

In *Christ without Myth*, I took a position in important respects different from the one I should now wish to defend. The crux of the difference is that there I simply identified Christian faith with authentic human existence, whereas now I would stress the distinction between them, while still seeking to avoid a monistic (i.e., either exclusivistic or inclusivistic) understanding of the other religious and cultural traditions in relation to Christianity. (It is no doubt arguable that, even in *Christ without Myth*, my position was more complex—or, more exactly, more incoherent or self-contradictory—insofar as I, too, in my way, distinguished Christian faith ^{from} ~~and~~ authentic self-understanding, even while saying other things that asserted or implied their identity.)

Thus, in *Christ without Myth*, I asserted that the implication of my position was that "Christian existence is always a 'possibility in fact' as well as a 'possibility in principle,'" and that this may also be expressed by saying that "the specific possibility of faith in Jesus Christ is one and the same with a general ontological possibility belonging to man simply as such [T]he possibility of Christian existence is an original possibility of man before God" (140). I also asserted that, "so far from being something independently significant, the demand for faith in Jesus the Christ, rightly understood, is simply a transparent means for expressing this original claim always standing against our lives." Consequently, "Christian faith is to be interpreted exhaustively and without remainder as man's original possibility of authentic existence as this is clarified and conceptualized by an appropriate philosophical analysis" (143, 146). Or, again, "Christian faith is always a 'possibility in fact' because of the unconditioned gift and demand of God's love, which is the ever-present ground and end of all created things" (153).

Of course, what I meant by "Christian faith"(or "Christian existence") in such formulations was faith in Christ, understood to mean, not *Jesus Christ*, but "the hidden power, the inner meaning, the real substance of *all* human happenings," and, therefore, "not one historical event alongside others, but rather the *eschatological* event, or eternal word of God's unconditioned love, which is the ground and end of all historical events whatever" (156). But if this understanding of "Christ" as "the unconditioned gift and demand of God's love," etc. made it reasonable to identify Christian

faith with "man's original possibility of authentic existence," it nevertheless failed to account for the fact that what makes, and always has made, one a Christian, properly so-called, is to assert or imply that *Jesus* is the Christ.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the christological outline I projected in *Christ without Myth* was not simply "filled out" in *The Point of Christology*, but significantly corrected there (although right up through the essay, "The Point of Christology," I was still, in effect, arguing for the kind of christology outlined in *Christ without Myth*). Whereas in *Christ without Myth*, I had indeed got beyond the kind of revisionary christology for which Jesus is the Christ because he actualized authentic existence in his own "person" (cf. 161), I was still very much caught up in the kind of revisionary christology for which it is his "office" (of re-presenting the God-man relationship) that accounts for his being the Christ. True, I also had got beyond the kind of revisionary christology for which Jesus is "the great 'teacher' of the human race" (161 f.). But, significantly, I defended the claim that he is "mankind's preacher," arguing that his ministry is "both the norm and the fulfilment" of "the office of preacher"—or, in other words, that he is simply one more preacher alongside others, even if the first and foremost among them (162 f.). (One cannot fail to be struck by the extent to which my whole discussion of Jesus in *Christ without Myth* (159 ff.), as well as, incidentally, in *The Reality of God* (cf., e.g., 185 ff.), is of a piece with, and shaped by, the so-called new quest of the historical Jesus.)

At least by the time of *Faith and Freedom* (cf., e.g., 54 f.), the christology of *Christ without Myth* and *The Reality of God* was being displaced by the kind of christology finally worked out more adequately in *The Point of Christology*. (The fifth lecture that I drafted to augment the other four even then in process of publication, when I taught at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond in the Summer of 1978, already deployed the key concept of Jesus Christ as primal Christian sacrament.) But only in the course of writing *The Point of Christology* did I sharpen the distinction between "sacrament" and "example" and elaborate the philosophy of authority first worked out in "The Authority of Scripture for Theology" so as to yield, in effect, an a priori christology in which a crucial distinction is drawn between being the explicit primal (ontic) *source* of authority and being *an*, even *the* (=primary),

authority authorized by this source. Given these developments, I could at last clearly distinguish—and *had* to distinguish—between Christian faith and authentic existence without losing what was most importantly at stake in my earlier mistaken identification of them.

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