

Concerning Authority

Clearly, the underlying logic of my entire christology is the logic of the concept of authority. But just as clearly, my own explicit treatments of the concept, which either are or approximate definitions of it, do not adequately explicate this logic.

Thus I define *de jure* authority as "the right to command or to act as regards the action or belief of others" (OT: 49), thereby ignoring my basic insight that action and belief are both related to and distinct from the still more fundamental fact of self-understanding and my repeated assertion or implication that it is precisely the self-understanding of faith that is first of all authorized (entitled and empowered) by Jesus Christ.

Minimally, therefore, I need to revise my definition of authority so as to take account both of my own insight into the relation of belief and action to the still more fundamental fact of self-understanding and of my consistent teaching that it is our self-understanding that is first of all explicitly authorized through Jesus Christ. Thus I might redefine it, say, as "the right to command or to pronounce as regards the existence, and thus the self-understanding and the life-praxis (the belief and the action), of others."

27 September 1986; rev. 30 July 1996; 6 November 1997

Corrigendum: If it is true, as I have argued elsewhere, that "I obviously use 'action' in more than one sense" and that "Self-understanding is also action—specifically transcendental action," then there is no need "to revise my definition of authority"—as "the right [and the power] to command or act as regards the action or belief of others"—even if "it is our self-understanding that is first of all explicitly authorized through Jesus Christ."

29 October 2009