

Whether or not *X* so experiences *Y* that *Y* becomes a revelation or act of God for *X* depends, finally, on how *X* takes, or *as* what *X* experiences and understands, *Y*. Unless *X* experiences and understands *Y as* making explicit a certain possibility for *X*'s self-understanding, *Y* cannot be a revelation or an act of God for *X*—just as *Y* cannot be such a revelation or act of God unless *X* experiences the self-understanding that *Y* is taken to re-present as *X*'s own authentic possibility.

Of course, what *Y* may think, say, and do toward so re-presenting this possibility to *X* is by no means irrelevant to *X*'s experiencing *Y* as just such a revelation or act of God. And the same is true of what yet others—*A*, *B*, and *C*—may think, say, and do by way of re-presenting *Y* as precisely God's revelation or act (cf. *Doing Theology Today*: 136 f.). But although what *A*, *B*, and *C* may think, say, and do may in this way facilitate *X*'s experiencing *Y* as God's revelation or act (*GV*, 1: 110 ff.), in the final analysis, *A*, *B*, and *C* can in no way guarantee it, since it depends, finally, on the free decision of *X* her- or himself—in fact, on *X*'s *twofold* free decision: (1) to take *Y* as re-presenting a certain possibility for *X*'s own self-understanding; and (2) to experience and understand this possibility as *X*'s own authentic understanding of her- or himself.

In this respect, the service that others may perform by what they may think, say, or do in re-presenting a certain possibility of self-understanding is like everything else that one human being can do for another with respect to the other's own decision for or against her or his authentic possibility. Like doing theology, including doing whatever has to be done by way of establishing the credibility as well as the appropriateness of Christian witness (e.g., by arguing for the existence of God or for valid transcultural moral principles), bearing witness, even the most valid Christian witness, is a matter of doing "good works," "works of love," all of which are directed toward serving the same ultimate end: "the removing so far as possible of all the false stumbling blocks to faith, so that the 'true *skandalon*' can be genuinely encountered and the decision to which he summons freely and conscientiously made" ("Theology and Philosophy," *JR*, 44: 14). (This might also be expressed by saying that all that any one of us may do for anyone else

with respect to her or his own decision of faith is to render her or him, so far as possible, "without excuse" [Rom 1:20].)

23 February 2000; rev. 7 December 2008