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An a priori criteriology entitles one to say that *the* criterion for a specific religion, in the sense of what is formally normative for it, must be its constitutive witness, the witness prior to the occurrence of which it was not constituted as the religion it is, but with the occurrence of which it is thus constituted. But what this constitutive witness is in the case of any specific religion is even in principle a posteriori and can be determined only historically. Thus whether the constitutive witness of Christianity is in principle the witness of Jesus himself or rather the witness of the apostles to Jesus can be determined only by empirical-historical inquiry. And this is true even though the concept of “constitutive witness” itself is a priori and has its place in a proper a priori criteriology.

But to determine that the constitutive witness of Christianity in principle is the witness of the apostles to Jesus still leaves undetermined what in fact is this witness. And this is even more obviously a posteriori and can be determined only historically.

5 June 1990; rev. 8 September 2003

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To what extent could an a priori *christology* such as Mackey's—for which the key concept is that of the founder of a religion, whose own subjective faith becomes contagious for her or his followers—be adapted to serve the purposes of an a priori *criteriology*?

It seems clear enough that the founder(s) of a religion, in the sense of its first and foremost adherent(s) as well as its primary teacher(s) and example(s), does(do) play a unique criteriological role. She or he(they), by reason of her or his(their) faith and witness, teaching and example, play(s) the role of the primary authority, and hence is(are) also *the* criterion, or formal norm, for the religion in question. For unless and until her or his(their) faith and witness, teaching and example, are present, the religion as such does not exist. On the other hand, the religion as such does exist as soon as her or his(their) faith and witness are present and as long as, through them, there continue to be persons having the same faith and bearing substantially the same witness.

What makes the case of the Christian religion problematic is that there is no consensus about just who the founder(s) of the Christian religion is(are). For those for whom normative Christianity is "the religion *of* Jesus," Jesus himself is the founder of Christianity. On the other hand, for those for whom normative Christianity is rather "the religion *about* Jesus," the founder(s) of the Christian religion is(are) one(all) of the disciples of Jesus otherwise designated as "the apostle(s)," taken as constituting the original Christian community. On either position, however, the significant point for an a priori criteriology is that the founder(s) of the Christian religion, whether Jesus himself or one(all) of the apostles, may claim, because of her or his(their) faith and witness, teaching and example, to be the primary authority, and hence also *the* criterion, or formal norm, of the religion.

In other words, the Christian case creates no problem for the a priori criteriological claim that it is always a religion's founder(s) or first adherent(s)

who, for just this reason, has(have) unique primary authority and therefore is(are) also *the* criterion, or formal norm, for that religion.

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