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I have written that “[t]he true religion’ . . . could be defined as the primary form of culture whose explicit declaration of how human existence as such is constituted (1) agrees with how human existence is in fact constituted; and (2) is free of any claim to be constitutive of human existence as distinct from explicitly declaring its constitution” (Notebooks, n. d.; rev. 3 September 2003).

It’s clear upon reflection, however, that the second of the conditions I stipulated is already implied by the first. If a religion’s explicit declaration of how human existence as such is constituted really does agree with how human existence in fact is constituted; and if human existence in fact is constituted solely by strictly ultimate reality, then the religion, not being either strictly ultimate reality or an essential aspect thereof, is *eo ipso* free of any claim to constitutive, as distinct from declarative, significance for human existence.

Even so, given the tendency of all religion to lay claim, in one way or another, to constitutive rather than merely declarative, significance, it is well to stipulate the second condition of being “the true religion” explicitly, even if it is already implied by the first.

So far as the Christian religion is concerned, the significance of Jesus’ death—and of the fact that it is precisely the crucified who is risen and reigns as Lord—is that it confirms Christianity’s fulfilment of the second condition, even as Jesus’ life confirms its fulfilment of the first. Just as his life declares human existence as such to be constituted as it in fact is constituted by strictly ultimate reality, so his death—and his reigning only as the crucified Lord—underscores that his declaration itself is neither strictly ultimate nor an essential aspect of what alone is. It is thoroughly declarative or re-presentative, in no way constitutive, of human existence and its authentic actualization. This is why to die *with* Jesus is also, paradoxically, to die *to* him—even as, in Paul’s great vision of the last things in 1 Corinthians 15, he himself will finally surrender his lordship so that the God who has subjected all things to him may be “all in all.”

21 September 2006