

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Indian Journal of Theology* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ijt_01.php

History and *Kerygma* in the Resurrection of Jesus

JAMES A. BERGQUIST

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM

It is the assigned purpose of this paper to explore the subject, 'History and *Kerygma* in the Resurrection of Jesus'. I both welcome the task this topic sets before me, and yet I tremble in the face of it.

I say, first, that I welcome the assignment. I do so because our topic stands at the very centre of the life and theology of the Christian faith. In recent years, both '*kerygmatic* theology', on the one side, and form criticism, on the other, have had the highly positive effect of underscoring the essential place of the resurrection of Jesus in the development of New Testament thought. By whatever route one approaches the New Testament, the resurrection occupies the high ground. The *exegete* finds it imbedded in every layer of early tradition, the presupposition of every New Testament document, the framework of all four Gospels.¹ The *historian* discovers that it was faith in the resurrection, perhaps that alone, which gave rise to the Christian Church.² The *theologian* recognizes the resurrection as the central affirmation of the apostolic *kerygma*, the key doctrine which puts all other events of the life of Jesus into focus, and the starting point for all theological developments of Christology, soteriology, eschatology, ethics and worship.³ The *parish pastor* places the weekly celebration of the Lord's Day (i.e. the day when the crucified Jesus was seen as the risen *kyrios*) at the very centre of his vocational task. And, in the most fundamental sense of all, *every Christian* experiences the

¹ Cf. Ernst Fuchs, 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus', in *Studies of the Historical Jesus* (Naperville, Ill., Alec R. Allenson, 1964), p. 26: 'However, the Gospels are, in fact, not just narratives of suffering; they are, from the very beginning, proclamation of the resurrection.' Also K. H. Rengstorf, *Die Auferstehung Jesus* (Witten/Ruhr: Luther-Verlag, 1960), p. 20.

² Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol. I (New York: Russell and Russell, 1959), p. 84. Also Maurice Goguel, *The Birth of Christianity* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954, p. 29).

³ Floyd V. Filson, *Jesus Christ the Risen Lord* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), pp. 25 ff.

resurrection daily as he dies to self and is 'united with (Jesus) in resurrection' so that he might 'walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6:4-6).

In short, apart from the event of Easter, there would be no church, no life, no stance of faith which could be identified and understood as distinctively Christian.

But I also tremble before this topic. If no event is more central to faith, it is equally true that no New Testament event is more problematical. Hugh Anderson is surely correct in calling the resurrection the 'glory and anguish' of theology:

Its glory, because in thinking on the Resurrection we are laying our finger right on the pulse of the primitive Church's life. Its anguish, because the witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is linked up in our source material with the witness to specific historical events and concrete details, events and details which the historian, when put to this acid test, has seemed quite incapable of verifying. Here, where most of all we would want to know what happened and how it happened, we are the most baffled.⁴

The difficulties confronting the exegete who sets out to interpret the resurrection are of two kinds: documentary and theological. As for the first, we need not examine in any detail the well-known points of divergence within the Gospel narratives in their account of the resurrection scenes, nor do more than allude to the differences between Paul's early resurrection *paradosis* of 1 Cor. 15:3-8 and the Gospel narratives.⁵ The questions raised by the fragmentary and contradictory forms of the documentary evidence are, of course, crucial and important. But these questions bring us nowhere near the heart of the problem. The most serious hermeneutical difficulties rather lurk in the question of the inner character of the Easter event and its theological meaning. The Easter narratives force us not only to ask of the documentary materials the historical question, 'What really happened?' but, perhaps more importantly, to inquire of the Easter *kerygma*, 'What does this mean?'

To put all this in terms of our topic, the two key interpretative problems of the resurrection of Jesus, the documentary and the theological, reflect two sides of the same question: How can we understand the relationship between history and *kerygma* in the resurrection? We may formulate the problem, then, as follows: *History*: In the face of all documentary and theological diversity in the reports of the resurrection, can we recover

⁴ Hugh Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 187.

⁵ See E. L. Allen, 'The Lost *Kerygma*', *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (July, 1957), for a discussion of the perplexing differences between Paul's resurrection *paradosis* and the Gospel narratives. The difficulty lies in the fact that Paul's list of appearances, which must certainly be dated much earlier than the Gospel narratives, cannot be harmonized with the appearances reported in the Gospels.

the 'historical' order of the events of Easter? Can we discover 'what happened?' Are we dealing with 'objective' events? Or was the resurrection so totally unlike anything the disciples had previously experienced or expected that their reports of it cannot be simple biography and the event itself must have a unique and decisive character of its own? *Kerygma*: To what extent was the resurrection tradition changed, adapted or shaped by the faith of the community, so that what we have in the New Testament reports is less 'history' than confession; less fact than fact-viewed-through-eyes-of-faith; less a witness to the historical Jesus than to the risen Christ? And if the Easter 'history' was shaped by Easter faith, to what extent can it bear the theological meaning assigned to it by the *kerygma*?

Now you will recognize that this last question marks out the problem dominating contemporary critical studies of the New Testament. I have here given focus to the problem of the relationship between history and *kerygma* at the point of the resurrection. Totally apart from our assigned subject, in fact I do believe that here is the inescapable point of focus, for the resurrection is the keystone and centre of the New Testament theology. Nevertheless, the question of history in the *kerygma* must also be given a somewhat wider perspective. The central issue, as viewed within the broader context of the continuing debates on the life-of-Jesus question, can be stated as follows: Does the *kerygmatic* character of the New Testament documents, particularly the Gospel proclamation (the Synoptic tradition as well as the Fourth Gospel), rule out the possibility of recovering authentic biographical (historical) details about the life of Jesus? Or to state the problem in language characteristic of the so-called 'New Quest': Can we discover a continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ confessed in the *kerygma*?

It is the conviction of the various scholars engaged in the so-called 'New Quest' that to neglect history in the *kerygma* leads to Docetism.⁶ I share that conviction. But I would go further. I would argue that not only must we be concerned to determine the historical authenticity of various scattered words and deeds of Jesus as recorded in *pericopes* placed within the context of the ministry of Jesus, but we must deal with the question of history at the very centre of the Faith, the resurrection. The question of the relationship between history and *kerygma* in the Gospels must be answered finally at the point of the great central saving events.

⁶ For example the statement of Joachim Jeremias, *The Problem of the Historical Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 14. 'We must continually return to the historical Jesus and his message. The sources demand it; the *kerygma*, which refers us back from itself, also demands it.'

The purpose of this paper, then, is to probe the relationship between history and *kerygma* at the point of the resurrection. The task is really more than I can manage within the scope of this paper—or manage at all, for that matter. But I shall attempt it in two stages. First, I shall deal with *definitions* by way of background to the problem. Here I shall attempt to sort out the terminology by showing how the words ‘history’ and ‘*kerygma*’ are understood in the present situation and how they relate to the resurrection of Jesus. My second task will be one of *exegetical summary* as I examine the New Testament proclamation of the resurrection, attempting to interpret it in a way which will do justice to the unique historical/*kerygmatic* character of the resurrection event.

I. THE PRESENT SITUATION

Up to this point I have not attempted to define carefully our two key words, history and *kerygma*, which stand like formidable sentinels—spectres, if you wish—over the New Testament scene. Both are slippery terms, of course. Just how and to what extent they can be separated is difficult to determine. But I must now attempt to define these terms in some detail against the background of the Jesus of history question, and then try to show how our understanding of these terms will determine to a large extent, at least, our interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus.

A. *History and Kerygma: Three ways to state Their Relationship*

The history of the life-of-Jesus research of the past century is the story of three quite distinct ways of stating the relationship between history and *kerygma*.⁷

1. ‘The Old Quest’—History over Kerygma

The first way was to make history the arbiter in matters of faith, eliminating *kerygma*, if necessary, to get back to ‘what really happened’. This was the stance taken by the nineteenth-century Liberals engaged in the ‘lives of Jesus’ movement.⁸ What led to their historicism?

⁷ The standard work is, of course, Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959). See also Heinz Zahrnt, *The Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963); Hugh Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins*; and J. M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1959).

⁸ Anderson, p. 56, described three stages through which scientific historical research passed in its long history beginning with Reimarus in the eighteenth century. Under rationalism, it sought the ethical precepts of Jesus; under pietism, it was concerned with the religious personality of Jesus; in its hey-day between 1835 and 1900, it pressed the breach which developed between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.

(a) Perhaps the major factor was that in the nineteenth century great convulsions in the fields of science, philosophy and history had fostered the development of a genuine historical sense. Darwin's theories, applied to history, meant that history was viewed as a process, not a static record of past events. Applied to the Scriptures, this meant that the inspiration and authority of the Bible were seriously questioned as verbal authority for the first time. This meant, of course, that the Gospels *per se* were no longer considered factual, objective biographical pictures of the life of Jesus, whose authenticity was guaranteed by divine revelation. The door was opened for a good many details in the life of Jesus to be questioned, especially the miraculous, since nineteenth-century historicism also put stress on the immanence of God. God was viewed as a God who worked from within the world and its historical process. In this way it was easy to distil all elements of a 'supernatural' Jesus out of the Gospels in the search for the 'historical' kernel.

Thus the Liberals sought to get back to the historical Jesus by stripping away the layers of dogma (*kerygma*) which (it was thought) had encumbered his actual portrait. Historical criticism appeared to present a clear-cut choice to the interpreter of Jesus: fact or faith, history or dogma, the historical Jesus or the dogmatic Christ, the real Jesus or the later theologized portrait of Paul, John and the primitive Greek Church. And his historical reason told the nineteenth-century Liberal to ride with the first choice in each of these alternatives, choosing, in effect, history over *kerygma*.

(b) But a second factor was instrumental in causing the nineteenth-century Liberals to choose history over faith. History seemed like the last bulwark available to protect faith against the onslaughts of rationalism. David Strauss, for instance, in his *Life of Jesus* (1835) had completely discounted the supernatural element in the Gospels, labelling it as pure mythology, and thus in effect eliminating most of the New Testament. Could faith then be based on Jesus if the New Testament proclamation was pure myth? Obviously not, in any traditional sense. In response to Strauss, therefore, the Liberals had a highly positive purpose in their historicism. They sought to save the faith by reconstructing the life of Jesus upon the firm and unshakable basis of history. This meant, to be sure, that part of the New Testament had to be eliminated as unhistorical. But the Liberals never wavered in their conviction that they could recover a convincing historical portrait of the real Jesus and offer Him as the basis of faith. Certainly their programme has a certain 'common-sense' appeal about it. If the Gospel picture of Jesus is falsified (non-historical) then surely it remains a shaky basis for faith.

In all this it can be seen that Liberalism operated with two basic presuppositions: *First*, it was confidently believed that the Gospels had been written with a biographical intention and that

the biographical (historical) details of the life of Jesus could be recovered if only the interpreter would apply rigorously the methods of scientific historical criticism. Mark's Gospel was thought to be prior, not only because it had been written first, but because it appeared to have least 'theologized' (*kerygmatised*?) Jesus. The historical reliability of the Marcan framework was the fundamental assumption of the liberal approach. *Second*, it was assumed that history, as history, could provide a sound, if critical, basis for Christian faith.

But the Old Quest failed. And it failed precisely at the point of its choice of history over *kerygma*. Their failures were twofold.

First, they had modernized.—As Schweitzer and others have shown, the Jesus recovered by the nineteenth-century Liberals was in fact a 'historians' Jesus', not the Jesus of history.⁹ In seeking to eliminate first-century Christological dogma (the Pauline and Greek elements) they had unconsciously substituted a peculiar nineteenth-century Idealistic dogma, superimposing it upon Jesus.

Second, they surrendered the uniqueness of the Gospel.—In the attempt to separate dogma from history, Liberalism had distorted or ignored the decisive centre of the New Testament, the announcement of God's act of grace in Jesus Christ. Somewhere in the midst of the mass of historical detail they had brought forth, they had lost the faith. Martin Kähler exposed that failure some fifty years ago,¹⁰ but his voice was not heard until dialectical theology, in its protest against historicism in the name of the *kerygma*, was able to develop his themes.

2. Bultmann: *Kerygma over History*

The breakdown of the nineteenth-century historicism was followed by a radically different formulation of the relationship between history and the *kerygma*. The so-called Biblical theologians sought to redress the historical and theological failures of the nineteenth century by giving pride of place to the *kerygma*.

Most of us, here, I should imagine, cut our theological teeth on the writings of the Biblical theologians. This movement (called variously 'dialectical theology', 'crisis theology', '*kerygmatic* theology') is associated with Barth and Cullmann, to some extent with Dodd, but to an increasingly dominant degree today in critical New Testament studies with Rudolf

⁹ Zahrnt, p. 49. Cf. Robinson, p. 31.

¹⁰ See the article by Carl F. Braaten, 'Martin Kähler on the Historic Biblical Christ' in Carl F. Braaten and Roy Q. Harrisville, ed., *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 79-105, as well as his introduction in his translation of Kähler's book, *The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), for an estimate of the way in which Kähler anticipated the themes of the later *kerygmatic* theology.

Bultmann. *Kerygmatic* theology began at the point of the two most apparent failures of the Liberals. *First*, faced with the failure of historicism to provide a sound, objective basis for faith in history, it was insisted by Barth and Bultmann (each in their own way) that the brute facts of history cannot in any case provide a basis for faith. Faith is born of the *kerygma*, not history. God, the Wholly Other, addresses men in His Word of Revelation (Barth); only in the proclamation of the faith of the church, the *kerygma*, not in the proclamation of the historical Jesus does one encounter Jesus as the Christ and come to know his own authentic existence (Bultmann).

Second, the *kerygmatic* theologians challenged the liberal surrender of the *kerygma* by attacking on two levels: (1) Theologically, they attacked the ethical humanism of the Liberals by recovering the Biblical motifs of revelation, transcendence and grace. They gave stress to the character of the *kerygma* as God's eschatological message, the announcement of God's saving deeds in history which summon men to repentance and faith. (2) But *kerygmatic* theology also raised a second front along methodological lines. In his brief, but decisive book, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development*, C. H. Dodd recovered the unity of the New Testament in a way that has had a determinative effect on all subsequent British and American (but not German) theology.¹¹ To an even greater extent, Oscar Cullmann's *heilsgeschichtliche* theology which underlies his many writings has established the *kerygmatic* unity of the Biblical writings. The synthetic work of both Dodd and Cullmann, stressing the unity of New Testament *kerygmatic* faith, was a needed corrective in the face of the bewildering array of analytical historical facts the nineteenth-century Liberals had assembled.

Thus, in Käsemann's words:

Dialectical theology and the parallel renewal of interest in the message of the Reformation combined to reveal the impoverishment and distortion of the Gospel which takes place whenever the question of the Jesus of history is treated as decisive for theology and preaching.¹²

Now how did it happen that the *kerygmatic* elements in the Gospels, so long despised as secondary, dogmatic accretions to be rooted out, should suddenly provide the focus for New Testament work? And how could the recovery of the *kerygma* be proposed as a theological answer to the historical scepticism, the unhappy point of the nineteenth-century lives? The answer

¹¹ W. D. Davies comments on how C. H. Dodd revitalized New Testament theology in England. 'A Quest to be Resumed in New Testament Studies', in *Christian Origins and Judaism* (London: Darton, Longman & Co., Ltd., 1962), p. 4.

¹² Ernst Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes* (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1960), p. 15.

lies in two developments: *Form criticism*, on the one side, led to the recognition that the Gospel sources were incapable of yielding biographical data to write a history of Jesus; and a *new view of history*, on the other side, led to the insistence that faith could not be based on relative historical data provided (or denied) by scientific criticism. Let us look briefly at each of these developments as characterized in the work of Rudolf Bultmann.

(a) *Form criticism* is concerned about the pre-literary, or oral, stages of the Gospel tradition. It seeks to discover the origins of the Gospel *pericopes* by analysing the narratives according to various literary 'forms' and attempting to determine how the final author of the Gospels altered or adapted the original 'oral' forms, if at all. Bultmann, along with Dibelius and Schmidt, was instrumental in developing the method. Bultmann's basic assumption is that the individual *pericopes* were handed down and, to some extent, created by the believing community. Therefore the origin of each unit of the tradition is to be sought in the *Sitz im Leben* of the early Christian community, whose practical interests either preserved or created the tradition,¹³ and the final authors of the Gospels are collectors and compilers of the tradition, not authors who gave the Gospels their framework or historians who preserved 'objective history'.

Therefore, the Gospels, according to this view, are confessions and not biography. The whole of the New Testament, but particularly the Gospel tradition, was seen to be *kerygmatic*. The interpreter cannot penetrate directly back to the Jesus of history because from beginning to end the sources are documents written entirely from the perspective of faith, coloured and penetrated by non-historical (*kerygmatic*) elements throughout. Form criticism appears to destroy the possibility of reconstructing history in the *kerygma*.

Bultmann, however, does not entirely reject the historical in the *kerygma*. He does indeed think that certain facts about Jesus can be known: perhaps only to say that he lived, died and spoke this or that word. Moreover, the inescapable 'thatness' of the cross and resurrection marks the limit of demythologizing.¹⁴ He never surrenders the view that there can be no Christianity apart from the historical Jesus, though he does

¹³ Dibelius located the *Sitzen im Leben* almost exclusively in preaching; Albertz sought it in worship; Schmidt took a similar view; and Bultmann finds the creative influence in a number of polemical, apologetic and dogmatic needs. In any case, it is a question of whether and to what extent the community was the creator of the tradition. The more conservative form critic, Vincent Taylor, makes the pointed statement: 'If the Form Critics are right, the disciples must have been transplanted to heaven immediately after the resurrection.' *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1952), p. 28.

¹⁴ John MacQuarrie's point in his *The Scope of Demythologizing* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1960).

insist that the historical Jesus has no significance for faith. But he has the critical position that we can deal only with the *kerygmatic* Christ, not the historical Jesus, because the sources themselves are confessions which allow the recovery of only the barest details about the historical Jesus.

(b) Bultmann's view of history is a second factor which causes him to choose the *kerygma* over history. In his view he reflects the insight of modern historiography that fact and interpretation are intertwined in events of the past, and that the positivistic attempt to find the meaning of history in the bare facts does not do full justice to history.¹⁵ Bultmann carefully distinguished between *historie* and *geschichte*, a distinction usually maintained in English translations by the respective words 'historical' and 'historic'. The first, *historie*, is concerned with the concrete, objective facts of history. *Geschichte* is interpreted history; it is event that occurs in the past plus the significance attached to the event. Now in Bultmann's view, faith cannot be based on *historie* because the objective facts of the Gospel narratives cannot be verified. Even if they could, brute fact would not alone tell the historian that God was acting in those facts. At this point Bultmann adds a second ingredient to his view of history; existentialist philosophy. Why cannot brute facts prove faith? Because to attempt to make faith rest on history is to turn the Gospel into Law; it is to substitute the false security of objectivity for the stark offence of the cross; it is to destroy the gracious character of the proclamation of the Word by substituting fact for faith.

Thus, to use the terminology made current by J. M. Robinson, *kerygmatic* theology concluded that it was both historically impossible and theologically illegitimate to attempt to base faith on history:

'The sources are so dominated by *kerygmatic* interpretation that they render a reconstruction of the historical Jesus impossible. And the *kerygma* calls for faith as an act of commitment; it is theologically illegitimate to go behind the *kerygma* in search of historical proofs of its truth.'¹⁶

Thus Bultmann's methods and presuppositions lead him to an extremely negative position regarding the possibility of knowing the facts about the life of Christ. He furthermore claims that faith is not dependant upon those facts. Indeed he retains a 'hard core' of event, though it may be nothing more than the assertion that Jesus lived and died. Nevertheless, for Bultmann

¹⁵ But see historian T. A. Roberts' objection to the rather loose way in which the *kerygmatic* theologians, especially J. M. Robinson, have applied the term 'positivistic' to nineteenth-century historians. 'Gospel Historicity: Some philosophical Observations', *Religious Studies*, Vol. I, No. 2, April 1966, pp. 185-202.

¹⁶ Robinson, 'The Historical Question', *The Christian Century*, LXXVI, (21st Oct., 1959), p. 1209.

the significance of Jesus lies rather in the Message proclaimed about Him; that is Christian faith is faith only on the exalted Lord proclaimed in the *kerygma*.

But in choosing *kerygma* over history, dialectical theology ran the risk of losing Jesus altogether. The *kerygma* tended to become a symbol, either understood as bare-boned proclamation of key events in the redemptive history (Dodd, Cullmann); or as an existential call to decision (Bultmann). But if a relationship cannot be established between the Jesus of history and the Christ of the *kerygma*, then what will save the Gospel from becoming a timeless myth which no longer speaks of God revealing Himself in history? In short, does faith rest on Jesus himself or on the Church's faith about Jesus?

3. *History and Kerygma in Tension*

This was precisely the situation faced up to by certain followers of Barth and Bultmann in inaugurating the post-Bultmannian phase of life-of-Jesus research now termed 'The New Quest'. They are asserting in various ways that Jesus and Christ, history and faith, cannot be separated as strictly as they are in Bultmann's theology. Käsemann, Robinson, Bornkamm, Conzelmann, Fuchs and Ebeling—these are the names associated with the new quest. Their critical stance is by no means a return to the presuppositions of nineteenth-century theology, though they in part share the historical concern of the old Liberals. Their critical position may be characterized by two convictions, both of which express their intention to hold history and *kerygma* in tension:

First, with the Bultmannian school, the 'new questers' agree that history cannot prove faith. Nor do they believe that it is possible to penetrate directly to the historical Jesus behind the *kerygma*. There is no attempt to negate the insight of form criticism that the Gospels must be understood first of all as Easter confessions. Thus Käsemann declares, 'It ought also to be clear to us that the Gospel history has not come any nearer to us when we have resolved it into bare facts.' And, '... primitive Christianity allows mere history no vehicle of expression other than the *kerygma*.'¹⁷

But second, the 'new questers' insist that there is a necessary connection between the Jesus of history and the Christ of the *kerygma*. Thus Conzelmann states, in objecting to the view that recourse to the historical Jesus is both systematically illegitimate and historically impossible, that 'we would still have to reject the way the attempt is made to grow a systematic Christ-rose from the soil of historical scepticism.'¹⁸ And Käsemann again:

¹⁷ Käsemann, p. 19.

¹⁸ Hans Conzelmann, 'The Method of the Life-of-Jesus Research', in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, p. 56.

In no case may we allow the exaggeration of insights which may be correct in themselves to exempt us from the dialectic obtaining here or to drive us to one-sided solutions. That would equally happen if we were to absolutize the irrefragable proposition that the Christian message is founded in the Easter faith. Such a position has its proper place . . . But it ought not to conceal a defeatist attitude which has already given up any attempt to penetrate the human individuality of Jesus, nor to appear to contest what the Evangelists would undoubtedly have maintained—namely, that the life history of Jesus has its relevance for faith.¹⁹

In short, the New Quest has reformulated the relationship between history and *kerygma* in the Gospel in such a way that it wants to hold both in tension. On the one side, there can be no 'saving event' without a historical content; and on the other, the earthly Jesus is nowhere proclaimed in the New Testament apart from the Easter faith. It is this view which Zahrnt approves in the conclusion of his *The Historical Jesus*:

It is a consequence of this peculiarity of the Christian revelation that in the New Testament tradition the history of Jesus and the *kerygma* are indissolubly intertwined. The work of theology must match this situation. It has always a twofold task; it must seek the *kerygma* in history, and history in the *kerygma*. . . . The two belong together; one is impossible without the other.²⁰

To sum up the three ways of formulating the relationship between history and the *kerygma*: Two are positions in which one element tends to swallow up the other. If history is made the arbiter of faith, full justice is not done to the *kerygmatic* proclamation of the once-for-all character of the Gospel, and if the *kerygma* is proclaimed in isolation from the concrete history of Jesus, only a small step remains between the total dissolution of the *kerygma* into myth or symbol. The more difficult, but necessary, task is to maintain the difficult tension between history and *kerygma*.

Certainly this last position has its critics. On the one side, many scholars have continued to find a solid historical framework within the *kerygma*. C. H. Dodd, for example, has never succumbed to the extremes of continental scepticism.²¹ Other English scholars—Vincent Taylor, T. W. Manson and A. M. Hunter—have produced works on the life of Jesus which are

¹⁹ Käsemann, p. 25.

²⁰ Zahrnt, p. 145.

²¹ C. H. Dodd, 'The Framework of the Gospel Narratives', *Expository Times* (Vol. 43), pp. 396-400, in which he contends for the historical reliability of synoptic chronology. Cf. *History and Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge University Press, 1963).

marked by a high degree of optimism toward the essential trustworthiness of the Gospel framework. Perhaps it is because the English have been less influenced by form criticism than German and American scholars. Even in Germany, the work of E. Stauffer resists mightily the Bultmannian juggernaut and maintains, in nineteenth-century positivistic style, the adequacy of the historical approach.²² For all these, there tends to be no radical distinction between *kerygma* and history because the *kerygma* itself has the character of history.

On the other side, some continue to resist the attempt to go behind the *kerygma* to the historical Jesus. Bultmann himself, along with Barth, have not reacted with favour to the New Quest.²³ On methodological grounds, Heinrich Ott represents the radical existentialist position which denies that there is any such thing as brute historical fact at all. For Ott, who radicalizes Bultmannian existentialism, there is no distinction possible between history and *kerygma* because all history, being interpretation, is in effect *kerygmatic*.²⁴

My position, as I have stated, is in sympathy with the proponents of the New Quest. History and *kerygma* are separate, but related. We must hold both elements in tension to be faithful interpreters of Jesus. But now we must ask what this means in the task of interpreting the resurrection of Jesus.

B. *The Resurrection, History and Kerygma*

We have named three ways of relating history and *kerygma* in the Gospels: history over *kerygma*, *kerygma* over history, and history and *kerygma* in tension. And we have chosen the third option as the only approach which protects both the historical and revelatory elements in the *kerygma*. Now I would like to refocus the problem in the light of the resurrection tradition.

1. *The Resurrection and Historicism*

The nineteenth-century Liberals were unable to do justice to the resurrection of Jesus precisely because of their historicism. As long as the resurrection was subjected to the investigations of scientific history, its *kerygmatic* character was unrecognized and its centrality ignored. There are two reasons why a strictly historical approach cannot deal with the resurrection.

²² Ethelbert Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1960), especially p. 12. For a critique of Stauffer, see Zahnt, p. 99 and Anderson, pp. 57-61.

²³ Rudolf Bultmann, 'The Primitive *Kerygma* and the Historical Jesus', in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, pp. 15-42. Cf. Karl Barth, 'How My Mind has Changed', *Christian Century*, LXXVII (1960), p. 75.

²⁴ Heinrich Ott, 'The Historical Jesus and the Ontology of History', *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, pp. 142-171.

First, source criticism had exposed the divergence in the resurrection narratives, divergencies which were impossible to harmonize.²⁵ The sources simply could not yield a consistent chronological account of the resurrection events. Second, the strictly historical method, if committed to an immanentist and positivistic view of history, is powerless to deal with the revelatory claims made in the resurrection event. The New Testament documents make it quite clear that they are not describing an ordinary event of history at all. There are no eye-witnesses to the actual resurrection,²⁶ and, according to the internal testimony of the disciples, it was an event nothing like anything any of them had previously experienced or expected; indeed, it has a unique and decisive character of its own. In short, the historical method alone can deal only with the *problem* of the resurrection; it is quite unable to grasp its *theology* (*kerygma*).

To cite examples. Ernest Renan's *The Life of Jesus* (1863) is something more than 200 pages in length in its English edition; he gives exactly one paragraph, less than half a page, to the resurrection. As a historian he makes it clear that he had nothing to say about the event, and what meaning he finds is pure speculation:

... The strangest rumours were spread in the Christian community. The cry, 'He is risen!' quickly spread among the disciples. Love caused it to find ready credence everywhere. What had taken place? In treating of the history of the apostles we shall have to examine this point and to make inquiry into the origin of the legends relative to the resurrection. For the historian, the life of Jesus finishes with his last sigh. But such was the impression he had left in the heart of his disciples and of a few devoted women, that during some weeks more it was as if he were living and consoling them.²⁷

Such a blend of scepticism and romanticism, of rationalism and psychologizing! How inadequately Renan speaks of the event. The historical method can neither establish the event nor grasp its theological importance. And so the very event, which provides the focal point for the entire New Testament witness, is passed by in virtual silence.

To look at one more example. Kirsopp Lake has written one of the most complete and thorough literary-historical studies of the resurrection narratives.²⁸ Although one can hardly speak

²⁵ For unsuccessful attempts to harmonize see Frank Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1944) and G. D. Yarnold, *Risen Indeed!* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

²⁶ The apocryphal Gospel of Peter purports to describe the actual raising of Jesus, but not, let it be remembered, the canonical accounts.

²⁷ Ernest Renan, *The Life of Jesus* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1941), p. 197.

²⁸ Kirsopp Lake, *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907).

of Lake as belonging to the nineteenth-century Liberal lives movement, he does represent the literary-historical method at its best applied to the resurrection. And with what results? Lake deals with the complex problem of the divergence in the Gospel accounts of the resurrection in a straightforward manner, but is almost totally concerned with these problems to the exclusion of theological exegesis. The keystone to his entire position is that the resurrection narratives preserve two differing traditions of the appearances of Jesus, the older Galilean (Mark) and the later Jerusalem tradition (Luke, John). We need not argue the merits of his position; I wish only to point out that on the same literary-historical grounds Johannes Weiss draws conclusions which are, at many points, directly contrary to Lake's position, and neither scholar is able to do full justice to the *kerygmatic* meaning of the resurrection or to appreciate its central position in the developing theology of the primitive church.

The methods of historical criticism continued to dominate the work of such sound New Testament scholars as Dodd, Manson and Taylor. Only the third in this great trio has been much influenced by form criticism. But it is an irony of the first rank, as Hugh Anderson points out, that T. W. Manson's sound historical approach, so concerned to show that the Gospels purposed, in part, to present a historical story of the life of Jesus, gives only a relatively minor place to the resurrection.²⁹ We mention also in passing that the work of Ethelbert Stauffer has sought to present a 'positivistic' history of the resurrection event, employing nineteenth-century historical methods coupled with conservative principles.³⁰ But can one authenticate the resurrection by appeal to the 'historical fact' of the empty tomb? Apart from its problematical character as an event of history, did not the appearances, not the brute fact of the empty tomb, give rise to Easter faith?

All this is not to deny the validity of the literary-historical method. Unlike the harmonizing approach, source criticism is not shackled by doctrinal presuppositions which force it to conclude in advance that the texts cannot be allowed to contradict themselves. Thus historical criticism has its positive results, especially by alerting the interpreter to the possibility of tracing the growth and transformation of the documentary evidence. But it needs to be supplemented by form criticism, on the one hand, to deal with the pre-literary stages of the tradition; and by theological exegesis, on the other, to grasp the *kerygmatic* meaning of the resurrection.

²⁹ Anderson, p. 92.

³⁰ Roy A. Harrisville, 'Resurrection and Historical Method', *Dialog*, I (1962), pp. 35-36, for a critique of Stauffer's empiricism.

2. Resurrection and Kerygmatic Theology

Kerygmatic theology has had the *positive* result of restoring the resurrection to its rightful place in the apostolic *kerygma*. This is perhaps most apparent in the work of Oscar Cullmann and Karl Barth, both of whom make the resurrection the keystone of their theological systems. Form criticism, too, has made its positive contribution by showing that the entire Gospel tradition is written through the eyes of Easter faith.

But *kerygmatic* theology, as shaped by form criticism and the Bultmannian critical position, implies two *negative* results as well. First, the historical scepticism of form criticism is only intensified at the point of the resurrection accounts. This result may be seen clearly in Bultmann's form critical analysis of the Easter stories. He rejects their authenticity entirely. He calls Mark 16:1-8, the account of the women at the grave, 'a completely secondary formulation',³¹ and labels the empty tomb tradition an 'apologetic legend' and 'a late formulation'.³² In Bultmann's view, the need for apologetics and dogmatics provided the motive which created the Legends of the Resurrection.³³ His form critical analysis of the resurrection narratives is almost entirely negative; only by treating it theologically (existentially) does he find any positive meaning. Dibelius is not nearly so negative, but his results too are equally inconclusive. He treats the resurrection narratives as a part of his discussion of the passion story, labelling the whole account a cultus-legend. He believes that only the story of the appearance of Jesus to the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) is authentic; but the empty tomb tradition and the bulk of the appearances are later expressions of the community designed to support the preachers' contention that the body of Jesus had not remained in the grave.³⁴ On the whole, then, form criticism may underscore the determinative role of Easter on the shaping of the tradition, but it cannot settle the historical question. It shows clearly that 'fact' cannot be separated from 'faith', and that the earliest proclamation of the Church had already interpreted the resurrection-event in the light of resurrection faith.

What we have just said implies the second negative result of *kerygmatic* theology. It places such a great emphasis upon the event as an event of faith that it almost totally severs its

³¹ Bultmann, *Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition*, 3rd ed. (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1957), p. 308.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 311, 314.

³³ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), pp. 44-45.

³⁴ Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson Ltd., 1934), p. 105. Note that Dibelius' use of the term 'legend' does not imply a negative historical judgement. By legend he means something rather close to what we normally understand by the term 'religious story'.

historical base and, thus, in fact truncates its theological meaning. This can be most clearly seen in the theology of Bultmann who refuses to assign to the resurrection any independent theological meaning; its sole meaning is that it interprets the meaning of the cross. In his view, the resurrection cannot be a miracle which sustains faith, but is the object of faith. Its meaning is precisely the meaning of the cross. The resurrection proclaims the Cross as God's saving eschatological deed. Again, we must understand that Bultmann does not deny outright that the resurrection may have been an objective event. But he does insist that the objectivity of the event cannot be recovered (his form criticism) nor are objective 'facts' in themselves significant (his existentialism).

3. *The Resurrection as Kerygmatic Event*

If then neither historicism nor radical *kerygmatic* theology can do justice to the resurrection of Jesus, does the theology of the New Quest? My answer is 'yes' and 'no'. 'Yes', because in principle it insists on the tension between history and faith. 'No', because the New Quest has in fact so far failed to move beyond the Bultmannian position to heal the breach between the two at the point of resurrection. The various scholars engaged in this movement have attempted to establish the continuity between Jesus and Christ at the point of his words (Bornkamm), or conduct (Fuchs), or his understanding of existence (Robinson). But if we are to save the Gospel from being a myth, must not also the centre of the saving event of Jesus, which the New Quest recognizes as being theologically determinative, be interpreted as both historical event and theological proclamation?

Can this tension be maintained in interpreting the resurrection? Certainly the answer will come only through detailed exegetical work, a task to be worked out with far more thoroughness than the following exegetical summary provides. But in this next section, I do intend to state the direction I believe a more comprehensive exegesis would take.

II. HISTORY AND *KERYGMA* IN THE RESURRECTION

Let me first summarize my preceding methodological inquiry.

The problem of the relationship between history and *kerygma* in the resurrection of Jesus is the focal point of the broader Jesus-of-history question. Contemporary, New Testament research formulates the central issue as follows: Does the *kerygmatic* character of the New Testament rule out the possibility of recovering authentic biographical (historical) details about the life of Jesus? Because both form criticism and *kerygmatic* theology have stressed that the Gospels are written entirely from the perspective of Easter faith, the question of the continuity

between the Jesus of history and the Christ of the *kerygma* takes on special urgency at the point of the resurrection. If it is true that faith can be protected from dissolving into myth only by preserving the history in the *kerygma*—and I think that statement is true—then we must face up to the problem of the historicity of the central Easter events if those events are to carry the theological meaning assigned to them in the *kerygma*.

Therefore we must now examine the Easter witness of the New Testament from the standpoint of the tension between history and *kerygma*. We shall do so in three steps. First we shall examine the character of the Easter event, showing how faith and history are here indissolubly combined. Next, we shall attempt to trace the historical tradition back to its earliest possible strata. Finally, we shall summarize the theological meaning of the Easter faith—its *kerygmatic* meaning—which is dependent upon the historical event of the resurrection of Jesus.

A. *The Character of the Event*

The resurrection cannot be interpreted in terms of positivistic historiography. It is no longer possible to go back and describe 'what really happened'. We can only state what Easter meant to the primitive Church. 'The last historical fact available to the historical critic is the Easter faith of the first disciples.'⁸⁵

This necessity is forced upon us both by the nature of the documents themselves and the character of the resurrection-event. Faith and fact are indissolubly combined in the New Testament. The tension between history and interpretation is most clearly expressed in the Fourth Gospel, but it prevails throughout the sources. Paul and the Synoptic Evangelists, no less than John, bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus from the standpoint of the faith of the early Church. There is no resurrection-faith apart from the attendant conviction that in Jesus, who is now recognized as Messiah and Lord, God accomplished a mighty act of creation and redemption. In short, when we deal with the resurrection of Jesus we must deal with the *kerygmatic* proclamation that the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, all viewed as the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises, have indeed heralded the End of all things. To this faith the entire New Testament bears witness. Without this faith there is no proclamation of the resurrection as an independent or isolated event.

Moreover, the very nature of the resurrection-event itself forbids us to treat it as a purely external, observable fact of history. We must say of the resurrection, as of every other historical event, that *uninterpreted* history has no meaning; history

⁸⁵ Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1960), p. 80. Cf. Georg Bertram, 'Die Himmelfahrt Jesus von Kreuz aus und der Glaube an seine Auferstehung', *Festgabe Für Adolph Deissmann* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1958), p. 188.

has meaning only because of the *interpretive* framework in which it must necessarily be understood.³⁶

What importance do these observations have for our understanding of the resurrection of Jesus? We must bear in mind that the risen Jesus appeared only to his followers, that is to men and women of faith.³⁷ Further, at every stage of the tradition it is clear that even the appearances themselves did not immediately convince those who saw Him, for He was sometimes unrecognized (Luke 24:16, 36; John 20:14) and sometimes there were doubts (Matt. 28:17; John 20:24 ff.). Just as the outward events of Jesus' life could be interpreted in two ways, by faith or unbelief (John 1:10-12), so the meaning of the resurrection itself was not immediately apparent. It was possible to interpret the empty tomb as evidence either of a fraud or as a witness to an act of God in raising Jesus from the dead (Matt. 28:11-15; John 20:13-15). Faith must interpret the event of resurrection. For, as Gerhard Koch has written:

The resurrection is the foundation for this, that the historical Jesus is no longer merely past, but becomes contemporary. Only in this way can he be understood as an historical event. The appearances of Jesus reveal his unique selfhood. Jesus Christ is no longer in the world after Good Friday.³⁸

The historical Jesus is present as the resurrected One because the resurrection is an event of revelation. We may hope to properly interpret its meaning only by recognizing that scientific-historical research cannot demonstrate the resurrection of Jesus as a bare fact.³⁹

³⁶ For the contrast between the historical methodology of positivism, which supposed that the bare facts of history could be discovered devoid of interpretation, and the present-day recognition that facts and interpretation are always blended, see Norman Sykes, 'Some Recent Conceptions of Historiography and Their Significance for Christian Apologetic', *Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. L (January-April, 1949), pp. 24-37. See also R. A. Roberts, *History and Christian Apologetics* (London: S.P.C.K., 1960), pp. 1-48. Rudolf Bultmann, *History and Eschatology* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1958), pp. 110-137.

³⁷ All of the appearances recorded in the canonical Gospels were to disciples or followers of Jesus. Only in the extra-canonical gospels, where apologetic needs have clearly influenced the tendency to make the appearances objectively concrete, are outsiders said to have seen the risen Jesus. Cf. the Gospels of Peter and the Hebrews in James. *The Apocryphal New Testament*, pp. 92, 94. Paul's list of appearances in 1 Cor. 15:5-8 are clearly to disciples or followers only. Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr* (New York: Living Age Books, 1958), p. 58, suggests that every appearance of the Risen One may have been regarded in itself as a 'call' to apostleship.

³⁸ Gerhard Koch, *Die Auferstehung Jesus Christi* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959), p. 154.

³⁹ Throckmorton points out that several conclusions could have been drawn from the bare facts of an appearance, among them that the body of Jesus was stolen and revived. Only faith can conclude that the resurrection was indeed a mighty act of God. *The New Testament and Mythology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 77.

Thus both the sources and the event itself resist all but a theological interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus. But this does not mean, however, that the resurrection must be removed entirely from the realm of history. Bultmann, who has strongly emphasized that the resurrection is not a self-evident event of past history and who believes the resurrection is simply an expression of the meaning of the cross, nevertheless admits that the resurrection *kerygma* 'is firmly rooted to the earthly figure of the crucified Jesus'.⁴⁰ But the resurrection is *more* than the interpretation of the meaning of the cross!⁴¹ The entire New Testament does not hesitate to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus as an event of history.⁴² If we can no longer discover 'what really happened', we must continue to recognize that the faith of the primitive Church was firmly committed to the conviction that God acted in history by raising Jesus from the dead! To put this assertion in another way, we believe with John Maquarrie that Bultmann's programme of demythologizing reaches its limit at precisely the point of the historical character of the *kerygma*.⁴³ We cannot say precisely what happened because the resurrection of Jesus was a unique, eschatological event. The resurrection narratives are not merely stories about an ordinary man who rose from his tomb, but, according to the Biblical witness, about the Son of God who was raised to life

⁴⁰ Rudolf Bultmann in *Kerygma and Myth*. Edited by H. W. Bartsch. Vol. I (London: S.P.C.K., 1957), p. 112.

⁴¹ Bultmann has argued that the resurrection has no independent meaning of its own. In his view, the cross and resurrection are one event: faith in the resurrection is faith in the cross as a saving event, the means by which the primitive Church surmounted the scandal of the cross, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I, pp. 44-45, 292-293. But we conclude, against Bultmann, that the resurrection has an independent meaning. Not only does Paul consistently distinguish the two events, but the resurrection does not merely interpret the meaning of the cross, overcoming its scandal, but the cross was not understood until after the resurrection. This must indicate that another event had intervened between the crucifixion and the interpretation of its meaning.

⁴² Why else would Paul appeal to the list of witnesses in 1 Cor. 15:3-8? Barth denies that Paul intended here to appeal to the witnesses as 'proof' of the resurrection; Bultmann recognizes that Paul does have this intention, but he believes Paul's attempt is illegitimate. Cf. E. C. Rust, 'Interpreting the Resurrection', *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (January, 1961), p. 27, who also insists that the apostolic testimony regarded the resurrection as an historical event, a particular moment in *Heilsgeschichte*.

⁴³ John Maquarrie, pp. 58-95. Maquarrie discusses Bultmann's existentialist approach to history. He agrees that it is a great gain in historiography to understand sacred history as a way of life, a possibility of human existence (pp. 89-90). But he asks whether it is legitimate to lose all concern for the 'outside' events of Christianity by limiting ourselves to the 'inside' (existential) meaning. 'Can we sit back and applaud when the existential content of the sacred history emerges and shrug our shoulders when it is a question about the past events themselves, although we have asserted that the link with factuality is not being severed?' (p. 90). Even though faith cannot be founded on historical research, it is necessary to retain objective factuality as the basis of Christianity.

after a humiliating death, according to the plan of God.⁴⁴ But unless the resurrection is in some sense an actual event of history, with an independent theological meaning, the Biblical witness cannot be understood.

The character of the resurrection event, therefore, faces us with a twofold task of interpretation. On the one side, because it remains firmly rooted to history, a purely existential interpretation of the resurrection does not do full justice to the New Testament proclamation of the event.⁴⁵ On the other side, we must recognize that because the developing resurrection tradition tended to bring the event more and more into the realm of observable fact, we must attempt to go behind the developed tradition to the earliest theological understanding of the event. To this task we now turn.

B. *The Order of the Event*

To trace the growth of the resurrection tradition and establish the most primitive understanding of the event we must raise next the question of the relationship between the appearances of the risen Jesus and the accounts of the empty tomb. Is it possible to determine the earliest form of each tradition? By 'order' we do not mean to establish the chronological sequence of events following the Easter event, but to trace the general growth of theological understanding. We shall do this by attempting to define the original experiences and their significance, and by seeking out the motives which shaped the form and content of the various traditional accounts.

1. *The Original Experiences*

(a) *Ascension and Resurrection.*

The starting-point for the Church's most primitive understanding of the resurrection of Jesus was the conviction that by the resurrection God exalted Jesus to the right hand of power. This was already clear in the Pauline epistles where the exaltation to power is viewed consistently in close connection with the resurrection.⁴⁶ The resurrection and ascension are scarcely distinguished also in the primitive speeches in Acts.⁴⁷ In both Paul and the speeches in Acts, Ps. 110:1 appears as the key

⁴⁴ Roberts, p. 161; cf. Koch, p. 151. See also the fine article by Paul S. Minear, 'Christian Eschatology and Historical Methodology', *Neutestamentliche Studien Für Rudolf Bultmann* (Berlin: Alfred Teepelmann, 1957), pp. 15-23. Minear's thesis is that if the eschatological interpretation of the death and resurrection is correct then this point of view should condition all historical judgements, secular or sacred.

⁴⁵ For a fine statement of the necessity of maintaining the resurrection as a genuine historical occurrence without reducing it to empirical fact, see Roy A. Harrisville, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁶ Rom. 1:1-4, 8:34; Eph. 1:20-21.

⁴⁷ Acts 2:33, 5:30-31. The same close connection appears also in the latest writings (1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:18-22; Heb. 1:3 *et al.*; Rev. 1:12-26).

Old Testament *testimonium* to interpret the resurrection as the exaltation of Jesus,⁴⁸ and in neither is there a hint of the distinctive Lucan forty-day chronology.⁴⁹ There are also hints of the early connection between the resurrection and ascension imbedded in all four gospel accounts. It may be that wherever Ps. 110:1 appears in the Synoptic accounts the ascension and resurrection come into view as one event.⁵⁰ There are also hints of this concept in the individual resurrection accounts themselves. In *Mark*, if the expectation of the appearance to the disciples in Galilee (14:28, 16:7) actually refers to the *parousia*, then by implication Jesus had already been exalted to the right hand of power from whence He would return.⁵¹ In *Matthew*, the appearance of Jesus on the mountain in Galilee also assumes that He had already ascended to heaven where He had received the power now given to Him (28:16 ff.).⁵² In *Luke* 23:28, 43 there are hints of the primitive idea that at the moment of death Jesus would be immediately glorified in Paradise. Moreover, Luke 24:51 appears to place the ascension on Easter Sunday, separated from the resurrection only by a matter of hours.⁵³ The same close association between the resurrection and exaltation is also implicit in the *Fourth Gospel*, for there both the cross and resurrection are a part of His glorification.⁵⁴ The Fourth Gospel, however, also shares Luke's chronological separation of the resurrection and ascension by apparently making it occur between the appearance to Mary

⁴⁸ Acts 2:34, 5:31, 7:56; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Rom. 8:34; Phil. 2:5-11.

⁴⁹ Except 13:31, where Paul is reported to have spoken of the 'many days' the risen Jesus appeared to those who came with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem. But the passage, especially the emphasis upon the centrality of Jerusalem, betrays editing by Luke.

⁵⁰ Cf. Bertram, p. 195, with reference to Mark 8:38, 13:26-27, 14:25, 62; Luke 22:69; Phil. 2:5-11. Eduard Schweizer believes that the texts which speak of the coming of the Son of Man may have originally referred to the *exaltation*, not the *parousia*. Eduard Schweizer, *Lordship and Discipleship*, p. 22, note 2. He further believes that the exaltation of Jesus really dominated the thought of the early Church, and as such was the earliest interpretation of the Easter event (pp. 38-39).

⁵¹ We here accept Lightfoot's arguments as stated in his *Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels*, pp. 61-63.

⁵² Matthew here appears to reflect Daniel 7:13-14, where authority is not given to the Son of Man until *after* he has come into the presence of the Ancient of Days.

⁵³ In Luke's first ascension account (Luke 24:50-53) the words 'and was carried up into heaven' are easier to explain as an omission than as an insertion—the phrase would be omitted to harmonize Acts 1 and Luke 24. If that be true, then Luke's ascension account in Luke 24 places the ascension on Easter Sunday, not 40 days later as in Acts 1.

⁵⁴ The glory of Jesus, seen throughout His ministry in the Fourth Gospel (17:5), is qualified by the mysterious 'not yet' which runs throughout the Gospel (2:4, 7:6, 8, 7:30, 8:20). But the moment of passion and resurrection marks the moment His hour for glorification had come (13:1; 17:1) and the paradoxical glory is made clear in the resurrection.

(20:17) and the disciples in Jerusalem on Easter afternoon (20:20), although again there is no hint of the distinctive forty-day chronology of Acts 1:3.⁵⁵

For the earliest Church, then, the resurrection meant that Jesus could now be recognized for what He was, God's Christ and the Lord of the world. No longer was there any question about the identity of Jesus; whether pre-existence is implied or not, *the cross and resurrection proclaimed to the first Christians that Jesus was indeed appointed by God to a new and exalted position.* In close connection to this idea, the earliest Church understood the resurrection as the breaking in upon the world of sin and death of the powers of the New Age.

(b) The Relationship between the Appearances and the Empty Tomb.

In the next place we must ask how this primitive theological coupling of the resurrection and ascension relates to the traditions of the appearances and the empty tomb. Two considerations must be kept in mind.

(1) First, *the appearances of the risen Jesus to His disciples were the primary data of the resurrection-faith.* This was already clear in the early speeches of Acts and the Pauline writings. The full weight of Paul's emphasis in 1 Cor. 15:3-8 falls upon the series of appearances. Although the contrast between ἀπέθανεν and ἐγήγερται in 1 Cor. 15:4 may presume a knowledge of the empty tomb,⁵⁶ neither Paul himself nor the tradition he employs make use of the empty tomb accounts to support the resurrection. Paul's *kerygmatic* summary, which may go back to A.D. 35, gives first place to the fact that Jesus, who had been truly dead and buried, had been raised on the third day and appeared to various groups of His disciples. The same emphasis upon the appearances is to be found in the *kerygmatic* speeches in Acts where the disciples are called 'witnesses' of the resurrection (2:32, 3:15, 5:32, 10:40, 13:30). Here again there is no explicit mention of the empty tomb, for the weight of evidence falls upon the appearances (especially 10:40 and 13:30).⁵⁷ That the appearances were primary may also be gathered from the gospel narratives themselves. In Mark, where the empty tomb tradition alone comprises the resurrection narrative, it is important to notice that the whole account points beyond the empty tomb. The women are overwhelmed by the message of the young man at the tomb (16:7-8) and do

⁵⁵ Ascension, glorification and Pentecost are conceived as a series of related events occurring in close proximity to Easter in the Fourth Gospel.

⁵⁶ Although it is impossible to actually demonstrate whether or not Paul knew the empty tomb tradition, it is clear that he did not use it as evidence of the resurrection.

⁵⁷ The traditional term ἀφθνη occurs in 13:30, evidence that this might be a genuine reminiscence of older preaching. In 10:40 the word ἐμφανῆ describes the appearances.

not tell the disciples what they had seen and heard as directed.⁵⁸ Rather the direction to go to Galilee, where it is promised that Jesus would appear (14:28, 16:7), anticipates the final *parousia* and is itself the climax of the gospel. The appearances are also very important even in the gospel of Matthew, where the empty tomb clearly has apologetic value. In Matthew the appearance on the mountain stands as the climax not only of the resurrection narratives but of the gospel as a whole.⁵⁹ In Luke and in the Fourth Gospel the Marcan account of the empty tomb is greatly modified, though still emphasized. Yet it is possible to see behind both gospels the more primitive conception that the appearances, not the empty tomb, convinced the disciples of the resurrection. On the one hand, each gospel attempts to give greater emphasis to the empty tomb tradition by making the disciples also witnesses at the grave (Luke 24:12, 24; John 20:3-10). The very attempt shows that the empty tomb tradition needed bolstering for apologetic purposes and that originally the appearances alone must have convinced the disciples of the resurrection. On the other hand, hints of the primary character of the appearances show through each gospel. In Luke, the Road to Emmaus narrative gives first place to the appearance (24:15, 31).⁶⁰ Again, the reference of the appearance to Simon (24:34) may be a reminiscence of 1 Cor. 15:5. The fact that the disciples refuse to accept the report of the women further shows the primacy of the appearances in the primitive Church (24:11). In John, the empty tomb tradition is not a convincing proof, for both Mary and Peter do not believe after viewing the empty grave (20:8, 11 ff.).⁶¹

In all of this we may draw two conclusions. (1) The appearances of the risen Lord in their earliest form assume that Jesus has *returned* from heaven, a presupposition which supports the earliest understanding of the resurrection and exalta-

⁵⁸ Is this Mark's way of accounting for the fact that the empty tomb tradition was known late? Cf. Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, translated and edited by F. C. Grant, Vol. I (New York: Harper Torchbooks), p. 87, and Bornkamm, p. 183. This interpretation we have rejected. Or, does the reaction of the women rather reflect Mark's theological emphasis upon the strangeness and uniqueness of the event? In either case the empty tomb has no apologetic value.

⁵⁹ The account of the appearance to the women may be secondary. The disciples still do not check the empty tomb themselves in Matthew.

⁶⁰ The 'flashback' about the women at the empty tomb may be an intrusion of traditional material into the Emmaus story.

⁶¹ But it has been noted that the beloved disciple does believe on the basis of the empty tomb. Here, however, we meet a concept characteristic of the Fourth Gospel: the beloved disciple is the prototype of those who have the insight and faith to see beyond the outward 'sign' and grasp its inner meaning.

tion occurring simultaneously.⁶² (2) The *continuity* between the crucified and buried Jesus and the risen and ascended Lord is emphasized, another conception which is everywhere explicit in the New Testament.⁶³

The earliest understanding of the resurrection, then, was based upon the conviction that the risen Jesus, whom God had exalted as Messiah and Lord, appeared to various individuals and groups of disciples. This leads to our second consideration.

(2) *The resurrection of Jesus was further interpreted in the primitive Church by means of the empty tomb tradition and the appeal to the Scriptures.* Does this mean that each of these appeals is secondary? Here particular care must be taken in tracing the earliest tradition.

The appeal to the Scriptures was a part of the *kerygmatic* proclamation from the beginning (1 Cor. 15:3-4; Acts 2:16 ff.). At first this line of interpretation was almost spontaneous and unreflective. Why did the Church see in the resurrection of Jesus the fulfilment of the Old Testament? At first the Old Testament picture of the obedient and exalted pious one, the collective Israel, seems to have been applied to Jesus.⁶⁴ As the passion and humiliation of Jesus were interpreted in terms of the suffering Righteous One, so the resurrection was viewed as the exaltation of God's Righteous One. This is why Ps. 110 is so early and so frequently applied (Acts 2:33-34, 5:31, 7:55; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13, 8:1). A second passage which must have had great influence was Hos. 6:2. This passage was connected on two counts. First, the passage supported the Church's interpretation of Jesus as the New Israel. Second, there was an added coincidence between the passage and the resurrection of Jesus on the basis of the third day, the day of eschatological fulfilment and the day of Christ's resurrection.

It is important also to emphasize that above all the primitive Church believed that the resurrection of Jesus had opened the way for a proper understanding of the Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 32, 45; Acts 3:17, 13:27). This is why such Christological titles as Lord, Christ, Servant, New Adam, Son of God and Son of Man were now applied to Jesus, for each one of them was a confession that in Jesus the Old Testament had been fulfilled, the history of Israel had been repeated and brought to an end, and a new act of creation and redemption was accomplished by God in Christ.

⁶² The distinction between the resurrection and ascension as separate events grew under two motives: (1) The theological interpretation by Luke of the salvation-event as a New Exodus, in which separate episodes were clearly marked out in accordance with the chronology of the first Exodus; (2) the necessity to account for the disappearance of the risen body of Jesus, a motive which developed as the physical character of the appearances was more and more emphasized for apologetic reasons.

⁶³ Cf. Acts 2:32: 'This Jesus (whom you crucified, 2:23) God raised up.' Also Rev. 5:12.

⁶⁴ Eduard Schweizer, pp. 22-41.

It is more difficult to estimate (properly) the primitive importance of the empty tomb tradition. There can be no doubt that the empty tomb traditions of the gospels received their final form much later than the earlier *kerygmatic* confession.⁶⁵

Before attempting to decide whether the earliest Church knew the empty tomb tradition or not, it is first necessary to state the theological meaning of that tradition. *The primary theological significance of the accounts of the empty tomb lies in the insistence upon continuity between the crucified Jesus and the risen Lord.*⁶⁶ The empty tomb tradition was the means by which the Church declared that the appearances of Jesus were not merely psychological and subjective. The disciples saw Jesus as Jesus and the empty tomb tradition testifies that this was more than a mystical or visionary experience. The New Testament nowhere pictures the risen Jesus as a disembodied spirit (Luke 24:37 resists this interpretation). Further, the meaning of *σῶμα* and *ᾤφθη* in connection with the Pauline anthropology shows that it is not possible to view the risen body of Jesus as purely immaterial, i.e. in bodiless form.⁶⁷ For these reasons it is possible to find a close relationship between the bodily nature of the risen Lord who appeared to the disciples and the empty tomb. Only when the gospel tradition begins to emphasize the 'physical' character of the risen Jesus for apologetic purposes does the empty tomb tradition take on a new significance.⁶⁸ Its basic meaning, that the same Jesus who was killed and buried appeared alive, agrees with the Church's most primitive confession.

It is important also to emphasize that the empty tomb tradition further explicates a theological concept closely related to the above, *that the raising of Jesus was a new act of creation by God.* Just as the first act of creation meant that man was brought into existence as a psycho-somatic whole, so the new creation implies a psycho-somatic resurrection of the whole man Jesus. As Rengstorf has pointed out, if the demand of demythologizing allows no room for a bodily resurrection of Jesus, why should not that demand also be extended to faith in

⁶⁵ On the growth of the empty tomb tradition, *see infra*.

⁶⁶ R. Niebuhr, *Resurrection and Historical Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), p. 164: 'If the resurrection appearances of Jesus mean anything at all in the historical context in which we are approaching it, it is an event that has a specific nature, in part defined by the individuality of Jesus of Nazareth.' What is true for the appearances is all the more emphasized in the empty tomb, for on p. 174 he again states that the resurrection appearances are meaningless unless 'that to which the witnesses respond is the historically recognizable Jesus.' Viewed in this light, the empty tomb claims no other meaning than that which is already claimed by the appearances, that the same Jesus who died lived again.

⁶⁷ For the Biblical view of man as a psycho-somatic whole, *see Rust*, p. 25; and especially Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Body* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), pp. 28-30.

⁶⁸ For this development, *see infra*.

God as Creator?⁶⁹ On this basis, the theological meaning of the empty tomb expresses nothing else than what the *kerygma* has made clear from the first, that the risen Jesus is both Lord and New Adam—i.e. both Creator and the embodiment of the New Creation.

What evidence do we have that the empty tomb tradition is primitive? Stauffer has argued that both linguistic evidence and the witness of the opponents of Christianity support its primitive character.⁷⁰ It is perhaps not possible to go as far as Stauffer, for in the end we cannot say whether Paul and the earliest *kerygma* proclaimed the empty tomb as explicitly as Stauffer thinks.⁷¹ Perhaps more to the point is Campenhausen's attempt to find an original core in the Marcan tradition of the empty tomb, even while insisting that no understandable analogies can illustrate its meaning.⁷² We must recognize that only faith can explicate its meaning. The historical evidence may support either the possibility of a fraud or the authentic possibility that the tomb was empty. The one thing that the evidence will not support are the various theories that the women may have gone to the wrong tomb or that the body was transferred after a hasty burial.⁷³

We conclude, therefore, on the basis of the present discussion, that the empty tomb tradition was a part of the *kerygma* from the first. However, it was subject to a vast amount of development and modification under the pressure of polemics. The appearances were indeed the primary data of the resurrection faith, but like the appeal to Scriptures, the empty tomb

⁶⁹ Karl Rengstorf, p. 113. Cf. A. M. Ramsey, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 2nd ed. (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), p. 55: 'The criticism which rejects the empty tomb as a *priori* incredible or inconsequent or crude has its roots in a philosophy which is far removed from the New Testament. For the Gospel in the New Testament involves the freedom of the living God and an act of new creation which includes the bodily no less than the spiritual life of man.' Ramsey is correct, it seems, in showing that three philosophical presuppositions have influenced the rejection of the bodily resurrection: (1) That the body has no place in man's future life; (2) that the human race is destined for a spiritual immortality through the survival of the soul after death; (3) that the resurrection of Jesus is not the source of our resurrection but a symbol of our survival after death (p. 54). If the Biblical doctrines of man, creation and redemption are understood and allowed to stand there is no basis for denying the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

⁷⁰ Ethelbert Stauffer, pp. 118-119.

⁷¹ In any case, we must reject Stauffer's attempt to base the resurrection faith upon the empirical fact of the empty tomb.

⁷² H. F. von Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das Leere Grab* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1958), pp. 42, 51.

⁷³ W. K. L. Clarke, 'What Became of Our Lord's Body?' *New Testament Problems* (London: S.P.C.K., 1929), p. 107. It is worth citing Clarke's last sentence. After concluding that the historical evidence allows us only to say that neither disciples nor foes removed the body, he writes that the body must have been removed by a person or persons unknown:

'Hush, I pray you!
What if this friend happen to be—God?'

accounts were later used to interpret the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus. Perhaps the disciples heard the women's amazing story in Jerusalem on Easter day, but only later, after the risen Jesus had appeared to them, did the account of the empty tomb make sense and find its place in the primitive *kerygma*.⁷⁴

To the process of the development of the original experiences and the motives for its subsequent modification we now turn.

2. *The Growth of Tradition*

The resurrection tradition in the New Testament appears to have developed along four lines.

(a) *The reality of the death and burial was stressed in the primitive kerygma from the beginning, but certain characteristic developments may be summarized.* Paul, perhaps for anti-docetic reasons, emphasizes the reality of the death of Jesus by including notice of the burial (15:3). The same pattern is found in the speeches in Acts (13:29), where in addition Ps. 16:10 is employed in recognition of the reality of the dead body in the tomb (2:25-31, 13:35-37).⁷⁵ In the gospels a fuller detailing of the burial appears. In Mark, Joseph, a member of the Sanhedrin, gives Jesus a hasty burial (15:42-47), but a burial like the kings of old nevertheless (Gen. 35:8, 19; 1 Kings 2:10, 11:43). Matthew extends the tradition by making Joseph a disciple, perhaps to avoid the impression that an outsider buried Jesus (27:57), and further notes that he was rich (27:57), a fulfilment of Isa. 53:9. In addition, Matthew's distinctive traditions of the guard at the tomb (27:62-66) and the bribing of the soldiers (28:11-15) reinforce Christian apologetic against the charge that the disciples had stolen the body. Luke does not call Joseph a disciple, but offers an explanation to Gentile readers why a member of the group which condemned Jesus should have buried Him (23:50-51). John weaves various theological motifs into his account of the death and burial—the pierced side (19:34) proclaims both that Jesus is the true giver of Life and, against the Docetists, that the death was real; the full and costly burial by Joseph and Nicodemus (19:39), secret disciples, further develops the appropriateness of burial by those of Jesus' own group. In all of this the fact that Joseph, a member of the council, buried Jesus seems to be a part of the most primitive tradition; the added details are included for apologetic or theological reasons.

⁷⁴ If the 'Galilean theory' is disproved, there is less reason to understand all of the empty tomb narratives as later additions. Cf. Campenhausen, p. 36, and A. M. Ramsey, *The Resurrection of Christ*, p. 72.

⁷⁵ Perhaps the tradition here implies knowledge of the empty tomb. In any case, the contrast is between the reality of the death of Jesus and the wonder of His resurrection.

(b) *The empty tomb tradition, as we have said, also grew in importance under the pressure of late first century polemics.* The earliest *kerygmatic* passages in the New Testament do not mention the tomb explicitly. In Mark, the announcement of the resurrection and the imminent *parousia* climax the mighty acts of God, but the empty tomb does not play an apologetic role at all. Matthew, in making the women tell the disciples what they had seen and heard (28:8) and by his distinctive traditions of the guard and the bribe (27:62-66, 28:11-15) makes the empty tomb tradition an important part of the Easter events. The scene in Luke is quite different, for his distinctive theology of the New Exodus places complete emphasis upon Jerusalem (24:1-11), but his additional comment that the disciples did not believe the report of the women (24:11) tends to preserve the primacy of the appearances. In the visit of Peter to the tomb (24:12), probably an interpolated passage in Luke, and the traditional statement that several disciples visited the tomb (24:24), we can see the beginning of the attempt to make the testimony of the empty tomb rest upon the disciples instead of the women alone. The Fourth Gospel clearly establishes the two chief disciples as eyewitnesses of the empty tomb (20:3-10). Thus we may trace in rather clearly marked stages the increasing importance of the empty tomb as the Church sought to defend itself against both the Jewish charge of fraud and the heretical Docetic 'spiritualizing' of the risen Christ.

(c) *A third line of interpretation begins to separate the one salvation-event into several chronologically separate episodes.* At first the resurrection and ascension were viewed together as the exaltation of Jesus, though there is no indication that the cross and resurrection were ever proclaimed as the same event.⁷⁶ The earliest *kerygma*, as well as Hebrews, Revelation, and the Marcan and Matthean accounts, apparently thought of the ascension as a part of the resurrection-event. The first separation of the two is seen in the Fourth Gospel and in Luke. The separation is less distinct in John, as in Luke 24:51, for the ascension takes place on Easter after the appearance to Mary (John 20:17-20). Pentecost occurs in connection with the last appearance of the risen Jesus in John (20:22) as it does in Matthew (28:19-20). Luke treats the salvation-events in strict chronological order according to his theological motif of the New Exodus, and here the 40- and 50-day period separating the ascension and Pentecost from the resurrection take on decisive theological importance (Acts 1:3, 2:1 ff.).

(d) *Finally, the appearances of the risen Jesus are developed in accordance with the distinctive theologies of the gospels.* In

⁷⁶ Bultmann, however, argues they are the same event: the meaning of the resurrection is precisely the meaning of the cross. *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I, pp. 44-45.

Paul and the speeches in Acts there is no indication of the location of the appearances. Paul counts the appearance to himself (1 Cor. 15:8) as of the same character as the other five he lists. The speeches in Acts show the hand of Luke by limiting the pre-ascension appearances to the disciples and excluding Paul (13:30).⁷⁷ In Mark, the resurrection is the amazing sign of the new age and the pledge of the *parousia*. Matthew locates the scene of the appearances to the disciples in Galilee, for the mountain in Galilee fulfills the 'way of the Gentiles' (Matt. 28:16-20).⁷⁸ Matthew does, however, speak of an appearance to the women which, as we have seen, is probably secondary, constructed to support the evidence of the empty tomb. Luke, on the other hand, places all of the appearances in Jerusalem, for Jerusalem is the proper seat of the New Exodus. The Fourth Gospel appears to combine both traditional locations. Chapter 20 includes only Jerusalem appearances, but the epilogue, chapter 21, tells of an appearance by the Sea of Galilee. The location of the appearances in each of the gospels is thus determined by theological considerations. There is nothing to prevent us from supposing that they occurred in both places.

It is more difficult to harmonize the traditional list of appearances preserved in 1 Cor. 15:3-8 with those recorded in the gospels.⁷⁹ Luke 24:34 (12) and perhaps John 21 may preserve an authentic reminiscence of the initial appearance to Peter. The appearances to the Twelve and all the apostles may be equated with John 20:26-29 and Luke 24:36-48, but the appearance to James is not told and the appearance to the 500 brethren cannot be equated with any of those recorded in the gospels or Acts. We can only conclude that the various traditions of the resurrection met the particular needs of different centres of the Church, and that the very variety of the tradition witnesses to the uniqueness of the event.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ For Paul, all the appearances were *post*-ascension.

⁷⁸ This is the fourth mountain of revelation in Matthew. The others are the Mount of Temptation (4:8), the Mount of the Sermon (5:1) and the Mount of Transfiguration (17:1). The instruction Jesus now gives appears to climax His work as the New Moses in delivering His Torah to the nations, one of the central motifs in Matthew's theology.

⁷⁹ E. L. Allen, pp. 349-353, believes that the crucial question is not why did Paul omit so much of the tradition preserved in the gospels, but why did the gospel tradition not adapt Paul's list of appearances? The answer he proposes is that the evangelists selected, interpreted and created traditions that suited their own purposes. 'When therefore the Church came to commit her message to writing, she not only saw her origins in the light of her subsequent experience, but had also lost some items in her past that might have been of value to her in meeting the needs of her time.' Eduard Schweizer, p. 38, suggests that Paul's list (1 Cor. 15:5 ff.) may have been lost because it emphasized Jesus' exaltation as simultaneous with the resurrection, and thus was not sufficiently realistic to the later generation.

⁸⁰ Vincent Taylor, pp. 59-60.

Several motives appear to have been at work in shaping and preserving the resurrection tradition.⁸¹

(1) *The need for apologetics and polemics.* The Church had to defend herself against criticism on two fronts, and in both the empty tomb tradition played an important role. Against the docetizing Gnostics the Church had to insist upon the reality of the death and resurrection of the man Jesus. Thus Paul and the *kerygmatic* passages already insist upon the burial and bodily resurrection. This is also the motive for the growing emphasis upon the physical character of the risen Jesus (Luke 24:36-42; John 20:20, 25). Against the polemics of the Jews, who were insisting at the end of the first century that the empty tomb was a fraud, the evidence for the empty tomb is bolstered (Matt. 27:62-66, 28:11-15; Luke 24:24; John 20:3-10).

(2) *The use of the Old Testament Scriptures.* Scriptural motives shaped several Matthean details: that Joseph was rich (27:57); the opening of the tombs at Jesus' resurrection (27:51b-54); the earthquake on Easter morning and the distinctive use of the word *τάφος* of the tomb of Jesus (28:2-4); and the Great Commission on the mountain where Jesus appears with all authority (28:16-20). It is also clear that the resurrection was interpreted in the light of the Old Testament (Luke 24:25-27, 32, 42; John 20:9).

(3) *The needs of worship and mission.* In the Emmaus story the risen Lord is known in the breaking and blessing of the bread (Luke 24:30-31), as in the appearance by the Sea (John 21:1-13). The obvious meaning for the primitive Church would seem to be that the risen Lord still meets His own in the sacrament. The various 'commissioning' texts in Matthew, Luke and John also serve to equip the Church with missionary zeal, a reflection of the missionary movement among the Gentiles at the end of the first century (Matt. 28:16-20; Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8; John 20:21, 21:15-19).

We may summarize our discussion of the order of the resurrection event by noting that the resurrection of Jesus, which first convinced the primitive Church that the powers of the New Age had broken in upon it because in Jesus the history of Israel had been brought to an end, was the decisive factor in the creation of the community of Christians. The peculiar needs of the Church, such as apologetics, missions, worship, and Scriptural authentication for the career of Jesus and the Church's own existence, all helped shape the resurrection tradition in a variety of ways. But the decisive message of Easter was never forgotten. To a discussion and summary of that message we now turn.

⁸¹ These motives are partially suggested by E. L. Allen, 'The Lost *Kerygma*', pp. 351-352.

C. The Kerygmatic Meaning of the Event

The resurrection is the decisive event in the proclamation of the *kerygma*. As R. R. Niebuhr has written, '... neither Jesus himself nor the Christian community can manifest a distinctive character or true identity apart from the resurrection event itself.'⁸² Or to quote Filson, who finds the central interpreting fact of the New Testament in the resurrection of Jesus:

This was the fact which the unbeliever found incredible, but the Christian knew was true. In the light of this fact the Crucifixion found its Christian interpretation; the ministry, its climax; the plan of God, its interpreting clue; and the future, its way to power and victory.⁸³

In short, our investigation of the resurrection has shown that every distinctive theological concept of the New Testament roots in and is related to the Easter event.

We may summarize the meaning of the event by stating five aspects of its theological importance.

(1) The resurrection of Jesus is above all proclaimed as a *decisive act of God*, a divine intervention in the course of history through which 'we have been born anew to a living hope' (1 Pet. 1:3). The accent of the theological meaning of the resurrection is upon the act of divine grace; the emphasis is 'the contrast between what men did and do and what God has done and accomplished in and through this Jesus . . .'⁸⁴ For this reason, therefore, the resurrection is everywhere interpreted as a New Creation (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Pet. 1:3; John 20:22).

(2) God's decisive intervention also gives rise to the *eschatological* conviction that the powers of the New Age are now 'in the process of being realized'. Only in Luke and Revelation is the inauguration still future. The resurrection of Jesus marks the decisive defeat of the old powers of sin, death and the law (Rom. 6-8). The Kingdom, already a present reality (Acts 2:17, 4:2, 5:32; Rom. 1:4; Col. 1:15-17; 1 Cor. 15:20-26; Mark 5:21-43; Matt. 10:5-8, 11:2-6, 28:2-4, 16-20; John 10:10, 20:31), has been decisively inaugurated, and because Jesus rose the future resurrection of all in Christ is certain (Rom. 1:4, 8:23; Col. 1:15-17; 1 Cor. 15:20-26; Acts 10:42, 17:31; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Mark 14:62; Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 1:11).

(3) Another theological result of the resurrection is the *soteriological* proclamation of the cross and resurrection as a mighty act of *redemption*. This is why Luke can describe the resurrection of Jesus as a New Exodus (Luke 9:31, 24:4; Acts 1:10), and why the *kerygma* everywhere proclaims the unity of the cross and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-8; Acts 3:12-16,

⁸² R. R. Niebuhr, p. v.

⁸³ Floyd Filson, p. 28.

⁸⁴ Bornkamm, p. 184.

4:10-12; Rom. 4:24-25; 2 Cor. 5:15; and all of the gospel accounts).⁸⁵

(4) Closely related to all of this is the *Christological* affirmation that by the resurrection God ordained Jesus to be Christ and Lord. The primitive Christological reflection began at the resurrection. If the earliest conception thought that the resurrection proclaimed that Jesus would be the *future* Messiah (Acts 3:12-26), the primitive Church proclaimed very early that by the resurrection Jesus was already designated Christ and Lord (Acts 2:26; Rom. 1:4). Paul combined this conception with the pre-existence of Jesus (Rom. 1:4; Phil. 2:5-11; Eph. 1:19-20). The significance of the *κύριος* title, by which the Church always confesses that the authority of the risen Jesus is none other than the authority of Yahweh Himself, is that by virtue of His resurrection Jesus is both the New Creation and Creator (1 Cor. 12:3, 16:21; Rev. 22:20). This is why the Synoptic Gospels can view Jesus from the beginning as the Son of God (Mark 1:11, 5:7, 9:7, 14:62; Matt. 27:54; Luke 1-2), and this is why in the Fourth Gospel Jesus is seen uniquely as the Son of God from eternity (1:1-3, 7:29), in whom is life (10:10, 5:21), and who Himself accomplishes the New Creation (5:17, 20:22).

(5) Finally, the primitive Church knew that their *present historical existence* was wholly dependent upon the new life in Christ. The resurrection had profound ethical implications. The Christian already experiences eternal life (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54). That new life, characterized by a walk according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-11; Eph. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:18), brings forth the fruits of the New Age (Gal. 5:22-23) because the powers of the New Age accompany the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:17; John 20:22; Matt. 28:18-20).

Behind the various traditions of the resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament stands one fact: God has raised Jesus from the dead. The unity of the resurrection faith is not to be found in a factual harmonization of the tradition nor in a reductionism of the resurrection theology. The Easter event was far too unique and significant. There were no understandable analogies by which the Church could fully grasp the richness and strangeness of what had happened. The risen Lord Himself provides the unity of the resurrection faith. The Easter *kerugma* is the joyful proclamation that God has acted decisively in Christ to achieve His New Creation and redemption, that the End has broken in upon the old historical order, and that all things have become new.

⁸⁵ Cf. Stauffer, p. 137.