Maria Louise Odgaard Møller

The True Human Being

The Figure of Jesus in K.E. Løgstrup's Thought



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Preface

This book is a translation of my Danish PhD dissertation *Det sande menneske: Jesus-billedet i Løgstrups tænkning* which was accepted by Aarhus University in 2012. The appearance of this book is thus the final result of a long process which left me owing a strong word of thanks to many. First and foremost comes my PhD supervisor, Svend Andersen, who not only guided me with skill and knowledge through this project, but also believed in it and me before I did. I would also like to express my gratitude to my co-supervisor Gerd Theißen for good guidance, useful help via the internet and for having carefully arranged everything for my stay in Heidelberg. My thanks also go to the scholars in the Løgstrup research circle, none named, none forgotten, and to the other Aarhus PhD candidates for a great working climate. At this point, specifically to Bo Bergholt Grymer with whom I shared an office from which many useful discussions ensued, both professional and personal – and also not least to Benedicte Hammer Præstholm and Katrine Frøkjær Baunvig for an unusually good working community of supportive sparring partners. My thanks go to Eve Marie Becker for encouraging me to get the dissertation translated and published and to the editors Moritz Reissing and Julia Roßberg from Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. I also owe a great many thanks to the two translators, Birgit Ducasse and David Allan Warburton, for their solid and thorough work. Fonden til fremme af K.E. Løgstrups forfatterskab and the research programme Christianity and Theology in Culture and Society: Formation – Reformation – Transformation, Aarhus University, have generously funded the translation from Danish to English, for which I am extremely grateful. Finally, my thanks go to my husband, Hans Henrik Hjermitslev, for going over the text and for technical assistance – and for the patience and support that I received the whole way. Last, but not least, I am grateful to Signe, Anna, Esther and Ludvig for being there.

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1 Introduction

The founding line in Løgstrup's thought is: the created *life*
– *the human* Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus embodies
the created *life*, therefore, he is the true *human being*.
This close connection between (created) life
and (true) human is the very core, which renders
Løgstrup's presentation of Jesus
and his Christology his very own
and deposits it in a special
– *Løgstrupian* – place.

The theologian and philosopher Knud Ejler Løgstrup (1905–1981) is rightly regarded as the greatest Danish thinker of the 20th century. His thinking ranges wide and delves deep, and his contributions to philosophy, theology, ethics and other important subject areas can hardly be overestimated. Therefore, it is only natural that there is a comprehensive and multifaceted body of research into his thinking. However, a contentious, but thus far unresolved, issue is Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus. The contribution of this book to the research on Løgstrup is an in-depth reading of his most important works, articles and sermons during the period 1936–1968, including a number of unpublished sermons, with a view to providing a characterisation, discussion and evaluation of his understanding of Jesus.[1]

1.1 Defining the issues and presentating the hypotheses

In my MA dissertation of 2005, *Løgstrups opfattelse af den specifikt kristne tro* [Løgstrup's Understanding of the specifically Christian Faith], I discussed the fundamental tension characterising Løgstrup's writings, namely the tension between belief in creation and the specifically Christian faith, i. e. belief in Christ. Løgstrup's theology is often described as creation theology, and it is indeed true that the relaunch of the understanding that life is created may be described as the core mission realised in Løgstrup's works. However, this does not mean that Løgstrup thereby ignores or calls into question the existence of the specifically Christian faith. On the contrary, it is a central aspect of his thinking that belief in creation is a keystone in the conceptual framework of the specifically Christian faith. This is closely bound up with Løgstrup's firm intention of formulating Christianity in a straightforward manner, particularly in an age dominated by

1 Thus, Løgstrup's metaphysics volumes are excluded, due solely to constraints of time and space.

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what he terms *the secular understanding of life* or *an irreligious ontology* where the sense that our existence has been created and bestowed upon us has been lost (cf. Møller 2005). It is undoubtedly also in this light that we should see his reluctance to use the heavy, dogmatic vocabulary of theology.

However, discussing Løgstrup's conception of the specifically Christian dimension of Christianity in my MA dissertation, I became aware that Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus is somewhat unclear and subject to a number of issues, giving rise to some critical questions. On the one hand, his presentation of Jesus seems consistent; his starting point is always the historical Jesus – or perhaps more precisely: the man Jesus of Nazareth. On the other hand, his presentation seems problematic, as Løgstrup consistently avoids referring to, for example, the synoptic gospels, the theological tradition or any other secondary sources from the wealth of research into the historical Jesus. Løgstrup's Jesus seems to be exactly that: *Løgstrup's* entirely subjective understanding of Jesus.

Moreover, in the secondary literature on Løgstrup's thinking, we encounter various claims about his presentation of Jesus, though it would be fair to say that they are not all equally well founded. For example, the argument has been made that Løgstrup was influenced by Rudolf Bultmann's (1884–1976) and Vilhelm Grønbech's (1873–1948) works on Jesus (Gregersen & Nilsson 1999: 20) and thereby part of a very specific tradition, or that Løgstrup's thinking even needs to be *supplemented* with a postmodern version of Jesus, because Jesus is allegedly *missing* in his thinking (Hauge 2005: 57). Add to this the issue of Løgstrup's *Christology*, which may be regarded as a separate sub-issue in relation to his presentation of Jesus. Thus, it has been argued that Løgstrup does not have a Christology at all, as he is only interested in Jesus, not in Christ (e. g. Hauge 1992: 587 et seq.). However, the opposite view has been championed by Ole Jensen: there is a coherent Christology in Løgstrup's theology, but it must be regarded as *implicit* in much the same way as did the students of Bultmann, who articulated such an implicit Christology in the confrontation with their teacher (Jensen 1994: 238; 247; 252). In other words, Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus, including the issue of his Christology, is unresolved on two counts: firstly, how Løgstrup himself presents Jesus and how he arrives at this presentation; secondly, how several contradictory claims about his presentation of Jesus may be found in the research on his thinking. The objective of this book is to clarify this prominent issue in Løgstrup's thinking. To this end, three theses have been formulated which will be examined separately in the three main parts of this book, meaning that thesis one will be examined in Main Part One, thesis two in Main Part Two and thesis three in Main Part Three:

1. Løgstrup's main task throughout all of his writings is a rehabilitation of the understanding that life is something specific because it is created. In this main intention, Jesus primarily plays a methodological/strategic role as the one who

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can confirm and testify to Løgstrup's exegesis of the belief in creation at a given point in time in the course of the development of his writings. When the belief in creation is formulated polemically in a debate with another understanding of life, Jesus functions as Løgstrup's ally in this debate.

2. Løgstrup has a Christology insofar as a Christology can be defined as considerations about the question: How is Jesus the Christ? Although this Christology can be designated implicit, this does not mean that Løgstrup's Christology is in accord with that of Bultmann's students. Whereas they start with determining Christology in the Christ of the kerygma, Løgstrup involuntarily starts with the historical/worldly/human Jesus of Nazareth. That Jesus should affirm Løgstrup's exegesis of what the created life involves is reflected in this fashion in his Christology.

3. Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus is apparently formulated completely independently of what texts – in this case the synoptic gospels – and the rest of the tradition say about Jesus. Beyond that, Løgstrup's offers – from and with *The Ethical Demand* – his presentation of Jesus as an interpretation, but without clearly defining the object of that interpretation. As text and interpretation are important aspects of setting out and solving the issue, it is obvious that hermeneutics must be included as an alternative philosophy of religion method in facing the question of the Jesus figure. The thesis is that in terms of a systematic theological evaluation of Løgstrup's presentation of Jesus it must be concluded that it is untenable and problematic, as it lacks the most essential aspect of the figure of Jesus drawn from a hermeneutical reading of the texts.

1.2 The structure of the book and presentation of the material

The first main part, "Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus" is devoted to a reading of the most important of Løgstrup's works of the period with a view to providing a characterisation of Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus. Neither his understanding of Jesus nor his Christology are the specific subject of any of Løgstrup's works. All the same, Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus may be inferred from his works and articles, not least because his presentation of Jesus plays a methodological and/or strategic role in the objectives of Løgstrup's individual works. However, this means that it will be necessary to provide fairly comprehensive summaries of his writings, partly because it is essential to bear in mind that his presentation of Jesus is closely linked with the very particular context of the individual work, and partly because I would like the opportunity to provide *my* reading of Løgstrup, so that there can be no doubt as to the background on which I draw my conclusions regarding his Jesus figure. The consequence is, however, that the length of this book, particularly Main Part One, is considerable, and my

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presentation of Løgstrup's individual works may seem a little tedious to readers already familiar with them.

Any discussion of (the historical) Jesus will invariably raise the question of the methodological approach, including the use of sources – that is the Bible, or more specifically the synoptic gospels, based on the brief, but precise question: whence do we know anything about Jesus? In this respect, Løgstrup is (as mentioned above) not renowned for bothering with direct textual references or otherwise using the texts. Though this approach may be regarded as both a strength and a weakness depending on your temperament, it does certainly force the underlying issue which may well be at the back of your mind while reading Main Part One: How do we evaluate a given understanding of Jesus in terms of systematic theology? What parameters and criteria do we have at our disposal to evaluate a presentation of Jesus?[2]

The first three chapters of the first main part are closely related, not only thematically but also in time. It concerns Chapter 2 on *Prædikenen og dens tekst* [The Sermon and its Text],[3] Chapter 3 on Løgstrup's dissertation and Chapter 4 on Løgstrup's sermons and church publications from his time as the pastor of the Sandager-Holevad parishes during 1936–1943. Chronologically, these chapters belong to the 1930s and 1940s, which, in the following, I will refer to as his *very earliest* writings.[4] Thematically, the chapters are linked by Løgstrup's main focus of his very earliest writings which also defines what Jesus's role is: The created life is something specific, namely forgiveness, giving, serenity, mercy, serving and loving one's neighbours. We only know about the created life through Jesus's life;

2 Possible answers to these questions will be proposed in Main Part Three, "Critique, evaluation and discussion".

3 In this chapter, I also consider the discussions with Regin Prenter (1907–90) and Paul Seidelin (1906–81) that followed in the wake of Løgstrup's articles which were later collected in the volume entitled *Prædikenen og dens tekst.*

4 The reason why I emphasise that I am referring to his *very earliest* writings is that the convention is to distinguish between Løgstrup's early and late works, the metaphysics volumes being the dividing line. Based on this distinction, all the writings I discuss in this book belong to Løgstrup's early works. However, in terms of Løgstrup's perception of Jesus, there is a difference between what I refer to as his *very earliest* writings, i. e. the 1930s and 1940s, and for example *The Ethical Demand*, which is why I believe that it is necessary to make such a distinction here. Belonging to his works of the 1930s are four published lectures which Løgstrup gave in connection with a competition for a lectureship in systematic theology at the University of Copenhagen in 1934. The task was specified in advance; the topics of the lectures were compulsory. As it was a set assignment, produced under competition conditions, I do not think that these lectures should be taken as an expression of his personal theological standpoint; surely, the intention was to demonstrate that he was a suitable candidate for the post of lecturer in systematic theology. Compared to Løgstrup's other works, these lectures come across as strangely dogmatic and they should carry little weight in uncovering his perception of Jesus. These lectures are therefore not included in this book. See Løgstrup 1934; Løgstrup 1934a; Løgstrup 1934b; Løgstrup 1938.

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he reveals it, lives and preaches it. He is the (true) human being who lives the created human life. Both in *Prædikenen og dens tekst* and in his dissertation, Løgstrup takes issue with, on the one hand, Barth's scriptural theology and its theophanic Christology, and, on the other, the secular understanding of life promoted by transcendental idealism. Løgstrup's alternative to both philosophies is the particularity of the created life which Jesus embodies – with varying emphasis on his life, deeds and preaching. Thus, the focus is unequivocally on Jesus as a human being and on the life he lived and/or his preaching. The crucifixion and the resurrection or the idea of anything divine is therefore far from Løgstrup's thinking. Insofar as it is possible to attach Christological reflections to this Jesus figure, it will concern only the presentation of him as the true human who lived and preached the created life.

In addition to his scholarly works of the period, I will also include a number of Løgstrup's sermons and church publications including some unpublished sermons. In our search for clarification of his understanding of Jesus, it is obvious and indeed very interesting to consider whether – and if so, how – Løgstrup's presentation of Jesus in a preaching/church context deviates from his presentation of Jesus in his other writings. The theology in Løgstrup's sermons and church publications is, not unexpectedly, consistent with the theology of his thesis and *Prædikenen og dens tekst.* Thus, the starting point and the basic premise remain that the created life is something specific. However, the whole issue of what it actually means for the lives of human beings that they do not live the created life but destroy it, really unfolds only in the sermons and church publications. Therefore, the figure of Jesus in the sermons and church publications tends to be the same as the one in the two other works of the period, namely that it is drawn from Løgstrup's understanding of what the created life is. Thus, the Christology and soteriology remain predominantly related to Jesus's *life*, rather than his death and/or resurrection. However, the Christology and soteriology no longer appear as a very weak appendage to an almost overexposed creation theology, since both have their *raison d'être* in the comprehensive description of the basic conflict of human existence, i. e. the reality of sin.

After a characterisation of Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus in his very earliest works, whether the purpose be academic or preaching, Chapters 5 and 6 will follow on, the Jesus books of first Bultmann and then Grønbech, from 1926 and 1935 respectively. As mentioned above, you may well encounter the assertion that Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus was influenced by these two books on Jesus, and I will therefore examine this assertion in Chapters 5 and 6. My overall conclusion is that there may well be many similarities in both the thinking and understanding of Jesus – though the similarities naturally differ for Bultmann and Grønbech – but Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus still remains predominantly his own, i. e. based on his own way of thinking and with the created life as

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his starting point. Therefore, it makes little sense to claim that these two thinkers had any significant influence on Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus; in fact, it is probably best described as uniquely *Løgstrupian*.

Then, in Chapter 7, I will look at Løgstrup's principal work, at least among his early writings, *The Ethical Demand*, and in this connection also partly on the prototype of the book in the article "Humanisme og kristendom" [Humanism and Christianity] and partly on a debate with Prenter in a couple of articles on the nature of the Christology in *The Ethical Demand*. There was a shift in Løgstrup's main theological focus from his very earliest writings to *The Ethical Demand*, which I believe confirms my thesis that Løgstrup's Jesus plays an important strategic role in his thinking as the one who is able to affirm and bear witness to what it is that Løgstrup wants to communicate. A crucial difference in *The Ethical Demand* compared to Løgstrup's very earliest writings is that the goodness of the created life now only exists in our lives as something that we can speak about speculatively; the necessarily positive background which must be thought to exist as compensation for our destruction of the interdependent life. In addition, the shift in Løgstrup's methodological approach plays an important part in the way in which Jesus is presented: Løgstrup wants to attempt "to give a definition in strictly humanistic terms of the relationship to the other person which is contained in the religious preaching of Jesus of Nazareth" (Løgstrup 2010: 9), i. e. the 'love thy neighbour' commandment/the Golden Rule/the Demand. Thus, from this work onwards, Løgstrup distinguishes explicitly between a universal and specifically Christian faith in Christianity. Belonging to the part of Jesus's preaching that may be defined in strictly humanistic terms is the Law which is now Løgstrup's main theological focus. For the figure of Jesus, this shift in focus means that Jesus is no longer presented as the one who, first and foremost, lives and preaches the created life; in fact, we are told very little about the kind of life that Jesus lived. When the created life no longer constitutes the main focal point of Løgstrup's theological/religio-philosophic reasoning, his need to present Jesus as the one living the created life also disappears. Instead, Jesus is now *the preacher* of the Law. He appears as a strangely neutral and indifferent proclaimer of a crucial message; there appears to be no connection between the person and the proclamation. In this chapter, I will discuss the issues that arise in the wake of this seemingly peculiar and very indistinct Jesus figure – entirely dissimilar to the one we find in the remainder of Løgstrup's works.

Finally, in Chapter 8, I consider *Opgør med Kierkegaard* [Controverting Kierkegaard]. Here, the goodness of the created life existing in our lives as a reality rather than merely in the speculative sense has now returned to Løgstrup's thinking in the form of the sovereign expressions of life. Therefore, Jesus is once again the one who *lives* the created life – namely in fulfilment of the sovereign expressions of life. However, in a crucial difference compared to his very earliest

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works, Løgstrup now argues that the created life is known via the sovereign expressions of life and not first through Jesus's life and preaching. Consequently, Løgstrup abandons the idea that Jesus *reveals* the created life, as everybody has the opportunity to know the created life through the sovereign expressions of life. Thus, Jesus's role is no longer exhausted by living and preaching the created life so as to merely show or *reveal* what it is. Indeed, his way of living *together with* his preaching of the kingdom of God, of the Demand and of the forgiveness on God's behalf means first and foremost that Jesus suffered and was crucified. Jesus was crucified for having lived and preached as he did. The meaning of the crucifixion is thus fully in accord with classical theology in that it is the turning point bringing about God's forgiveness of our sins – or to be more precise: affirming that forgiveness which throughout his life, Jesus preached as God's forgiveness. Thus Løgstrup's Jesus in *Opgør med Kierkegaard* has a clear Christological profile. And finally, the first main part concludes with a summary and a conclusion in Chapter 9.

In the second main part, "Løgstrup's Christology", Løgstrup's Christological reflections are positioned in the so-called second quest for the historical Jesus (*Neue Frage*), which was launched in 1953 when the students of Bultmann confronted their teacher at that year's convention of the "alter Marburger". Løgstrup participated in this meeting and it seems altogether appropriate to compare his understanding of Jesus with that of Bultmann's students, as *The Ethical Demand* and *Opgør med Kierkegaard* are contemporary with the *Neue Frage*. Moreover, he explicitly took a stance on Bultmann's position in his 1965 article "Kristendom uden den historiske Jesus" [Christianity without the historical Jesus] (Løgstrup 1965). Chapter 10 introduces the overall issue being addressed and the relevance of including Løgstrup. In Chapter 11, the debate between Bultmann and his students will be discussed in some detail.

The *Neue Frage* focuses on the significance of history for Christianity, the issue of when Christianity began – with the historical Jesus or with the kerygma – and as a consequence the issue of the nature of the resulting Christology. The term often used to describe the Christology of Bultmann students' is "implicit Christology". The deeper meaning of the term and whether Løgstrup's thinking with his understanding of Jesus, including his Christology, may be classified as such – as Ole Jensen would have us believe – is the general question that will be answered in the second main part. While the first main part considers Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus in broad terms, the focus of the second main part is much narrower and concerns the nature of his Christology. For even though Løgstrup rarely used the word 'Christ' and, as already mentioned, he had the historical/worldly Jesus as the indisputable basis for any discussion of the Jesus figure, this does not mean that his thinking included no Christological reflections. In fact, the way in which it may be said that Jesus is Christ plays a central role in

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Løgstrup's line of thought regarding the relationship between belief in creation and the specifically Christian faith. The very fact that this issue features so prominently in Løgstrup's thinking renders it inapt to deny that he had no clear Christology, let alone Christological reflections. However, it is absolutely crucial to try to uncover the nature of his Christology and its systematic-theological tenability. An evaluation of Løgstrup's Christology is made in this part of the book, based on the thesis presented above that his version of implicit Christology is not consistent with that of Bultmann's students.

The second quest for the historical Jesus took the form of an ongoing discussion between Bultmann and his students over more than two decades. The main part of that discussion took place between Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann (1906–1998), which is why I include Käsemann as one of the representatives of Bultmann's students. In addition, I look in some detail at Günther Bornkamm's (1905–1990) contribution to the discussion, partly because he is the author of what is regarded as *the* Jesus book in the *Neue Frage*, and partly because there are obvious and interesting similarities between his thinking and Løgstrup's. Bultmann, Käsemann and Bornkamm present three different forms of "implicit Christology".

Bultmann's version may be regarded as a *preliminary*, *incomplete* or *prospective* Christology. Invariably, Bultmann's starting point is the Christ of the kerygma. In relation to this figure, the only significance that may be attributed to the historical Jesus is *that* he lived: "the That" (*das Daß*). Therefore, the Christology which Bultmann attributes to the historical Jesus – or more precisely to his preaching – cannot stand alone. It is only realised with the cross and resurrection, and therefore it is not made explicit until the community professes its faith in the kerygma. Thus, the relationship between implicit and explicit Christologies takes the form of movement: question – answer, Law – Gospel, promise – fulfilment.

Käsemann's intention was to attribute greater importance to the historical Jesus and argue that Christianity begins with the historical Jesus and not just with the cross and the confession of the kerygma. Käsemann's implicit Christology, which he projects with the aid of his *double dissimilarity criterion*, which later became controversial, may be described as a *Christology including history*. He wants to demonstrate that crucial characteristics of Jesus's *historical* life and work are *included* in the subsequently fully developed Gospel in the kerygma and that this is neither a coincidence nor merely the result of the early Christian community's retrospective projection of evangelical core content in the information handed down about Jesus of Nazareth. In support of his point, he emphasises for example Jesus's authority and Jesus's preaching a merciful God and that the kingdom of God is near. These are Christological characteristics of *both* Jesus's preaching and work and of the kerygma. Or to be more precise: the life and preaching of the historical Jeus are the origins and the reason why this is

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part of the Gospel. Therefore, it is not possible to isolate his significance to "the That" (*das Daß*), but the historical Jesus must be included in the contents of Christianity.

Bornkamm's implicit Christology is the version that seems most compatible with Løgstrup's (implicit) Christological reflections. For Bornkamm, Jesus has Messianic characteristics, indicating that *God's reality* is present *now*, which is why he also believes that Christianity already began with the historical Jesus. He emphasises, for example, Jesus's *immediacy* and his unique authority. In fact, it may be more apt to use the term "implicit *eschatology*" to describe Bornkamm's version of implicit Christology, as he focuses on the relationship between Jesus and God's reality rather than the relationship between Jesus and the subsequent, fully developed Christology.

These three versions of implicit Christology are compared with Løgstrup's Christological reflections in Chapter 12. Just as Løgstrup's Jesus figure changes during the various phases of his authorship, though he retains the historical/worldly Jesus as his starting point, there are also shifts of stress in his Christological reflections, which I will unwrap in the second main part. The overall conclusion is that Løgstrup's various Christological reflections, which could be described as an "implicit Christology", differ on a crucial point, particularly from Bultmann's version, but also from Käsemann's and Bornkamm's Christologies, in as much as Løgstrup always begins – and in fact also always ends – with the man Jesus of Nazareth. Thereby, Løgstrup represents one of the extreme positions in the debate and Bultmann, whose starting point is the Christ of the kerygma, represents the other. Käsemann and Bornkamm therefore occupy the middle ground, as they both seek to attribute to the historical Jesus as many implicit Christological characteristics as their criteria permit. In contrast to these three German theologians, Løgstrup is the only one who includes the notion of creation in his reflections on the Jesus figure and Christology. This makes his presentation of Jesus uniquely *Løgstrupian*, and it means that his varying implicit Christologies cannot be said to express or include the same as Bultmann's or his students' Christologies.

The material basis of the second main part is the articles that make up the debate between Bultmann on the one hand and Käsemann and Bornkamm on the other. This debate went on from the beginning of the 1950s to the early 1970s. Käsemann and Bultmann each wrote three articles on the subject. Bornkamm's contribution was his Jesus book of 1963 and an article in 1971.

In the third main part, "Critique, evaluation and discussion", the underlying question from the first main part is revisited: How do we evaluate a given understanding of Jesus in terms of systematic theology? In Chapter 13, I include the French philosopher Paul Ricœur's (1913–2005) hermeneutical reflections; the choice is highly appropriate, as Løgstrup clearly states that his presentation of

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Jesus is based on an *interpretation* of Jesus of Nazareth. The question therefore becomes: What is the object of this interpretation and how do we find it?

Ricœur insists on a connection between philosophy of religion and hermeneutics, and he simply regards the religious texts as a natural and necessary part of the material under scrutiny. For Ricœur, philosophy of religion is characterised by being a philosophy that deals with religious faith, and this faith is always articulated linguistically, i. e. it is expressed in a verbal discourse which in the case of Christianity was put in writing in the Bible. Based on such a hermeneutically motivated inclusion of the texts, Ricœur paints a Jesus figure that is entirely different from Løgstrup's. On this basis, I reflect critically on Løgstrup's interpretation without text and in Chapter 14, I evaluate as limited the systematic-theological tenability and credibility of his Jesus figure. The fact is that from an overall perspective, Løgstrup's Jesus lacks precisely the core of the figure that emerges from a hermeneutically motivated inclusion of the texts: the resurrection. Above all else, it is the resurrection that adds crucial, new, meaning to the concept of God in the New Testament. The material included in the third main part comprises a representative selection of Ricœur's writings on hermeneutic philosophy of religion and on reading the religious texts using this approach.

In the conclusion, in Chapter 15, I consider – in addition to the three theses presented above – whether the objective of the book has been reached: To clarify how Løgstrup presents Jesus in his writings before 1969 and the reasons why (Main Part One), to shed light on the nature of Løgstrup's Christology as it emerged in a debate with Bultmann and two of his students and whether, and if so how, it may be described as an "implicit Christology" (Main Part Two) and finally, with the aid of Ricœur's hermeneutic philosophy of religion, to evaluate the systematic-theological tenability and credibility of Løgstrup's Jesus figure (Main Part Three).

1.3 Concluding remarks

As alluded to above, I will pause to consider interesting issues that arise during the reading and discussion of Løgstrup's works. I will do so even though these issues may not immediately seem of relevance to the characterisation and discussion of Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus. However, these digressions will ultimately prove to be of great significance, as they primarily confirm the overarching thesis that Løgstrup's core mission – faith in creation or the concept that life is something specific, because it is created – is the foundation of Løgstrup's thinking and also defines other basic theological concepts beyond the figure of Jesus.

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Finally, I hope that readers of this book will feel that I leave the door wide open for anyone wishing to discuss what I present here as my contribution to a long and proud tradition of authoritative Løgstrup research. I feel entirely justified in maintaining that the unique nature and quality of Løgstrup's thinking warrants our discussion and critique. I hope that my reading of Løgstrup and the critique that I present here will encourage others to pick up the baton and carry on the discussion of this remarkable theologian and his works.[5]

5 A note on formalities: I refer to all works and articles, whether written by Løgstrup or others, by stating the year of publication and then the page number(s), e. g. 'Jensen 1994: 233'. It is in the same fashion that I cite the most recent publications of Løgstrup's works, in Danish. The translated volume, *The Ethical Demand*, is mentioned in the text, but the references are to the Danish version as I have translated the Danish text rather than citing the translation; in the same fashion works in German are translated from the German and I cite the original sources, even where English translations, of e. g. Bultmann exist. This means that for Løgstrup in particular, the references should not be used in isolation to infer any conclusions about the original chronology of the publications and their relation to the contemporary debates. However, the years of publication of the first editions appear in the bibliography. Please see footnote 51 with regard to references to Løgstrup's sermons, whether published or not.

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Main Part One: Løgstrup's understanding of Jesus

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2 *Prædikenen og dens tekst*

Rather than being mere *homiletica*, *Prædikenen og dens tekst* [The Sermon and its Text] is first and foremost a polemic work, aimed at what Løgstrup called Barth's scriptural theology (*skriftteologi*). According to Løgstrup, in Denmark the main representatives of Barth's scriptural theology were Johannes Asmund, Regin Prenter and Paul Seidelin, who in 1941 published *Kirkeaarets Texter. Første Textrække: Advent til Pinse* [Texts of the Ecclesiastical Year. Series One Texts: Advent to Pentecost] (Asmund et. al. 1941). However, the reason why Løgstrup wrote *Prædikenen og dens tekst* is found a few years earlier, in March 1939, when Løgstrup gave a lecture entitled *Kirkelig og Human Exegese* [Ecclesiastical and Human Exegesis] at the well-attended Barth meeting at Nyborg Strand, on the island of Fyn. Unfortunately, the manuscript of this lecture does not exist, but according to what Løgstrup himself writes in his brief introduction to *Prædikenen og dens tekst*, the lecture formed the basis of two articles that were printed in *Tidehverv* in February and March 1940.[6] Both these articles were entitled "Prædikenen og dens tekst" and collectively they comprise largely what became theses I–III in the published work. Then, in April 1940, *Kirkeaarets Texter* was published and Løgstrup's direct reaction was partly the feature entitled "Den alt for korrekte Prædiken" [The Overly Correct Sermon] in the daily *Nationaltidende* (Løgstrup 1941a), and partly the article "Systematisk Teologi" [Systematic Theology] in the monthly periodical for theology students, *Stud.Theol.* (Løgstrup 1941), both published in 1941. A large proportion of the contents of these articles correspond to what is referred to as thesis IV in the published work. Although there is no doubt that Løgstrup intended to publish these articles in book form, for various reasons, it was never published during Løgstrup's lifetime.[7] The complete manuscript was, however, found in the Løgstrup Archive and formed the basis of the publication of the work in 1999.

6 See Løgstrup 1999: 38.

7 See Gregersen & Nilsson 1999: 27ff.

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As mentioned above, Løgstrup directs his critique at what Løgstrup calls Barth's "scriptural theology", by which Løgstrup understands a particular way of reading the biblical texts that he compares with orthodox scripturalism.[8] Only theoretically is the authority and infallibility of Scripture, and thereby the evangelists, put in doubt; an historical understanding of the texts is thus trvialised.[9] A consequence of this view of the Bible is a so-called *theophanic Christology*, according to which Jesus is special because he is manifestly divine. Thus, according to Løgstrup, there is a close connection between the view of the Bible or the method and the understanding of Jesus and of Christology.

In the following, I will summarise Løgstrup's line of argument in *Prædikenen og dens tekst* and consider the figure of Jesus that emerges in this small volume. In addition, I will consider the debate that Løgstrup entered into with Seidelin in *Stud.Theol.* in 1941–42 in the wake of Løgstrup's critique of *Kirkeaarets Texter* in *Nationaltidende* and *Stud.Theol.* Finally, I will briefly cover Prenter's critique of Løgstrup's Christology in *Bibelen og vor Forkyndelse* [The Bible and our Preaching] of 1942, a critique to which Løgstrup unfortunately never reacted, at least not publicly.

2.1 Thesis I

Thesis I is worded as follows: "The secular concept of life thrives on vetoing historical critique" (Løgstrup 1999: 39). Here Løgstrup presents his view of historiography and the historical method.[10] History is a social science in contrast to systematising sciences, of which a main characteristic is that method and understanding coincide. In history, *understanding* is crucial, and it is neither methodical nor systematic. In history, method is therefore only, and should only be, an assisting technique. If method becomes more than that, if it becomes everything, history will become the history of sensationalism, and it will then lose its vital link with philosophy which ensures the focus on understanding:

8 In the preface to *Prædikenen og dens tekst*, the editors Niels Henrik Gregersen and Jan Nilsson argue that Løgstrup's critique of Barth's theology should "probably not be regarded as a critique of the young dialectical Barth, but of Barth following his ecclesiastical turn" and that – according to Løgstrup – "the new interest in Barth's dogmatic project among young Danish theologians reflected disciplined orthodoxy […]". Gregersen & Nilsson 1999: 16f.

9 See Løgstrup 1941: 140; 142: "[…] but the scripturalist sermon itself and systematic theology mean a levelling of the words of Scripture in a trivialisation of their historical significance. […] the principle of humility, the subjective principle changes infallibility from an absolute to a relative: compared with us today, the New Testament theologians are infallible, so in purely practical terms, we can never criticise or correct them, which is why their fallibility is merely theoretical".

10 Not to be confused with historical *critique*, which Løgstrup touches upon in thesis II.

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> Genuine history is a branch of philosophy; it seeks to understand the meaning, in itself, of events as human life – a meaning revealed only if the historian poses real, human questions about the events (Løgstrup 1999: 43).

As the theme of history is the past, i. e. people's lives in the past, it is essential that we ask of history our own human questions; indeed, it is with the answers to such questions that we gain an understanding of history. However, historical method in itself also reflects a particular concept of life, namely the secular understanding of life, which promotes the idea that human life is a self-sufficient whole. Such a concept of life is a prerequisite for successfully applying a method that will view and explain any historical event in relation to what went before and what happened next. And – as historians – we also have our own understandings of life. When we pose our own human questions to history, we we may risk our own individual concepts of life.

When we are considering the texts of the Bible, we will have to risk both our own concept of life and that implicit in the historical method we apply. Reading historical accounts, such as the Gospels which are also testimony of God's word and work, we see that the historical method we apply becomes an exponent of the secular concept of life that pervades modern life.[11] This will invariably create tension between the secular concept of life, of which the historical method is an exponent, and the Biblical narrative which we will also have to risk. If we do not do that, only scripturalism remains. With scripturalism, the secular concept of life is not defeated, it is *granted an exemption.* It follows, therefore, that faith becomes a payment, because "It is a concession to believe when at the same time you live in a secular understanding of life and existence" (Løgstrup 1999: 47).

2.2 Thesis II

With thesis II "The veto against historical critique and the textual sermon of this veto is theophanic Christology" (Løgstrup 1999: 48), Løgstrup presents his view on historical critique which he believes should be used and taken seriously during the preparation of a sermon. In addition, he explains his stance on the scripturalist veto against historical critique together with the reasoning behind this veto and its consequences.

In connection with his account of historical critique, Løgstrup defines the concept of *historical* truth in relation to *philosophical* truth. However, it is not clear what Løgstrup more precisely wants to achieve from clarifying these con-

11 Cf. Løgstrup's dissertation, in which he states that transcendental idealism becomes an exponent of the culture in which we live and thereby of the secular concept of life. See Løgstrup 2011: 12; 125.

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