

If Christian faith itself is a *medium salutis*—namely, the *medium salutis apprehensivum*; and if "the Christian *proprium*" is "the experience of Jesus as the Christ, or, as we might say today, the experience of Jesus as of decisive significance for human existence" (and I have argued that both of these are the case), then it is at best one-sided to define "Christian faith and witness" in purely formal terms, as I have sometimes defined them—namely, as "human self-understanding and praxis insofar as they are mediated—immediately or mediately—through Jesus Christ" (*Revisioning the Past*: 17 f.). So formulated, the definition focuses solely on the *ontic*, as distinct from the *noetic*, pole of the Christian *proprium*; and as understandable as such one-sidedness may be, it is nonetheless exactly that. Consequently, I need to reformulate my definition in some such way as this: "human self-understanding and life-praxis insofar as they are mediated—immediately and mediately—through *experience of Jesus Christ*" (cf. the reformulation in *Doing Theology Today*: 24).

Elsewhere I have written that "what alone makes anything properly Christian [this being an exact definition of "the Christian *proprium*"] [is] *the particular experience of Jesus as of decisive significance for human existence, which, from the apostles onward, has provided the basis for everything that Christians have thought, said, and done*" ("Toward Doing Theology": 7; italics added). "*One experiences Jesus to be thus significant insofar as it is decisively through him that one's own existential question about authentic self-understanding is directly and explicitly answered*" (*Revisioning the Past*: 18; italics added). This means that "[t]o be a Christian is *to have experienced Jesus, immediately or mediately, as thus significant, because it is decisively through him that one's own existential question about the meaning of ultimate reality for us receives its answer*" ("Toward Doing Theology": 7; italics added). The evident importance of the noetic pole of "experience" in all these formulations calls to mind my characterization of what is attempted in the first four chapters of *The Point of Christology*: "By considering in some detail each of the three points in what I have called 'the contemporary revisionary consensus,' we have carried out something like a Heideggerian 'dismantling' (*Destruktion*) of the usual revisionary christology. . . . That is to say, we have tried to return from the whole

long tradition of christological reflection, of which contemporary christologies are typically the revision, to *the original experience underlying the constitutive christological assertion*. In this way we have tried to recover the point of this assertion, so as to give an adequate account of its meaning and truth" (86; italics added).

As I have written elsewhere, the significance of the orthodox doctrine of the *media salutis*—given the insight that Jesus Christ himself is *the* (= primal) *medium s. exhibitivum*—is that it allows one rightly to elaborate the distinction (i.e., the difference as well as the unity, and the unity as well as the difference) between Christianity—or, better, perhaps, "Christianness" (*die Christlichkeit*)—on the one hand, and authentic human existence, on the other. Christianness, arguably, is related to authenticity as means is related to end—as "means of salvation," or, more formally, "means of ultimate transformation," from inauthentic to authentic existence. As such, however, Christianness has two poles: an ontic pole = Jesus Christ, and a noetic pole = faith. The first pole, accordingly, is rightly distinguished as *the* (= primal) *medium s. exhibitivum*, the church and its so-called means of salvation being the other *media s. exhibitiva* — primary and secondary respectively—while the second pole is rightly distinguished as the (= primal) *medium s. apprehensivum*, hope and love being the primary *media s. apprehensiva*, and good works, of mercy as well as of piety, being the secondary such means.

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