

In my theological understanding, God and faith belong together in the sense that "God" designates strictly ultimate reality insofar as it authorizes—entitles and empowers—our authentic self-understanding, while "faith" designates our authentic self-understanding insofar as, being such, it is authorized—entitled and empowered—by strictly ultimate reality.

In theistic religions, however, the decisive re-presentation of God and faith also belong together in the sense that "the decisive re-presentation of God" designates strictly ultimate reality's explicit authorization—entitlement and empowerment—of our authentic self-understanding, while "faith" designates our authentic self-understanding insofar as, being authentic, it is implicitly as well as explicitly authorized—entitled and empowered—by strictly ultimate reality.

The decisive re-presentation of God is experienced as such either immediately, by those who thereby become the constitutive members of the community of faith constituted by it, or else mediately, by all other members of the same community, who can become such only through the witness of its constitutive members. In either case, the decisive re-presentation of God is experienced as such only insofar as it is experienced as explicitly authorizing—entitling and empowering—faith in the sense of our authentic self-understanding—even as God is experienced as such only insofar as strictly ultimate reality is experienced as the implicit primal ontic source of such explicit authorization—entitlement and empowerment.

The witness of the constitutive members of the community is its sole primary authority in that any other authority in the community must be authorized by this witness. But even its authority is *authorized*, deriving from the decisive re-presentation of God and, through it, from God. This means, then, that it is experienced as such, as the sole primary authority in the community, only insofar as it is experienced as in turn explicitly authorizing—entitling and empowering—faith in the sense of our authentic self-understanding.

Consequently, the authority of the sole primary authority is limited to explicitly authorizing—entitling and empowering—faith. Of course, faith,

like any other self-understanding, necessarily implies both beliefs (*credenda*) and actions (*agenda*), and one cannot bear witness to it except by somehow formulating the beliefs and somehow specifying the actions that it implies. For this reason, the authority of the sole primary authority in explicitly authorizing faith might appear to extend to explicitly authorizing beliefs and actions as well, at least insofar as they are necessarily implied by faith. But, recognizing, as we must, that in different situations the same beliefs can be differently formulated even as the same actions can be differently specified and, conversely, that different beliefs can be similarly formulated even as different actions can be similarly specified, we can only conclude that the authority of the sole primary authority does *not* extend to the formulations of beliefs or the specifications of actions, except in the sense that it authorizes any formulations insofar as they appropriately formulate the beliefs necessarily ^{presupposed and} implied by faith and any specifications insofar as they appropriately specify the actions that faith necessarily ^{presupposes and} implies.

There can be no question, then, of the primary authority's authorizing everything in the formulations of beliefs or the specifications of actions through which faith has found expression in particular situations in the past. As a matter of fact, there can be no question of everything being authorized even in the formulations of beliefs or the specifications of actions in the primary authority itself. Because even its authority derives entirely from the primal source of authority, it is itself authorized only to the extent that the faith of which it is the witness is authorized and its formulations of the beliefs and its specifications of the actions necessarily implied by this faith are appropriate thereto.

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