

A religion is an explicitly authorized understanding of human existence—or, as can also be said, of the basic faith in the ultimate meaning of life, the underlying trust and loyalty, constitutive of existence as such. Thus it is constituted as a religion by an explicit primal source of all existential, and therefore religious, authority, this source having both an *ontic* and a *noetic* component. The ontic component of the source is the pre-existing reality experienced as authorizing the religion; its noetic component is the immediate experience of that reality as thus authorizing it. These two components are interdependent, the ontic component being, in a way, dependent on the noetic, as well as the other way around. Even though immediate experience of the authorizing reality obviously depends on the reality's being pre-existent, its only reality, so far as such immediate experience of it is concerned, is its reality as thus experienced, i. e., as authorizing, and hence both entitling and empowering, the religion in question.

As for the Christian religion, its explicit primal source, which constitutes it as such, as the Christian religion, is the immediate experience of Jesus by the apostles as authorizing it—Jesus as thus experienced being the ontic component of the source, the apostles' immediate experience of him as such being its noetic component. Keeping in mind the interdependence of these two components, one can say that, if what is properly meant by the apostles are those who immediately experienced Jesus as the explicit primal source of the Christian religion, what is properly meant by Jesus is the one who was thus experienced by the apostles and to whom they bear witness accordingly. And because this is so, the witness of the apostles, which expresses their experience of Jesus as the explicit primal source of all existential authority, is itself the sole primary authority (and thus the formal norm) of the Christian religion.

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