



The experience of reading about and therefore experiencing in your own being how the Lord of history took 20th century scientific criticism and undid a lot of bad theology, is crucial for all of us. We're going to have some fun with Gogarten's book Christ the Crisis from that kind of a perspective.

This chart of the book is a chart on reading the first and last paragraphs of each chapter. And you can prepare a good chart on the basis of reading the first and last paragraph of each chapter. But I would guess that it might be possible to prepare a better chart once you've read all the paragraphs in each chapter and therefore you should receive this chart as an initial chart that your struggle with Gogarten over the quarter can bounce off of and improve. This construct is mainly for the purpose of organizing the chapters that we were going to work on week by week. You'll notice under chapters one and two that there's a little phrase there which says September 17. That's today. What that means is that today we're working on one and two. Wednesday of next week is September 22, and that completes our work on the introduction, if you like, of this book. After that, we pretty well take a chapter a session, alternating between Friday and Wednesday and then, as you can see, on Oct. 8 we go back and review chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8; on Oct. 29 we review 9 to 13; on Nov. 19 we review 14-19; and then we review the whole on Nov. 26 and Dec. 1 and evaluate the whole study on December 3.

This morning it seems to me that the main task is to get a grasp after this whole book and its crucial picture. I think this kind of a model on the black-board is crucial. You might say there are three periods in the history of Christology. The first one ends with the New Testament. I don't know where you say the New Testament ends, maybe 120 A.D. Call that New Testament Christology. The next period we'll call--I'm using Gogarten's language--the Early Church Christology. And the last period we'll call Present Day Christology. Present Day Christology for Gogarten begins with the Enlightenment, and I don't know where you would start the Enlightenment--1500, something like that? If so, then Present Day Christology got started sometime back around 1700. Key events for Gogarten in Christology in the midst of these are Luther (he's deeply concerned about Luther's Christology)

and the other which we'll draw as Bultmann. Bultmann represents the turning point in Christological thinking of Present Day Christology--so much so that Biblical scholars don't have any problem talking about post-Bultmannian, or the post-Bultmannian struggle with Christology.

Now, obviously, a discussion of Jesus the Christ goes on all through these periods. But what makes each of these three periods something different is the type of talk that goes on inside it. If you have something like Greek intellectual ontology, that's a different human environment to do theology in than historical thought. "historical critical thought" of "historical method" are phrases that Gogarten also uses for this. At any rate, as Christology, or the whole of theology, entered this most recent era of history, a new method of theology had to be built that lived in the world of historical thought and radically called into question the theological methodology of the previous world. A term for the first period would be something like Hebrew moral theology. The first Christology grew up inside the Hebrew inheritance and then also very quickly the Gnostic and Greek world made its contribution to that.

Gogarten is not really very interested in the early church's Christology but he talks about it at the beginning of this book to make it clear to us that the God-man theme is a very old one: The problem of how you get hold of the fact that Jesus the Christ is radically man and radically God, and what you mean when you say that. He talks about this period's thinking as beginning from the metaphysical idea of God, and therefore they have Jesus installed into that as the second person of the Trinity. Primarily they are wrestling with how in the world a divine thing can be historical. Frankly, Gogarten's book is not really interested in being sympathetic and working through to the depth the human and existential issues that were underneath that kind of thing. But you could work much more on getting inside of the real human issues underneath that than he does. He's very clear that this intellectual way of working on Christology is something very different than what you had back in the New Testament times and what you had out here in our times.

He's very interested in Luther. He's interested in Luther's emphasis on a certain kind of historical dimension of Jesus. Luther is concerned to grasp Jesus as the place where God is known and the only place where God is known, and therefore he places a great deal of emphasis on the humanity of Jesus. The last chapter of the book works through a bit on this, how for Luther he lives in the Bible of the World and in the Bible of the Faith at the same time. The Bible of the World in one sense this whole theological heritage is just the world view of the times. Luther said that even Satan believed in God in that sense. But Luther had another way of believing in God that had to do with his recovery of the concept of faith. Gogarten tries to get something said here about Luther as a turning point, that in the way Luther worked on faith, he was in incredible tension with the whole of the medieval world and was therefore part of its disintegration and a signal toward the modern era. But he was definitely in the medieval world in the sense of not participating in this kind of historical method that characterizes 20th century theology.

I want to walk through this story here as a sort of crucial story inside our own existence in just a moment. But just briefly to put it up, you have liberal theology in the first half of this period concerned with the life of Jesus. Then you have the revolt of 20th century theology in which the transcendence of God is, if you like, rediscovered. And in that context the Jesus Christ message is worked through as the proclamation of a kerygma. This is a crucial kind of word, meaning "preaching." The preaching of an event, the preaching of, not the life of

Jesus, but the preaching of a happening in human history. And most of all Jesus Christ is to be understood as a happening to human consciousness, a happening in human history, a happening that brings forth a new aeon, a happening that brings forth a whole new possibility for living.

It's on this side of pushing that to the bottom that the arena of 20th century theology is taking place. Gogarten finds that there are people of the present day who are very subtly trying to get back to the "lives of Jesus" period,. He wants to go on and take a look at Jesus afresh in what he would consider a much more positive way to pull 20th century theology back into this early era. He wants to take a look at the issue of the relationship between Jesus' preaching and the Church's preaching about Jesus. How are these different? How are they the same? How are they contradictory? How do they support and interpret one another? There has been a big discussion among New Testament scholars on this side of Bultmann, a lot of it utterly futile plowing around for some way to get out of the Gospel. But Gogarten wants to examine that kind of thinking and see the meaning of it for Christology at the bottom.

This whole period through Luther is in one sense something different from this whole present day period. You might say that Christology in these earlier eras of the church began with a grasp of being as just given; they began with a grasp after God as the starting point for Christology. However wild the mess in the philosophical spins were to modern ears, Christology in this period of the church begins with an awareness of the mystery--clarity, if you like, on angels and devils and hells and all kinds of lively religious perspectives. And the historical Jesus pole of the Christ event was the scandal pole. Back in the New Testament the scandal was experienced primarily in "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose mother and father we know?" I mean, how can he make himself out to be something important if that is true? Or in the Early Church period, just the agonizing struggles with the "very man" pole of the fact of Jesus Christ as an existence that's very God and very man at the same time. Probably when you read monasticism here--Anthony to Francis--what's scandalous about them is that they are in their own being talking about re-duplicating the life of Jesus. Anthony's going out into the desert and Francis's ministry, are taking that historical pole and ramming it through their own lives--and that makes them scandalous. Or Luther, as we've already suggested, is scandalous in his time because he is an assault on the divine law with a radically human or historical or earthy kind of grasp in his concept of faith.

Now in our time, it seems to me, the exact opposite is true. The divine pole of the Christ is the scandal pole of the thinking represented by the God-man symbol. In early present day Christology we watered down God to man's size and solved the problem that way. We idolized Jesus of Nazareth as a good man, and therefore really lost the God pole entirely. And when New Testament scholarship itself tears that to pieces, and Jesus of Nazareth falls before objective scientific research, then the 20th century man's response is something like, "Well, Christian faith is pure mythology, Christian faith is wild religious nothing. We'll just throw it out." For the scandal is coming in genuinely de-mythologizing the divine pole, or genuinely making relevant to our life the tension symbolized in that God-man symbol by making meaningful Jesus as the revelation of God. Our recovery of being that we've been participating in in this order, as well as our sociological struggle of this summer, where we recovered the spirit dimension or the being dimension of society itself, is going to give us a new ability to appreciate this whole struggle through here. Certainly a new ability to dialogue with the New Testament has already been our experience. I think also a new ability to dialogue with the

middle ages, and that dialogue is going to enrich the 20th century's grasp after the God pole.

Now, one of the ways of just summarizing what's happened in the struggle to get clarity on Christ in the 20th century is that historical-critical thought, when it's been applied to the New Testament happening, has had to reconsider what history itself is. It's as though historical thought set out to criticize Jesus, and in the process of working through the critical analysis of Jesus, got itself criticized-- and the bottom was blown out of the 20th century historical thought. It raised the question, what is historicity after all? What does it mean to be a historical being? And it listened to Jesus himself for an answer to that question. That's one of the things that makes this book exciting: it takes our concept of what we mean by the word "historical" and shoves the bottom out of that.

Now if you think back, the same sort of thing happened in the early church period. The struggle to articulate what they meant by Jesus Christ literally blew the bottom out of Greek intellectual ontology. I mean it wasn't capable of holding it. Tertullian said something like, "It's absurd, and therefore I believe it." That wasn't quite the way he said it, but it was sure true that when you got the Trinity put together, Greek intellectual ontology coughed and sputtered. They were over against something utterly incomprehensible from a normal human worldly point of view. It's like when you were dealing with the eternal, reason broke through reason to look beyond itself.

You could say the same kind of thing happened to Hebrew moral theology back in the first century. You read the apostle Paul, and read him to the bottom and what you see is an entire way of being in history just having the bottom blown through it. And so also with primitive Christianity. Gogarten's book enables us also to see how Jesus himself in his preaching blew the bottom out of moral theology as he inherited it in his time. I think this is an important kind of an awareness, that reason, whether it be first century reason or medieval or modern reason, as it attempts to articulate and make related and understandable the Christ happening, has something happen to itself. I mean, reason gets converted to Christ, or else it gives up and doesn't relate to Christ.

One of the ways that Tillich worked on the middle ages was very helpful: he talked about reason being broken through and then becoming theonomous reason, or reason filled with ecstasy. When you've seen the finitude of reason and have left it behind in the death/resurrection spin, then you come back into reason and fill it with power. Well, something like that is probably happening to historical thought. You might just keep that image before you as you read the book. As historical thought attempted to get hold of the Christ event, historical thought's finitude was directly challenged, and as it plowed on through to an articulation of the Christ happening, a whole new "ecstafication," if you like, of historical thought was beginning to happen.

I would remind some of you of the essay that Bultmann wrote on "History and Eschatology" which we study in our Sociology and History course. The part of that essay that we study has to do with blowing the bottom out of history. But the last section of that paper has to do with the preaching of the church, and that section blows the bottom out of blowing the bottom out of history by talking about the role of preaching. Although Gogarten doesn't seem to have read that essay, I think it gives Bultmann an even higher value than he gets at certain places in Gogarten. When Bultmann gets through shoving history to the bottom, he has said something very, very close to what we are saying in our Christ lecture: that the meaning of history is man, and man is over against his suffering that comes in upon him and is

an actor in the sense of making decisions. He's over against the past and he's over against the future. Understanding man as freedom having to relate to and endure what he's given and build an answer over against that at the same time being free from the past and free for the future--that's the way Bultmann says it-- is the radical understanding of what it means to be historical. It means to be a man at the crisis of decision with your freedom on your hands.

Then he goes on to say that the meaning of Christian preaching begins with understanding that man is not free. He is not free. He is not man. He is not his radical historicity. And the reason he's not is that he's not dead to the world. He's not dead to himself, and therefore he is hung up in his past in some way. And the preaching of the Gospel is the preaching of death and resurrection and is experienced by the man as a deliverance from his being unhistorical into his being his historicity. So while it's true that in principle the future is always offering man freedom, it's only the man who has heard the preaching of death and resurrection who is freed to be the historicity which he is.

I would suggest thinking that through to the bottom: that you are dependent upon this message, you are dependent upon this grasp of life to be liberated to be man. That kind of a push is blowing the bottom out of history. Nobody else can make history, or nobody else can be history, save the one who believes in the death and resurrection of Christ. That means that anybody that's not operating out of that revelation is not able to see what history is at the bottom, or if they are able to see it, they aren't able to do it, because they're still hung up in their past in some kind of way.

Now, about the historical study of Jesus and the relation to the kerygma-- I want to tell that story here in the remaining time, because it's a story that's just in everybody's inner being. For the history of the story of 20th century theology, beginning back in the 18th century somewhere and moving on to our time, is our story; it's imagery is our imagery; it's wrestlings are our wrestlings. And maybe this is a first comment: when I tried to talk about the Christ event blowing the bottom out of reason, that must not be understood as some kind of anti-intellectualism. Twentieth century reason is holy, and just, and good. And rebellion against it is rebellion against God. But, 20th century reason is not God. Twentieth century reason is God's creature and must be brought into obedience to him.

And this kind of struggle really spells out the meaning of the fundamentalist and liberal quarrel. Liberal theology came into being trying to say that 20th century reason had to be taken seriously. Twentieth century reason was God's gift to us, and living in the world we were given to live in meant taking 20th century reason seriously. To see that 20th century liberal theology got trapped in making 20th century reason subtly its God is a very deep and profound insight, but the positive pole of that must also be understood from the beginning--that if you are going to be honest Christians in the 20th century, you have to be Christians inside 20th century historical thought. There were liberals who marched out risking their whole souls--and many of them lost them, so to speak--to the God of 20th century historical thought. But those theologians who stepped out risking their whole souls trying to make Christian living and theologizing relevant are those upon whom we have built our lives, and to whom we owe our lives too. So as you and I find it necessary on this side of the 20th century theological revolution to get a little snotty, a little cocky and beat over the head those early liberal theologians, we ought also to remember that we wouldn't be here without their authentic push and without their well-meaning errors in understanding the Christ happening.

The fundamentalists understand Jesus as a personal savior. He was a friend, that helped you with his bloody death to get out of this world rather than live in this world seriously. You got yourself safe for the next one, which really meant you could be a slob in this one. Oh, that was never thought through in that kind of a way, but because you had not taken death seriously, especially had not seen death as death, you lived your life in this world in sleepy, dreamy, non-living.

This kind of other-worldliness that had become the rule in 20th century Christian life was that against which liberal theology was a mighty revolt. For liberal theology, Jesus became somebody rather robust. You know, he was a man of the earth. Boy, they made that point clear. And he was the fairest, and the truest, personality that anybody every saw. And they tried to work on the God pole this way: when you looked into his face, you saw the face of God (they read that somewhere in the New Testament). What they meant by the face of God was that you saw the benevolent image of love and peace. God is love. They read that in the New Testament too. But the way they understood that was as being some generalized quality of man. There was a generalized quality of man called love, and Jesus-- he was the best embodiment of it ever seen. And if you looked into the face of Jesus, you saw love, which was their understanding of what they meant by God. Or when you looked into the face of Jesus you saw peace. Again, a generalized quality of man. These same two words, "love and peace," many effeminate longhairs still write on the sidewalks. I mean, we've got to see that this theology made a great impact on our time. God is an ideal man. And love and peace were the kind of terms in which that ideology got put. These lives of Jesus that came out in this period were really moral ideals, trying to make meaningful what it meant to be a Jesus man in moral terms.

Now, this was a step forward out of the wooden doctrinaire meaningless "son of God" business. I remember how delighted I was the first time I heard that Jesus probably wasn't born of a virgin really, because that got him down to my level, where I could relate to him. I mean, if Jesus had a head start like that, how could I even think of him being an example for me? Now, that came to me very seriously. And because I got rid of that virgin birth, I could take seriously that quality of life that Jesus represented, as a challenge to me. But if he had a virgin birth, and he was ahead from the beginning, then I didn't ever have any chance of catching up.

Also I'd have to confess that some of the lives of Jesus written in that period were so good that they blew the bottom out of crass, materialistic living and recruited people like me for the Christian ministry. Now that's sobering, because if all the church had had to offer was pre-liberal theology, they'd never have seen me, and about half of you too, or any of you probably.

But now we see that all of this was Jesus worship, Jesus idolatry, if you like-- the worship of man, not the worship of God, and not the worship of God revealed in flesh somewhere. Let's be sure we don't cheapen this part of the story. For Biblical scholarship was extremely serious, and though they were coming out of this liberal mindset, they were out after the truth, and that has to be underlined.

And if you tell their story, my Lord, you see these images are inside every last one of us in the room. Biblical scholarship considered the gospels as sources for a biography of Jesus' life. Now, how many of you, if you were honest, have not understood the gospels as in some way or another a biography of Jesus? I mean, what else could they be, on the first blush, than a biography of Jesus? And what

you meant by biography had to do with his personality. I mean, you read the New Testament to see what Jesus was like. You read to see what kind of personality he had. And another image in your bowels was that you were interested in the religious effects that Jesus' personality had on others. The whole image of the ministry was hung up in that when I joined it. That is, if you had a really fantastic personality, you were making religious effects on your congregation. So you put that fantastic personality in that pulpit up there and then you went around and measured the effects on the lives of the people out in the congregation. And that was the way you understood Jesus as a happening in history. He was a fantastic personality, and he had fantastic effects through his fantastic personality.

Now, liberal theology dismissed the dogmatic theology and divine attributes of the New Testament, but they didn't really dismiss them. They just said, that was the New Testament's kind of awkward way of making intelligible to the first century mind now powerful Jesus personality really was. Well, you almost say, how else could they have understood it? It wasn't that they really threw all of that out, they just interpreted it so that it made sense to a 20th century man. The redeeming power of Jesus was simply the effect of his personality. He gave his disciples courage to have faith in a loving Father who required only love and adoration in return. All this business about God as a judge and a retributive hard taskmaster that would send anybody to hell--they got rid of all that. And Jesus showed forth in his person the joy of a man who believed in a loving God.

Now that story, that wrestling with the New Testament, is a part of your life, and is a part of the life of every single human being that shows up at RS-I. To get a little clarity on those images that are pounding away down inside their being is to get a little clarity on how you're going to be helpful as you try to carve through that in your Christ lecture and say, "Jesus is not a good personality, he is not a moral example--he is a happening in human history." That is an entirely new idea for person after person that encounters that course.

To be sure, objective New Testament scholarship itself found problems in these views. The reading of John and Paul showed that both of them seemed to be totally ignorant of the content of Jesus' teaching and utterly uninterested in the traits of his personality. That shocked people. You know, here Paul was supposed to be a real Christian, and he wasn't even interested in the traits of Jesus personality. And John, my Lord, he didn't even know what it was, he had no seeming interest whatsoever in either Jesus' personality or his teachings, and probably never heard of them. Most of the primitive church was concerned with Jesus, scientific scholarship showed, as part of a proclamation that God had acted, inaugurating a new era, and giving possibility for a new kind of a life to those who apprehended it in faith. They were interested in Jesus as a happening to them and to the world.

The kingdom of God was not something that man built out of his ideal model, the kingdom of God was something God built, by harsh interruption in the historical process "Nonsense!" liberal theology had to say over against what they called the "eschatological interference of God," the eschatological grasp after divinity invading the historical scene and not mending it but making all things new. A careful examination of primitive Hellenistic Christianity with the tools of comparative religion showed it to be something like a mystery religion, a cult of redemption. There was sort of a pre-occupation with ecstatic union with being--that seemed, you know, un-Christian. Jesus Christ is more like a symbol operating in that community. A symbol of this divine happening, a symbol of this interruption, and the preoccupation

of the faith of that church is more a pre-occupation with God as a radical actor in history than it is with Jesus and certainly with his historical personality.

Now some liberal scholars handled this crisis this way: they just dismissed Paul and everything after Paul as Christian folderol, and got back to the "real" Jesus. They were really saying in a sense that the New Testament Church perverted Christianity, and that we're going to get back to the real person of Jesus and re-organize the faith from its basic origin. That was a radical step. Anybody with any sense could see that that was sure saying something wierd about the whole history of the Christian Church: that it lost the faith in the year 35 and didn't recover it again until this liberal scholar in the 20th century. Nevertheless, many people very soberly held that view.

Bultmann went the other way, as did many Biblical scholars. He dismissed the historical Jesus as of first importance in favor of the New Testament proclamation of Jesus and re-understood what value the historical Jesus had in that context. People who are offended by caricaturing Jesus as a hairlip or a hunchback or a dirty, dusty, sweaty Jew rather than a beautiful person should be even more offended by Bultmann, because he says something like, "Christ according to the flesh has nothing to do with us. I do not know what the man Jesus looked like, and I do not want to know." CRACK! goes the entire universe of liberal theology. For Bultmann it's the proclamation that is crucial, the proclamation of the death and the resurrection as an event in history, an event, if we use our language and not Bultmann's, in the history of consciousness in which the bottom of what it meant to be human got blown out. God had acted, freeing man and giving him a new possibility for his life, and that was NEWS. The 20th century personality of some man, that wasn't any news. But what was preached about Jesus, or what was preached that had Jesus in the middle of it, well now, that was news. Now you have to be honest to Bultmann, which some people haven't been and recognize that he took the historical Jesus incredibly seriously, and he worked through how Jesus thought, what his consciousness was, and what his preaching was. He makes it plausible even that Jesus in all that preaching and consciousness might have become a self-conscious part of the proclamation he became a part of. But the first importance for Bultmann was that proclamation that ricocheted down through history to my ear today and gave me my past as forgiven, and gave me my future as open. on

Some Bultmann critics, as you can see as you read the 3rd and 4th chapters of Gogarten especially, scream, "At least the curriculum needs to include a concrete portrait of Jesus." It may be true, what you say, that the kerygma is the main thing, but at least you need to put in a fairly good picture to make it believable." Gogarten is very clever in pointing out that that is an extremely subtle return to Jesus-olatry. Gogarten, you'll find, is concerned with Jesus in a different way. He's trying to look into the historical existence behind those actual sayings that were said in that earliest, earliest layer of the heritage, and to see in them the same faith that was in those who believed the kerygma later on. That, believe it or not, Jesus believed in Jesus Christ before there was a Jesus Christ to believe in; maybe that would be a way of putting the paradox. Or, that Jesus had faith in his own death and resurrection before they occurred. Now you need to work on that a little bit, but Gogarten arrived at the answer, "yes, that's true." I find that comforting, to believe that the historical Jesus really was a man of faith. And I think that maybe that's crucial, to get that much said. Personally, I believe Bultmann would not have been upset by that comment, that he would have found that all right.



But what interests me in this Gogarten book is not that he arrives at that kind of conclusion about Jesus himself but the sociological imagery that Gogarten brings forth in the process of doing all this. If I were going to lecture on one of those chapters 9 to 18, I would like to deal with how Gogarten in his examination of Jesus and his preaching, gives us clarity on the nature of the trans-establishment way of being in history. Now that's what I'm interested in, and it seems to me that this book is a lot of help to us at that point. Those of us lecturing in those areas ought to be raising that question. Or, to put it one more way, to show how what it means to be the trans-establishment is simply to be the ontological existence of Jesus in a sociological community in the midst of the concrete idolatries of this epoch.

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