

### Marxsen, Willi

Willi Marxsen (1919–1993) was a German NT scholar. Between 1945 and 1948, he studied Protestant theology at the University of Kiel, wrote his doctoral dissertation on the institution narratives in Mark (“Die Einsetzungsberichte zum Abendmahl,” 1948). In 1954, he was given the *venia legendi* by the same faculty. His habilitation (“second book”) dealt with the redaction of Mark (*Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums*). After the publication of his second book, he was often referred to as the creator of the term “redactional history” (*Redaktionsgeschichte*). From 1956 to 1961, Marxsen was professor for NT studies at the Kirchliche Hochschule Bethel; from 1961 until his retirement in 1984 he held a professorship at the University of Münster.

Marxsen’s work focused on NT Christology. Regarding the interrelation of the historical Jesus and the post-Easter proclamation of Christ, Marxsen developed the term “kerygma” as defined by Bultmann and distinguished between a Christ-kerygma and a Jesus-kerygma. On the one hand, the personal Christ-kerygma may be perceived in the scriptures by Paul or John. The traditions adopted in the synoptic gospels, on the other hand, show signs of a

functional Jesus-kerygma, according to which Jesus brings about the kingdom of God and, as a result, embodies the substance of the kerygma.

Continuity between ante- and post-Easter faith corresponds to the distinction within the kerygma. Death at the cross and resurrection are not understood as a sharp break. Rather, resurrection is seen as an *interpretamentum* that marks a new beginning after Jesus’ death. Easter then means that – in spite of the “catastrophe” of Good Friday – the “matter Jesus” lives on. Thus, the term does not designate teaching material that can be detached from the person of Jesus. Rather, it refers to a new perspective of faith by way of Jesus. This perspective finds a new expression and it develops into a belief in the resurrected Christ.

The focus on faith is also reflected in Marxsen’s distinction between “Christian” and Christian ethics. This distinction refers to faith as the foundation of ethical behavior, on the one hand, and the concrete formulation of ethical maxims in Christian tradition, on the other hand.

The diverse titles of his commentaries on 1/2 Thess mirror Marxsen’s judgment on the issue of authenticity. While he considers 1 Thess to be an authentic Pauline epistle, he regards 2 Thess as a pseudonymous post-Pauline scripture. Marxsen was committed to a theologically rigorous exegetical analysis. His analyses sought to emphasize that NT language is highly allegorical and that it seeks to clearly formulate its belief.

**Bibliography:** ■ Marxsen, W., “Die Einsetzungsberichte zum Abendmahl” (PhD diss.; Kiel University, 1948). ■ Marxsen, W., *Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums* (FRLANT 49; 1956); ET: id., *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel* (Nashville, Tenn./New York 1969). ■ Marxsen, W., *Einleitung in das Neue Testament: Eine Einführung in ihre Probleme* (Gütersloh 1978 [1963]). ■ Marxsen, W., *Die Auferstehung Jesu als historisches und theologisches Problem* (Gütersloh 1964). ■ Marxsen, W., *Der Exeget als Theologe: Vorträge zum Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh 1968). ■ Marxsen, W., *Die Sache Jesu geht weiter* (Gütersloh 1976). ■ Marxsen, W., *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher* (ZBK 11/1; Zurich 1979). ■ Marxsen, W., *Der zweite Thessalonicherbrief* (ZBK 11/2; Zurich 1982). ■ Marxsen, W., “Christliche” und christliche Ethik im Neuen Testament (Gütersloh 1989).

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