

The issue that Christian faith resolves is not whether life has an ultimate meaning (basic or elemental faith resolves that); nor is it whether the most adequate account of life's meaning is provided by thinking and speaking of the love of God (theistic faith resolves that). The issue it resolves, rather, is whether the love of God that most adequately accounts for life's meaning is a conditional or an unconditional love. Specifically, it is the issue between what Marxsen distinguishes as Paul's Pharisaic self-understanding before his conversion and his Christian self-understanding after his conversion.

Thus the reason that—as Gerrish puts it—faith in Christ, although "in form one instance among many of a generic faith," is nonetheless "distinctive in content," is that it discloses the love of God to be an unconditional love. Otherwise put, Christian faith discloses that the possibility of every human being's salvation has always already been constituted solely and sufficiently by God's love, relative to which anything and everything else is not and cannot be constitutive of that possibility (as it could be only if God's love were conditional rather than unconditional), but is and must be merely representative of it.

What is at stake, finally, in the difference between a strictly representativist theology like mine (or Maurice's) and all other theologies that, to some degree or other, or in one way or another, are constitutivist, is whether God's love alone is, in every respect, unconditional, and thus the sole and sufficient ontic source of the possibility of everyone's salvation, or whether it is, in some respect, conditional, being conditioned by something or someone other than God as the ontic source of this possibility. But this is to say that what is at stake in this difference, when all is said and done, is *either/or*: either *solus Deus*, or idolatry—in howsoever subtle or sublimated a form.

Of course, salvation itself in the sense of the faithful acceptance of God's unconditional love is, in the nature of the case, conditional, in that it is conditional on, or conditioned by, just such faithful acceptance. But since such acceptance itself is, in turn, conditional solely and sufficiently on God's love, not God's love in any respect on it, recognition of it as, in its own way, a

condition—namely, a condition of salvation—in no way conflicts with maintaining that God's love itself is, in every respect, unconditional, and so the sole and sufficient condition of the possibility of everyone's salvation.

Can this point also be made by thinking and speaking, not of God's *unconditional* love, but of God's *prevenient* love, or of God's *boundless, all-encompassing* love? It would seem so. For if God's love is "prevenient" in the sense of always already coming before *all* things, then *no* thing could be a condition of its coming, and so a condition of the possibility of salvation. Likewise, if God's love is "boundless" and encompasses *every* thing, then, again, *no* thing could be a condition of it, but only an expression of it, so that it is and must be the sole and sufficient condition of the possibility of salvation.

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