

In what sense is God the primal source of authority?

Heretofore I have generally held that God as such is the *implicit* source of authority, while whoever or whatever is taken to decisively re-present God is the *explicit* primal source. But, assuming that John Wesley's comment on Col 1:15 is to the point—namely, that the Christ is “*the image of the invisible God—whom none can represent [sic!], but His only begotten Son; in His divine nature the invisible image, in His human the visible image, of the Father*”—one would rather see both the implicit and the explicit source of authority as the two aspects of the decisive re-presentation of God, i.e., its “invisible,” or “divine,” and its “visible,” or “human,” aspects.

Who, then, is God—or, more exactly, God the Father? God, or God the Father, is the primal source of authority in its sheer *thatness* as distinct from its *whatness*. *Qua* Father, God is the sheer thatness of the strictly ultimate reality of which the Son and the Holy Spirit are in their related but distinct ways the whatness. One could also say that, if God simply as such is the primal source of authority, God the Father is precisely the *primal source* of authority, while God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are the primal source *of authority*, in its two aspects of entitlement and empowerment respectively. *Qua* Son, God is the primal source that implicitly *entitles* me to understand myself in a certain way. *Qua* Holy Spirit, God is the same primal source insofar as it implicitly *empowers* me to understand myself accordingly. Through the Son and the Holy Spirit together, *what* God is is revealed, *that* God is thereby acquiring its meaning for us.

Such a view seems to me to fit very well the theory of the immanent or ontological trinity that I have elaborated elsewhere (“On the Trinity,” *Theology* 83 [1980]: 97-102).

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