

The usual way of employing the scheme of question and answer that I also employ is to conceive the question as other than a self-answering question and as therefore admitting of a plurality of equally meaningful, even if not equally true, answers, all logically more specific than the question itself. But granted that there can indeed be a plurality of equally meaningful answers to the religious question, is this because, like any other non-self-answering question, it is logically more general than any answer to it?

I should reason, on the contrary, that any true religion would have to give an answer to the religious question that—however verbally, or even conceptually, different it might be from other equally meaningful answers—could not be really, existentially, different from them, because any such difference would indicate that it is not really true after all but false. Decisive revelation, in other words, doesn't add anything to what original revelation discloses; rather, it subtracts everything from what all other really different special revelations disclose to the point of re-presenting only what is true in them. Thus, in Christian terms: Jesus doesn't give me anything that has not always already been given; Jesus takes away from me everything that stands in the way of my receiving, truly and authentically, what *has* always already been given—to me and to everyone. This I understand to belong to the point of the cross and of being crucified with Christ—to everything except the pure unbounded love of God.

No doubt, my thoughts about all this have been affected by my study of Bultmann's interpretation of Johannine theology, according to which a religion typically functions, not to mediate the radical gift and demand of God always already presented through creation, but to obstruct it, thereby closing up its adherents against God's meaning for them. My contention here, however, is the converse: a true religion would not add to, and so obstruct, the original presentation of God's gift and demand, but rather mediate them and only them, thereby opening up its adherents for the decisive revelation of God.

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