

Theistic religions, I have argued, characteristically generate concepts and symbols other than their constitutive concept and symbol "God." This they do because, although the whole point of "God" is to explicitly identify strictly ultimate reality as authorizing a certain self-understanding as the authentic understanding of ourselves, different theistic religions, all of which are formally the same in thus using the term, nonetheless represent materially different understandings of the meaning of ultimate reality for us. The result is that the same term "God" that functions in one context to *answer* the existential question can also function in another context to *ask* it, the meaning of God for us having become, in turn, the very thing we are concerned to ask about in this other context.

And so theistic religions develop certain other concepts and symbols the whole point of which is to ask and answer this further question about the meaning of God for us by explicitly identifying someone or something that, making this meaning fully explicit, decisively re-presents God and thereby authorizes a whole system of dependent re-presentations. Thus, just as "God" is used in theistic religions as the name for strictly ultimate reality insofar as it is the *implicit* primal source authorizing authentic self-understanding, so someone like Jesus, being designated "the Christ," "the Word of God," "the Son of God," and so on, is thereby said to be the decisive re-representation of God because he is the *explicit* primal source authorizing the same self-understanding.

But now it can also be said to be characteristic of theistic religions that they generate yet other concepts and symbols to designate the implicit primal source that is strictly ultimate reality itself as distinct from the explication of this reality by means of the constitutive theistic concept and symbol "God." Thus Meister Eckhart, for instance, distinguishes between the constitutive theistic concept and symbol "*deus*" and what he calls "*deitas*." And Paul may be held to make a similar distinction in Romans 1 by distinguishing between "ο Θεος," on the one hand, and "το γνωστον του Θεου" (vs. 19), "τα αορατα αυτου" and "η τε αιδιος αυτου δυναμις και Θειοτης" (vs. 20), on the other.

Reviewing the above, the first part of which simply tracks the argument in *The Point of Christology* (37 f.), I realize that a problem with it is

that it fails to take into account another insight in that book—namely, that "the two concepts of 'primary authority' and '[explicit] primal authorizing source' are correlative concepts in that each may and must be defined in relation to the other" (103). Clearly, that earlier argument fails to make certain important distinctions—notably, that between concepts and symbols that function to designate the meaning of God for us, such as "the Word of God," "the Son of God," "the Wisdom of God," and so on, and the persons and things that can re-present (and therefore also decisively re-present) God's meaning for us, such as sacraments, the church, or Jesus himself, who is said to be the Christ, the Son of God, the Wisdom of God, etc. But, above all, it fails to distinguish, as it should have, between the *transcendental* source of theistic religions in strictly ultimate reality conceptualized and symbolized as "God" and the whole *historical* structure of persons and things that each religion takes to be authorized by this transcendental source, and thus to be or to be authorized by its decisive re-presentation. That the correlation of explicit primal source of authority and primary authority is central to this structure does not mean that it is simply identical with the structure, which also includes other dependent re-presentations or secondary authorities.

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