

To accept Jesus as the Christ is thereby to assert or imply the inspiration and inerrancy of the apostolic witness, provided it is interpreted as precisely witness to Jesus as thus decisively significant for human existence. Why?

First of all and most fundamentally, because the explicit primal source of authority and the primary authority authorized by this source mutually condition one another and must be understood accordingly. Thus, while such authority as the primary authority has is derived entirely from its explicit primal source, what this source does and does not authorize can be determined, finally, solely by appeal to this primary authority. To accept Jesus as the Christ is, in effect, to acknowledge him as the explicit primal source of authority and the witness of the apostles as the sole primary authority. But while such authority as the apostolic witness has derives entirely from Jesus as its explicit primal source, what Jesus does and does not authorize can only be determined, finally, by appeal to this apostolic witness. For this reason, or in this sense, this witness is inspired and inerrant, provided it is interpreted as witness to Jesus as the Christ.

It can be so interpreted, however, only if it is interpreted in existentialist terms, as addressed to our existential question about the ultimate meaning of our existence. To accept Jesus as the Christ is to accept him as being of decisive significance for human existence, because he is the explicit primal source authorizing authentic self-understanding. But, then, it must be in the same existential respect, and solely in it, that the primary authority of the apostolic witness is inspired and inerrant. To function as inspired and inerrant, therefore, this witness must be interpreted as addressing the existential question to which the assertions constituting this witness explicitly as such are made or implied as the answer.

But what about the inspiration and inerrancy of scripture? Are they also asserted or implied by accepting Jesus as the Christ?

Clearly, they would be so asserted or implied if scripture could be rightly said to be apostolic witness, or, in the case of the Old Testament, prophetic

witness, to Jesus as the Christ. But this scripture cannot be rightly said to be, since it is now known to be neither apostolic nor prophetic witness to Jesus as the Christ in the relevant senses of the words, i.e., it is neither original and originating and therefore constitutive witness to Jesus as the Christ nor conscious prophecy of his coming as such. (I should perhaps say, instead of “nor conscious prophecy of his coming as such,” “nor the formulation of the question to which such original and originating and therefore constitutive witness is immediately the answer.”)

Therefore, unless one is prepared to allow that there is some explicit primal source of authority other than Jesus, whence the primary authority, and therefore the inspiration and inerrancy, of the apostolic witness alone derive, one cannot claim that scripture is inspired and inerrant, except in whatever sense this can be claimed for any other Christian witness or kind of Christian witness if and because it is conformed to Jesus by being in substantial agreement with the witness of the apostles.

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