

Bultmann argues that it is clear from Paul's use of it that "the concept of the 'Spirit' is demythologized." "[I]n the final analysis, [Paul] understands the 'Spirit' to be the possibility in fact of the new life that is disclosed in faith. . . . [The 'Spirit' is] the possibility of life that [believers] must lay hold of by resolve" (*NTM*: 20).

Heretofore I have tended to resist this argument, on the ground that the possibility in fact of new life is one thing, the divine presence and power that makes it possible—namely, the Holy Spirit—something else. In other words, it has seemed to me that this is a good example of Bultmann's simply collapsing the distinction between ourselves and our possibilities, on the one hand, and God and God's action, on the other.

At the same time, I have myself argued that "the term 'religion' by its very meaning always has an objective as well as a subjective reference— analogously to the way in which, on a traditional theological analysis, the term 'faith' refers to the 'faith which is believed' (*fides quae creditur*) as well as to the 'faith through which (it) is believed' (*fides qua creditur*). . . . Accordingly, religion is not only the explicit understanding *through* which our existence is understood; it is also the explicit understanding which *is* understood as and when we so understand ourselves" (*ITOOTR*: 10). Along the same lines, then, I have further argued that, in the specific case of the Christian religion, all prophets, sages, and saints "are always only one among others, dependent for their authority upon the explicit understanding of existence that alone is . . . constitutive of the faith they represent," and that "this explicit understanding [*sc.* of existence] is not, in the first instance, some law or teaching or word of wisdom, but Jesus himself, through whom the meaning of ultimate reality for us is decisively re-presented" (97). In other words, if Bultmann identifies the Holy Spirit with the possibility in fact of the new life disclosed in Christian faith, I have myself identified Jesus, as Christians understand him, with the same possibility.

But can one validly say that, if what Christians think and say about Jesus in expressing their understanding of him is demythologized, he is himself the possibility in fact of new, i.e., authentic, life? Yes, I believe one can say this. In fact, this is exactly what Bultmann's demythologizing/

existentialist interpretation of the Christ event demonstrates—or, at any rate, what it would demonstrate if it were consistently carried out by allowing that the Christ event is decisively *representative* of the possibility of authentic existence, not *constitutive* of it. There is also the consideration that religions are rightly understood analogically as themselves so many means of ultimate transformation—more exactly, as themselves so many *primary* means of ultimate transformation, each representing and being constituted by ~~#~~ some *primal* means, and each constituting and being represented by certain *secondary* means.

As for whether two distinct things—Jesus himself, as understood by faith, and the Holy Spirit—can both be validly said to be one and the same possibility in fact of authentic existence, in the sense of the decisive representation of this possibility, an affirmative answer can be defended by distinguishing between Jesus Christ, as the *normative, or entitling*, aspect of the Christian primal means of ultimate transformation, and the Holy Spirit, as the *causative, or empowering*, aspect of the same primal means.

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