

How should the concept "*religio vera*" be generalized, given the meaning assigned it by the orthodox?

The concept "*religio*" in general, and thus the concept "*religio vera s. christiana*" in particular, is understood by the orthodox in a very broad sense. It not only includes, on the one hand, what I distinguish as "faith" (and "love") but also, on the other hand, what I call "witness," "implicit" as well as "explicit." Accordingly, if the concept "*religio vera*" is to be generalized with a comparable breadth of meaning, it will have to include not only the explicit symbolization of authentic self-understanding by means of specifically religious beliefs, rites, and social organization, but also the actualization of authentic self-understanding, on the one hand, and the life-praxis, secular as well as religious, implied by such self-understanding, on the other.

Since the orthodox concept "*religio vera*," as indeed "*religio*" in general, is defined in terms of the immediate and mediate worship of God, it is defined in specifically theistic terms, as is confirmed by the definition of "*religio improprie*" as either "*religio falsa*," which is to say, the worship of false gods or the false worship of the true God, or "*irreligiositas*," which is said to be, simply, "*atheismus*." If, then, "*religio vera*" is to be generalized so as to get beyond theism, it will need to be understood either as authentic self-understanding (or, possibly, as the relatively more active aspect of such self-understanding, as distinct from its relatively more passive aspect), together with the life-praxis, the beliefs and actions, secular as well as religious, that such self-understanding implies. On the contrary, "*religio falsa*" will need to be defined as inauthentic self-understanding, together with the false beliefs and the wrong actions that necessarily follow therefrom.

If "*vera religio est, quæ verbo divino est conformis*," the comparable way of making the generalized point would be to say that that religion is true which is conformed to the meaning of strictly ultimate reality for us. Of course, by "*verbum divinum*" is meant, if not scripture, then the incarnate word to which scripture bears witness, as distinct from the unincarnate word that, for orthodoxy, is with God, indeed, is God. Correspondingly, by "the meaning of strictly ultimate reality for us" should be meant, neither that meaning simply in itself nor the primary authority of any particular religious

tradition, but that meaning as somehow decisively re-presented and as thereby authorizing some true religion. We may say, then, that any religion is true that is conformed to the explicit primal source authorizing any true religion.

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