

The different things Bultmann says about "the need for acceptance [*das Geltungsbedürfnis*]" are not as clear and consistent as they might be.

In some places—notably in the essay, "*Christus des Gesetzes Ende*" (GV 2: 32-58)—he talks about it throughout as though it were a need only of "the natural man," i.e., one who, having always already refused to live solely by God's grace, is anxious lest her or his life slip away without meaning anything, and so undertakes to secure its meaning by her or his accomplishments. On this understanding, the need for acceptance would not be present and effective if one had trusted unreservedly in God, thereby accepting God's unconditional acceptance. Thus when Bultmann speaks elsewhere of "the need for acceptance of the natural man [*das Geltungsbedürfnis des natürlichen Menschen*]" (e.g., GV 3: 192), it doesn't occur to anyone oriented to this understanding to suppose that this is other than a redundancy, since no one other than the natural man would have such a need.

Elsewhere, however,—notably in the essay, "*Gnade und Freiheit*" (GV 2:149-161)—it becomes clear that this is not really what Bultmann means to say. Here "the need for acceptance" is treated—in Heideggerian terms—as an "*existenzial*," or "*ontologisch*," need, more or less like "*Sorge*," rather than as an "*existenziell*," or "*ontisch*," need peculiar to the natural man. Thus Bultmann says, "*Das Geltungsbedürfnis ist als solches nichts Perverses, sondern dem Menschen, der mit anderen und vor anderen leben muß, angemessen. Aber es ist ein Grundmißverständnis, wenn er meint, seine Geltung erzwingen zu können, den Anspruch auf Geltung durch Leistung begründen zu können,—durch sein Werk und durch sein Sein. Im Grunde des Geltungsbedürfnisses liegt das Wissen um das Angewiesensein auf das Urteil anderer, und auf die Abhängigkeit von ihnen; letztlich das Wissen um eine dem Urteil aller anderen Menschen überlegenen Instanz, um Gott. Aber dieses Wissen wird pervertiert, wenn der Mensch die Geltung erzwingen will, wenn er einen durch eigene Leistung begründeten Anspruch auf sie erhebt, wenn er nicht versteht, daß sie ihm nur geschenkt werden, daß er in Wahrheit nur aus Gnade leben kann*" (152 f.). Clearly, on this understanding, Bultmann's talk of "the need for acceptance of the natural man" is not redundant, but a significant, carefully distinguishing formulation.

As for the "knowledge" that he says lies at the bottom of the need for acceptance, isn't it just what he has in mind when he cites Augustine's "*Tu nos fecisti ad te, et cor nostrum inquietum est, donec requiescat in te*" ?

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