

'New Testament Scholarship Supports Christology' by Gerald O'Collins, SJ, AC

** Theology is 'faith seeking understanding'; Christology concerns who and what Jesus is *in himself*; soteriology concerns Jesus *for us*, what he has done to save human beings and their world.

** The identity of Jesus. Who did he understand himself to be? How did the early Christians identify him? *Merely* as a teacher of ethics, a great prophet, and a worker of miracles? Did Paul and John misrepresent the Jesus of history and create a Christ of faith? Did they pervert the faith *of* Jesus and made it faith *in* Jesus?

** Jesus was 'sent' to break Satan's power and, in his person and work, realize the final rule of God. 'Those who welcome me welcome not me but the One who sent me' (Mark 9:37). But, unlike the prophets, he also 'came' (Mark 2:17; Luke 12:49).

** Jesus identified himself with the in-breaking kingdom of God. To accept the kingdom is to become a disciple of Jesus, and do so by even breaking family ties (Mark 3:31-35).

** It was in his own name that Jesus performed miracles and taught ('I say to you'). Amen used to introduce teaching.

** Authority over the Sabbath, the Temple, the law, and the forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:1-12).

** This claim to a personal authority on a par with God lets us understand the accusation of 'blasphemy'. Rabbi Jacob Neusner: 'Jesus makes a demand that only God can make'.

** Jesus will bring others to share the coming kingdom (Luke 22:29-30), and is decisive for our final relationship with God (Luke 12:8-9). He is the Son of Man to come in judgement.

** Implicit claims; and an explicit claim in Mark 12:61-64.

** St Paul, who wrote before the Gospels, highlights Jesus as the divine Lord (*Kyrios*). This term can have various meanings ('sir' right through to God), but the context makes the meaning clear. *Marana tha* ('Our Lord, come'; 1 Cor 16:21; see 'come, Lord Jesus' of Rev 22:30). The hymn in Philippians 2:6-11 (the divine *Kyrios*) does not introduce some new teaching). Passages in the Old Testament that call God *Kyrios* are regularly referred to Jesus; in Philippians, Paul echoes Isaiah 45:23-24.

** Paul (continued): his opening salutation (integral salvation comes from the Father and the Lord Jesus). The mark of a Christian is confessing Jesus as Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3). Paul divides the Jewish confession of monotheism (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) to insert the 'one Lord, Jesus Christ' as agent of creation (1 Corinthians 8:6). In 1 Thessalonians, Paul talks of Jesus as 'Lord' 24 times and, in particular, 6 times as the coming Lord.

** What creates faith in Jesus? Faith goes beyond the evidence; inner testimony of Holy Spirit. Historical scholarship helps, but is insufficient by itself to create faith. Malcolm Muggeridge needed a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and a visit to Mother Teresa.