

If De George is right, it would seem that religious authority, properly so-called, could be analyzed, in part, in accordance with the paradigm of "epistemic authority." Insofar as religious authority is a matter of "*what*" in the sense of Bultmann's distinction, it's "epistemic" and, like any other epistemic authority, is "in principle expendable" and "always open to challenge."

On the other hand, religious authority seems to require analysis, in another part, after the paradigm of "deontic or performatory authority." Insofar as it has to do with the "*that*" in Bultmann's sense, it's "deontic." Only here the relevant presupposed covenant is not the special covenant of family or nation, or any of the still more specialized covenants familiar from human society and culture, but the unique, completely general or universal covenant binding each individual person to every other as well as to the strictly ultimate reality implicitly authorizing authentic human existence. Given *this* covenant, simply being a human being is itself having an office, or position, with certain rights and responsibilities (= "constitution"). At the same time, whoever or whatever authorizes authentic existence *explicitly* is uniquely authoritative, being no less authoritative, indeed, than the implicit primal source of authority, strictly ultimate reality itself.

According to De George, "Christ is unique" (223). But is he correct in claiming that Christ, like Moses and Mohammed, held "original religious authority," i.e., an authority that comes directly from God? If by "Christ" be meant Jesus the Jew, then his authority as a Jew could only have been derived rather than original. On the other hand, if "Christ" refers to Jesus the Christ, properly so-called, then he arguably holds no religious authority at all, either original or derived, at least in the same sense of the term, because, as De George puts it, "he exercised [*sic!*] divine authority," i.e., he is the explicit primal ontic *source* of authority, and so not simply *a* religious authority of either kind.