

"Über den Glauben kann man nicht diskutieren; den kann man nur bekennen."—

Willi Marxsen

If it is true, as I now think it is, that believing that *p* is not something that one decides to do or not to do, but rather something that one is caused to do or not caused to do by what one takes as evidence—experiential or argumentative—Marxsen's statement deserves to be reconsidered. Perhaps it is not meant only, or even primarily, to distinguish religious believing from other kinds of believing, but rather to make a strictly logical point about *any* kind of believing—namely, that, simply as such, as believing, it is something that is either caused in us or not caused in us by what we take as evidence, and so something that we cannot discuss but only confess.

Even if this interpretation is granted, however, there is evidently another strictly logical point also to be made about all kinds of believing that *p*, including religious believing that *p*. This is the point that "I believe that *p*" necessarily implies not only "*p*," but also, "It is true that *p*," or "*p* is true." Thus Vincent Brümmer says: "*Constatives and expressions of belief* are always aimed at convincing the hearer of the truth of the asserted constative or the expressed belief. It would be absurd to say, 'It is a fact that *p* (or I believe that *p*), but I do not want you to believe that *p*'" (*Theology and Philosophical Inquiry*: 30). Assuming, then, that Brümmer's point is well taken and that one way of expressing one's religious belief is confessing it, one may infer that confessing one's religious belief that *p* would be equally absurd were one to add, "But I do not want you to believe that *p*." In confessing one's belief that *p*, one implies—as Brümmer says, not merely contextually but undeniably—both that *p* and that *p* is true, and so worthy of being believed by anyone else as well as oneself.

In short, however true it is that believing that *p* as such neither can nor need be discussed/justified, the claim to truth necessarily implied by one's believing that *p* both can be and, in certain circumstances, may very well need to be, discussed/justified. Nor can religious believing that *p* be an exception to this rule except by forfeiting its right to be accepted as a matter of believing that *p*.

A further point: although I'm not yet able to explain to my satisfaction just why it is so, I believe that all this is connected with my long-standing position that believing that *p*, and so accepting *p* as true, and therefore authoritative *de facto*, necessarily implies claiming that *p* is also authoritative *de jure*.

Finally, never forget that the connection between belief and truth is so tight one doesn't count as even believing something unless one takes it to be true. To believe and to take to be true are one and the same

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