

In most of my previous work I have tended, however understandably, to use “norm” and “authority” as, for all practical purposes, synonymous. But although “authority” in one of its meanings clearly is a synonym of “norm,” and vice versa, this is not its only meaning.

As the orthodox theologians rightly recognized in their discussions of the authority of scripture, its “authority” is *auctoritas causativa* as well as *auctoritas normativa s. canonica*. As the first, it is said to be the authority “by which scripture generates and confirms in the human intellect assent to the things that are to be believed” (Hollaz). One could say, perhaps, that, in this sense of “authority,” the moment of *power* is dominant, the moment of right, recessive, whereas in the other normative or canonical sense, these roles are reversed, the moment of *right* being dominant, the moment of power recessive. If one does say this, however, it is important to keep in mind that both moments are present in each sense, even if their roles are reversed with respect to their being either dominant or recessive. Of course, one need not buy into the anthropology that orthodoxy presupposes in distinguishing a causative as well as a normative sense of “authority.” In fact, instead of speaking of scripture’s generating and confirming assent in the “intellect,” it would be more appropriate to define its causative authority as the power and the right by which it generates and/or confirms an authentic understanding of oneself in relation to others and the whole.

Clearly, this causative sense of “authority” is, in its way, as important theologically as its normative sense; and my failure to appreciate it earlier is yet another indication of the extent to which my concern with questions of truth, credibility, justification, and so on, has kept me from recognizing the relevance and importance of matters highlighted by other equally legitimate concerns. In any event, it should be one of the objectives of my work hereafter to rectify this one-sidedness by more clearly and consistently distinguishing between “authority” and “norm” and making use of the first term, rather than the second, wherever it is the more appropriate.

Thus, for example, were I to rewrite the concluding sentences of Ch. 4 of *The Point of Christology*, I would (in addition to replacing “truthfully” with “truly”!) write: “This means that the condition of truly making this assertion in any of its formulations lies not in the being of Jesus in himself that we still have to infer from this [sc. earliest Christian] witness, but rather in the meaning of Jesus for us that this witness itself already authoritatively [*sic*] represents. Consequently, it is by way of empirical-historical inquiry into what is meant by Jesus in this authoritative [*sic*] witness that the conditions of asserting any christological predicate truly can be known to be satisfied, insofar as this can be historically known at all” (84 f.).

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