

I take what orthodoxy analyzes as "the essential or substantial foundation of faith" to be the twofold reality of God and Jesus: God being the *transcendental, strictly ultimate* reality whose meaning for us is decisively re-presented through Jesus; and Jesus being the genuinely *historical* reality that decisively re-presents this meaning (cf. Notebooks, December 1992; rev. 26 November 1993; 15 June 2002).

What formally normative Christian witness has to assert about this twofold reality, however, rests upon two presuppositions that it must therefore also somehow affirm.

What it has to assert about God rests upon the presupposition of *radical monotheism*, by which I mean, the presupposition that all things, actual and possible, are included in the one all-encompassing whole of which we experience ourselves and all others to be parts and which is therefore conceived as the one universal individual, from, through, and for which all things exist (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6 ff.). Thus what the Christian witness somehow has to assert about God is by way of answering the question as to the identity of the all-encompassing whole thus conceived as the one universal individual—not, to be sure, in its structure in itself, but in its meaning for us, i.e., how it implicitly authorizes (entitles and empowers) us to understand ourselves and existence generally if we are do so authentically and truly.

In an analogous way, what Christian witness has to assert about Jesus rests upon the presupposition of *genuine historicity*, by which I mean the presupposition that the explicit, primal, ontic source of all Christian faith and witness is the fully real historical person designated "Jesus" (a.k.a. "Jesus bar Joseph" or "Jesus of Nazareth"). But here again, what is presupposed is not simply the experienced historical reality of this person, although precisely that is what might be called, in scholastic terms, the "material object" of the presupposition, analogously to the way in which the "material object" of radical montheism is the all-encompassing whole that we all experience in experiencing ourselves and others. Rather, what is presupposed is the historical reality of this person as also conceived in a certain way, so that its "formal object" is the historical person Jesus in his meaning for us, again, analogously to the way in which radical monotheism's "formal object" is the

all-encompassing whole conceived as the one universal individual in its meaning for us. Thus what Christian witness somehow has to assert about Jesus is by way of answering the question as to his identity as a historical person, not, indeed, in his being in himself, then and there in the past, but in his meaning for us, here and now in the present, i.e., as decisively authorizing the understanding of ourselves that is authentic and the understanding of existence in general that is true.

If this analysis is sound, however, the fundamental problem set for Christian witness and theology in any historical situation is how to assert what Christian faith necessarily implies and so somehow has to assert about its "essential or substantial foundation," i.e., the twofold reality of God and Jesus, even while affirming rather than denying what it necessarily presupposes about this same twofold reality. Arguably, the measure of their "orthodoxy" is the success they respectively enjoy, in their different historical situations, in solving this problem, whereas the sure sign of their "heresy" is their corresponding failure—whether because they assert what they must assert in such a way as to deny their presuppositions, or the other way around, because they affirm their presuppositions only at the expense of not asserting what they must somehow assert.

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