into the cul de sac of anthropomorphism, which rejected cultural history and, by implication, the historical

Jesus and Palestinian history associated with him. His students questioned his epistemology, but not his motivation.

Bultmann's Anti-Judaism

Determining whether Bultmann was anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish is an important distinction to make, not least because the former is a more hateful attitude than the latter. Yet two important writers on the subject, Susannah Heschel and Shawn Kelley, disagree on the distinction.²³⁹ Heschel questions the distinction made by theologians between anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism.²⁴⁰ She is writing about the German Christian movement which supported Third Reich ideology, but her criticisms, to a lesser degree, could be directed towards the German Confessing Church, of which Bultmann was a member. Since anti-Judaism has been prevalent in German theology since Hegel and the influence of leading Tübingen scholars such as Baur, it would be a reasonable hypothesis that Bultmann, as a student of the History of Religions School and of Bousset, might be insensitive to the pervading subtleties of anti-Semitism.

Heschel examines the argument that the church extended a philanthropic gesture to those Jews who availed themselves of baptism. But she deconstructs the popular argument that, by extending baptism to Jews, the German Christian church would be

²³⁹ Kelley argues that Bultmann was a member of the Confessing Church which was not aligned with the National-Socialist party, and that he spoke up for Jewish Christian ministers. See Kelley, *Racialising Jesus*, 155-156, who cites Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal*, 90-110. Bultmann was concerned about appearances and did not want to appear to be breaking away from popular opinion. Consequently, he was very guarded in his responses about Jews.

²⁴⁰ See Susannah Heschel, "Historiography of Anti-Semitism versus Anti-Judaism: A Response to Robert Morgan," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33 (2011): 258.

culpable only of anti-Judaism and not anti-Semitism, since it had become a theological matter between the religions of Christianity and Judaism. However, if the argument is turned on its head, it would follow that without the acceptance of baptism, this privilege could be labelled anti-Semitism, since it would be tantamount to saying that, without the sacrament of baptism, Jews possessed immutable, degenerate characteristics.²⁴¹ Therefore, the Jews would be dependent on the superiority of Christianity to relieve them of their depravity. Heschel's argument is that church doctrine of baptism masks the "degeneracy" factor. Either way, the factor of racism is the same to Heschel, and there is no distinction between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. Kelly and Heschel are in disagreement over this distinction.²⁴² Kelley states unequivocally that Bultmann was a member of the Confessing Church and was not a Nazi, but "this does not mean that he is diametrically opposed to everything they represent."²⁴³

Bultmann trod a fine line on the racial issue and his publications betray an anti-Judaism mind-set. Someone not prejudiced against Judaism would show a greater willingness to be more positive towards the Jews. Bultmann's writings on Judaism betray a superiority complex with respect to Christianity, and his dialectical, exegetical, existential theology, derived from the philosophy of Heidegger, forced him into an impasse of prejudice from which he had no retreat.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Kelley, *Racialising Jesus*, 156. Kelley is painstaking in his argument that Bultmann was not a supporter of National Socialism. He bases his argument on the distinction which Heschel is opposing. Kelley would rather fall into the Robert Morgan's camp, whom Heschel is taking issue with, over his definition.

²⁴³ Ibid.

Jesus and Anti-Judaism

Heschel argues that, by rejecting Judaism, Bultmann simplified the separation of Jesus from Judaism, which enabled him to argue that Jesus challenged Judaism with respect to the law.²⁴⁴ However, Bultmann was never inclined to join the German Christian movement, “which radically de-Judaised the Bible, the hymns and the Churches.”²⁴⁵ The issue of Jesus’ Jewishness was not new to Bultmann, having been well established by Abraham Geiger from the middle of the nineteenth century. Geiger had painted a realistic picture of the sources of Jesus’ humanity when he characterised Galilee people as uneducated, lower class, and nationalistic. He argued that Jesus was not only a product of that environment, but he was possibly a Pharisee: “he did not utter a new thought, nor did he break down the barriers of nationality... he did not abolish any part of Judaism; he was a Pharisee who walked in the way of Hillel.”²⁴⁶

Because this nineteenth-century Jewish historian had written that Jesus was not unique, and that he was possibly a Pharisee and indigenous to Palestine, he represented a threat to liberal reformers and, ultimately, to the German Christian movement which sought to de-Judaise the church. His argument that a relationship existed between liberal reforming Pharisees and liberal history of Jesus research was alarming to the German

²⁴⁴ According to Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, 222, Jesus was heralded because he was thought to have challenged basic tenets of Judaism. This allowed for the separation of authentic Germans from inauthentic Germans in the promotion of German nationalism. She adds that it demonstrated that German biblical scholarship possessed an agenda to promote German nationhood over the interests of true scholarship, since it confused racial and religious polemic.

²⁴⁵ Kelley, *Racialising Jesus*, 156.

²⁴⁶ Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal*, 15. See also, Franklin H. Little and Hubert G. Locke, *The German Church Struggle and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974), 22, for a severe criticism of Bultmann’s denigration of Judaism without substantiation.

Christian movement. He had argued further that if nineteenth-century liberal scholarship wanted to find the true historical Jesus, the place to look was in Pharisaic Judaism.²⁴⁷

Geiger was arguing that looking for the historical Jesus, in church-constructed dogma, was unproductive: the most feasible location was “among modern reform Jews in Germany.”²⁴⁸ He played an important part in alerting the nineteenth-century German sceptical fringe to Jesus’ humanity and Palestinian origins and, given the timing factor of the breakdown of the Weimar Republic, together with the rise of German nationalism, it was inevitable that such a claim as Geiger’s, even if and when validated, would pose a threat, not only to German theology, but also to a German sense of nationhood, where Judaism was seen as a major threat from the outside.

Given that a tradition for nineteenth-century church reform already existed in the ideas of Hegel and Baur, which had penetrated the Tübingen School and the History of Religions School, it was conceivable that a twentieth-century reform-minded theologian like Bultmann would continue the tradition and try to build a more modern theological infrastructure to remove utopian orthodoxy and replace it with a theology more in keeping with modern reality: he looked to Barth and Heidegger to fill the same role, as the contemporary nineteenth-century roles played by Hegel and Baur had done, in an earlier era.

It was predictable that German theologians would look for a way to bring the historical Jesus into the mainstream of German society, while minimising his Judaism, or if that proved to be impossible, then sidelining him as irrelevant for Christianity. By the

²⁴⁷ Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal*, 16.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

early twentieth century, German theologians had conceded that Jesus' message had originated from Judaism, but they elevated it to a supra-Judaic position to dilute the impact of Judaism on Jesus.²⁴⁹ Powerfully persuasive Jewish criticism had little effect on German theological scholarship. There were no faculties of Jewish Studies in German universities, Jewish texts were ignored, and negative stereotyping of Jews, Judaism, and "Jewish behaviour" was normative.²⁵⁰

Ericksen and Heschel cite Bultmann as an influential German theologian during the period of Nazi rule, especially his *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting* (1949) as an example of biased reflections on Judaism.²⁵¹ These authors accuse Bultmann of promoting his study of early Christianity "with the same kinds of distortions that Jewish scholars had been protesting for over a hundred years."²⁵² Their principal argument was about Christianity's use of power symbols over Judaism. Bultmann followed in the traditions of earlier writers, placing Jesus on a pedestal as a protest against what they defined as "Jewish legalism," or against a religion that they held to be responsible for making God remote, and against a religion of "salvation by works and ritual." The debate over Jesus' Jewishness even continued after World War II, and was reflected in the writing of the former students of Bultmann who cited examples of how deep their negative feelings were over being associated with Judaism, and with a Jewish Jesus, in particular.²⁵³ In this respect, they supported Bultmann's displacement of Jesus

²⁴⁹ See Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, 47-48.

²⁵⁰ See Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal*, 18.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁵² *Ibid.* Cf. Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, 66, 68, 72, 77-79.

²⁵³ *Ibid.* (Käsemann is cited for saying that "calling Jesus' teachings Jewish, was insulting").

by Paul and his use of Paul to substantiate theological opposition to Judaism: “the contrast between Paul and Judaism consists not merely in his assertion of the present reality of righteousness, but also in a much more decisive thesis – the one which concerns the condition to which God’s acquitting decision is tied.”²⁵⁴

Bultmann explained his view this way: “the Jew takes it for granted that salvation will be earned by works and by keeping the law” (it is interesting that Bultmann referred to a people and a nation as “the Jew”). He emphasised how Paul’s teaching opposes the basic tenets of Judaism as “no human being will be justified in God’s sight by works of law” (Rom. 1:18-3:20).²⁵⁵ Bultmann then proceeded to explain how, in his theology of Judaism, grace and faith are antithetical to the law.²⁵⁶

Jewish legalism and Christian practice are antithetical to each other, in Bultmann’s theology. Kelley sees a reflection of the ideas of Hegel, Baur, and Heidegger in the writing of Bultmann, particularly with respect to the link between the notion of existential authenticity and national freedom. Kelley has argued how the myth of the enslaved East gave way to the freedom of the West.²⁵⁷ Christian authenticity was equated with freedom, which Bultmann held to be antithetical to Jewish legalism. He employed similar terminology to Baur and Heidegger, where Jewification and inauthenticity correspond with each other, while Christian freedom and authenticity complete the equation. Bultmann’s attitude to Judaism and Jewish law hardened over time, with the

²⁵⁴ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 1:279.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 281.

²⁵⁷ Kelley, *Racialising Jesus*, 148, and 64-88, where he examines the “Myth of the West.” Nevertheless, this myth has sustained the belief in a superior German nation, which traced its origin to a mythical Greece.

cut-off point being around 1940. Before 1940, he expressed optimism that Jews who converted to Christianity could leave their worldliness and ritual behind, and be saved. In *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting*, he refers pointedly to “Judaism” as “Jewish Legalism.”²⁵⁸ This is interesting in view of the fact that World War II ended in 1945, indicating that his negative view of Jews and Judaism had been growing, even without National Socialism.

New Testament and Mythology

The thrust of Bultmann’s argument, on the need for demythologising, is that the New Testament is not speaking about the Jewish eschaton but about individual human existence. The message needs to be deconstructed from its original dogmatic interpretation of historical and cultural evolution and replaced with an individual understanding. Bultmann falls back onto the power equation of the Tübingen tradition of the Hegelian *Geist*. This tradition mapped a history of Eastern despotism and slavery giving way to the freedom of the West and typified by the emergence of the Greek mind.

But Bultmann’s theme is an emphatically, existential one: he coined the term “testimonium paupertatis” to express frustration over his existential message needing to be repeated so frequently: the New Testament message must be interpreted in anthropomorphic terms where authentic existence demanded a renunciation of the cultural world by the individual believer.²⁵⁹ It is the Jewish world which must be renounced and freedom must not be confused with Palestinian eschatological values of

²⁵⁸ See Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 385.

²⁵⁹ Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology*, 9-10.

national redemption: “to be sure, this becoming free from the world is not understood eschatologically as it is in the New Testament, but rather in terms of a mystical concept of religion.”²⁶⁰

Bultmann argued that mythical composition is used in the New Testament to explain the role of Jesus, whereby Jesus is not to be proclaimed as primarily a teacher saying things of decisive importance, but one whose person “is indifferent to anyone who has understood his teaching.”²⁶¹ Bultmann was emphasising how the spiritual nature of Jesus privileges the importance of his message over and above the earthly persona of Jesus. The spirit of Jesus provides the substance for a kerygmatic Jesus to supersede the earthly Jesus. It has the appearance of a “coup de grace” because it elevates Jesus above his Jewish lineage, thus removing the need to consider the importance of his Jewishness. Yet Bultmann was forced to credit the person of Jesus with the fact that, although the New Testament is speaking mythically, it is nevertheless speaking about the earthly Jesus. This argument will assert itself with his former students and will continue to hobble him. Bultmann recognised the paradox and sought refuge in the teaching of the History of Religions School that “the essential thing is religious life, which has as its high point a mysticism that knows itself to be at one with Christ, in who God has taken symbolic form.”²⁶² Bultmann leaves us in no doubt as to where he stands on the issue of

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 13.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

Jesus' spirituality: "the symbolic Christ supersedes the earthly Jesus, because Christ has become the imperishable cultic symbol of the Christian community."²⁶³

The New Testament, according to Bultmann, draws on cultic conceptions from Jewish apocalypticism and the Gnostic redemption myth. Both speak of the need for redemption by an intervening God. Both also speak of a new age forthcoming. Both refer to a messenger from God. The Gnostics refer to a messenger clothed in human form. Bultmann concluded that both of these constructs required an interpretation along the lines of Hans Jonas.²⁶⁴

By 1941, Bultmann was reiterating his commitment to a demythologising (deconstructing) of the New Testament. He was adamant that Christianity had superseded Palestinian Judaism. Any merit in Judaism had to be found in the interface between Judaism and Hellenism, where Hellenism was the recognised superior culture.²⁶⁵ Ritual

²⁶³ Ibid., 14. See also 43, n. 8, for Bultmann's citation of Troeltsch's "Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu für den Glauben" (1911). Bultmann used Troeltsch and Harnack as examples of a false understanding of the role of the world in human existence.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 14-15.

²⁶⁵ Bultmann devoted a great deal of space to arguing for the demise of Judaism and the superiority of Christendom. See Rudolf Bultmann, "The Significance of Jewish Old Testament Tradition for the Christian West," in idem, *Essays, Philosophical and Theological* (London: SCM, 1955), 262-272; idem, "The Significance of the Idea of Freedom for Western Civilisation," *ibid.*, 305-325. The principal argument is that Judaism was forced to give way to Christianity. Bultmann cites Paul as a purveyor of the value of "inner freedom," which he took from the Greek culture. Bultmann credits Hellenistic Judaism with benefiting from contact with Hellenistic cultural values of individualism. Undergirding his thesis is the Hegelian argument that the *Geist* was at work bringing a pre-ordained plan to fruition. This allows him to argue that Judaism is defunct as a religion which catered exclusively to one people and yet claimed to be a religion of God's people. But there is a hint of nationalism in his writing. In "A Question of Natural Revelation," *ibid.*, 90-118, he asks, "What can we learn from the past that will be useful for the present?" or "What is inescapably German?" (105-106). This particular essay was written in 1941, two years into the war and a time when decisions were being taken by the state regarding the fate of the Jews. *Kristallnacht*

cultic, legalism had been forced to give way to individual freedom, which could be won only by rejecting worldliness when in contact with the divine. The mystical relationship with Jesus Christ, discovered in the preached kerygma, comes into play at this point.

Bultmann developed his existential theology as an answer to failed liberal historiography and orthodoxy. But his anthropomorphic theology came at a cost. It was derived from the idea that mankind, and Germany certainly, was experiencing a degree of alienation from which it must free itself, if the church was to survive. But the hermeneutical process involved a retreat from Judaism and the Hebrew Bible.²⁶⁶

Bultmann was faced with a dilemma of how to deal with a Jewish earthly Jesus. The Institute which Heschel writes about was under the control of Walter Grundmann, who tried to prove that Jesus was not Jewish. Following the example of Grundmann, in principle if not in fact, Bultmann spiritualised Jesus in order to reduce his Palestinian importance. If there is any doubt about Bultmann's hermeneutic motivation of severing a link with the earthly, Jewish Jesus, it can be put to rest with his essay entitled "On the Question of Christology," where he writes:

had occurred three years earlier. Consequently, Bultmann must have been very aware of the plight of the Jews.

²⁶⁶ See Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal*, 76-78, where the authors show how the Christian churches were bent on forming a Christianity which meant rejecting everything Jewish. Consequently, Jesus was portrayed as an Aryan. Walter Grundmann argued that Jesus was an enemy of the Jews. Heschel, in her book, *The Aryan Jesus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), describes the work of *The Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on Church Life*. Her work shows how strongly Grundmann identified with the anti-Jewish stance of the Nazi party to the extent that he managed to have an SS officer fired for stating falsely that a church member had used Jewish materials improperly. Heschel has established the close relationship which existed between the German Christian Church and, to a lesser degree, between the Confessing Church and the Third Reich.

furthermore, in regard to the attempt to immerse one's self "in the heart of the crucified" [Bultmann makes a reference to the work of Emanuel Hirsch, who was promoting an understanding of the worth of the earthly Jesus] I must say bluntly: it is impossible to see what more was done by the historical Jesus who goes to his death in obedient love than was done by all those who, for example, in the World War took the same road, also in obedient love. Their road actually means more to us, not only because we see it more clearly, but chiefly because we were associated with them as with a living thou. To try to create such experiences of encounter, with a person of the past, seems to me to be artificial and to lead to sentimentality.²⁶⁷

Bultmann's attitude to the Jews and to Jesus is often ambivalent as it fluctuates between the views of Bousset and Weiss. He was closer to Weiss, in arguing for continuity between Jesus and Judaism, but closer to Bousset, in depicting Jesus in idealistic terms and, implicitly, more acceptable to the ideals of the German *Volk*.²⁶⁸ In his *Jesus* (1926), Bultmann presented Jesus as more radical than Judaism in his condemnation of sin.²⁶⁹ But Gerdmar adds that Bultmann did not demonstrate "great historical expertise on Judaism,"²⁷⁰ and yet Bultmann's tone has hardened by the end of the 1940s, when he shows less understanding of Jewish law and ritual in his *Theology of the New Testament* (1951).²⁷¹ Gerdmar reports that in *The Commentary on John's Gospel*

²⁶⁷ Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, 127-128.

²⁶⁸ See Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 385.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 386.

and the Jews, there is a fundamental conflict between Jesus and the Jews. The Jews are placed “on the dark side of Johannine dualism.”²⁷² Bultmann wrote that “the Jews were the absolute representatives of the world.”²⁷³ And Gerdmar argues that Bultmann deliberately mischaracterised John’s statement that the Jews “are children of the devil.”²⁷⁴

Bultmann’s political reactions to Nazism were less extreme than Bonhoeffer’s and Barth’s. Where Barth refused to take an oath of loyalty, Bultmann’s position is more ambivalent. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is an example of extreme resistance to the Nazis, and he paid for it with his life. Barth is one step closer to Bultmann, preferring to be exiled to Switzerland rather than lose his life. Bultmann chose to confine his protests to within designated church-state boundaries.²⁷⁵ Gerdmar reports that after 1945 Bultmann stated an opinion that the Jews were at least partly responsible for their fate,²⁷⁶ which suggests a less than complete sympathy for their plight.

²⁷² Ibid., 391.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 393. Gerdmar writes that Bultmann removed a saying of the evangelist where “Jews were actually on the positive side.” Bultmann interpreted John 8:41-47 as overtly talking about Jews as “children of the devil.” Gerdmar tries to be positive in the sense that, theoretically, they would be labelled as unbelievers and therefore not Christian.

²⁷⁵ The Aryan paragraph is where Bultmann resisted the Nazi claim that Jewish Christian ministers should not be allowed to practise. See Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal*, 19, 97; Gerdmar *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 399, on this issue. The authors credit Bultmann with being one of the writers of the 1934 Barmen Declaration, which defined the boundaries of church authority over which the state could not cross. Bultmann invoked the Barmen Declaration to absolve the church from becoming involved over matters concerning the treatment of the Jews as guests rather than as citizens. See Gerdmar *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 397, for Bultmann’s article, “The Aryan Paragraph in the Context of the Church,” where he states clearly that he “leaves social questions to the state realm-and the Jewish Question is a social problem.”

²⁷⁶ See Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 400. No comment is required here.

Bultmann shows all the signs of vacillating between Weiss and Bousset and between Greece and Palestine in assessing the origins of Christianity and the respective place of Jesus. He favours Bousset and spiritualises Jesus to break with his Palestinian origin. He is paying some homage to the theological importance of Jesus, albeit in a spiritual sense, but his anthropomorphic hermeneutic has removed the cultural components surrounding Jesus' background, thereby freeing Bultmann from the need to speak up for the Jews, since they are part of Jesus' objective cultural history.

H. Jonas

In the 1920s, Hans Jonas the Jewish philosopher, student and pre-war friend of Heidegger and Bultmann, proposed an existential interpretation of "Gnosticism" as the expression of the "Spirit of Late Antiquity" defined as *Entweltlichung* (liberation or freedom).²⁷⁷ Jonas considered Bultmann a friend, and Fergusson reports that he was the only professor to whom Jonas paid a visit, before he was forced to emigrate in 1933.²⁷⁸ Such a visit implies that Bultmann was pro-Jewish and this contention is partly supported by Gerdmar, who has stated that Bultmann would not tolerate any anti-Jewish statements in his presence.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Michael Waldstein, "Hans Jonas' Construct 'Gnosticism': Analysis and Critique," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000): 341-372 (341).

²⁷⁸ See Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 3. Jonas was Jewish, and the rise of Hitler to power in 1933 forced him to leave Germany to avoid incarceration and, most probably, death.

²⁷⁹ See Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 373. Note also that Bultmann was instrumental in the writing of the Freedom of the Church and the Aryan Paragraph, which tried to protect the right of ministers who would not be designated Aryan, to continue practising in the church. However, Gerdmar argues that Bultmann restricted his anti-Jewish statements to church matters, although he did discourage verbal anti-Jewish polemics. However, his writings do not reflect his own reluctance to make anti-Judaism statements. The terrain on Bultmann's approach to Judaism is muddy. Kelley, *Racialising Jesus*, 141,

But Bultmann needed Jonas in order to put flesh on the skeleton of Heidegger's existentialist philosophy described in *Being and Time*. Fergusson hypothesises that Bultmann used the dissertation of Jonas to formulate his principle of demythology,²⁸⁰ which he applied to the Fourth Gospel and the Pauline letters with a resulting anti-Judaism bias.

Bultmann argued that John purposely did not reveal the name of the Redeemer. This argument fitted in very nicely with Bultmann's construction that the importance of the Redeemer in John's gospel was that he arrived: the person, per se, was not important. Bultmann could now justify his rejection of the earthly Jewish Jesus without losing the Christological meaning in John's Gospel. He used the Fourth Gospel to invalidate the earthly Jesus and to argue, from the Pauline letters, that the Jews were not authentic on account of their theological emphasis on legalism. The way was now clear for Bultmann to proclaim his own arguments against the Jews in his post-1941 essay on demythology.

Waldstein provides the historical terrain to understand Jonas' existentialism and, ultimately, why he severed connection with Bultmann's interpretation.²⁸¹ In "Gnosticism, Existentialism and Nihilism," Jonas described his first feelings of warmth from his first encounter with Gnosticism in the early 1920s. But by the early 1950s, he claimed that

describes it as racialised due to its foundation in Heidegger's existentialist philosophy. The question to be raised is, did Bultmann straddle a dividing line between anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism? And if so, why would Jonas consider him a friend?

²⁸⁰ See Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 109. Bultmann's existentialism needed a method, and demythology enabled him to apply his constructed theology to the Gospel of John and to Pauline letters to prove the inauthenticity of Judaism.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*; Waldstein, "Hans Jonas' Construct", 344-345.

Gnosticism had showed its true face to him as acosmic nihilism.²⁸² Jonas then made it his mission to “repudiate and overcome the acosmic nihilism of existential philosophy... by developing a philosophy of organic life and an ethics of responsibility for the technological age.”²⁸³

Jonas had embraced existentialism, initially, as a significant breakthrough for the meaning of existence. But he recognised the nihilistic direction of existentialism and Gnosticism after the publication of Bultmann’s *New Testament and Mythology* (1941). He concluded that the philosophy of nihilism must be rejected in both Gnosticism and existentialism.

Bultmann and Jonas may have parted company over Bultmann’s anti-Judaism. It had become a polemical boundary for legitimating Hellenistic Christianity as authentic, in contradistinction to Bultmann’s historic, inauthentic Judaism. Jonas turned away from Gnosticism, as the true exponent of existentialism, and moved towards traditional Jewish theological tradition. Several dramatic events had occurred between taking his leave of Bultmann and his later epiphany which helped in his decision: his mother had died in Auschwitz, and his Jewishness would have been emphasised by the denial of a

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid. An ethics of responsibility for existentialism was not a major concern to Bultmann, however. Karen King, although admitting that Jonas did not develop the ethics of existentialism for oppressed peoples, thought he was moving in that direction in his assessment of Orientalism as a response to oppression. (We do not see this trend in Bultmann’s interpretation of Existentialism.) See Karen King, “Translating History: Reframing Gnosticism in Postmodernity,” in *Tradition und Translation: Zum problem der interkulturellen Ubersetzbarkeit religioser* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 264-277 (270-273), for her ideas on how progressive Jonas’ ideas were, potentially, in applying existentialism to post-colonialism. Where Bultmann maintains a purely anthropomorphic approach to existentialism, Jonas has introduced social and psychological components.

commission in the German military. His initial interpretation of Gnostic texts was jettisoned as he turned one hundred and eighty degrees away from his initial embrace of existentialism. The later Jonas described Gnosticism “a spirit of vilification, of parody, of caricature, of conscious perversion of meaning, with wholesale reversal of value signs, a savage degrading of the sacred and of gleefully shocking blasphemy.”²⁸⁴ In case the reader should be left in any doubt about the strength of his conviction, Jonas added: “it is the pepper and salt of Gnosticism.”²⁸⁵

Jonas is important for understanding the relationship between existentialist philosophy, anti-Judaism, and Gnosticism, although he was criticised by Arthur D. Nock for trying to subvert history in the interests of metaphysics. Nock sums up the major contribution of Jonas to Bultmann’s existential theology as “Jonas’ real interest lies in an attempt to achieve a synthesis. He does this with concepts of Spengler and Heidegger.”²⁸⁶ Nock was criticising Jonas for emphasising metaphysical elements at the expense of positivist history. He accused Jonas of resorting to metaphysics because he was impatient with the pace of historical enquiry. However, Jonas was absolved from this criticism because his work has been acclaimed as surpassing the work of Bultmann in his first successful portrayal of the close connection between Gnosticism and existentialism. The value of Jonas’ work lies in its ability to act as a lens through which to view the

²⁸⁴ See Hans Jonas, “Response to G. Quispel’s ‘Gnosticism and the New Testament’,” in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship: Papers Read at the 100th Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, December 28-30, 1964* (ed. J. P. Hyatt; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), 279-293 (287).

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ See Arthur D. Nock, “Review of Jonas, *Gnosis und spatantiker Geist I*,” *Gnomon* 12 (1936): 605-612, reprinted in idem, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (ed. Z. Stewart; 2 vols.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 1:444-451 (444).

existentialist theology of Bultmann. Jonas had cultural experiences denied to Bultmann and it is understandable that his experiences would teach him to recognise the subtleties of anti-Semitism, and enable him to appreciate the degree to which Gnostic texts paralleled the “metaphysical anti-Semitism of Heidegger.”²⁸⁷ Jonas’s cultural experiences led him to understand the close relationship between theology and culture, which Bultmann had labelled objective and out of bounds. Jonas was attacking a purely nihilistic, abstract theology of existentialism, which removed itself from the savage day-to-day cultural experiences of Jews in Germany, as theologically inappropriate for a spiritualised Christianity.

Karen King has examined the frameworks which have “shaped our imagery of surviving artifacts in historical translation.”²⁸⁸ She selected to study the ancient Gnosticism of Hans Jonas, because of its “superior quality, and the enormous influence it has had on our understanding of the character of ancient Gnosticism.”²⁸⁹ King’s synthesis, from her historical assessment of Jonas’ work, is that his examination of East-West relations in Hellenism has enabled Jonas to argue that, contrary to its Oriental traditions of passivity in magic and myth, the East has provided a spirit for the origins of Christianity: it has provided the means for the renewal of religion in the West.²⁹⁰ King is arguing that Jonas was presenting a novel ideology of passive strength among conquered

²⁸⁷ Jonas, “Response to G. Quispel’s ‘Gnosticism’,” 288.

²⁸⁸ See King, “Translating History,” 265

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 271. This argument opposes the Enlightenment tradition and the History of Religions School teachings, which Bultmann reflected in his writings.

peoples: “Gnosticism represents one kind of authentic human experience of conquered subjects.”²⁹¹

The lesson from King is that Gnosticism has a message for the oppressed in its rejection of cosmic power, in its ridicule of illegitimate force, and in its insistence of the power of the genre of myth over “philosophical reason.”²⁹² The treatment of Judaism by Bultmann in his *Essays, Primitive Christianity, and Theology of the New Testament* has been shown to be overly critical in tone rather than understanding. There have only been statements about the superiority-inferiority relationship between East and West, and between the inferiority of Judaism compared to Christianity. King has interpreted Jonas as illustrating the nature of the ideological component of the East-West divide, but undergirding it is an interpretation amenable to Judaism, with an added component of understanding for the oppressed. Yet Jonas has described Gnosticism as defined by “the anti-Jewish animus.”²⁹³

Concerning the origins of Gnosticism, Jonas discussed three possibilities and was not able to find any evidence that it was instituted by Jews, which Quispel favoured. Jonas was left with the anti-Judaism factor in Gnosticism. Gnosticism, according to King’s interpretation, is possibly favourable to Judaism, as a product of a defeated East, with a positive political ideology. The underlying theme of “freedom” is paramount in any discussion of the goals of Gnosticism and Christianity. King has also discussed Bultmann’s arguments on this topic elsewhere. She concludes that Bultmann’s work on the Gnostic Redeemer myth demonstrated an over reliance on the interpretations of

²⁹¹ Ibid., 273.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ See Jonas, ““Response to G. Quispel,” 288.

Bousset and Reitzenstein.²⁹⁴ King argues that Bultmann used the Redeemer myth to legitimate his existentialist philosophy without doing the necessary research. He relied completely on Reitzenstein's work and, to a more limited degree, on the work of Bousset.²⁹⁵ But Jonas has relied on Hegel's view of development also, as Waldstein shows. Waldstein has written a good description of Jonas' historical hypothesis and he

²⁹⁴ See Karen King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 100.

²⁹⁵ King *What Is Gnosticism?*, 102-103. King cites Bultmann's statements in *Primitive Christianity* about the superiority of Christianity compared to Gnosticism, yet, Bultmann had no genealogy to draw on for his arguments. In his comparison of the two religions Bultmann condemned Gnosticism for its Persian syncretism, yet he saw no problem in the acknowledged syncretism of Christianity indicating a degree of inconsistency for his argument that Christianity is unique. King cites Bultmann's comparative analysis: both have the same understanding of humanity in the world, both recognised a need for salvation by the divine, but Gnosticism was fatalistic, whereas Christianity had a doctrine on sin, and Gnostic cosmic dualism failed, whereas Christianity survived due to a unified doctrine of existence (106). King argues that Bultmann used Gnosticism as a foil whereby he extends Gnostic imagery into John and argues for John's demythologising of Gnostic imagery. John was using Gnosticism in a political manner and Bultmann was using John's interpretation to spiritualise Jesus in a Gnostic manner, while going beyond Gnosticism to argue for a superior interpretation of the Gnostic message of salvation in Jesus as the Word. Bousset saw Gnosticism as "Oriental, pre-Christian, anti-Jewish and un-Hellenistic" (108). King concludes that Bultmann was relying on bits and pieces of information to form a narrative without the necessary literary sources. The corollary which follows is that Bultmann has been very strident in his anti-Judaism and in his condemnation of Gnosticism without the necessary literary support. In support of Bultmann's position it might be argued that, since he had committed himself in the early 1920s to existentialism, in an anthropomorphic sense, his framework carried him into an anti-Judaism which spiritualised the earthly Jesus and which rejected the East as depraved and inauthentic, thus avoiding animosity with the National Socialists. It is interesting that Jonas came to see the implications of anti-Semitism in existentialism only after the fact of his departure from Berlin. A further important corollary from King's work lies in the implications she draws for political involvement. There was a place for Bultmann to become involved in the defence of the weak and the vulnerable in existentialism as understood by Gnosticism. But Bultmann's interpretation of the need to retreat from the world rather than engage within it, unlike in King's interpretation of Gnosticism, meant that he could sit on the fence, politically.

shows that Jonas depended on Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*.²⁹⁶ Spengler argues that early Christianity emerged from a Mandaean seed-bed of Arabian culture, which he developed with the help of members of the History of Religions School, notably, Bousset and Reitzenstein. Waldstein argues also that Bultmann adopted the same set of hypotheses used by this school.²⁹⁷

This is the same argument presented by King to show that Bultmann adopted argument uncritically, to support his existentialism theory. Spengler emphasised the importance of Jesus to explain the way in which early Christianity lifted itself "beyond all religions in this fertile, early period."²⁹⁸ Jonas adopted Spengler's account and adapted Arabian culture to Gnosticism. Waldstein argues that Jonas modified Spengler's description of the conflict between the East and the West by arguing that the East was on the attack at around the turn of the ages, and launched an offensive with "a powerful sense of self."²⁹⁹ Jonas emphasised the defining feature of this offensive as "a tremendous existential insecurity, cosmic anxiety, anxiety over the world and the self."³⁰⁰ Escape could only occur through redemption, which would be offered as a gift, via an agent of the divine. However, it was not at the disposal of the self. The life of the Gnostic soul led into nothingness: "the existential fear of losing oneself to the world gives rise to compulsive self-annihilation, which finds its highest expression in the Gnostic notion of

²⁹⁶ See Waldstein "Hans Jonas' Construct", 345-356.

²⁹⁷ Michael Waldstein, "Foundations of Bultmann's Work," *Communio*, Spring 1987: 133-135.

²⁹⁸ See Waldstein "Hans Jonas' Construct," 352.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 355.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

God.”³⁰¹ While the East experienced renewal, the West experienced decay. Jonas wrote: “the Western world received the new “Word” and transformed it into its own possibility, but it did not utter it, because it was paralysed and incapable of doing so.”³⁰²

Jonas was arguing in an opposite vein to the hypothesis of Bultmann, Bousset, and Reitzenstein. Where they were arguing in a deprecating manner for Eastern passivity, Jonas was interpreting the role of the East positively, as the founder of the “Word.” Bultmann and the History of Religions School held a totally negative view of the East and argued for an intrinsic superiority of Christianity. But Jonas’s work challenges their arguments with the support of Karen King.

An important element of Jonas’ understanding of Gnosticism is the discovery of the self, through a break with the world. The self is incommensurable with nature or anything objective. Even the self can be regarded as hostile to itself, when it behaves inauthentically. To become authentic it must be rescued by an offer from the divine, to which a response is required: this decision represents a break with the world. Jonas described this process as “a cosmic turning point of the spirit.”³⁰³

Waldstein argues that scholarship has ignored the connection between history (Spengler’s historiography and Jonas’ adaptation) and existentialist philosophy. But he also makes a plea for including the Nag Hammadi finds, which provide an antidote to Bultmannian, Jewish negativism. Even without the Nag Hammadi finds, the argument in favour of Jonas, and against the interpretation of the History of Religions School and Bultmann, is strong. Jonas and Bultmann share a view of existence which involves

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid., 368.

decision making in an encounter with the divine. Where they differ is in the role of history which explains how the bigger picture involves a positive role for Judaism in religion. And King has deconstructed Jonas' interpretation of strength in passiveness, which contradicts Bultmann's superior Christianity argument. Had Bultmann followed the argument of Jonas, in the deconstructed manner of King, he could have salvaged the Jewish Jesus within his Palestinian environment. Of course, this would have incurred the wrath of the German authorities, but it would have been honest endeavour, compatible with Barth and Bonhoeffer.

My understanding of this very complicated assessment of Jonas' work through the lenses of King and Waldstein is that Bultmann has been selective in his appropriation of material to support his existential theology, his spiritualising of Jesus in the manner of Hegel's *Geist*, and in his inattention to the arguments made by Jonas' appropriation of Spengler's historical and geographical analysis of the rise of the East and the decline of the West. Jonas does not deal specifically with Christianity, but his view of its decline in the West, and the search for an answer to being lost, with the answer being found in the redemption of the self, by abdication from the world, explains Bultmann's existentialist theology as a search for abstraction, spirituality and, ultimately, nihilism. Bultmann was aware of the dilemma and was forced to retain Jesus, as an agent of the divine, to avoid charges of anti-Christianity. Jonas saw anti-Jewish elements being promoted in Christianity under the guise of existentialist theology, but he legitimated it as an objectivity to be banished. But Bultmann retained his dependence on the History of Religions School and its dependence on Hegel and Baur, by creating a spiritual Jesus,

with origins in the Diaspora, rather than acknowledging the important Palestinian locus of Jesus.

Bultmann, Bousset, and Reitzenstein are duly admonished by King, as the Redeemer myth is rejected on the basis of faulty scholarship.³⁰⁴ The credibility of Bultmann's hypothesis of the spiritualised Jesus, at the hands of the Fourth Gospel, as a foil for inauthentic Judaism, is flawed. The value of Jonas' interpretation of existentialism as a cry for the emancipation of the self, but with historical, sociological, and political, as well as psychological features, is strengthened. The door is now left ajar for more sustained criticism of Bultmann's historical Jesus from his former students.

Legitimizing the Historical Jesus: The Former Schüler

Germany was divided between liberal and orthodox interpretations of the gospels, and in particular, over the role of the historical Jesus in Christian faith. Bultmann was a product of the History of Religions School and was acutely aware of the place that history and culture held in religious formation. But he had been influenced by Heidegger's existentialist philosophy, which led him to embrace an individualist interpretation of history, at the expense of traditional cultural history.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ King has argued convincingly for the demise of the Redeemer myth, which was so important for Bultmann's exegesis. For a detailed account of her argument, where she enlists the support of Carsten Colpe, see King, *What Is Gnosticism?*, 137-143.

³⁰⁵ Bultmann was so enraptured by Heidegger's individualistic centred philosophy that he was able to argue that Paul refers to the Greek word "cosmos" not in the accepted socio-cultural sense, but in the existential sense of Heidegger's usage. See Rudolf Bultmann, "The Significance of 'Dialectical Theology' for the Scientific Study of the New Testament," in idem, *Faith and Understanding*, 160.

A political element becomes evident where Bultmann takes steps to protect his existentialist hermeneutic from attack by positivists, who supported a cultural component of collective history. Bultmann labelled the historical Jesus an objective, cultural construct, inappropriate for faith. He constructed a hermeneutic of individual faith history by combining Kähler's hermeneutics with Heidegger's existentialist philosophy. In so doing, Bultmann ensured that his version of history and his view of Judaism and the Jewish Jesus would maintain its hegemony. But he also had to be careful about how far he ventured into secular territory as he tried to avoid the clutches of the dogmatic right. Bultmann found himself in the middle of a quandary: too far to the demythologising left and he would be in secular territory and stand liable to allegations of heresy and anti-Christianity.³⁰⁶ But if he ventured too far to the right, he would be in liberal, orthodox territory, and he would have made no gains, theologically speaking. The left wing did not come from the former Schüler, who can be designated the right wing, because they tried

³⁰⁶ See Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, in particular, note the Introduction by Robert W. Funk. The significance of this publication is that it is a collection of essays written by Bultmann over the years between 1924 and 1928, originally published as *Glauben und Verstehen*. They indicate how his theology was being formed: "Liberal Theology and the Latest Theological Movement" (1924); "Karl Barth, the Resurrection of the Dead; Historical and Supra-Historical Religion in Christianity" (1926); "On the Question of Christology" (1927); "The Significance of Dialectical Theology" (1928); "The Eschatology of the Gospel of John" (1928); "Church and Teaching in the New Testament" (1929); "The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul" (1929); "The Question of Wonder" (unpublished, no date); "The Christology of the New Testament" (unpublished, no date); "The Concept of the Word of God in the New Testament" (unpublished, no date); "The Problem of Natural Theology" (unpublished, no date). The argument is made that Bultmann's ideas changed very little in his later publications. For example, his ideas on the need to demythologise, which raised a storm after his 1941 publication, showed little if any significant change from the ideas expressed in these earlier writings.

to remain faithful to Bultmann's existentialist philosophy, while arguing the need for a broader interpretation of history, which would legitimate the historical Jesus.

First, I have chosen to look at four "left wing" opponents of Christian orthodoxy and myth, who are supporters of Bultmann's demythologising hermeneutics, before examining the ideas of the "right wing" Schüler. By taking a left-right approach, the opposing poles become more evident. The left hold the opinion that Bultmann does not do justice to demythology. They are not critical of his sidelining of the historical Jesus, but they want a mythical Christ demythologised. Bultmann was not prepared to go this far. The right wing Schüler are not as confrontational as the left. They are loyal to Bultmann's existentialism, but they see flaws in his view of history. They are trying to find a place for cultural history and the historical Jesus in Bultmann's existential theology.

I have selected Karl Jaspers, Schubert Ogden, Fritz Buri, with a glance at Wilhelm Kamlah, as examples of the left wing. Ogden, although not German, fits nicely with Jaspers and Buri on the left of the "kerygma as myth" pole. By glancing at the left, the arguments of the right come more clearly into view. The former Schüler understand what Bultmann is trying to achieve, and they remain sympathetic to his existentialist mode of theology. However, they are trying to create a bridge between the historical Jesus and the post-Easter kerygma, which has been described as mythical because it has no basis in history. Consequently, Bultmann's definition of the limits of theological history is under fire from the right.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ The former Schüler may be identified here as Ernst Käsemann, Gunther Bornkamm, Hans Conzelmann, Ernst Fuchs, and Gerhard Ebeling. The thrust of their argument is based on the premise that, while they

Bultmann was loyal to the principle espoused by the sceptics (Kähler et al.), “that we cannot know enough about the person of Jesus to write a biography.” Yet he did admit that the kerygma is a reality only “through the historical Jesus.”³⁰⁸ What Bultmann is saying is that the historical Jesus has been transformed into a faith object, namely the kerygma, and this explains how Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:18, is referring to a new age of Christ: one age has ended while another is beginning. Bultmann interpreted this meaning as dependent upon Paul’s interpretation of eschatology. An existential interpretation sees it as a new age being continually rekindled for the believer.³⁰⁹

This part of the chapter will explore the arguments of the left and the right as they try to exploit the inconsistency in Bultmann’s position vis-à-vis history, cultural objectivity, and mythology. I shall begin with an examination of the left, to illustrate the direction Bultmann was moving towards, since it helps to illuminate the contrast in arguments between the left and right poles, where Bultmann is situated in the centre left.

The former Schüler are then examined individually, beginning with the 1953 seminal paper of Ernst Käsemann, in which he presented the arguments responsible for re-opening the quest of the historical Jesus. Käsemann is followed by Gunther

support the principle of a Jesus of faith, they cannot accept that it has no historical relationship to the historical Jesus, otherwise the kerygma would be mythical and docetic in nature. Their major writings, with the exception of my selection for Conzelmann, have been identified by Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, as follows: Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*; idem, *New Testament Questions of Today*; idem, *The Testament of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1968); idem, *Perspectives on Paul*; Gunther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960); Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of Saint Luke* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960); Ernst Fuchs, *Studies of the Historical Jesus* (London SCM, 1966); Gerhard Ebeling, *Theology and Proclamation: A Discussion with Rudolf Bultmann* (London: Collins, 1960).

³⁰⁸ See Bultmann, “The Historical Jesus and the Theology of Paul,” 245.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 243.

Bornkamm, Hans Conzelmann, Gerhard Ebeling, and Ernst Fuchs. A brief conclusion completes the chapter.

K. Jaspers

Karl Jaspers is a recognised Swiss philosopher,³¹⁰ born in Oldenberg.³¹¹ While Bultmann relied on Heidegger's theology of existence for his hermeneutics, Jaspers has been acclaimed a great existentialist philosopher in his own right. Bultmann became more famous for his work on the history of the New Testament, while Jaspers became more famous as a philosopher. In the same vein, Jaspers credits Bultmann for the quality of his historical research, but questions his strength as a philosopher.³¹² So both men were well recognised, in their own distinctive fields, by the 1950s and 1960s.

Jaspers, in his defence of liberalism, accuses Bultmann of illiberal orthodoxy. However, Jaspers' liberalism has been given a different meaning to the one usually attributed to nineteenth century liberal thinking.³¹³ Thus, Macquarrie considers Jaspers to be more liberal in the sense of being open to a wider array of theological possibilities than Bultmann, namely Jaspers' concern for the salvation for non-believers, which he

³¹⁰ See Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 40.

³¹¹ See *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 12 (1971): 968-969, and Karl Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity: An Enquiry into the Possibility of Religion without Myth* (New York: Noonday, 1960), 111, where Jaspers recounts his memory of Bultmann in the "school yard of the Oldenberg gymnasium."

³¹² See Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity*, 4. Jaspers attacks the premises on which Bultmann bases his demythologising hermeneutics. The first is Bultmann's conception of modern science and of the modern view of the world "which leads him to negate many articles of the Christian faith." The second is his conception of philosophy, which enables him to give an existentialist interpretation to certain contents of faith.

³¹³ See John Macquarrie, *The Scope of Demythologising: Bultmann and His Critics* (London: SCM, 1960), 154.

claims, has not been considered by Bultmann. Liberalism is never exclusive and it is open to every way in which the divine may speak to man.³¹⁴ Jaspers is arguing that Bultmann reflected “old fashioned and illiberal orthodoxy in which the revelation of God was limited to a single episode in the past.”³¹⁵ Fergusson is arguing, on Jasper’s behalf, that it is legitimate for the creeds of other faiths to have their own interpretation of God and salvation. However, Bultmann was not averse to the insights to be gained from the study of comparative religion and, since he was a product of the History of Religions School, he could argue that Christianity is no different in its syncretist formation to other religions, when viewed from a socio-cultural perspective.

Bultmann takes a different view when it comes to matters of faith. The Christian is committed to the significance of the death of Christ on the cross, and it is at this point where Bultmann and Jaspers disagree. To Bultmann, the significance of Christ’s death means that God has spoken, certainly as far as “the Christian” is concerned, who has no choice but to behave in an obedient manner.³¹⁶ Jaspers, however, was committed fully to the philosophy of existentialism. Where Bultmann sees obedience only, Jaspers sees existentialism extending the scope of reason. Existence implies the freedom to choose, making the self responsible for its own existence. This seems to be the defining difference philosophically between Jaspers and Bultmann. Although Bultmann is sounding like Hegel, and to some extent, even Feuerbach, he was not prepared to go all the way into humanism. Jaspers, on the other hand, was prepared to extend Heidegger’s

³¹⁴ Ibid., 157.

³¹⁵ Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 40.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 40.

philosophy beyond obedience into reason and to give the individual a level of autonomy denied by Bultmann.

This is the point where Bultmann seems to be at his most vulnerable: he denied the freedom of the individual to carve out his/her own existence, by insisting on the centrality of God acting in Christ. Yet he was ambivalent about the role of Jesus in the formation of that faith. Jaspers has not denied the possibility of God acting in Christ, but he was much more open to the idea that mankind has a greater role to play in determining existence, which in turn, implies that socio-cultural factors should play a greater role in the formation of faith.

The concept of “openness” is central to Jaspers’ thinking. A true philosopher exposes himself/herself to divergent thought patterns, and Jaspers criticises Bultmann for his narrow interpretation of existence around the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. Bultmann stands accused, therefore, of taking a single philosophical strand, *Sein und Zeit*, and building a dogmatic theology upon it. The implication is that Bultmann has interpreted the concept of “existence” to fit his own theology, which has had the spin-off effect of diminishing the role of the earthly Jesus.

Authentic existence is the goal of Christianity in Bultmann’s eyes, and authentic existence is bound up with God in the Christ event. But Jaspers argues that Bultmann is selective in his formulation of this philosophy.³¹⁷ Where Jaspers supports openness, Bultmann is narrow and pessimistic about man’s fallen state, and unwilling to consider theological alternatives, since he has confined his philosophy to a single book by Heidegger.

³¹⁷ See Macquarrie, *The Scope of Demythologising*, 162.

Jaspers highlights the crucial point of the debate as Bultmann's struggle for biblical truth, which has led him to conclusions unacceptable to Jaspers.³¹⁸ Bultmann has separated his expertise as a historian from his theology, permitting him to be indifferent to the Hebrew Bible, while maintaining that the Synoptic Gospels possess little historical knowledge of the earthly Jesus. But he attached a high value to the writings of Paul and to the Johannine gospel, in order to buttress his argument that revelation is to be found not in the historically known Jesus, but in a redemptive history found in these post-Easter texts.³¹⁹ Jaspers counters that the teachings of the living figure of Jesus are more significant than the mythical idea of justification by faith alone. Hence, Jaspers is pointedly decrying the kerygmatic spiritualised Jesus of Bultmann's creation. He takes Bultmann to task for not being troubled by his preference for a Gnostic figure created in the Fourth Gospel. Jaspers allows that Bultmann does recognise the mythical character of the Gnostic kerygmatic figure, but he does so under the impression that he is using the Fourth Gospel in a demythologised manner.³²⁰ Jaspers argues that John's gospel is more anti-Semitic than the Synoptic Gospels and the Epistles of Paul, who is clearly dealing with problems of an anti-Jewish nature.³²¹

Bultmann replied to Jaspers' criticisms under the rubric, "The Case for Demythologisation."³²² First, he enlisted the support of Friedrich Gogarten's "Demythologisation and the Church" to argue that it is possible to use a philosophy

³¹⁸ See Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity*, 20.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² *Ibid.*, 57-72.

without subscribing to its theory. Bultmann is arguing that he makes use of Heidegger without subscribing to his humanist philosophy: he only uses the framework of Heidegger's existentialism to resolve a problem which Troeltsch identified, namely, how to distinguish between personal existence history and cultural objective history. He then gets to the heart of the matter.

Where Jaspers has said that Bultmann's intention is to "salvage faith" in the face of "scientific insights that cannot be ignored," and to give "the unbeliever a means to persevere in his faith with a good conscience," Bultmann clearly contradicts him. His goal was not to make religion more acceptable but rather to clarify what Christian faith is, and he did this by demythologising, which means clearing away the "stumbling blocks" created by modern science.³²³ Implicitly, by focussing on the individual and his/her moment of decision, he overcomes these "stumbling blocks."

Much of Bultmann's argument boils down to the place of myth in Christianity. Bultmann has focussed on the divine-human encounter at the expense of cultural and historical meaning. This is the context for understanding myth. Bultmann argues that it is used in such a way by the early Christian narrators that it does not distinguish between "empirical reality" and "existential reality."³²⁴ It is at this point that I feel Bultmann would have helped to clarify the context of the role of myth if he had given credit to Heidegger for his existential understanding of the individual. Bultmann, with the help of Heidegger's existentialism, searches the New Testament for existential authority, and finds it in the Fourth Gospel and in Paul. Bultmann finds in the notion of "eternal life," of

³²³ Ibid., 59.

³²⁴ Ibid., 61, n. 1.

“apocalyptic ages to come,” and in Paul’s teaching of “individual responsibility for wrapping oneself in Christ” confirmation for existential interpretation.³²⁵

Bultmann gives a premier place to the revelation of God in Christ, and from this Jaspers has formulated his argument, as noted earlier, that God does not “confine revelation to one particular event.” This is one of the bases of Jaspers argument, namely, that Bultmann was fostering intolerance for other religions. Bultmann’s reply was that “revelation has to be an event which occurs whenever and wherever, the word of grace is spoken to a man.”³²⁶

Bultmann completes his answer to Jaspers with an illustration of the application of his demythologisation hermeneutics to the historical Jesus. But it is important to keep in mind that Bultmann’s primary focus was not the historical figure of Jesus but the Christian message. The Christian message is bound to a historical figure only in the respect that “it regards this figure and its history as evidence of the word of God.”³²⁷ Bultmann concludes his explanation of the connection between the person of Jesus and the Christian message by saying that the demythologised Jesus Christ is the eschatological phenomenon which guarantees that “Christ” (now proclaimed in the message) is more than a past phenomenon but is “the ever present word of God.” The rest of his closing statement is worth quoting: “the paradox of the Christian faith is precisely

³²⁵ Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, 197. Bultmann cites Pauline interpretation of Jesus’ change of identity: “he knows him no longer after the flesh.” Bultmann is arguing that the church took over ideas from Gnostic myth to explain how the work of Jesus could be made intelligible “as a present reality” (198). Bultmann here is explaining how myth was used in ecclesiastical service, but it is necessary to demythologise, first, to situate its function correctly.

³²⁶ Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity*, 70.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

that the eschatological process, which sets an end to the world, became an event in every true sermon.”³²⁸

Here is evidence of one dilemma facing Bultmann: how to be both pastor and academic. He recognises the dilemma between speaking of faith in objective terms (cultural, historical) and the need to go beyond the objective, which he does through his existential demythologising. I am sure that as a pastor, preaching in the village church in his *Heimat* at Christmas, he might speak as poetically and whimsically as any other village pastor, but Heidegger would always be there in spirit, no doubt leading the way.

The scope of the differences between Bultmann and Jaspers is not huge. Both are existentialists to a certain degree, although Jaspers is a stronger philosopher than Bultmann. The area of contention appears to be in the socio-cultural area. Jaspers rejects what he considers to be Bultmann’s restricted theology to a one-time event that privileges Christianity. Bultmann argues that Jaspers has not understood his existentialism and the need to demythologise. Bultmann places a definitive meaning on the concept of revelation and divine encounter, whereas Jaspers is more open, socio-culturally. Jaspers, in an attempt to meet Bultmann on a common terrain, argues that history can free the pastor in his presentation of objectified contents. But I feel that Jaspers is missing the point as far as Bultmann’s theology of existence and objectivity is concerned. Consequently, Jaspers and Bultmann may differ, not on questions pertaining to the

³²⁸ Ibid.

validity of existentialist hermeneutics, but rather on the understanding of what constitutes objectivity, and the cultural-objective importance of myth in history.³²⁹

F. Buri

Fritz Buri and Jaspers were colleagues at Basel and shared an existentialist philosophy, but Barth has described Buri as more radical than Jaspers. In some ways he is close to Bultmann because he supports the need for demythologisation and acclaims Bultmann as the master.³³⁰ But like Jaspers, Buri cannot accept the kerygma as the link to “God’s decisive act in Jesus Christ.” The criticism of Buri is centred not on the process of demythologising per se, but rather on the supreme importance placed on the kerygma by Bultmann.

Buri is critical of the degree to which Bultmann has applied his demythologising hermeneutic. Buri’s criticism is echoing Jaspers’ inasmuch as he finds Bultmann’s assertion about the role of the kerygma theologically arrogant due to theological inconsistency: on the one hand, Bultmann is proclaiming the end of myth through his system of demythology, while on the other hand, he is selectively constructing an existential kerygma, derived from the person of Jesus.³³¹ The conservative Roman Catholic Church, however, approved of Bultmann’s attempt to construct a theology of

³²⁹ See Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*, 129. Bultmann argues that Jaspers is taking a universal approach to the meaning of history and describes Jaspers as a philosopher looking at history from the outside. Consequently, Bultmann could accuse Jaspers of objectivity, while Jaspers could accuse Bultmann of being too narrow, culturally, and even dogmatic in his assertions.

³³⁰ See Macquarrie, *The Scope of Demythologising*, 131.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 132.

revelation through his constructed kerygma.³³² The question which Buri is raising is whether a principle of demythologising is compatible with a constructed kerygma. Macquarrie has tried to rationalise Bultmann's motives: does he feel that he has been too heavy handed in his treatment of orthodoxy, and so he is trying to cushion the blow? Is he afraid of being labelled a heretic?

Buri questions the nature of kerygmatic uniqueness, and implies that Bultmann is an arrogant thinker who formulated a philosophy to impose on others with a claim of its inherent superiority. The corollary is that Bultmann has created a mythical kerygma, which he privileges over the treatment of myths, generally.³³³ Buri argues that the kerygma is another myth and consistency demands it be treated in the same way as other myths. Its function is purely apologetic. A kerygma which is not demythologised inhibits the due process of existential analysis. Buri is arguing that the mythical figure of the kerygma is an impediment to faith in Bultmann's theology.

Kerygmatic theology cannot be inherently hostile to orthodoxy, however, because Bultmann has been praised in catholic circles for his affirmation that the New Testament is a message of proclamation and kerygma,³³⁴ and he has been credited by the Roman Catholic Church for not allowing kerygmatic theology to become abstract and philosophical, in the manner advocated by Jaspers and Buri.³³⁵ A comparison between

³³² See Miegge, *Gospel and Myth*, 140.

³³³ See Bultmann, *Kerygma und Mythos*, 2:90-92, cited by Macquarrie, *The Scope of Demythologising*, 133-135.

³³⁴ See L. Malevez, *The Christian Message and Myth: Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (London: SCM, 1958).

³³⁵ See Miegge, *Gospel and Myth*, 140.

catholic theology and the anti-kerygmatic philosophy of both Jaspers and Buri highlights differences between these opposing groups.

S. Ogden

Schubert Ogden is helpful in clarifying the paradox of history in Bultmann's hermeneutics.³³⁶ He agrees with Bultmann that it is erroneous to ground the scriptures in history, while he is at odds with him over his emphasis on the kerygma, originating as an historical event, making the person of Jesus significant for salvation.³³⁷ Ogden is arguing that Bultmann has placed an existential happening alongside an objective, historical one, thereby breaking his own rule. If Bultmann is linking the historical occurrence of the historical Jesus with a faith event, then they are in opposition to each other.³³⁸ Like Jaspers and Buri, Ogden holds the view that the only remedy for Bultmann is to move to the left, more, and "dekerygmatisise."³³⁹

Was Bultmann not in danger of relinquishing Christianity altogether? While Bultmann has separated the Christ-kerygma from historical objectivity, his former student Wilhelm Kamlah has gone further by separating self-understanding from the Christ-kerygma in the same way that Jaspers, Buri, and Heidegger have done. The argument that holds is that Jesus is no longer needed, and the way is being prepared for

³³⁶ Professor of Theology at Southern Methodist University, Texas, he published *Christ without Myth: A Study Based on the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (London: Collins, 1962), and "How New Is the 'New Quest' of the Historical Jesus," in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ* (eds. C. E. Braaten and R. Harrisville Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), 197-242.

³³⁷ See Ogden, *Christ without Myth*, 109.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

³³⁹ Ogden, *Christ without Myth*, 110.

“a modern anthropology with no dependence on Christianity.”³⁴⁰ Walter Kunneth argues that Bultmann’s theology offers philosophical wisdom in Christian dress, only. Consequently, while Bultmann may use Christian terminology, he has robbed it of its Christian substance.³⁴¹ Bultmann’s implicit response was that the event of Jesus Christ is the revelation of the love of God, which frees a man to live a life of love and commitment.³⁴² But those to the left of Bultmann would argue that he must decide where he will stand: either further to the left or further to the right with his former Schüler.

It is evident that Bultmann is shielding arguments about faith from culture. Jaspers is arguing for a broader interpretation of religion, while Bultmann is concentrating on the uniqueness of Christianity due to the unique role of revelation through Christ. The “leftist” scholars have highlighted the central issue surrounding Jesus and his Christology. Bultmann, by insisting on an ahistorical approach to Jesus, while at the same time maintaining the need for a central but abstract kerygma, has opened up a cavity which threatens to engulf both the left and the right wings.

We have reached the point where we need to move to the right, away from the arguments of the left, towards the former students of Bultmann. We shall examine the work of Ernst Käsemann, Gunther Bornkamm, Hans Conzelmann, Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs. James Robinson has played an important role in articulating the need and

³⁴⁰ See Braaten and Harrisville, *Kerygma and History*, 112.

³⁴¹ See Walter Kunneth, “Bultmann’s Philosophy and the Reality of Salvation,” in *Kerygma and History*, 113.

³⁴² Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology*, 22.

legitimacy of a second quest, and has even outlined a procedure to be followed.³⁴³ However, Robinson, while he has taken some courses from Bultmann, does not qualify fully as a former Schüler.

E. Käsemann

The most controversial feature of Bultmann's theology is his rejection of the historical Jesus. He has based his hermeneutics on the argument that the gospels were not written with historical intent. Bultmann has argued that the gospels are faith documents, and need to be interpreted as such. By this statement, he means that Christian faith is derived from the kerygmatic proclamation of the post-Easter church. However, since the 1950s, this theology has been under attack from some of his most notable former Schüler, notably, Käsemann, Bornkamm, Conzelmann, Fuchs, and Ebeling.

Käsemann has been credited with re-opening the historical Jesus question.³⁴⁴ He began his studies in 1925, in Bonn, and then moved to Marburg, via Tübingen, where he completed a dissertation under Bultmann. Dawes recounts how he was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned, before being conscripted. We may assume, therefore, that he shared with Bultmann a distrust of the goals of the Third Reich.³⁴⁵ He continued to write,

³⁴³ James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). Robinson also includes four essays as an appendix: "The Formal Structure of Jesus' Message"; "The Recent Debate on the New Quest"; "Albert Schweitzer's Quest of the Historical Jesus Today"; "Jesus' Parables as God Happening."

³⁴⁴ See Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Quest*, 276.

³⁴⁵ See Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, 8. In the preface, dated October, 1963, Käsemann writes that the church's conflict with Nazism has still not been decided unfortunately, and that it is more important than ever to break from conformity, even if it means following false trails. He writes that he finds

and earned a doctorate from Marburg in 1947. In 1959, he was granted a post at Tübingen, where he remained until his retirement in 1971.³⁴⁶ The post-Bultmannian group of former students are viewed by Dawes as “right wing,” theologically. Yet it would appear that Käsemann shared a more left-wing orientation, compared to what we know of Heidegger and Barth, politically.

Käsemann is important because he was the first of the former Schüler to raise the question of how the kerygma related to the Jesus of history, or how did the proclaimed Jesus relate to the Jesus of history. In 1953 Käsemann presented an essay, which paralleled the Kähler essay, entitled “The Problem of the Historical Jesus.”³⁴⁷ Käsemann, like Barth, supported Bultmann that the liberal search for the historical Jesus should remain dormant, because the hope of uncovering the life story of Jesus as a correction to church dogma had proved to be in vain.³⁴⁸

But Käsemann challenges the Bultmannian view that the kerygmatic proclamation of the early church is devoid of any connection with the earthly Jesus, since the gospel narrative is about Jesus and comprises both an eschatological and Easter faith perspective. Käsemann faces a dilemma if he maintains, alongside Bultmann and Kähler, that the gospels are of little value historically.³⁴⁹ He is faced with answering the question, what constitutes legitimate history? Bultmann has sided with Kähler regarding the distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte* and he has privileged the *Geschichte* view of

himself at variance with his own past, with the school of theology in which he grew up, and particularly with his teacher, Bultmann, but he also says that it is only “marginally visible in these essays.”

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 276-277.

³⁴⁷ Kähler, *The So Called Historical Jesus*.

³⁴⁸ Ernst Käsemann, “The Problem of the Historical Jesus,” in Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Quest*, 288.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

history over historical, cultural epistemology. He has strongly opposed Troeltsch in his attempts to broaden the historical epistemology of religion to embrace not only the historical, in the later Bultmannian objective sense, but even psychological phenomena.³⁵⁰

Käsemann could be expected to reject the extreme views of Jasper and Buri that Bultmann has not gone far enough in his demythologising procedure. What exactly is Käsemann saying then? He elaborates at length on Jesus of history research and how liberal quests have been less than profitable, theologically speaking. Yet he cannot accept the anti-liberal view that the gospels contain nothing of historical value, even though they paint an image of an exalted Jesus:

But conversely, neither am I prepared to concede that, in the face of these facts, defeatism and scepticism must have the last word and lead us on to a complete disengagement of interest from the earthly Jesus. If this were to happen, we should either be failing to grasp the nature of the primitive Christian concern with the identity between the exalted and the humiliated Lord; or else we should be emptying that concern of any real content, as did the Docetists.³⁵¹

He argues that despite the obscurity of Jesus' life, there are characteristic traits in his preaching which stand out, and that primitive Christianity united its message with these unique characteristics of Jesus' message.³⁵² Käsemann is arguing that giving undue prominence to the "Lord dogma" of the exalted Jesus is a disservice to the primitive

³⁵⁰ Troeltsch wrote prodigiously on what constituted history. He was famous for his creation of the argument that "analogy" was basic to understanding history.

³⁵¹ Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, 46.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

Christian community, which maintained a link between the exalted and the earthly Jesus. This must be considered a criticism of Bultmann's exclusive theology of the kerygma. However, Käsemann is reluctant to support Troeltsch, in his view of a necessary link between universal and religious history, since he is being careful not to stray too far from his teacher. But he makes a major leap from Bultmann's hermeneutics, which argued that the earthly Jesus was only a pre-supposition of the exalted Jesus. Käsemann is saying that the earthly Jesus and the exalted Jesus is the same person: "for to this particularity (history), there corresponds the particularity of faith, for which the real history of Jesus is always happening afresh; it is now the history of the exalted Lord, but it does not cease to be the earthly history it once was, in which the call and the claim of the gospel are encountered."³⁵³

Käsemann has been careful to reserve a place for Bultmannian existentialism, while arguing that the kerygma must recognise the place of Jesus as a historical figure, since the message of the earthly Jesus was important for faith. However, Käsemann has unconsciously highlighted a historical dilemma. In "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," he tries to argue that "revelation invades human history," but in so doing, he has raised the question of how history is to be understood. Bultmann has argued that human history is both cultural and objective and therefore out of bounds for faith as faith is beyond reason. Käsemann is trying to bridge this gulf, but at a cost to Bultmann's demythologising criteria. If he succeeds in linking post-Easter faith to the historical Jesus, a gulf will be created between his teacher and himself. Käsemann's view of history is not flawless, because he extends his history hypothesis to the notion that Jesus stood above

³⁵³ Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, 47.

traditional Jewish piety, meaning that Jesus was outside Jewish piety and, by implication, outside Jewish law to the extent that he could not be integrated into the Jewish piety of his day.³⁵⁴ In this respect, Käsemann is demonstrating allegiance to Bultmann's anti-Judaism, by emphasising Jesus' supra-Judaism.

Käsemann has raised more questions than he has answered. The major question raised has to do with the cultural background of the historical Jesus. Bultmann's major accomplishment was to close the door to further historical analysis thereby protecting questions of faith from scientific scrutiny. Käsemann has opened this door with Troeltsch being kept outside. However, Käsemann has been the most forceful and articulate in his argument for a re-examination of the problem surrounding connections between the kerygma and the historical Jesus. But while Käsemann has argued forcibly, he has scarcely been as determined as the left wing scholars, who were not afraid to confront Bultmann with his inconsistencies. Käsemann has expressed concern that he is no longer satisfied with Bultmann's taboo that it is not permissible to search behind the kerygma to find the authentic Jesus. Käsemann argued that to separate the earthly Jesus from his Christology is to deny the validity of Jesus' message and the basis of the gospel. The corollary follows that if Bultmann is saying that the whole of the gospel narrative is contrived, it would mean that the preached Christ would be mythical. Nevertheless, despite obvious inconsistency, Käsemann remains loyal to Bultmann's form criticism, indirectly supporting his theological hegemony.

³⁵⁴ Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, 303.

G. Bornkamm

Gunther Bornkamm is recognised as the most formidable of the post-Bultmannians for his work entitled, *Jesus von Nazareth* (1956). Because Bornkamm accorded much more importance to the historical Jesus than Bultmann, it is to be expected that he would attract more attention from Jesus scholars than other Schüler, since they were interested only in certain aspects of the historical Jesus perspective.³⁵⁵

Bornkamm has outdistanced Bultmann. He agrees with Bultmann that the eschatology of the New Testament means a moment of present decision for the believer, but he extends its meaning to the person of Jesus. Bultmann was not prepared to do this.³⁵⁶ Bultmann's words about the historical Jesus sound very confident, even to the point of arrogance, while Bornkamm's *Jesus* is sympathetically written, with an emphasis upon the need to accept that history has an important role to play in understanding Jesus' relation to post-Easter faith.³⁵⁷ Yet Bornkamm, like Käsemann, cannot be described as opposing Bultmann entirely. Bultmann's Lutheran theology of opposition to salvation by

³⁵⁵ Käsemann was more interested in the question of authenticity in the gospels, for example. See Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, 37, where he discusses the Sermon on the Mount and argues for the authority of Jesus being greater than that of a simple rabbi. This, in itself is no meagre claim on the part of Käsemann, but I am arguing that Bornkamm has gone beyond Käsemann in the sense that he has re-introduced the historical Jesus issue on a wider front than Käsemann, for example, and consequently, Bornkamm has attracted interest from a wider front.

³⁵⁶ See Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 14: "whoever prefers to put the name of 'Jesus' always in quotation marks and let it stand as an abbreviation for the historical phenomenon with which we are concerned, is free to do so."

³⁵⁷ Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 17. Bornkamm is arguing that the historical component in the gospels shows "what belongs to the past in the history of Jesus should always be investigated and understood in relation to its significance for the present time today and the coming time of God's future."

good works is upheld. But Bornkamm has centralised the question of the kingdom of God by stating that:

The meaning of the kingdom of God in Jesus' message was fatally misunderstood by the theology of the nineteenth century, which in dependence upon Kant's teaching of the supreme good, and in accordance with the belief in the progress of their time, defined the kingdom of God as the highest moral ideal.³⁵⁸

Bornkamm adds the historical dimension to the importance of the kerygmatic Jesus, without losing sight of the Bultmannian existential dimension. He refuses to ignore the historical connection between the role of the post-Easter followers as witnesses and their memories of the earthly Jesus. Bornkamm is saying that an "existential theology of the present" does not nullify the historical interpretation needed to give credibility to the faith of the post-Easter Jesus community.³⁵⁹ According to Bornkamm, both are compatible. Bultmann responds by arguing that the Jesus tradition is not formed from historical interest but only on the basis of Easter faith.³⁶⁰ Bultmann begs the question, how do you recognise Easter faith per se? He has no answer to this question.

Bornkamm wants recognition for the historical component in the actions and expectations of the post-Easter community. But he has not answered Bultmann on his own terms. Bornkamm, unlike the left, has not confronted the inconsistency in Bultmann's theology of existence. He portrays the historical Jesus in humanistic terms,

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 201, n. 17.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 188.

³⁶⁰ See Rudolf Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ* (eds. C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville; Nashville: Abingdon Press 1964), 34.

but he has not explained his epistemological use of history clearly. He would receive more support from outside the Bultmann orbit, where the distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte* is not important, or where the dialectical theology of objectivism is not supported. Although he tries to distance himself from Bultmann, he is unsuccessful, because he has not clarified the paradox inherent in the philosophy of existentialism: he is writing like a positivist historian, thereby incurring Bultmann's censure, while trying to maintain the *Geschichte* option. He needed to demonstrate, like Troeltsch and Harnack, the value of historical and cultural positivism. Bornkamm explains how the Pauline epistemology of "New existence in Christ" reaches beyond Bultmann's hermeneutics:³⁶¹

Bultmann only becomes understandable, when it is realised that the existence of man is seen historically. Man has possibilities that he can grasp or relinquish. The authenticity of his existence is dependent on a set of dynamics around which man makes decisions. This is the point where Christ intercedes as a matter of faith. Bultmann asks the believer to accept what God has done in Christ.³⁶²

Bornkamm is able to accept Bultmann's hermeneutics of existence but not his rejection of the historical significance of the earthly Jesus. Bultmann is arguing in favour of demythologisation to prevent a divinisation of the historical Jesus. But it can be recalled that Harnack supported the historical Jesus' legitimacy without his divinity. Bornkamm is revisiting Harnack for help in bridging the gap between the liberal view of

³⁶¹ See Gunther Bornkamm, "Demythologising the New Testament Message" in *Kerygma and History*, 192. Bornkamm writes, "the believer's new existence has its nature in the fact that my I is dissolved and taken into Christ." This approach, which is seeking to find a place for objective history in Bultmann's theology, is using Bultmann's strategy of using Paul to legitimate his argument. Bornkamm is arguing that Paul has gone beyond the Heideggerian hermeneutic of Bultmann to see Christ as an entity in his own right.

³⁶² Gunther Bornkamm, "The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann," in *The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann*, 11.

the earthly Jesus and Bultmann's existentialism: "false understanding occurs when man is forced to leap over his own shadow and is forced to surrender, to this supposed (false) 'revelation,' his world view and his self understanding... a *sacrificium intellectus* to faith."³⁶³

Bornkamm is being critical of Bultmann for demanding a sacrifice of reason on behalf of faith. Bultmann has rejected reason as a demand for security because a demand for certainty, in a historically based relationship with the kerygma, is not surrendering obediently to God. Ironically, Bultmann has resurrected the old liberal objection to orthodoxy, requiring a sacrifice of the intellect for faith, only he is now in the dock (court of public opinion). Bultmann has been criticised for not clarifying this paradox. Surprisingly, Bultmann gives only approbation in his response to Bornkamm: "Bornkamm states correctly that my work has two roots, historical-critical and dialectical theology."

Barth and Gogarten have had an important influence on Bultmann's work. Both have acknowledged the importance of history in the life of the individual as outlined by Dilthey and Heidegger. While Bultmann acknowledges Bornkamm's criticism of his anthropological and subjective orientation, he makes no effort to defend it. Perhaps it is this attitude which prompted the charge of arrogance? Bultmann's loyalty to the Lutheran doctrine of "justification by faith" is beyond question and may explain his devotion to Paul. But a grey area is visible in Bultmann's theology which is being skirmished by Bornkamm. An explanation is warranted from Bultmann regarding the connection between the anthropological focus of Paul, which Bultmann supports, and his allegiance

³⁶³ Ibid. 19.

to the “justification by faith” doctrine, which requires no hermeneutical support for the historical Jesus. Bornkamm is on the cusp of identifying the problem.³⁶⁴

Bornkamm’s *Jesus of Nazareth*, when compared with Bultmann’s *Jesus and the Word*, illustrates an original Jesus: we learn much more about the person of Jesus and his message from Bornkamm than we do from Bultmann, and Jesus becomes creditable, even without divinity.

H. Conzelmann

Hans Conzelmann, professor of New Testament at the University of Göttingen, may be one of the most cautious of Bultmann’s former Schüler,³⁶⁵ but he is credited with being one of the first to apply Bornkamm’s redaction criticism to Luke.³⁶⁶

Bornkamm advanced Bultmann’s concept of the historical Jesus within a Gestalt view of Jesus’ ministry. What has been less acknowledged about Bornkamm’s work has been his important attention to the redaction of the evangelists. In 1948 Bornkamm wrote a brief comparative analysis of how Matthew had altered Mark’s version of the “stilling of the storm” episode. Bornkamm was able to demonstrate that Matthew had creatively highlighted the theme of discipleship.³⁶⁷ The stilling of the waves was to be interpreted metaphorically, by linking the act of calming the storm, with the need to stand fast amid

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 258.

³⁶⁵ See Hans Conzelmann, “The Method of the Life-of-Jesus Research,” in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, 54-68.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ See W. Barnes Tatum, *In Quest of Jesus* (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1982), 49.

dissent and opposition in the community. Bornkamm was illustrating how the gospel writers edited their texts to make a theological point.

Bornkamm's gospel analysis, known as redaction criticism, became more developed in the work of Conzelmann and Marxsen. In 1954, Conzelmann published the first significant redactional account in his study of Luke, and this was followed by Marxsen's 1956 publication of *Mark the Evangelist*. Barnes Tatum helpfully points out that redaction criticism was looking for differences between the evangelists as opposed to the traditional harmonisation approach.³⁶⁸

Marxsen was able to show that Mark, who was concerned with the delay in the Parousia, took it upon himself to provide an explanation. Redaction criticism was a major advance on the original findings of source criticism. Source criticism had provided a stepping stone for Bultmann to form criticism. Redaction has shown that what Bultmann had labelled myth within history, was really an interpretive form of history. It raised the question of how valid Bultmann's objectivity principle was as the basis of his existentialist theology, and as his yardstick of authenticity. It addressed the problem faced by the evangelists, and proposed the solution that what the evangelists were doing was not mythical, but was based on factual representation. The year of Conzelmann's publication of the *Theology of St. Luke* (1954), suggests when a wider interest in Bultmann's hermeneutics began to appear. The English version appeared in 1960, and a search in the Anglo-American journals reveals that Bultmann's ideas were being investigated.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

Barnes Tatum describes how Conzelmann examined the premise that Luke, in a way similar to Mark, was concerned about the delay in the Parousia, but unlike Mark, supplemented his gospel with material from Acts, which gave an ecclesiastical direction to his argument. Luke produced a historical account of salvation with Jesus occupying a middle place between the history of Israel and the period after Easter, when the church began to form under Paul.³⁶⁹ But it is in *Jesus* (published in English in 1973), that Conzelmann gives the impression that research has come full circle in its essential features of a dogmatic picture of the Messiah having its point of reference in Jesus himself.³⁷⁰

Conzelmann reconciled Bultmann's existentialist theology with explicit demands for a new quest, while Bornkamm argued in contrast to Bultmann that, while Jesus made no explicit demands to messianic authority, history can demonstrate the "messianic aspect" in his word and acts and in the "unmediatedness of his historical appearance."³⁷¹ Robinson argues that Bornkamm is suggesting, differently to Bultmann, that there is continuity between the earthly Jesus and the Kerygma, and Conzelmann is following Bornkamm when he writes, "how can a historical event be the eschatological event and encounter a person as such today? Answer: when he is preached in proclamation."³⁷² Conzelmann goes on to argue that historical enquiry is not an option. The object of historical enquiry is not faith, which is taken care of through the function of preaching.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 50.

³⁷⁰ See Bultmann, "The Primitive Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," 15.

³⁷¹ Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 17.

³⁷² Hans Conzelmann, *Jesus: The Classic Article from RGG3 Expanded and Updated* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 89.

Historical investigation will situate faith but it will not replace it. And in Bultmannian fashion, Conzelmann argued that the historical enquiry, like the encounter decision, will need to be repeated constantly. By maintaining the historical reference, the charge of a mythological kerygma could be kept at bay.³⁷³

After mapping out an argument for the use of history to support the kerygma, Conzelmann launches into an argument to support the continuity thesis of Bornkamm, which incurs the satirical observation of Bultmann that the wheel has turned a full cycle. The church asserts that the “risen one” is the same man as the one crucified. Both the Hellenistic church (Paul and John) and the Synoptic Gospels accept this dogma. Therefore, Jesus remains a pre-supposition for faith which, in turn, prevents a mythologizing of the redeemer figure.³⁷⁴

At this point, Conzelmann tries to link his continuity thesis and its need for historical recognition with the existentialist anthropological theology of Bultmann. Jesus calls mankind to decision without a direct Christological assertion.³⁷⁵ Conzelmann is arguing that Jesus is claiming an implicit Christology. Both Conzelmann and Bornkamm support the hermeneutic of a logical continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygma. They are unwilling to accept Bultmann’s argument that the church has assumed Jesus’ kerygma, thereby making him irrelevant.

Robinson supports the argument that Conzelmann has united various lines of development into a unified view of Jesus’ eschatology with his person, in which

³⁷³ Ibid., 90.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 93.

³⁷⁵ See Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 43. Bultmann writes, “In his lifetime he had demanded decision for his person as the bearer of the Word; the church has now made this decision.”

Christology replaces chronology as the basic meaning of Jesus' message.³⁷⁶ Conzelmann, Robinson argues, has explained Wrede's misunderstanding of Mark's "messianic secret." Mark was working with Christological material already: therefore, he was not forcing an agenda to explain a theological problem.³⁷⁷ Robinson uses this position of Conzelmann's to argue that twentieth century research is discovering the redactional uses of the evangelists and, far from their being non-historical documents, we are learning how they interpreted history Christologically. The narration of Luke is an excellent example of a historian working in a non-positivistic manner to present a unified view of history. This assertion by Robinson runs counter to Bultmann's view of objective and profane history. However, Robinson argues that Conzelmann deviates in his commitment, making his theology inconsistent:

as long as he was at Zürich, he was willing to share in the new quest, but when he went to Göttingen, where an unbroken continuity with the original quest was –in the person of Joachim Jeremias – Conzelmann withdrew from the new quest by arguing that although one was free to enquire as to the historical Jesus, the matter was irrelevant to Christian faith.³⁷⁸

From Robinson's statement, one could conclude that, while Conzelmann was willing to pursue the continuity factor, from an existential perspective in line with Bultmann's theology, he was unwilling to go out on a limb and support a Bultmannian

³⁷⁶ Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 18. Robinson explains how Conzelmann interprets how Jesus confronts man with existential decision time. Hence, Robinson is illustrating, without saying so, Conzelmann's demonstrated allegiance to Bultmann's theology of individual existence (Heidegger).

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

opponent in the person of Jeremias.³⁷⁹ Robinson's book, *The New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1959) predates *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ* (1964) by almost five years: enough time for evidence that Conzelmann had changed his mind when he wrote latterly, "the kerygma itself requires a historical exposition of Jesus' life and preaching."³⁸⁰

In an article devoted to "The Method of the Life-of-Jesus Research," Conzelmann makes a number of important observations which have implication for Bultmann's theology.³⁸¹ First, he argues that Jesus' self-consciousness cannot be divorced from his eschatological statements concerning the kingdom. Without accepting that Jesus saw a place for himself in the kingdom about which he was teaching, there would be no unity in his message. Conzelmann is criticising Bultmann here for his lack of interest in Jesus' self-consciousness.³⁸² Bultmann's form criticism supported the arguments of Kähler that the gospels were faith documents. Consequently they are unable to provide the kind of evidence which Conzelmann is alluding to. However, Conzelmann shows that he has this criticism in mind when he writes, "it seems to me that what is really new in Jesus' eschatology consists not of a new objective understanding of the eschaton, nor of an extreme reduction of the period of time."³⁸³

Conzelmann is arguing that scholars have over-emphasised the time factor implicit in the kingdom. They ought to be looking at the fact that the kingdom was

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 37, n. 1. Jeremias shows his opposition to Bultmann's Hellenistic overview of the Palestinian tradition.

³⁸⁰ Conzelmann, "The Method of the Life-of-Jesus Research," 68.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 63-69.

³⁸² As we have noted earlier in this study, Bultmann was not interested in the personality of Jesus.

³⁸³ Ibid., 67.

imminent and Jesus was intimately involved in its teaching. He himself was a proclaimer, extending an invitation to the believer to make an instant decision about whether to enter the kingdom or not. One difference between Conzelmann and Bultmann here is that the latter would dismiss Jesus' kingdom concept as in need of demythologising. Conzelmann, on the other hand, gives it credibility. Conzelmann is arguing that Jesus projects a Christology which Bultmann rejects.³⁸⁴

Conzelmann's theology is very cautious, and while he is trying to uphold the tenets of Bultmann's existential philosophy, he is endeavouring to go a little beyond, in an effort to establish the credibility of Jesus. Where Bultmann dismisses Jesus in a manner similar to Schweitzer, Conzelmann uses redaction criticism to interpret Jesus' words about his kingdom, in order to establish how much Jesus was prepared to become actively involved through his teaching, in opposition to Bultmann, who had argued that Jesus had occupied a passive bystander mode.

Conzelmann examined the liberal chestnut of whether Jesus was teaching a code of ethics. He argued that Bultmann has posited an inner unity between Jesus' eschatology and his ethics, which then enabled Bultmann to frame the eschaton in an existential decision context. Conzelmann rejected this view of Bultmann as too narrow.

G. Ebeling

In Fergusson's opinion, Gerhard Ebeling's *Theology of Proclamation: A Discussion with Rudolf Bultmann* (1962) was the most sustained critique of Bultmann at this point.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 132.

Ebeling argues that the name of Jesus is irreducible and all “Christological predicates employed in scripture and tradition refer to his name.”³⁸⁶ Pannenberg substantiates Ebeling’s claim by arguing that, if the historical Jesus had been unimportant to Christian faith, then his name would have been dropped by the early church.³⁸⁷ Robinson wrote that while the new quest reached its strongest response to Bultmann in Ebeling’s *Theology and Proclamation*, the decisive phase of the discussion appeared in *Kerygma und historischer Jesus* (1967).³⁸⁸ The 1960s are notable for their support of the use of history to interpret the historical Jesus, and Ebeling reflects this trend.

Bultmann, in one of his replies to his Schüler, singles out Fuchs and Ebeling as having the same view with respect to the continuity factor between the historical and the preached Jesus: both appreciated the existence of discontinuity.³⁸⁹ But Bultmann discredited Ebeling’s drive to derive proof of continuity from the fact that Jesus, as the witness of faith, became the basis of faith.³⁹⁰ Bultmann, in a footnote, argues that Ebeling is falling into the trap of psychological description, which is forbidden, theologically speaking.³⁹¹ Bultmann then accuses Ebeling, and Fuchs, by implication, of “objectivising Jesus.”

Kähler argued that the timing of the new quest, with its historical focus to prove the authenticity of the post-Easter kerygma, was due to the work of former Bultmann Schüler, convinced that the integrity of the kerygma depended on continuity with the

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology* (London: SCM, 1970), 149.

³⁸⁸ Robinson, *A New Quest*, 7.

³⁸⁹ Bultmann, “The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus,” 33.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

Jesus of history.³⁹² Braaten points out the enigma raised by Kähler, namely, how to resolve a faith matter by historical enquiry, and his answer is that it cannot.³⁹³ What remains, is to assess whether faith may be examined historically, and whether it is permissible to search behind the kerygma historically, to establish its validity. Braaten suggests that the variations between the Schüler are not significant, even though they pitch their arguments on apparently different landscapes: “Fuchs: the attitude of Jesus, Ebeling: the faith of Jesus, and Robinson: the selfhood of Jesus.”³⁹⁴ Braaten is proposing that the arguments used against the “Life of Jesus studies” still maintain their validity.³⁹⁵ However, it needs to be pointed out that Braaten is arguing from a Bultmannian perspective. He is not confronting, in any way, the premises that undergird the Bultmannian theology of objectivity and the consequential need to demythologise.

Ebeling is evidently not prepared to accept the Bultmannian premise that the foundations of Christian faith cannot be questioned. If we have only the crucifixion as the basis of faith, why is the life of Jesus unimportant, or, why is this particular man so important if his life is so unimportant?³⁹⁶ Bultmann places so much emphasis on the work of Paul and John the evangelist without answering the question, why they are more creditable as witnesses to faith than the Synoptic Gospels. Surely this epistemological bias begs the question, “why this man?”³⁹⁷

³⁹² See Carl E. Braaten, “Martin Kähler on the Historic Biblical Christ,” in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, 102.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁶ See Ebeling, *Theology and Proclamation*, 64.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Bultmann's hostility to objectivising, and its consequent outlawing of historical information, which could be relevant for faith, is questionable. According to Bultmann, the bare facts of the crucifixion are enough and Bultmann's dependence on Paul and John is based on his argument that they are saying the same thing. So we return to the Schülers' argument that there must be something distinctive about this man as opposed to some other crucified men. The implication of Ebeling's argument is that this question needs to be answered for the security of faith. Bultmann disagrees: faith cannot be questioned. Ebeling might have argued that Bultmann is guilty of tautology, and he does not mince his words:

If we could ascertain nothing historically authentic concerning the person to whom the kerygma refers, then the relation of Jesus to the kerygma would consist in nothing more than in a series of assertions, for the understanding of which, Jesus himself would have no more importance than that of a random and meaningless cipher. In this sense the kerygma, if such it could be called, would be no more than a mere myth. Nor would the matter be basically any different if all we could discover about Jesus – insofar as an abstraction of this sort is at all conceivable with historical events – was the mere fact of the existence at a certain time and place of an otherwise completely unknown person by the name of Jesus.³⁹⁸

Ebeling, in the final pages of his masterpiece, draws on Hermann for support against Bultmann's criticism of him as psychologising Jesus. Ebeling argues that Hermann was taken out of context in his portrayal of the need to consider the inner life of

³⁹⁸ Ebeling, *Theology and Proclamation*, 64.

Jesus. Like Hermann, Ebeling is arguing for an understanding of the unity of the person, which implies more distinction between faith and Word, faith and God, person and subject matter, person and work.³⁹⁹ The Ebeling position constitutes an attack on the premises upholding the Bultmannian theology.

According to Robinson, the new quest “reached its most valid formulation in 1962 in Gerhard Ebeling’s response to Bultmann in *Theology and Proclamation: Dialogue with Bultmann*.”⁴⁰⁰ Robinson cited the fact that this discussion was enlarged and published in *Kerygma und historischer Jesus* (1967), it also included detailed responses to the criticisms of Harvey and Ogden which had been published earlier, in Germany.⁴⁰¹ Robinson, who has made a significant contribution to New Testament interpretation, was to translate this German edition into English, but the Nag Hamadi codices took preference for his time.

The unity expressed in Jesus’ message is a recurring theme among the former Schüler. If the Schüler could be convincing that Jesus was more than a passive spectator in his kingdom preaching, then they could strengthen their argument for continuity between the message and the person, in contradiction to Bultmann’s Christology.

E. Fuchs

Ernst Fuchs followed Bultmann, after his retirement, to his New Testament chair at Marburg, where he co-operated with Ebeling to develop a new German language

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 130.

⁴⁰⁰ See Robinson, *A New Quest*, 7.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

theology known as the New Hermeneutic.⁴⁰² Perrin describes how Fuchs began to move away from Bultmann's view of the role of language. To Bultmann, authentic existence comes about not from an understanding of the words of the Jesus of history, but only from the words in the text of the kerygma. As we know, Bultmann ascribed a much more limited role to the Jesus of history compared with the existential role of the kerygma. Fuchs, on the other hand, departed from Bultmann in two directions: one, in ascribing greater significance generally to the Jesus of history for matters of faith, and second, in his view of the role of language in understanding the historical Jesus in matters of faith.⁴⁰³ Perrin describes Fuch's view of language as a "performative event," whereas Bultmann saw it as simply a means of transmitting an understanding of existence to the believer. We have now reached an important stage in Bultmann's career, when his former Schüler are questioning his understanding of Heidegger, with consequent implications for Bultmann's existence theology.

A turning point in Heidegger's thinking was noticed in the early 1950s. By 1959, Heinrich Ott, a young Privat-Dozent at Basel, had presented a monograph in which he argued that Barthian theology is more compatible with the later Heidegger's philosophy than Bultmann's theology. Significantly, Heidegger applauded Ott's conclusions.⁴⁰⁴ Bultmann was very critical of Ott's book and, in particular, of Ott's position on the

⁴⁰² See Norman Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 108.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁴⁰⁴ See James M. Robinson, *Language, Hermeneutic, and History: Theology after Barth and Bultmann* (Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, 2008), 3. Robinson describes the sequence of events which led to the critical review of Ott's book by Fuchs and Ebeling.

relation of the later Heidegger to theology.⁴⁰⁵ Bultmann's opposition to such new interpretations of existence can be seen in his questioning technique. He asks whether Jesus' eschatological consciousness meets an eschatological self-understanding in the believer, and importantly for Bultmann's relationship between faith and existence, is the question, does Jesus' claim of authority, perceived as a historical phenomenon, reach beyond his ministry?⁴⁰⁶ Fuchs argues that Jesus' word and the kerygma belong together. Robinson says that the turning point in this development is marked by Ebeling's volume *Theologie und Verkündigung*.⁴⁰⁷

So the point of departure from Bultman, by Fuchs and Ebeling, lies in the hermeneutics of unravelling the role of the historical Jesus in meeting the believer in faith. Where Bultmann had separated the historical Jesus from the kerygma, Fuchs has argued for a linkage: Jesus' word is found in the kerygma. In particular, Fuchs is interested in the parables of Jesus because they represent a contextualising by Jesus of situations with which the believer can identify:

I understand Jesus' proclamation as a "language event." That is not to say that Jesus created new concepts. It is his parables which are typical of Jesus... in the

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 55. Robinson describes in detail the points on which Bultmann disagreed with Ott's theology of existence. This study does not require that I go into depth on this issue. Suffice it to say that the wheels were set in motion for a critical look at the uses of meta-language uses in Jesus' parables in order to ascertain how Jesus understood his relationship with the Father.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 123. See "Bultmann's reply to Schniewind," 117, for his strong statement of belief that the Jesus of history is not kerygma: "The Jesus of history is not kerygma, any more than my book was."

⁴⁰⁷ See Robinson, *A New Quest*, 123.

parables Jesus' understanding of his situation "enters language" in a special way.⁴⁰⁸

Where Bultmann refused to admit that Jesus had any understanding of his own situation, Fuchs does not hesitate to argue this point. Bultmann accuses those who argue in this manner, of psychologising, but Fuchs remains undeterred. However, it needs to be borne in mind that, while Fuchs opposes Bultmann on the theological worth of the earthly Jesus, he still maintains Bultmann's existential commitments. However, Fuchs and his students, Etta Linnermann and Eberhard Jungel, extend the mandate of the kerygma to include the Jesus of history as its source of faith.⁴⁰⁹

It is worthwhile looking at Fuch's argument that language has the power to create identity. Implicitly, although not spelled out quite in this way, it appears that Fuchs is searching for a way to accommodate language as a common factor between the historic Jesus and the preached kerygma. Fuchs discusses the way in which Jesus "enters into the world of his hearers," and emphasises that Jesus does more than create pretty pictures: "He enters into the life of various groups of people like farmers, the wealthy, the woman, the handicapped and the despised."⁴¹⁰

This is what Fuchs describes as the nature of existence.⁴¹¹ Jesus is able to pull the hearer over to his side so that listener and Jesus think together.⁴¹² The importance of language events is that they can be interpreted as important illustrations of how Jesus is

⁴⁰⁸ Fuchs, *Studies of the Historical Jesus*, 220.

⁴⁰⁹ See Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 113.

⁴¹⁰ Fuchs, *Studies of the Historical Jesus*, 196.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 131.

reacting to God's message. The parables are important because they verbalise Jesus' understanding of his existence in relation to God, certainly, but also to the particular listeners. Fuchs' and Ebeling's hermeneutics are an extension of Bultmannian and Heideggerian existentialism. They have not abandoned Bultmann, because they have maintained his existentialism, but they have modified his hermeneutics of objectivity so that Jesus is no longer objectified, but rather a participant in the encounter process: his parables become meaningful.

James Dunn concurs with Ebeling and Fuchs as he writes that "parables are analogies, and in analogy lies the very language power of existence."⁴¹³ The language of the parable research separated Bultmann from a large section of the scholarly community outside of Germany. Fuchs and Ebeling, like Bultmann, are not ploughing completely new furrows. They show many distinct "points of affinity with the later Heidegger," with respect to the crisis between thought and language, "in the nature of being." Fuchs argues that Jesus is involved with the crisis of existence in Palestinian lives.⁴¹⁴ The theme of "crisis of language," is a significant deficiency in Bultmann's theology, which the former Schüler, particularly Fuchs and Ebeling, are trying to fill.

Consequently, the former Schüler are upholding central tenets of Bultmannian existential theology, while searching for fresh insights, particularly where Bultmann has been criticised for a deficiency in religious language, due to narrowly focussing on subjective individual encounter. This, coupled with a legalistic designation of what

⁴¹³ James D. G. Dunn and Scott McNight, eds., *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2005). Bultmann has been criticised, by Ogden and others, for reducing theology to anthropology by failing to present a doctrine of analogy.

⁴¹⁴ For a fuller description of the role of language in existence, see Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 342-347.

constitutes objectivity, has reduced his language to subjectivism, with no place for the historical Jesus.

The premises of Bultmann's theology, which obligated him to hold the view that the historical Jesus was irrelevant, came under attack from several of his former Schüler in the 1950s.⁴¹⁵ Bultmann argued that the Christian proclamation consisted in the post-Easter message of the disciples, not in the teaching of Jesus. The Schüler argued that the kerygma of the preached Christ cannot be separated from the historical figure of Jesus. Bultmann stood accused of docetic tendencies by concentrating on an abstract encounter with no basis in fact. Consequently, Bultmann's hermeneutics of objectivity, coupled with his demarcation of history into *Historie* and *Geschichte*, made investigation into the historical Jesus, as theologically important, impossible. The Schüler remained loyal to Bultmann's existentialism theology in principle, while searching for ways to link the historical Jesus with the preached post-Easter kerygma. Each of the Schüler made a unique contribution. Bornkamm incorporated a personal unified view of Jesus, while Fuchs and Ebeling concentrated on researching the uses of language with respect to Jesus' use of parables. By their work, Fuchs and Ebeling established the ground work for further research into Jesus' ministry, and laid a foundation for more questioning of the premises supporting Bultmann's theology with respect to the historical Jesus.

By situating Bultmann between opposing poles, the dilemma facing Bultmann becomes more apparent. The left, represented by Jaspers, is not concerned about the historical Jesus and wants more demythologising, while the right wants less.

⁴¹⁵ See, Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus"; Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*; Conzelmann, "The Method of the Life of Jesus Research"; Fuchs, *Studies of the Historical Jesus*; Ebeling, *Theology and Proclamation*.

Chapter 5

Anglo-American Dissent

The importance of parables' scholarship lies in the fact that it marks a departure from the Bultmannian view of language. Bultmann understood language as an instrument for transmitting information. The Schüler and Ernst Fuchs in particular, recognised in the language of the parable the means of transforming its meaning. Bultmann was focussed on explaining the existential message in the message of Jesus so that the actual transformation of the message via language was not part of his taxonomy. Fuchs has gone beyond Bultmann: where Bultmann has emphasised the existential nature of Jesus' message, Fuchs is arguing that the way Jesus employs language tells us something about how Jesus perceives himself and his role in transmitting knowledge about the kingdom of God: Fuchs refers to language as "a transformative event."⁴¹⁶ The use of language to argue that Jesus is speaking of his own existence runs counter to Bultmann's hermeneutic that we cannot know anything about the Jesus after the flesh, or that Jesus was only a pre-supposition for the gospels. Joachim Jeremias is the hinge that adapts Jülicher's nineteenth century work on the parables to the the work being done in England by C. H. Dodd.⁴¹⁷ Taking a language perspective to the parable acted as a catalyst for the re-

⁴¹⁶ See Robert Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and the Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 26-27. Funk cites J. L. Austin for her use of the term "performative discourse," where the argument is made that a person is not only saying something, but demonstrating something.

⁴¹⁷ See Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1972), and C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1936). Jeremias credits Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (2 vols.;

examination of the historical Jesus, by attacking it from an angle ignored by Bultmann. The consciousness of Jesus is shown to be reflected in his parables.

My examination of post-Bultmannian Schüler hermeneutics concluded that Bornkamm provided the most complete view of a human Jesus in *Jesus of Nazareth*, which corresponded with the work of Troeltsch and Harnack. Bornkamm, Troeltsch, and Harnack advanced the hermeneutic that Jesus made a contribution to faith despite the fact that he was human and not divine. Hugh Anderson argued that the Schüler remained loyal to Bultmann, by avoiding the issue of the personality of Jesus, and by concentrating on tangents of Jesus historiography. However, while there is undoubtedly some divergence within the Schüler in this respect, Bornkamm must be given the credit for emphasising the close relationship of Jesus to God.⁴¹⁸ Bornkamm advanced the importance of the historical Jesus debate with Bultmann to an understanding of God's relationship to mankind, via the earthly Jesus, while Fuchs advanced the linguistic approach in Germany. The Schüler were only writing in the 1950-1960 period, while Dodd had been grappling with linguistic issues from the 1930s. In 1927 a conference at Canterbury introduced German and English scholars to each other, suggesting that the work of the Schüler may have been a logical extension of the conference's influence. The ideas of the Schüler with respect to Jesus' consciousness are evident in earlier work, not only of C. H. Dodd, but also in the work of T. W. Manson and Vincent Taylor, who held that the divine consciousness of Jesus is seen as his distinctive element.⁴¹⁹ T. W. Manson

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1888-1899), for the original work on parables, and then C. H. Dodd for his major influence on the importance of the parables in interpreting the historical Jesus.

⁴¹⁸ Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 155-156.

⁴¹⁹ See Vincent Taylor, *The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching* (London: MacMillan, 1966), 189.

argued that the God consciousness of Jesus is “pivotal to Jesus’ understanding of God as Father.”⁴²⁰

Dodd will be the first English scholar to be examined,⁴²¹ followed by Manson, Taylor, and some of the less prominent scholars, who played important support roles. English scholarship, beginning with Dodd, illustrates the historical evolution of issues pertaining to Jesus’ consciousness. In the background lies the question of how these scholars legitimated their positions regarding the historical significance of Jesus in opposition to the Bultmannian view.

A similar process is followed with respect to American scholarship. A number of important leaders are identified, of which Amos Wilder and John Knox are the most prominent. The issue of Jesus’ Jewishness is evident in arguments regarding whether Jesus followed an apocalyptic or a prophetic tradition. Proponents of the Weiss tradition would support the former, while American social gospel adherents would be in favour of the prophetic tradition. The apocalyptic stance opposes the Bultmannian view and is supported by Dodd and the leaders of the Anglo-American community. The strength of their argument is founded on the *Sitz im Leben* position of Dodd, from which there was to be no going back, and which provided the foundation for the language in context research of the German Schüler, Norman Perrin, Robert Funk, and the American scholarship of Amos Wilder.

⁴²⁰ T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 156.

⁴²¹ See the volume, *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: Studies in Honour of C. H. Dodd*, where the editors, W. D. Davies and D. Daube, have displayed his Curriculum Vitae and biography from pages xiii to xviii.

C. H. Dodd.

Since C. H. Dodd was conducting research in the same time-frame as Rudolf Bultmann, we can make a comparison of their work. Dodd was not constrained by Bultmann's power, unlike his Schüler, and where they were reluctant to oppose the premises of Bultmann's existentialism, Dodd felt no such compulsion. Dodd was committed to Jesus and his kingdom and his research was built around this commitment. I trace the evolution of Dodd's work and argue that his credibility lies in the breadth of his historical-cultural research and the linguistic ability he brings to the task.

The beginning of Dodd's work is evident in the proceedings of the English 1927 Canterbury Conference, which was attended by German delegates.⁴²² It is a significant reference in the proceedings, because it illustrates how English and German theologians were in communication with each other shortly after the publication of Bultmann's *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921) and *Jesus and the Word* (1926), although

⁴²² See *Theology* 14 (1927): 247. The conference was held at the Deanery, in Canterbury, April 2-9. Six German and six English theologians presented papers. Those present included: C. H. Dodd (Mansfield), E. Hoskyns (Cambridge), J. K. Mozley (Reading), J. H. Oldham (London), A. E. J. Rawlinson (Oxford), and G. K. A Bell (no designation given), from England, and, from Germany, Heinrich Frick (Geissen), Gerhard Kittel (Tubingen), K. L. Schmidt (Jena), W. Stählin (Münster), and W. Voltrath (Erlagen). I counted only five German theologian presenters, however. Papers were limited to a 1000 words, with the discretion principle being applied, where necessary. Interestingly, several German authors were recommended: Bultmann, Barth for *Dogmatics*, Gogarten, Althaus, and Kähler. There was no mention of Bultmann's *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, which was his form criticism work. The focus of the conference was, "The Nature of the Kingdom of God." The Canterbury conference was important because it comprised English and German theologians who agreed that the kingdom of God was an apocalyptic concept in the message of Jesus, which provided the basis of discussion from then on. It meant that Jesus' transformation of the apocalyptic was to done on the basis of detailed exegesis rather than general considerations.

Bultmann himself was not there. It is worth noting that Dodd was influenced by a presentation by a German theologian, Karl Ludwig Schmidt.⁴²³

Schmidt emphasised the inconsistency factor in Jesus' teachings and called for prudence when tempted to draw universal implications. In 1919, Schmidt had argued that the order of events in the gospels is not based upon a collective memory of Jesus' followers, but is the result of redactionism, whereby unrelated stories were reassembled into a narrative form, and used for devotional purposes by the early church.⁴²⁴ Schmidt concluded that we ought to exercise prudence in any universal interpretation of Jesus' message. Schmidt was making a cautious reference to the liberal interpretation of Jesus' message, which Bultmann, in line with Schmidt, also repudiated. Bultmann was in the process of formulating his existentialist views during the middle to late 1920s, and by the time of the conference, Bultmann's views would have been known in England for at least five years. The form critical views expressed by Schmidt at the Canterbury conference were instrumental in catapulting Dodd into action.

Between the Canterbury conference and 1938, Dodd continued a critique of the work of the German form critics. By 1938 he had produced a framework for analysing the gospels, a rebuttal of the pericopae gospel structure advocated by Bultmann, and a critique of the form critical view of the way in which the kerygma should be understood in its relation to the community. All of this led to his epochal work on the parables of Jesus, where language was instrumental in understanding the context within which Jesus taught. The German translation of Dodd's emphasis on "contextual understanding" is *Sitz*

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Robinson, *A New Quest*, 35-36.

im Leben. It is a comprehensive term which covers the economic, cultural, linguistic, and historical context of Jesus' environment. I shall review his work to the point where I shall discuss Dodd's work on Jesus' parables. Dodd's work is critical in understanding the cleavage which occurred in Bultmann's theology and which provided the basis for the work of the Schüler of Bultmann.

In 1932, Dodd published a paper entitled, "Present Tendencies in the Criticism of the Gospels,"⁴²⁵ and followed this with "The Framework of the Gospel Narrative,"⁴²⁶ where he took issue with Schmidt's critical "Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu" (1919), by arguing that it is a preparatory work to form criticism, and further that the school of Formgeschichte "has not produced a work of really first class quality."⁴²⁷ J. A. T. Robinson (English Bishop of Woolwich and a Bultmann supporter) wrote in 1963-1964 that, despite the strength of form criticism, Dodd refused to write off the Jesus of history,⁴²⁸ while James Robinson wrote that it is indicative of Dodd's intellectual stature that he carried through the logic of his position, despite the findings of form criticism

⁴²⁵ C. H. Dodd, "Present Tendencies in the Criticism of the Gospels," *Expository Times* 43 (1931-1932): 246-252.

⁴²⁶ C. H. Dodd, "The Framework of the Gospel Narrative," *Expository Times* 43 (1931-1932): 396-400.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 249. Dodd concluded that, by the end of the 19th century, no side had won the debate over the historical Jesus. He listed four aspects which he considered important: The re-entry of the Johannine gospel, the impetus of fresh Jewish studies, a new view of Gnosticism as no longer heresy, and the work of Reitzenstein, Bousset, and Bultmann into the Mandaeans. But of that, he concluded that "behind the gospel in Greek, or portions of it, lies a mind that thought in Aramaic – the mind of a Jew and not a Greek Gnostic" (*ibid.*).

⁴²⁸ J. A. T. Robinson, "Theologians of Our Times: C. H. Dodd," *The Expository Times* 75 (1963-1964): 100-102.

(and implicitly, the arguments developed by Schmidt initially, and by Bultmann later) and “he does actually present us with a kerygmatic chronology of the public ministry.”⁴²⁹

Dodd references Schmidt’s Canterbury paper, and cites a paper written by Archdeacon Dr. Rawlinson, in his reference to form criticism. He then leads in to a rebuttal of Schmidt’s paper, which described the gospel as consisting of individual pericopae, in line with Bultmann’s form criticism. Both Dodd and Rawlinson questioned the German practice of reducing the gospel to “short narrative units.”⁴³⁰ Dodd’s opposition to Bultmann’s theology is also apparent elsewhere: in his opinion, “a true historical perspective suggests that it would be nearer to the truth to say that the kerygma, or the facts and beliefs involved in it, created the community, than to say that the community created the kerygma.”⁴³¹

Dodd’s ideas on the constitution of the kerygma were published in 1936.⁴³² A study of the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* between 1932 and 1938, when he was Rylands Professor at the University of Manchester, illustrates the progress he was making

⁴²⁹ Robinson, *A New Quest*, 57.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ C. H. Dodd, “The Gospels as History: A Reconsideration” (lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library, 18th November, 1937), *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 22 (1938): 122-143.

⁴³² C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936). Archibald M. Hunter, *The Message of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1944), 26, described it as “one of the most important and positive contributions to New Testament science in our generation.” It established Dodd’s reputation as a New Testament scholar. Dodd made rapid strides in his career: in 1927, at the Cambridge conference he was listed as being at Mansfield, Oxford, after which he took up a position at Manchester University, and in 1936, the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* listed him as the Norris-Hulse Professor at Cambridge. He remained at Cambridge, marrying and buying a house there.

towards determining the historical boundaries of the kerygma.⁴³³ His work involved him in a defining search for the new gospel and his publications demonstrated the extent of his search, with his knowledge, for example, of the Egerton Papyrus, dubbed “the Unknown Gospel.”

Dodd’s work between 1932 and 1936 illustrated his use of linguistics in gospel interpretation. In 1932 he published “Gospel Parables,” which was an introduction to usage of metaphor, allegory, and language generally employed. Significantly, Dodd cites the work of Bultmann, in his comparison of German and English approaches.⁴³⁴ He shows that he is knowledgeable of the foundational work done by Jülicher, but he also parallels the work of English authors by citing Edwyn Hoskyns. His argument is that the New Testament is a riddle and requires several methods of interpretation. This was a veiled attack on the work of form criticism, which was being seen in England as only one method among others, and a rather narrowly interpreted one at that. Dodd proves himself as a New Testament linguist and as a professor of Greek; he enjoys an advantage in textual analysis particularly, which he uses in forming argument pertaining to the timing of the Parousia and the kingdom of Jesus. He also published two articles on Paul, one examining Paul’s psychology, with the other comparing changes in Paul’s writings.⁴³⁵

⁴³³ See C. H. Dodd, “The Gospel Parables,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 16 (1932): 396-412; idem, “The Mind of Paul: A Psychological Approach,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 17 (1933): 91-105; idem, “The Mind of Paul: Change and Development,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 18 (1934): 69-110; idem, “Background of the Fourth Gospel,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 19 (1935): 329-343; idem, “A New Gospel,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 20 (1936): 56-92; idem “The First Epistle of John and the Fourth Gospel,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 21 (1937): 129-156; idem, “The Gospel as History: A Reconsideration,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 22 (1938): 122-159.

⁴³⁴ Dodd, “The Gospel Parables,” 400.

⁴³⁵ Dodd, “The Mind of Paul” (1 and 2).

Dodd probes the mind of Paul for clues as to how his conversion occurred. What was its meaning? What did Paul mean by the term “liberation”? Dodd was searching for clues to explain Paul’s emphasis on the meaning of Christ, and he did this by a comparative analysis of Paul’s writings, in order to learn the degree to which Jewish eschatology had played in Paul’s writing. By 1935, Dodd was assessing Rabbinic Judaism, Paul’s use of Jewish and Christian messianism, the uses of “mystery” found in the Third Book of Enoch, the ideas of Philo and his understanding in the Old Testament, as a source for interpreting eternal life and “Background of the Fourth Gospel.” In 1937, Dodd published a study of “The First Epistle of John and the Fourth Gospel,” where the use of philology comes into play as he compares and contrasts style of authorship, and idiomatic and rhetorical forms, in his search for uniformity.

By 1938, Dodd had concluded that the search for the historical Jesus must be more than a search for bare facts. His focus on style of authorship, coupled with his knowledge of Greek and linguistics generally, had taught him that facts were less recoverable than style of presentation and unity of message. He wrote that the character of the gospels was not the character of historical documents and, in Bultmannian style, argued that a certain degree of scepticism was necessary in their interpretation. However, Dodd acknowledged that there was indeed a movement away from historical assessment in the direction of dogma, and he cited Germany as being particularly vulnerable, since it was the home of pure historicism, where reaction could be expected to be the greatest: “in that country the pendulum is apt to swing with a vengeance unknown in this country.”⁴³⁶ To drive home his point, that English scholarship differed from the continental approach,

⁴³⁶ Dodd, “The Gospel as History,” 122.

Dodd wrote that “England had never committed itself to the extreme position of the Bultmannian critical-historical school.”⁴³⁷ Thus, Dodd absolved himself from the constraints of Bultmann’s form criticism, and Bultmann’s theological hegemony.

By 1936, when Dodd had published *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*, he had formulated a framework for the study of the gospels, which was distinctly different to what he called “the continental approach,” and by implication, from the Bultmannian theology of the existentialist kerygma. His studies of Paul, and his comparative situating of the Synoptics vis-à-vis the Johannine gospel, had taught him that the study of the kerygma ought to be considered as research of the structure favoured by the early church in its proclamation. He identified the earliest gospel as promoting a theme of fulfilment, akin to a coming of age party, where the role of Jesus must have been central. The early church had made Jesus divine by exalting his status in line with a belief in the value of his ministry. A belief in a meaningful death and a consequent resurrection was a natural corollary. All was not finished with the resurrection, since the early church believed in a messianic return of Jesus with offers of salvation for repentance.⁴³⁸

Dodd’s *Apostolic Preaching* received acclaim from several British and American scholars, but the same cannot be said of German scholars, who largely ignored this work, with the exception of the sympathetic research of Joachim Jeremias, who extended Dodd’s embryonic work on the parables of Jesus. A possible explanation is that the

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 123.

⁴³⁸ Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching*, 21. Dodd’s words are: “The prophecies are fulfilled – He will come again as Judge and Saviour of men.” Dodd, like Bultmann, did not change his ideas. Both were claiming in the 1950s what they had written in the 1920s (Bultmann) and 1930s (Dodd).

period 1920-1950 in Germany, noted already, was a period for establishing Bultmannian hegemony, where form criticism inhibited further historical Jesus research. But there was no commitment in England to the findings of form criticism, although Dodd has given credit to form criticism, that scepticism is demanded when interpreting the gospel historically.

The Parables of Jesus

Perrin traces how the history of parable understanding originated from the work of Adolf Jülicher and Joachim Jeremias, who supported Dodd in his anti-form critical work,⁴³⁹ and gave him the credit for introducing the parables of Jesus into the discussion on the kingdom in the message of Jesus.⁴⁴⁰ Jeremias is important for his emphasis on the use of the historical method when researching the message of Jesus. Dodd influenced Jeremias with his discussion of how Jesus understood the timing of the in-breaking of the kingdom. This was important discussion because it challenged Bultmann's *Geschichte* view of history. Bultmann had interpreted the eschatological component of Jesus' teaching as present and future in an individual sense of decision making, and he had forcefully decried any attempt to understand Jesus' consciousness. The work of Dodd and Jeremias provided the groundwork for questioning Bultmann's hermeneutics of Jesus,

⁴³⁹ Credit is given here to the work of Perrin for his interpretive work on the parables of Jesus, especially *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 98-113. Perrin covers the German contribution in the work of Jeremias, Fuchs, and his pupils, Linnemann and Jungel. Perrin's important work lays the groundwork for understanding the later work of Robert Funk and Dominic Crossan of the Jesus Seminar.

⁴⁴⁰ Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 97.

and the parables, in particular, provided the means for understanding what Jesus was trying to do.

Perrin shows how Dodd argued, successfully, that it was essential to try to reconstruct the original setting of the life of Jesus. Dodd argued that this may require removing a parable from its setting in the life of the church.⁴⁴¹ Perrin describes Dodd's use of metaphor and linguistics in contextual parables' research, and he shows how Dodd, by extending the work of Jülicher, enabled Jeremias to expand the influence of Dodd's work. The importance of the Jewish context of Jesus' message in Dodd's work is thereby reinforced. The strength of Dodd's contribution is evident even in the work of Robert Funk.⁴⁴² The evidence provided here is the importance of the Jewish context of Jesus' message. The historical component is bigger than the Bultmannian *Geschichte* view of history. Dodd and Jeremias, by developing the work of Jülicher, while rebutting the narrow interpretation of the gospel by the form critical school and its later existential theological corollary, sowed the seeds for a re-examination of the historical Jesus and the message of the kingdom.

The Anglo-American Kerygma

The Anglo-American view of the kerygma emphasised a unified connection between the historical Jesus and the exalted Christ and disputed the segmented view of the form critical method referred to by Bultmann as gospel pericopae. It accepted that, despite some differences, such as the number of facts to be ascribed to the kerygma, or the

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁴² See Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God*, 133-162. Dodd's work on literary style and different uses of forms of speech like metaphor is evident in Funk's work.

Pauline distinction made by Dodd between kerygma and didache, faith was the issue, “since it was by kerygma,” says Paul, “not by didache, that it pleased God to save men.”⁴⁴³

I have selected a number of writers presenting the Anglo-American view of the kerygma-historical Jesus issues: A. M. Hunter (briefly), R. H. Fuller, Vincent Taylor, D. E. Nineham, and T. W. Manson (English section), Shirley Jackson Case, C. J. Cadoux (although English, I have footnoted him in the American section), A. N. Wilder, F. C. Grant, and John Knox (American section). There is some bias here because the number of English scholars is greater than the American. The reason for this is that I have selected scholars who showed some continuity with the work of Dodd and Jeremias in the parables of the kingdom. There was more disparity in the American section than in the English, although this is not meant to imply that harmony existed there either. This brief review is aimed at substantiating how issues ignored by Bultmann were deemed to have a bearing on the understanding of the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic faith of the early church. Cultural relevance was a subject of debate and the arguments displayed help to solidify the strength of the argument that Bultmann was too narrow in his theological terrain, which required a broader cultural context for interpretation.

Hunter argues over the number of facts in the kerygma doctrine,⁴⁴⁴ and yet supports Dodd in his view that a unified pattern exists. This position of the Anglo-American community is at odds with German, existential, Bultmannian theology.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁴⁴ See Hunter, *The Message of the New Testament*, 26.

⁴⁴⁵ See Erich Dinkler, “Existentialist Interpretation of the New Testament,” *Journal of Religion* 32 (1952): 93.

Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament* (1951) re-emphasises the existential view of the kerygma, namely, that it demands readiness and preparation on the part of the believer, to engage in a decision of an eschatological personal event with the divine. But Bultmann came under threat from former Schüler, who were beginning to embrace the idea that history may be capable of providing information on the sources of the kerygma and be a support for faith at the same time. In spite of the support for Bultmann by Gogarten,⁴⁴⁶ Dodd was arguing that the kerygma of the early church consists of a proclamation, which must be interpreted within an eschatological context: "the Pauline kerygma, therefore, is a proclamation of the facts of the death and resurrection of Christ in an eschatological setting, which gives significance to the facts."⁴⁴⁷

Both Dodd and Bultmann accept the eschatological, or decision time factor implicit in the kerygma. For Bultmann it is an individual existential decision, while for Dodd it is a historical, cultural decision, or what Bultmann would label as culturally objective and therefore inadmissible. The difference is that where Bultmann is excluding the Jesus of history, Dodd is including the eschatological history of Jesus as essential to Christian theology.

From what I have shown in the previous chapter, the former Schüler should complement Dodd. James Robinson affirmed that the role of Dodd, in his portrayal of the kerygma, must be credited with bringing the old "Bultmannian" quest to an end. But then he argued that Dodd ignored Bultmannian theology that the kerygma receives its

⁴⁴⁶ It should be understood that in the 1950s, despite opposition from former Schüler, Bultmann continued to enjoy the support of Gogarten. See Robinson, *Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*. There are several articles in there by Gogarten affirming Bultmann's hermeneutics.

⁴⁴⁷ Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching*, 16.

authority from its “existential call to faith.” Robinson demonstrates his loyalty to Bultmann’s hermeneutics by postulating that, in order for Dodd’s theory to succeed, he is required to show that Jesus’ life is indispensable for “conveying the existential meaning of the kerygma.” But Robinson’s coup de grace, in Bultmannian style, is the claim that Dodd is a positivist, and outside the Bultmann orbit.⁴⁴⁸ This statement illustrates some of the distance between Dodd and the post-Bultmannians, who continued to support the subjective element in Bultmann’s existential theology, a decade and a half later.

How are we to evaluate these respective arguments? One way is to identify the premise(s) underlying the propositions. Dodd has written forcefully about the kingdom being present, or realised in Jesus. The kingdom of God is a product of the events surrounding the ministry, life, and death of Jesus. There is no mistaking the importance Dodd attaches to the historical component, while Bultmann’s interpretation is derived from his existential philosophy.⁴⁴⁹ To an English historian, Bultmann’s assertions would appear as belonging to the world of ideas rather than to a concrete situating of Jesus within his social and historical environment. Dodd argues, in contradistinction to Bultmann, that the ministry of Jesus “is not merely of the seed, but of the harvest, that the

⁴⁴⁸ Robinson, *A New Quest*, 48-49. Robinson credits Dodd with centralising the historical component of the kerygma. But Robinson is a stalwart defender of Bultmann and argues that Dodd was trying to swim against the tide of scholarship by arguing for continuity in Mark. Robinson then cites Ethelbert Stauffer as a positivist trying to rectify Dodd’s work (59-60). However, Robinson is not disposed to give much credit to Stauffer on account of his positivism. So the gulf is evident between Dodd and Robinson.

⁴⁴⁹ Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, 209: “abstract propositions can only become the Word of God when it is proclamation.”

kingdom of God is a present reality, *even before the decisive event of the Cross and Resurrection.*⁴⁵⁰

The Parables of the Kingdom, published in 1935, is the most influential of Dodd's works. He is credited with drawing a line, in a similar way to Bultmann, by defining theistic cultural objectivity restraints, with the argument that Jesus must be studied within his *Sitz im Leben*, or Palestinian context. This definition of heuristic interpretation pertaining to Jesus has had the effect of marginalising Bultmann's futuristic view of the kingdom and opened the door for the examination of various interpretations of time, vis-à-vis the kingdom.

Dodd's work has been scrutinised by Jeremias. His work on the parables agrees with Dodd's where he has found a present component in Jesus' kingdom. But he has added a futuristic component, arguing for a kingdom being in the process of realisation. This finding seems to approximate Bultmann's description of a train in the process of entering the station where it can be seen without having entirely arrived. Bultmann would explain this in existentialist terms as the believer being in sight of redemption, while still having a commitment to make.

J. A. T. Robinson implies a parallel between Bultmann's ideas on the futuristic component and Dodd's argument that the powers of the kingdom are at work, currently.⁴⁵¹ However, Dodd modified his original thesis on "realised eschatology."⁴⁵² J.

⁴⁵⁰ Robinson, "Theologians of Our Time," 101 (my italics).

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 101-102.

⁴⁵² See C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 447.

A. T. Robinson surmised that Dodd left the time factor question open to promote dialogue, and when he felt that he had achieved his objective, he modified his thesis.⁴⁵³

Dodd opened the door to the *Sitz im Leben* argument for the study of Jesus' kingdom and he has been given credit for this milestone, particularly in the subsequent work of Jeremias. Nevertheless, Dodd did endure criticism over his "realised eschatology" argument,⁴⁵⁴ which he modified to bring it in line with the current thinking of the time. However, he did experience much criticism over his transcendence view of Jesus' kingdom. Dodd held that Jesus taught an eschatology which would occur beyond time and space. But his arguments did not appear to hold up despite his use of the Book of Enoch to indicate the presence of another worldly being.⁴⁵⁵ Perrin rejects Dodd's arguments. The consensus is that Jesus' kingdom will take place on earth in line with Jewish tradition. There is not enough support in the Book of Enoch to countenance this view. However, Anderson credits Dodd with being highly influential in promoting the argument that the primitive kerygma "mirrors the skeleton framework of Jesus' earthly career."⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵³ Ibid. The present-future question was dominant towards the end and after the Second World War. Jeremias followed Dodd in his agreement that the parables did teach a present component in Jesus' kingdom. But there is also a future component as well. Jeremias was writing in 1941, before Dodd had retracted it in *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Also note that by 1958, Frank Cross had published *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, which added to Dodd's credibility by situating Jesus' teaching against the backdrop of Jewish expectation.

⁴⁵⁴ See Robinson, *A New Quest*, 134. Robinson describes how Dodd modified his realized eschatology, its impact on Bultmann, and the implications for the understanding of Fuchs and Jeremias.

⁴⁵⁵ See Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1963), 71-73.

⁴⁵⁶ Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 153.

R. H. Fuller

Reginald H. Fuller takes a stand that is closer to Bultmann than Dodd. He does not agree with Dodd's view that the kingdom is present in the ministry of Jesus, although it is near and shows signs of imminence.⁴⁵⁷ Anderson has argued that post-Bultmannian research which coincided with the time of Fuller's writing, was showing awareness "[t]hat the whole of Jesus' teaching flows from his conviction that God is breaking into history, that crisis is impending, that the kingdom of God is near."⁴⁵⁸

Anderson is arguing that mid-twentieth century research had ultimately accepted Bultmann's theology that God was the centre of things and breaking into the world through Jesus. However, where Bultmann saw Jesus' life as un-messianic, Fuller took the opposite view. Fuller saw the kingdom of God as being at the "centre of things" and supported Oscar Cullmann's view that what Jesus did, provided an indication of his self-perception.⁴⁵⁹ Fuller is closer to Bultmann than to Dodd in the sense that he rejected Dodd's "realised eschatology," while maintaining Bultmann's distinction between the dawning and the actual breaking in of the kingdom.⁴⁶⁰ Perrin takes issue in the Fuller-Dodd debate by stating emphatically that there is no going back from Dodd's method of *Sitz im Leben*: there can be no denial that the parables do teach that the kingdom of God is present in the ministry of Jesus.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁷ See Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 86-87.

⁴⁵⁸ Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 119.

⁴⁵⁹ See Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 3-4, cited by Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 119.

⁴⁶⁰ It should be noted that Dodd modified his "realised eschatology" concept to allow for a futuristic component.

⁴⁶¹ Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 73.

Fuller describes his ideas about Jesus' self-perception in his *Mission and Achievement of Jesus*,⁴⁶² where he argues that Jesus was preparing for his messianic role after his death, and while he did not claim to be the messiah, he provided clues that humiliation would lead to post mortem exaltation and the fulfilment of his destiny, to become the Son of Man. Fuller is similar to Bultmann in the view that what happened post-Easter provided the meaning of the kingdom. However, in *Theology of the New Testament*, Bultmann denies that Jesus identified himself as the Son of Man.⁴⁶³ The issue of how Jesus perceived himself became an important issue, which the debate over language as a means of interpreting the parables helped to resolve.

Fuller and Bultmann differ in the amount of significance Fuller places on the life of Jesus, expressed in the kingdom as a preparation for exaltation later. Fuller coincides with the broad view of Dodd that the kerygma is a Greek word for preaching which recovers the original message of Jesus. This message is not about "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man," but "the apostolic proclamation of the life, death, and exaltation of Jesus as Christ and Lord."⁴⁶⁴ Robinson leaves no doubt as to where the feelings of Dodd are situated regarding the true meaning of the kerygma. It is situated not in an abstract theistic idea, but in the concrete ministry of Jesus. Were Fuller asked to choose sides, he would ultimately side with Dodd.

⁴⁶² R. H. Fuller, *Mission and Achievement of Jesus: An Examination of the Pre-Supposition of New Testament Theology* (London: SCM, 1950-1960).

⁴⁶³ Bultmann does not deny that Jesus used the words "Son of Man," but argues they did not apply to an exalted status for him. See *Theology of the New Testament*, 1:26.

⁴⁶⁴ Robinson, "Theologians of Our Times," 102.

V. Taylor

According to Vincent Taylor, “the universities of Great Britain are silent on rejecting form criticism – only C. H. Dodd, F. C. Burkitt, F. C. Howard and A. H. McNeile support this claim.”⁴⁶⁵ Like Bultmann, Taylor conducted research to be of use to both the pastoral community and to the exegetes.⁴⁶⁶ Anderson summarises Taylor’s focus with the cliché, “we do not first discover who Christ is and then believe in him, we believe in him and then discover who he is.”⁴⁶⁷ This epithet does echo a similar one by Bultmann. Taylor conducts his research as a scientist on the premise that Jesus’ self-consciousness is verifiable. He makes no effort to show that he is aware of any dilemma.⁴⁶⁸ Anderson points out that, unlike his British colleagues, Taylor was sympathetic to the findings of form criticism, making him sympathetic to the Bultmannian view that history is unable to provide dependable memories of Jesus. He was amenable to a positive interpretation of Bultmann: where Bultmann claims that we do not know enough to write a history of Jesus, can be interpreted positively that we do know something, and he has conceded this.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁵ Quoted by Robinson, *A New Quest*, 36.

⁴⁶⁶ See Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice: A Study of the Passion Sayings in the Gospels* (London: MacMillan, 1937); idem, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: MacMillan, 1952); idem, *The Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955); idem, *The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching* (London: MacMillan, 1958); idem, *The Formation of Gospel Tradition: Eight Lectures* (London: MacMillan, 1960); idem, *The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching* (London: Macmillan, 1966). William Baird, *The Quest of the Christ Faith: Reflections on the Bultmann Era* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1977), 34-35, writes that Taylor supported the form critical method of Bultmann and used it in his own research. He adds that Burton Scott Easton introduced it to America in 1928.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ See Taylor, *The Person of Christ*, 186, 301, 306, quoted in Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 88.

⁴⁶⁹ See Robinson, *A New Quest*, 65.

Anderson has labelled Taylor a conservative pragmatist, who adheres to the common sense approach.⁴⁷⁰ Taylor is enigmatic. He is conservative in his orthodoxy, yet he is sympathetic to the claims of form criticism. But in one paper, he considers the place of the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles in the “Suffering Servant” discussion, and makes a plea for more historical thought than traditional Bultmannian theology allows.⁴⁷¹ He argues that Matthew’s citing of the servant poems of Deutero-Isaiah illustrates a decline in their usage, and concludes that one cannot consider the use of Isaiah, by Matthew and Luke, to be creative.⁴⁷² Taylor arguing is that Bultmann’s hypothesis – i.e., because Paul does not mention Jesus, he is only interested in a mystical Jesus – may not hold water since the usage was probably on the wane by the time of the epistles and the gospels.⁴⁷³ A corollary, which I suspect Taylor wants to follow, is that since Bultmann’s hypothesis could be wrong on the dating of the servant motif, he might be equally wrong on the linking of faith and history issues. In the article just reviewed, Taylor keeps Bultmann’s *Theology of the New Testament* in the forefront of the discussion.⁴⁷⁴

D. E. Nineham

⁴⁷⁰ Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 88.

⁴⁷¹ Vincent Taylor, “The Origin of the Markan Passion-Sayings,” *New Testament Studies* 3 (1954-1955): 159-167. According to Taylor, the Servant motif was a pre-Pauline idea, its peak was in the 30-50s C.E. and it was in decline when the gospels were written. Taylor finds it hard to accept that the community kerygma shaped the prophecies of the Suffering Servant.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 161-163.

D. E. Nineham supports Bultmann's goals, but not his methods: he finds Bultmann too absolutist.⁴⁷⁵ Nineham's approach to historical interpretation puts him on the side of Troeltsch and opposite to Bultmann. Troeltsch held to the belief that a religious historian excluded divine intervention as an explanation for particular events. Troeltsch subscribed to the History of Religions School that Christianity must be seen as part of a wider cultural context that was part of an inter-connected web. Troeltsch's thinking is apparent in Nineham's writing that while Jesus' events could be understood as divine intervention at a given time, "[t]hey may not have seemed to demand such interpretations given different cultural assumptions."⁴⁷⁶

Nineham is writing about the importance of recognising cultural relativity in the "scaffolding of our thoughts."⁴⁷⁷ Thiselton explains that Nineham is saying that Troeltsch's analogy argument whereby the interpreter uses his/her experience to extract meaning from a historical situation only goes so far, it must be complemented by the apocalyptic tradition governing Jesus' life. Nineham is leaving the ideas of Bultmann and moving closer to Troeltsch, Dodd, and Jeremias in the use of language to understand history.

T. W. Manson

⁴⁷⁵ See Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 53.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 72. See Denis Nineham, "The Use of the Bible in Modern Theology," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 50 (1969): 178-199.

⁴⁷⁷ Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 74-75.

T. W. Manson became known for his writing on the Son of Man from a corporate or collective perspective.⁴⁷⁸ He has also been strongly criticised for this hermeneutic.⁴⁷⁹ The volume *New Testament Essays* (1959) was published in honour of Manson only a year after his untimely death. It contains articles from colleagues who knew his work well, including Bultmann,⁴⁸⁰ Cullmann, Dodd, Jeremias, W. Manson, C. F. D Moule, H. Riesenfeld, H. H. Rowley, and Vincent Taylor. The Curriculum Vitae listed his writings and provided evidence to argue that he was the scholarly equal of C. H. Dodd. Manson contributed to the debate over Jesus' consciousness of his role, and provided ideas for debate regarding Bultmann's scientific explanations.

Manson was a leader in the "Son of Man" debate and the interpretation of Jesus' sayings in this regard, arguing that the kingdom of God was a present reality to Jesus: his teachings, his words and actions were only parts of this greater whole. Manson, like Dodd, argued from the texts. Initially, he argued that Jesus was teaching about a kingdom which was evolving to which believers would enter in the future. The idea of two periods

⁴⁷⁸ T. W. Manson's began writing about the same time as H. C. Dodd. See his monograph, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), and his essay, "The Son of Man in Daniel, Enoch and the Gospels," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 32 (1949-1950): 171-193. He continued to publish after 1949 to 1956, *The Servant Messiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), and post-humously, *On Paul and John: Some Selected Theological Themes* (ed. M. Black; London: SCM, 1966). His writings included a focus on the importance of Paul for understanding the historical importance of Jesus, analyses of the ministry of Jesus with reference to his sayings, Jesus' view of his ministry as it pertained to the kingdom, as well as interpretations of the New Testament and the gospels with a view to providing a unified picture of Jesus and his kingdom.

⁴⁷⁹ See Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 97.

⁴⁸⁰ Rudolf Bultmann, "Zur Frage nach den Quellen der Apostelgeschichte," in *New Testament Essays: Studies in Memory of T. W. Manson 1893-1958* (ed. A. J. B. Higgins; Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1959), 68-81.

of ministry was vital to understanding the present-future dilemma, so Manson was able to refer to Jesus' earlier ministry as a time of preparation with the later period being the realised component.⁴⁸¹

In the first part, Jesus was preparing the way in a futuristic sense, but in the later part of his ministry Jesus was speaking of the kingdom as having arrived. Manson used Peter's confession at Caesarea as an indication that the kingdom had arrived. Perrin argues that while Manson shares with Dodd a belief in the current fact of the kingdom for Jesus, he also departed from Dodd in his belief that there was a future component of complete realisation involved.⁴⁸² It is here that we learn of the disparity between Bultmann and Manson. Manson goes to the Hebrew Bible to gather evidence of the focus of Jesus' kingdom: who were the objects of his ministry? His argument is compelling.

He researches the concept of the "elect" found in the Old Testament and Qumran and decides that Jesus was not preaching to a universal audience but to an elected Jewish group. This view is supported later by findings from Cave Four where the Community of Qumran imposed strict boundaries on the definition of insiders and outsiders in matters of faith. Jesus was following the Jewish tradition of preaching that only the elect would be saved. Manson gives a Pauline interpretation that Jesus was creating a new Israel for his followers.⁴⁸³ While Manson is trying to extend the teachings of the Old Testament, from the chosen people of Israel to a new chosen people of the kingdom as those who are prepared to listen and commit themselves to the Kingdom of Jesus, he is approaching Bultmannian terrain in the demand for individual authentic commitment to the divine.

⁴⁸¹ See Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, 129-131.

⁴⁸² See, Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 92.

⁴⁸³ See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, for support for the influence of T. W. Manson's ideas.

But Manson departs from Bultmann, over the degree of significance he gives to Jesus' Kingdom, because Bultmann has rejected the objectified Kingdom and constructed an abstract form of existential commitment.

Perrin, in a manner similar to the post-Bultmannians, is critical of Manson for his reliance on the historicity of Mark.⁴⁸⁴ Perrin argues, in Bultmannian vein, that Mark consists of kerygmatic history rather than positivist history and he reiterates the Bultmannian view, which has by now attained popular currency, that the early church has shaped the format of the gospels for its own ecclesiastical needs. We have noted this argument by James Robinson.⁴⁸⁵ Robinson is not denying the role of the church in this respect, and he is supporting the work of Manson in his demand for a new look at the historical Jesus. Perrin, however, departs from Robinson by criticising Manson over the collectivity thesis in the "Son of Man" and the "Suffering Servant."⁴⁸⁶

Perrin draws on Erik Sjöberg, who has criticised Manson for a "collectivity thesis" associated with the Son of Man.⁴⁸⁷ Sjöberg's criticisms rely on arguments taken from the Book of Enoch, found at Qumran, to imply the existence of a pre-existent

⁴⁸⁴ Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 96.

⁴⁸⁵ See Robinson, *A New Quest*, 8, 54, 60, 62, 103. Robinson cites T. W. Manson's observation that while the kerygma barely mentions Jesus, Mark provides a narrative account, which must be an important indication of Jesus' importance to some groups, at least. Robinson credits T. W. Manson with reviewing Jewish sources and finding that there is a dearth of references to Jesus in older Jewish writing, but a greater amount in the more recent ones, with the exception of the Mishnah. The argument is that Jesus made an impression as a person as distinct from being a mythical character, as argued by Bultmann.

⁴⁸⁶ Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 97-106.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 97. Note, however, that Cecil J. Cadoux, *The Historic Mission of Jesus: A Constructive Re-Examination of the Eschatological Teaching in the Synoptic Gospels* (London: Lutterworth, 1941), 218, gave the "Son of Man" a political orientation: to lead against Rome. In this collective idea of the "Son of Man" Cadoux reinforces Manson.

heavenly being in Jewish apocalyptic literature.⁴⁸⁸ The problem which Manson and Dodd face on this question is the ambivalence in English scholarship towards the legitimacy of the Book of Enoch as a basis of the Son of Man epithet used by Jesus. The problem is not helped by the fact that the Book of Parables (chapters 37-71), which refer to the Son of Man, have not been found at Qumran with other Book of Enoch documents.⁴⁸⁹ Manson and Dodd enjoy the support of Jeremias in their views against these criticisms, however.

Manson's collectivity thesis enlists support from Qumran with the existence of an inner elite group which corresponds to Jesus' chosen twelve apostles.⁴⁹⁰ Perrin argues that the Community Rule (1QS 8:3) accommodates both Daniel's Son of Man and the Suffering Servant motif from Isaiah. In his opinion, both ideas are found in the Qumran community.⁴⁹¹ Credit must be given to Manson for his argument that the Suffering Servant and the Son of Man were bonded together at the time of Jesus. Manson deserves a great deal of credit for his perspicacity, since he did not have the later resources of Qumran Cave Four at his disposal when he framed these arguments.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid. Perrin gives several angles to this criticism of Sjöberg who is arguing for a mythical interpretation of the "Son of Man" based on its pre-existence. Perrin accepts the argument of Manson that there is evidence of a collective community linking of the Suffering Servant and the Son of Man in Judaism at the time of Jesus. Hence, even if it was a pre-existent being that is referred to, it is the collective use being made of it that is being argued by Manson. We could extend his argument to show that Bultmann was not prepared to use Judaism's history to support a positive historical Jesus interpretation.

⁴⁸⁹ On the dating and reliability of the Book of Parables, see now Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007).

⁴⁹⁰ See Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 99. Perrin cites the study of Matthew Black, "Servant of the Lord and Son of Man," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 6 (1953): 1-11, which drew attention to the parallel between the community collective at Qumran, which possessed an inner elite core, and the collectivity thesis of Manson. Black paid particular attention to 1QS 8:1, which detailed the need for obedience and faithfulness on the part of the members of this inner circle.

⁴⁹¹ Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 99.

As Perrin argues in support, Manson drew his conclusions on the basis of his research into the Hebrew Bible and what he conceived to be the “Hebrew concept of the corporate personality.”⁴⁹² Inevitably, there was dispute over Manson’s claims. In England, he enjoyed the support of Vincent Taylor, who argued convincingly that the epithet “Son of Man” could have been used interchangeably, as Jesus frequently reverted from a collective to an individual meaning. It was becoming accepted by the scholarly community that an individual meaning attached to the epithet said less about the individual and more about the society of which he was a part: hence, its most common usage was to be applied to man in the collective sense. There was a growing consensus that historiography must accept a certain degree of dissonance when interpreting Jesus’ sayings: Jesus is not consistent when judged by twentieth century norms, but he did not have twentieth century social norms to guide him either.

Manson conducted most of his research between 1930 and 1956 suggesting he was conversant with Bultmann’s hermeneutics regarding the historicity of the gospels. Manson’s projection of “Son of Man” and “Servant of the Lord” concepts reflected his attempt at demonstrating the historical value of the gospels, while discrediting Bultmann’s critical dependency on form criticism.

There are parallels between Manson and Bultmann in their academic preparation, which could explain a similarity of approach. Manson uses linguistics to learn the true meaning of the Ethiopic Enoch epithet *walda egwala emaheyaw* (“Son of the Offspring [i.e. Mary] of the Mother of the Living [i.e. Eve]”) which, in his opinion, simply means

⁴⁹² Ibid., 100.

“the man.”⁴⁹³ But he argues, while it is an ordinary noun, it may denote a special understanding in certain contexts. In the Book of Enoch it is depicted as a human figure with the look of an angel. What does it symbolise, Manson asks? Manson draws a parallel with wisdom speech in Ecclesiasticus. Like Bultmann, Manson is suspicious of any use of the terms “pre-existence” and “heavenly being,” and like Bultmann, Manson sees the origin of the epithet in a Manichean myth, where he calls on the support of F. C. Burkitt.⁴⁹⁴ Where Manson veers away from Bultmann is in the weighting he places on the value of the historical and linguistic interpretations involved. The Danielic Son of Man “represents the people of the saints of the Most High.” Their destiny is to receive the kingdom in the same way that he has done.

Manson interprets Jewish history in a manner similar to Bultmann, to argue for some deviation in Jesus’ behaviour, where he rejected the traditional Jewish goal of political and economic victory over the enemies of Israel. However, Manson’s view of Jesus’ deviance was that it was not constructed to promote a superior Jesus within Judaism, in order to be able to reject his Jewishness, as Bultmann had done. Jesus defined the Israelite ideal as being the Servant of the Lord,⁴⁹⁵ and Matthew Black supports Manson’s argument in *Jesus the Messiah* that the Son of Man in the Book of Enoch

⁴⁹³ For the titular, Christological use of this expression, see Pierluigi Piovanelli, “‘A Testimony for the Kings and the Mighty Who Possess the Earth’: The Thirst for Justice and Peace in the Parables of Enoch,” in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 363-379.

⁴⁹⁴ See Manson, “The Son of Man in Daniel,” 179-182.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.

portrays several features of the Servant.⁴⁹⁶ But Manson wrote later that “it is an excellent thing that we should not be allowed to reduce the Good News to ancient dogmas or modern speculations.”⁴⁹⁷

Manson is arguing that we should keep our feet on the ground and not be carried away by the inappropriate interpretation of metaphor. The failure of the disciples to recognise Jesus’ function was grounded in their inability to make the connection between their involvement in Jesus’ ministry and his messianic function. Manson is placing the messianic character of the Danielic or Enochic Son of Man in an earthly context of “ministry,” which the disciples could not comprehend. Manson is sympathetic to Bultmann’s criticism of Enochic mythical terminology, but he widens Bultmann’s demythologising hermeneutics of Daniel and Enoch to argue for a historical basis to the understanding of post-Easter kerygmatic teaching. Bultmann and Manson are similar in their disdain for utopian speculations, but they differ in their view of what constitutes faith. Manson is prepared to accept an earthly explanation grounded in Jewish history, while Bultmann is not.

Manson is advancing Bultmann’s ideas by providing a historical basis for the interpretation of Jesus’ ministry within an earthly context. He is saying that because we can understand where the messianic character has come from historically, it does not eliminate the spiritual value of Jesus’ ministry. This constitutes a diametrically opposed

⁴⁹⁶ Black, “Servant of the Lord.” Incidentally, I noted that Manson’s Curriculum Vitae does not list *Jesus the Messiah*, as Black intimated, but rather, *The Servant-Messiah* (1952). However, *Jesus the Messiah* (1943) was written during Manson’s earlier Bultmannian investigative work.

⁴⁹⁷ T. W. Manson, “Present Day Research in the Life of Jesus,” in *The Background of the New Testament*, 220.

view to Bultmann's rejection of the epistemological role of cultural history in faith. The nature of Jesus' messianic message must be sought in the love of God and the needs of man.⁴⁹⁸ Manson successfully attacked the methodology of Bultmann's form criticism by suggesting that the criteria used did not take into account the human factor of admiration for the man Jesus, with the corollary that the community wished to preserve his memory.⁴⁹⁹ He argued that because Paul and the Acts portray a unified picture of Jesus, prudence must be exercised. Manson argues, we need to ask, "is it credible in itself?" and if not, "what motive led the church to invent it?"⁵⁰⁰ Manson has reached an important epistemological juncture in this debate with Bultmann.

Vincent Taylor advanced T. W. Manson's thesis where he was searching for a way to use history to explain the uniqueness of Jesus' ministry. Bultmann had foundered, in the eyes of Manson and Taylor, by defining divinity as myth and therefore unacceptable for this day and age. Taylor has argued that the "divine consciousness" of Jesus cannot be ignored because it is what distinguishes the character of the New Testament writers.⁵⁰¹ Both Taylor and Manson are arguing that, if the character of Jesus is not considered historically, the faith component in the gospels is meaningless, and the result is an inappropriate existentialist Bultmannian explanation. Manson, in his latest publication before his untimely death, pulled no punches. His obituary paid homage to

⁴⁹⁸ See T. W. Manson, "The New Testament Basis of the Doctrine of the Church," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (1950): 1-11 (7).

⁴⁹⁹ See Manson, *Jesus the Messiah*, 20-22.

⁵⁰⁰ Manson, "Present Day Research in the Life of Jesus," 215.

⁵⁰¹ See Taylor, *The Person of Christ*, 189.

his wit which is evident when he writes that “the further we travel along the *Wredestrasse*, the clearer it becomes that it is the road to nowhere.”⁵⁰²

He draws a parallel between Schweitzer’s well imagery and the Heideggerian kerygma constructed by Bultmann. Demythologising may be another reflection of our image.⁵⁰³ Burkitt’s ideas are also employed by Manson in an attempt to clear up the dilemma faced by Jesus historians. Burkitt argues that Jesus added a prologue to the king-messiah idea. Jesus’ career became the ministry, which in turn appropriated the idea of a messiah, not as a king or general, but as a minister to his people. Manson is summarizing his life’s work in an attempt to explain the role of history in explaining Jesus’ ministry.⁵⁰⁴

In the work of the post-Bultmannian Schüler, Bornkamm has presented the most unified picture of Jesus which is in line with the image of Jesus portrayed by Dodd and Manson. It could be argued that Bornkamm, Dodd, and Manson have more in common with each other than with Bultmann. Jay Dobbin has concluded that, in a comparison between Bornkamm’s *Jesus of Nazareth* and Bultmann’s *Jesus*, Bornkamm has presented a more unified understanding of the person and the message of Jesus.⁵⁰⁵

Dobbin has documented the clearest statement of Bornkamm’s difference with Bultmann being over Bultmann’s reduction of New Testament texts to futuristic

⁵⁰² Manson, “Present Day Research in the Life of Jesus,” 216.

⁵⁰³ Ibid. Manson is citing H. J. Cadbury’s book entitled, *The Peril of Modernising Jesus*, as particularly appropriate.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid. See pages 218-221 for an exposition of the uses of parable in Jeremia’s and Dodd’s work, and implicitly, new understandings of terms labelled myth by Bultmann.

⁵⁰⁵ Jay D. Dobbin, *Gunther Bornkamm and the New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Rome: Pontificia Studiorum Universitas S. Thoma, 1970), 62-63.

decision.⁵⁰⁶ Dobbin has characterised Manson as Bultmannian in his non-eschatological style, because he held that the preached kingdom of Jesus lies in the personal experience of God in the individual, independent of time and space.⁵⁰⁷

Dobbin makes Manson sound very much like Bultmann, but Manson's solution is to situate the eschatological in an historical focus. Bornkamm, Dobbin argues, is at an impasse, where he has to choose between the eschatological in a positive sense and the existential.⁵⁰⁸ Dobbin's corollary would be that Manson also may be facing the same impasse as Bornkamm. However, Dobbin credits Bornkamm with extending the faith-history relationship of Bultmann.⁵⁰⁹ Dobbin does not extend the same level of scrutiny to Manson as Bornkamm. From what has transpired, Manson was trying to bridge the apocalyptic with the existential. He sought in Paul, like Bultmann, affirmation for the individual in Christ. But, like Dodd, he saw the roots in eschatological history.

English scholarship benefited primarily from the leadership of Dodd and Manson during the critical years of Bultmannian hegemony, between 1920 and 1950. The critical Canterbury conference laid the groundwork for airing theological differences of interpretation over Jesus' kingdom. Ultimately, Bultmann's ahistorical hermeneutics were destined for reappraisal. The ideas of Dodd and Manson were critical in the reappraisal process. Dodd was followed by C. J. Cadoux, H. A. Guy, A. M. Hunter, and Vincent Taylor. R. H. Fuller took a different path. He argued that the kingdom was not

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 27. Dobbin has summarised the advances made by the critics of Bultmann who are arguing that a study of the historical Jesus involves more methods than the purely historical. But the study of the past is still crucial. Dobbin writes that Bornkamm's strength lies in the extremes he avoids.

present in the teaching of Jesus.⁵¹⁰ In this respect, Fuller is approaching the hermeneutics of Bultmann in his futuristic argument. However, he is outside the bulk of English theological opinion on this matter.

American Influences

Germany and America shared a tradition whereby historical-critical research grew out of the liberal tradition: “American emphasis on the concrete historical character of Jesus’ message, and the fact that the kerygma is situated in specific historical situations, acts as a counterbalance to current (1960s) trans-historical versions of the Word or the kerygma in Europe.”⁵¹¹

The Bultmann tradition took hold in America with the work of Robert Funk, Norman Perrin, and James Robinson, who had all studied under Bultmann.⁵¹² Shirley Jackson Case represents the Social Gospel School, which dates from the work of Walter Rauschenbusch.⁵¹³ The foundations of American social contextualising of the gospel are

⁵¹⁰ See Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 80.

⁵¹¹ Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 62.

⁵¹² James Robinson is careful to maintain the principles of existentialism, while advocating a new quest of the historical Jesus, in a manner similar to the Schüler. Robert Funk founded the Jesus Seminar where the ideas of Bultmann are evident. But he recruited Dominic Crossan, whose *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992) is magisterial. Bultmann’s ideas endured in America more than in England.

⁵¹³ See Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1997; first ed., 1919), cited in Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 47-52. Perrin condemns this work as lacking in research. It tends to be theological, but without any theoretical basis: it is polemical in the sense that it denies that Jesus taught an apocalyptic message. It shares some territory with the inclination in Germany, under the Third Reich, to elevate Jesus above Judaism.

evident in the work of Case.⁵¹⁴ Case shares some terrain with Troeltsch in the view that biblical research must operate within the broad political and cultural parameters of religious history. But I shall by-pass an in-depth treatment of the social gospel adherents.

A. N. Wilder

Amos N. Wilder cautioned against constructing twentieth century social categories and thrusting them into early Christian contexts.⁵¹⁵ Wilder, who emphasises the need to interpret the symbols and metaphors in the parables, is supporting the historical premises of Troeltsch, Harnack, and Case, while narrowing the terrain. Wilder is narrowing the focus of research from one of broad contextual Christianity, in the mode of Troeltsch and Harnack, to a narrower interpretation, in the manner of Bultmann, with the difference being that Jesus has become the primary focus again. Perrin sees Wilder as “enormously

⁵¹⁴ See Shirley Jackson Case, *The Evolution of Early Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1914), and *Social Origins of Early Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923). See Robinson, *A New Quest*, 10. Robinson describes *Jesus: A New Biography*, by Shirley Case, as the most important American biography on the subject. Case reacted to the idea that the New Testament contained timeless, unchanging truths. He argued that, since people (believers) were conditioned by changing social circumstances, their religion must be equally subject to changing social conditions. Anderson finds a parallel with History of Religions School that had been prominent in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. We noted earlier that, although Bultmann was product of that school, he ultimately turned against it in his promotion of the kerygma.

⁵¹⁵ Perrin has described Wilder as distinguished poet, literary critic and New Testament scholar in *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 127. Perrin has lauded Wilder for his interpretive skills and his use of figurative language for understanding Jesus’ language and particularly for helping to explain Jesus’ use of myth, not in the negative manner of Rudolf Bultmann, but from the angle of the language scholar. Perrin has concluded that one of Bultmann’s major deficiencies lies in his inability to interpret myth correctly.

important in the discussion of both Kingdom of God and the parables in the message of Jesus.”⁵¹⁶

Anderson, drawing on Wilder’s “Early Christian Eschatology,” argues that, in addition to his warning against retrojecting current sociological and psychological schema in to early Christianity, he is establishing heuristic boundaries: while property, slavery, persecution, for example, are facts of life, and may look like boundaries, they only function as a part of the total cultural situation, where religious heritage comes into play, because there are no defining boundaries between the social and the religious: they overlap. Where a text speaks of bad times, the focus may not necessarily be political or even economic, but rather religious or spiritual. Keeping Bultmann’s hypotheses in mind, I find that Wilder is able to illuminate texts which Bultmann misread.⁵¹⁷

Wilder explains the eschatological imagery of early Christianity as a product of a long prehistory in Judaism, Israel, and the ancient Near East. Future hope “could not be a novum: it could not represent a truncation with the past, a discontinuity.”⁵¹⁸ Early Christianity was dependent on Jewish tradition and it repossessed its social-cosmic realism. It recognised that the “new thing which God was doing, had done, would do, was

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 131. Cf. Robinson, *A New Quest*, 196, who describes Wilder as a poet who crossed the divide between allegory and metaphor in the interpretation of Jesus’ parables. We are witnessing a juncture with the embracing of the earlier work of Dodd and Jeremias leading to the later poetic, historical, work of Crossan and Funk.

⁵¹⁷ See Amos N. Wilder, “Eschatological Imagery and Earthly Circumstance,” *New Testament Studies* 5 (1958-1959): 229-246, and Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 127-131.

⁵¹⁸ Wilder, “Eschatological Imagery,” 232.

not a discontinuous novum: it could only be understood in terms of the imagery of the past and of the life experience, from which that imagery was drawn.⁵¹⁹

Wilder draws support from the hermeneutics of J. A. T. Robinson, the controversial British bishop of Woolwich (1919-1983).⁵²⁰ He is using the Bishop's argument that Jesus was aware of the historical events of his time and that he was cognizant of the transcendental terms he was using to characterise these outcomes. The message which Wilder is interpreting from J. A. T. Robinson is that Jesus was not abandoning "historical expectation" for myth.⁵²¹ Wilder writes:

Jesus' transcendental interpretation of his time had an analogous relation to real situations but of a deeper kind. Such features as the political dilemma, poverty, Jewish social authority are evident, and sometimes come to the fore, but these are absorbed in a deeper crisis. The eruption and appeal of apocalyptic vision of this kind is occasioned by radical cultural disorder, by the loss of meaning of inherited symbols and rites, and such was the Jewish situation in the time of Jesus, as it was in another sense for larger groups in the Hellenistic world.⁵²²

Wilder, like Dodd, brings a linguistic ability to the interpretation of texts which Bultmann has lacked. Perrin has documented areas of weakness in Bultmann's understanding of myth.⁵²³ The revolt against Bultmann is evident in the work of the

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 233.

⁵²⁰ See J. A. T. Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967). Wilder does not cite Robinson's *Honest to God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), but it is an example of his controversial hermeneutics.

⁵²¹ Wilder, "Eschatological Imagery," 239.

⁵²² Ibid., 240, n. 3.

⁵²³ See Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, 78.

Schüler, particularly Fuchs, who demonstrated “a real depth of mythological perception,” in his hermeneutics: “in primal mythos a community celebrates the truth in which it is founded and assembled as the actualisation of a theophany.”⁵²⁴

Wilder argues that in a society, where an older way of life had become non-viable, social and psychological instability was endemic. The new world proposed by Jesus brought conflict and disorder. No doubt the old way of life appeared to be ending. Therefore, something short of miraculous was required and Jesus found this in transcendental and miraculous expression.⁵²⁵ Wilder’s conclusion: “the problem involves not only the religious individual dimension but importantly, the public dimension, not only the present but the past, and not only man but nature. In Jesus’ Palestine, a new creation was required. Hope required a transcendental mythical statement.”⁵²⁶

The implications for Bultmann’s existentialism hermeneutics are huge. Wilder had the support of both the British theological establishment and the post-Bultmannian Schüler. Bultmann is criticised for his narrowly anthropological interpretation of the kerygma as “wholesale translation into an understanding of man.”⁵²⁷ He argues that the language of the New Testament is a statement about human understanding. However, American and British scholarship is on the side of the need for historical scholarship in order to offer a corrective to Bultmann’s isolated, timeless kerygma.

⁵²⁴ Wilder, “Eschatological Imagery and Earthly Circumstance,” 240

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁵²⁷ Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 75.

F. C. Grant

This view is supported by F. C. Grant, who has attacked existentialist exegesis and neo-orthodoxy as enemies of historicism.⁵²⁸ Grant is a supporter of research into the Jewish impact on Christianity, though Perrin points out a number of inconsistencies in Grant's hermeneutics.⁵²⁹ The gospel of the kingdom was this-worldly, not other-worldly, as it has been portrayed. Nor was it apocalyptic. Instead, it portrayed a gospel of social redemption, close to the current Judaism of the day. However, Perrin questions whether Grant is accurate in his depicting a social gospel for Jesus.⁵³⁰

J. Knox

John Knox parallels Grant in his view that Jesus was more closely aligned with prophetic tradition than with the apocalyptic. However, Knox is prepared to accept that both traditions were evident in Jesus' ministry because of Jesus' use of the phrase *basileia tou theou* which, he argues, has variable meanings.⁵³¹ Perrin is critical of Knox for this view, because it implies that Jesus was inconsistent in his use of an Aramaic phrase, yet Jesus was very consistent in his phraseology and undoubtedly apocalyptic in its usage. Knox is seen, by Perrin, as weak in his discussion of New Testament texts.⁵³²

⁵²⁸ F. C. Grant, *Ancient Judaism and the New Testament* (New York: MacMillan, 1959).

⁵²⁹ See Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 326, n. 14; Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 150.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 154.

Cultural Relevance and Historical Relativism

The accommodation reached between prophecy and eschatology in Knox's hermeneutics, which has been criticised by Perrin for its incompatibility, has been explained, to some degree, as cultural relevance. Harvey draws on the work of Richardson to argue that historical facts vary according to one's perspective.⁵³³ Harvey then goes on to argue that this tendency can be found in the writing of Dodd and Knox: both obscure the line between hard fact and significance. The line between apocalypticism and propheticism may have been deliberately blurred by Knox, thus rendering him liable to Perrin's strong criticism.

Harvey, in a later chapter, launches into an attack on Bultmann, Cullmann, Fuchs, Grant, Käsemann, Dodd, and Knox. He also includes James Robinson in the list. He argues that mundane reasons are responsible for the differences between them: the uncritical nature of some of their reasoning has been obscured by claims of faith. These theologians have argued from a position of faith, while ignoring the evidence, or conversely, the lack of evidence. In addition, they have used varied conceptual schemes to guarantee their results. Harvey concludes that "distinctively Christian warrants" will not settle historical disputes.⁵³⁴

Historical relativism is a series of loosely knit arguments "woven into a somewhat rough but identifiable garment of belief."⁵³⁵ Harvey argues that historical relativism is visible in the writing of Dodd, Knox, Niebuhr, Ott, Pannenberg, and Richardson.⁵³⁶ In an

⁵³³ See Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer*, 218.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*

assessment of the work of Knox, Harvey argues that Knox deviates by stating that there is no such thing as objective history to questioning whether the memory of the church is authentic.⁵³⁷ But can we learn something from the question of historical relevance, which has been highlighted by Harvey, from unconscious messages in the writings of Dodd and Knox?

Harvey is arguing that there are several types of significances in historiography. We may look at a historical event through a number of different lenses: philosophical, economic, political, teleological, phenomenological, and philological. Each lens will yield different insights, privileging some at the expense of others. The burning question which appears to remain unsolved is: how do we select the right lens? Knox has pointed out that one can have a true picture of a person and his/her personality without being able to supply a host of detail.⁵³⁸ It is highly probable that Jesus had a strong impact on the memory of his disciples, and ultimately on the collective memory of the early Jesus movements that led to the formation of the early church. Why then is Knox questioning the authenticity of the memory of the early church? The criticisms of Perrin and Harvey are legitimate and highlight the nature of the dilemma faced by the religious historian, and particularly, the historian of early Christianity and Judaism.

Anderson and Harvey appear to share a common perspective of historical relativism. Both recognise that the inclination exists for a biased interpretation of history

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 218. See the gist of Harvey's argument against Knox's inconsistency. Incidentally, Dodd argues in the same fashion. The gist of Knox and Dodd's argument, according to Harvey, is that "the religious significance of the New Testament story will not be perceived by anyone who is merely concerned with external fact" (220).

⁵³⁸ John Knox, *Christ the Lord* (Chicago: Willett, Clark and Co., 1945), 55.

where faith is involved. Bultmann's way out of this dilemma was to distinguish between objective and faith history. He created his own set of premises: any thing smacking of objectivity is irrelevant to theology because he argued that God cannot be objectified.

The Anglo-American school wrestled with the problem of how to understand the New Testament. Wilder has advanced the socio-historical methodology developed by Case into socio-historical-philological parameters, while Dodd, Manson and Knox have widened the perspective to include a Gestalt view of Jesus without all the details.

Writers like Grant, Cadoux, and Rauschenbusch are examples of tangents to the main thrust of their day. Rauschenbusch emphasised the social transformative element in Jesus' teaching.⁵³⁹ Perrin rejects the social gospel argument as "a mosaic of ideas drawn together from many different places."⁵⁴⁰ Cadoux, Guy, Hunter and Taylor are British scholars who follow Dodd in the hermeneutic that the kingdom was present in Jesus' ministry. Fuller differs from the above in the sense that the kingdom is on the way without having arrived. Fuller became known for his view that certain parables indicated a growth factor in the kingdom.

Bultmann disagrees with the growth thesis, but appears to accept the time of decision that is implicit in the future timing of the kingdom. Perrin supports the future component of Fuller as an ingredient in the present kingdom, and cites the support of Jeremias, whom he describes as the most important researcher on the parables after Dodd. However, it would not be accurate to claim that these scholars followed the leaders completely. It is inevitable that there would be differences of interpretation. Cadoux

⁵³⁹ See Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 46.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

believed that Jesus was concerned about politics and worked to improve conditions. Guy and Hunter distinguish between “different elements in the future expectation of Jesus.”⁵⁴¹

Undoubtedly, there was divergent thinking in how to explain Jesus’ view of the kingdom: was it here as part of his teaching? Did it lie in the future? Or was it a combination of both? There is evidence of tension in the literature regarding Jesus’ view of his kingdom and of his role in it: is he the bearer of a message that will change people’s lives if they commit to him? Bultmann built his theology around the decision component and has interpreted eschatology in an anthropomorphic sense. For Bultmann, the significance of the kingdom lies in individual decision making. Critics of Bultmann argue that he has individualised and subjectivised the kingdom and that he has ignored other possible constructions of interpretation of the New Testament.

I have argued that Bornkamm’s *Jesus of Nazareth* was a landmark publication in historical Jesus research. Likewise, Dodd’s *Parables of the Kingdom* must be credited alongside Bornkamm’s *Jesus of Nazareth* for the impact which they have made. Dodd has been credited with popularising kerygmatic theology in the English speaking world.⁵⁴²

Thompson documents that Dodd’s work has met criticism over his interpretation of Mark 1:14, Matthew 12:28, and Luke 11:20 regarding whether the kingdom has

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 84.

⁵⁴² See Thompson, *Theology of the Kerygma*, 6. Thompson claims that, while Dodd has created controversy over his realised eschatology, he must pay tribute to the influence of Rudolf Otto. See also Baird, “What Is the Kerygma?” 183.

come.⁵⁴³ Nevertheless, it was Dodd's *The Apostolic Preaching and Developments*, which pointed the English-speaking world towards Bultmann's kerygmatic Jesus and which raised decisive questions regarding the problematic premises on which his theology was built.⁵⁴⁴ When the work of Dodd is placed alongside the work of Bornkamm, J. M. Robinson, Fuller, Hunter, Schniewind, and Manson, it becomes evident that they have identified an unnecessary scepticism on the part of Bultmann. This assertion is not a claim for uniform coherence of opinion in the Anglo-American scholarly community. The American community has a long history of conservative liberalism which is anchored in the idea of a social gospel. However, the work of Wilder has placed that creed within a historical perspective.

It can be concluded, therefore, that although the hermeneutics of Dodd and Manson were very critical of Bultmann's form critical methods and of the inherent biases within his methodology, they did accept that existentialist thought had extended an understanding of Jesus' message in the gospel and that form critical research had provided an understanding of the gospels as faith documents, which led to a broader understanding of the uses of history. Coherence has been achieved between the theology of Bultmann's kerygmatic Jesus and Dodd's and Manson's more conservative proposals

⁵⁴³ See Thompson, *Theology of the Kerygma*, 8-9; K. W. Clark, "Realized Eschatology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 59 (1940): 367-383 (371); Cadoux, *The Historic Mission of Jesus*, 296; Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus*, 48-49; W. G. Kummel, *Promise and Fulfilment* (Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1957), 24-25; J. J. Vincent, "Didactic Kerygma in the Synoptic Gospels," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 10 (1957): 262-273 (263); Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark*, 24.

⁵⁴⁴ See Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus*, 117. See also Julius Schniewind, "A Reply to Bultmann," in *Kerygma and Myth*, 45-101.

for a historical Jesus in tune with his consciousness of God as the Father. The Schüler occupy a middle place in the debate.

Dodd and others made a strong case for the recognition of the historical Jesus in kerygmatic preaching. Bultmann has failed to make a strong enough argument for a post-Easter kerygma existing with no significant links to the historical Jesus. His Achilles' heel was the denial of the importance of the eschatological memory of the Jesus movement and ignored in anthropomorphic theology. His anti-Judaism was reinforced by Heideggerian existentialism, which led to a need to portray a Jesus removed from his past. He was forced to construct an individualist faith history to counteract Jesus' Judaism and to deny the importance of Palestinian eschatology.

Epilogue: Hermeneutics and History

Bultmann was determined to end historical life of Jesus research and prevent the re-emergence of liberal historiography. He constructed an anthropomorphic theology of existentialism from the philosophy of Heidegger situated in the Hegel-Baur Enlightenment tradition. Conflicting messages within the History of Religions and Tübingen schools enabled Bultmann to construct a theology opposed to traditional cultural history. Twentieth century theological terrain became hard to navigate, when personal history was privileged over cultural history.

Bultmann's hermeneutic of negative objectivity became the defining feature of his existentialism. By defining authentic behaviour narrowly, Bultmann was able to steer clear of criticism that he avoided becoming politically involved in issues pertaining to the rights of Jews outside the boundaries of church interest. He was able to argue that, while historical-cultural artefacts could not be totally avoided, they represented worldliness, where avoidance was to be attempted in order to encounter the divine. The divine was encountered through an act of world-denying, authentic decision. Bultmann linked Heidegger's existentialist philosophy to findings in a dissertation by Jonas, to develop a taxonomy of antitheses where Judaism and Christianity were opposed to each other: Judaism was defined as objective, worldly, and inauthentic in its reliance on works and ritual, whereas Christianity relied on a gift of faith from the divine in a moment of encounter and was deemed to be authentic.

Bultmann created two versions of the divine. He described the Jewish God as historically remote, and the Christian God as accessible, by means of individual decision-

making. It was inevitable that Bultmann's use of Heideggerian existentialist philosophy, coupled with the research of Jonas' linking of anti-Jewish Gnosticism to anthropomorphic existentialism, would draw Bultmann into a web of paradoxes concerning Jesus and Judaism.

The paradox became evident in his dilemmas. On the one hand, Bultmann needed to dispose of the Jewish Jesus because the political climate in Germany, from the beginning of his academic tenure, was politically and theologically threatening. On the other hand, he needed to rehabilitate the earthly Jesus because the post-Easter faith of the early Christians demanded a source for the kerygma to avoid being labelled cultic participants in an abstract system. Bultmann created a new orthodoxy by Christianising a Hegelian view of self-resolution, leaving himself open to theological criticism from both the right and the left: the left argued that he had not demythologised far enough in his retreat from orthodoxy, while the right was anxious to prevent the spirit of Christianity from being lost. Bultmann therefore faced a serious dilemma.

He tried to resolve the dilemma by elevating the earthly Jesus to a superior position within Judaism, thereby playing into the hands of the National Socialists, who used Jesus' supreme status to denigrate the status of the Jews. Bultmann showed limited inclination to speak up for the Jews. At the most, he protested against unfair treatment of Jewish Christian ministers. But he made it clear that the affairs of the state were outside the boundary of the church's responsibility. He made no distinction between the state and society. It could be argued that his theology of individual existence, practised at the expense of any objective cultural milieu, prevented his becoming involved in cultural affairs of the state. It is interesting that his former students, while they were concerned

about promoting links between the historical Jesus and the kerygma, provided no initial evidence that they were anxious to rehabilitate the Jewish-Jesus dimension. It appears that Bultmann shared a great deal in common with his students, whose main concern was to show a link between the earthly Jesus and his Christology in kerygmatic form, while maintaining the existential foundation of Heidegger.

Implications of Bultmann's Existentialism

There were several layers involved. Existentialism differed from liberal orthodoxy in the sense that it was anthropomorphic. Heidegger's philosophy held that the individual would resolve conflict through a thesis-antithesis Hegelian method. Bultmann's method was to situate the Christian God inside the individual. When an authentic encounter took place, the presence of the divine would become apparent to that individual. But the encounter would have to be constantly renegotiated in order to remain authentic and beyond the threat of the constantly threatening, objective world. When described in this manner, the procedure sounds very secular and even un-Christian. Bultmann needed to emphasise a spiritual quality in Jesus in order to create an intermediary role for him in the process of divine intervention, and he found confirmation for Jesus' intermediary role in the Redeemer myth described in John. He found further support in the letters of Paul, which had very little to say about the earthly Jesus. However, both sources elevated Jesus spiritually.

Hidden behind Bultmann's interpretation of Heidegger's existentialism is a hermeneutic of objectivity with a corollary of demythology. Bultmann constructed both concepts to narrow the theological terrain in order to make it impervious to criticism.

Cultural forms outside individual history are labelled objective, worldly, and outside the boundary of theological examination. When Judaism is considered from an historical and cultural perspective, it is labelled objective and worldly. Bultmann held Judaism responsible for an absent God because of worldly and sinful reliance on legality and ritual. This theology was strongly disputed by Susannah Heschel.⁵⁴⁵ Existentialist hermeneutics allowed Bultmann to place a boundary around the theological relevance of Jesus because of his Jewishness. Jesus' usefulness was limited to the historical fact that he existed. While Bultmann argued that the spirit of Jesus influenced the post-Easter kerygma faith, not his humanity, Heschel argued, convincingly, that Bultmann's elevation of the earthly Jesus to a supra-Jewish position, critical of Judaism and its legal and ritualistic behaviours, enabled the state to criticise Judaism even more and to use Jesus as a legitimating device to support the inferiority of the Jews, and for Bultmann, to claim that the affairs of the state, beyond the confines of the church, were not his concern.

Bultmann constructed the concept of demythology to explain the function of individual myths where ancient writers presented an objective, worldly account of their understanding of how the divine was manifested. Since Bultmann had constructed a theology in opposition to liberal historiography in the form of existentialist

⁵⁴⁵ See Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, for a general overview of how Jesus was elevated in a move to discredit Judaism. See also Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal*, 18, 25, 32, and Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler*, particularly, 21: "Led by Ernst Käsemann, a new life of Jesus research has developed in the past thirty five years based on the assumption that Christianity and the Bible are meaningless, if the historical transition from Jesus to Christ cannot be maintained." Ericksen writes that "this new direction will no doubt reduce the tension found in Bultmann's irrational faith, but there seems little hope it can avoid those tensions which occasioned Bultmann's faith."

anthropomorphism, the way was clear for him to search for confirmation in the Fourth Gospel and the New Testament writings of Paul. Both John the evangelist and Paul were anxious to appeal to faith: they were not writing a history. However, Bultmann did not hesitate to use the Redeemer myth in John as objective history to support his existentialist theology of a spiritualised Jesus. There is no evidence that Bultmann followed a programme of Jewish studies to verify his arguments about the Jews. But this did not prevent him from using the work of Reitzenstein and Bousset, and even Jonas, uncritically. He has been subjected to criticism on both counts by Ed. Parish Sanders, Karen King and Susannah Heschel, for faulty interpretation of Jewish history and religion. Even without the source criticism of Karen King it is a leap of faith to claim that Jesus was unimportant because the Redeemer myth refused to identify him.

The Debates: Germany

The location of the debates over the historical Jesus influenced the topics to a certain degree. In Germany, the debate centred initially on the place of Jesus as a Jew. Heschel has shown how the church was divided over this issue. In the Confessing Church, where Bultmann practised, there was more support for Jews who had converted to Christianity, particularly if they were ordained ministers. Bultmann must be given credit for supporting the principle of allowing them to remain in the church unhindered. And he is given credit for his friendship with Jonas. However, while it is mentioned that Jonas visited Bultmann before he left Germany under threat of persecution,⁵⁴⁶ there is no mention of his returning to see Bultmann after the war. We are told that Jonas had a

⁵⁴⁶ See Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 3.

change of heart and saw Gnosticism and existentialism as anti-Jewish. It is possible that he came to see both Heidegger and Bultmann as anti-Jewish. It is important to note that Heidegger abandoned his anthropomorphic view of existentialism as unrealizable, while Bultmann soldiered on, but Heidegger did not surrender his Nazi affiliations.

Bultmann's determination to promote his theology is evident in his 1941 publication, *New Testament and Mythology*. Since he was not adapting his existentialist theology to accommodate any opposition, he most probably felt some need to reiterate his method. The war had begun in earnest by this and he used the opportunity to explain the uses of "myth" and why it needed to be deconstructed in order to provide a legitimate understanding of the gospel in line with the needs of a modern laity experiencing the trauma of war. The implication to be drawn was that the ancient gospel had a hidden meaning, which had to be reinterpreted for the modern day. The notion of a Jesus lecturing an outmoded view of the Jewish eschaton to a foreign Palestinian audience had to be deconstructed. Bultmann argued that he had done this with his existentialist modern interpretation of the eschaton. Jesus' earthly, outmoded message had given way to a permanent, existentialist, spiritual message relative to the needs of the individual believer.

The arguments by the former students of Bultmann did not question the anti-Judaism bias in Bultmann's theology. Nor did they question the existentialist framework which determined authenticity. There was no attempt made to examine the framework of existentialism and its extrapolation for political and historical behaviour. They accepted the anthropomorphic framework with all of its limitations. The substance of the debate in Germany, pertaining to the existential Jesus, was around the question of continuity. They

were not satisfied with Bultmann's limited *Dass* factor, meaning that Jesus had no theological importance outside of the fact that he existed: the faith factor had become a more important focus than the liberal historical focus.

The contrary argument went as follows: the Easter faith was based on someone and something. Faith could not be constructed around an abstraction, otherwise Christianity would be based on Docetism. Bultmann had travelled a path leading from a liberal historiography of constructed Jesus images to his constructed theology, where Jesus had become a faith object, safely removed from liberal scepticism. However, Bultmann's students had not trodden the same path as their reformist mentor. They did not have the same antipathy to the historical method which Bultmann labelled objective and sinful. The divisions were not great, epistemologically, but, psychologically, the divide was greater.

There was a general uniformity about the Schüler in that their loyalty to their former teacher was unmistakable. However, there were some differences between them. They shared a belief in the value of the ministry of the earthly Jesus for understanding the faith of the post-Easter early church. They were prepared to accord more value to the gospels, thereby questioning Bultmann's rejection of the historical Jesus. This was a major departure, but it did not negate the existentialism theology of Bultmann. Consequently, they were arguing that it was possible to link existentialism with Bultmann's defined objective history. They were asking Bultmann, paradoxically, to redefine his concept of history: to include a historical-social dimension in the anthropomorphic hermeneutic of existentialism.

Bornkamm was the most explicit of the Schüler with his argument that there was no need to distinguish between two histories: one for faith and one for cultural events. Bornkamm reflected Harnack's view that the two histories could be bridged by linking the earthly Jesus to the kerygmatic Jesus. Harnack was not advocating a return to the liberal idea of a divine earthly Jesus, and neither was Bornkamm. Bornkamm had hit upon an unconscious barrier in Bultmann's psyche because he was committed, perhaps obsessively, to maintaining the divide between liberal historiography and his constructed anthropomorphic history. Like arguments about faith, logic would not be capable of moving Bultmann in Bornkamm's direction. Bornkamm became his most impassioned critic when he wrote that Bultmann should not sacrifice reason for faith invoking a pre-Bultmann line of reasoning, found also in Troeltsch. We have noted how Bultmann would not budge from his position that faith and cultural history could not bond with each other. While Bornkamm argued that situating Jesus in the cultural memory of the early church would not displace the existential component, Bultmann reiterated, in an ecclesiastical mode, that post-Easter faith was formed from tradition and not from memory.

Conzelmann echoed Bornkamm in his support that the function of history was to situate faith, not to replace it. He was looking for a way to accommodate Bultmann's emphasis on faith over reason. But he added that history would enable a flesh and blood Jesus to counter criticism of a docetic Jesus. However, it was Ebeling who took the history argument to Bultmann in the most forcible manner by questioning why he had ascribed more importance to the Fourth Gospel and the Pauline letters than to the gospels. Ebeling's work represented a turning point in the early 1960s, whereby history was

becoming more acceptable in matters of faith. The role of history in questioning matters of faith was presented by Ebeling and constituted a frontal attack on Bultmann's existential premise that faith history was distinctly different to positivist history. Ebeling's work constituted a bridge beyond the work of Conzelmann and Bornkamm into the work of scholars like the English Dodd and the German Jeremias, who were advocating the study of language and style in assessing the true meaning of Jesus' parables. Debate in England over Bultmann's theology had begun much earlier than in Germany, but it shared a common terrain with Ebeling's work.

The Debates: England

The debate in England was not as circumscribed in its approach to the gospels as the debate in Germany. Bultmann's hegemony started to be questioned in Germany only in the 1950s, and in earnest by Ebeling, in the 1960s, while the 1927 Cambridge conference had introduced English scholarship to German scholars and the work of Bultmann's form critical method to English scholars. The issues being debated in England were not controlled by Bultmann's delimitation of history to anthropomorphic faith history. The gospels' narratives were recognised as authentic, with the caveat that they were not to be slavishly interpreted in a literal manner.

As early as 1932, Dodd was using linguistics to examine the parables of Jesus, which Bultmann had failed to do. Jesus was situated in his Jewish context without prejudice. The Hebrew Bible was seen as integral to an understanding of Jesus' ministry. Dodd probed the mystery religions and Jewish apocalyptic literature, including the Book of Enoch, and extended his search for the meaning of freedom to Paul. One of the major

contributions of Dodd was his argument that history was more than the positivist nature of bare facts. Scholars should be looking for a unity of message in Jesus' words and actions. This sign-post was not lost on later work by Ed Parish Sanders, who situated Jesus in his actions. However, Bultmann and Dodd shared some of the same landscape in their view that the kerygma involved decision making, but they differed on how this was to be interpreted. Dodd saw no problem in using what Bultmann would label objective history to find examples of decision making in the gospels. Dodd's principal argument was that the post-Easter kerygma mirrored the skeleton of Jesus, and the true meaning of his preaching would be found in his parables, which required knowledge of languages and uses of style like metaphor to interpret them. The pre-war period, when Bultmann was immersed in political problems associated with a Jewish Jesus theology, enabled Dodd and his British colleagues to pursue the historical Jesus question, unhindered by political problems. While Dodd was criticised for his ideas on Jesus' view of transcendence, he was acclaimed for his interpretive linguistic work on the parables.

Manson, writing between 1930 and 1956, broaches some of the issues identified by Ebeling in his confrontation with Bultmann. Working from texts, particularly the Hebrew Bible, Manson did his best to discredit Bultmann's form criticism, which argued that the gospels were historically inauthentic. He attacked Bultmann's view of history by claiming that it lacked a human dimension, and that consistency should not be expected of Jesus at all times. Ironically, he criticised Bultmann for imposing twentieth century interpretive models on ancient writing.

The English tradition challenged the breadth of Bultmann's existentialist theology and introduced a cultural dimension which was dependent on an historical epistemology

for interpretation. Many of the threads introduced by Dodd and Manson, for example, were taken up and developed by Bornkamm and Ebeling, and later by the proponents of the New Quest, and later still, in the Third Quest.

The Debates: America

The American contribution to the debate was more diverse than in England. Many German scholars migrated to America on account of a shared liberal tradition, evident in the social gospel tradition there. Wilder proclaimed that there should be no boundaries between religion and social life. This was a significant statement because it reflected a perceived shortcoming in Bultmann's existentialist theology that cultural phenomena were out of bounds in matters of faith. Wilder argued that Christianity depended on Jewish traditions and he did not share Bultmann's view that Christianity was a new beginning, totally independent of Judaism. While Christianity was a new phenomenon, its continuity with Judaism must be maintained. Jesus was important for the messages he gave, which applied to different levels of society. Wilder argued that Jesus' vision for a better, more loving world was important and should not be lost. Perhaps the argument which sums up the manner in which Bultmann exercised his theological hegemony was expressed by Harvey: Bultmann has guaranteed the theological results he wanted by devising an ingenious conceptual scheme which uncritically removed faith from considerations of cultural relevance.

Conclusion

Bultmann's understanding of history encapsulated his agenda with respect to the historical Jesus. He was so opposed to liberal historiography that he used dialectical theology to reject the historical Jesus in order to reject liberalism, which, in turn, pointed him in the direction of an anthropomorphic existentialist theology, devoid of positivist history considerations. The spin-offs were considerable. An anthropomorphic view of history enabled Bultmann to construct a kerygma dependent only on the moment of decision of the believer. Socio-cultural and historical issues were labelled worldly and out of bounds in a way very similar to Bultmann's opposition to his perceived Jewish exclusive theology. Bultmann's existentialism appears to be exclusive of social responsibility.

Bultmann distinguishes between Hellenistic history and history found in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible emphasises human responsibility and decision making, but it also emphasises human relationship and responsibility to the future. Bultmann's agenda is evident in the fact that the Hebrew Bible is emphasising behaviours which Bultmann ought to find amenable for his existentialist theology. Yet, he minimises the value of the Hebrew Bible for the new Christianity. Bultmann rejects the futurist aspect of the Hebrew Bible to concentrate on the present as a moment of decision.⁵⁴⁷ By so doing, he can be consistent in rejecting any political implications from history by concentrating only on individual existence. He has forced himself into position whereby he cannot be consistent in his interpretation of Hebrew Bible and New Testament cosmology. Ultimately, this position had political implications. Emphasising the authenticity of the present at the expense of inauthentic history enabled him to sidestep

⁵⁴⁷ See Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*, 43.

involvement in social and political issues: “The meaning of history always lies in the present.”⁵⁴⁸

Whose interests were being protected by Bultmann in this conception of history? Bultmann was opposing any critical investigation of social and political issues. I am referring particularly to the position he took vis-à-vis the Jewish situation in Germany under the Third Reich. Bultmann’s programme of demythology was hermeneutically his. His argument was that it was necessary in order to explain ancient ideas to a modern laity. Bultmann could be accused of promoting a new orthodoxy in opposition to the ideas of the Enlightenment which he was trying to protect, namely, principles of openness and anti-orthodoxy. His agenda is most visible in his treatment of the tension between the historical Jesus and the kerygma.

Ebeling describes the kerygma as “a formidable summary of everything, which has to be proclaimed, and now threatens to conceal the real problems facing proclamation.”⁵⁴⁹ The problem is concealed under “a welter of high sounding Christological terminology.”⁵⁵⁰ The result is a collection of doctrines that cannot be criticised and yet, they are formulated not mythically, but ideologically. Bultmann has determined the limit to demythologising to suit his purpose, which is to promote the kerygma as the kernel of Christian faith. However, Bultmann is aware of the dilemma when he writes, “although kerygma and theology are fundamentally different, they are not separable in practice.”⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Ebeling, *Theology and Proclamation*, 36.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, 218.

Bultmann is saying that the kerygma cannot be criticised or evaluated, nor, like love, can it be situationalised or described. It is therefore, irrational. However, Bultmann needs the historical Jesus to protect the kerygma from becoming what was feared in the Enlightenment era, namely, dogma. But Bultmann has relegated Jesus to a minimal status vis-à-vis the kerygma because of his historical relativity. This is where the tension is evident and where Bultmann's Achilles' heel is exposed. His antithesis to liberal uses of history has forced him to reject the historical Jesus because he is not unique. It appears that Bultmann is looking for a divine Jesus and then rejecting him because he is earthly, yet he needs his humanity. This is a dilemma which Bultmann did not resolve and which invited responses from not only his former students but from outside of Germany.

Bultmann achieved hegemony in Germany between 1920 and 1960. He was certainly a catalyst in the demise of the liberal theology. But his antipathy to liberalism led him down a path which promoted an individual theology of salvation at the expense of social and political issues, which needed intervention by the church. Bultmann confined himself to defining the affairs of the church as being outside of society. Consequently, he developed a theology which became anti-Jewish, and which included the historical Jesus among its casualties on account of his Jewishness. However, he must be given credit for highlighting the need for a fresh examination of the gospels and the New Testament, even if his interpretation was pulled in an unfortunate political direction.

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