

504. On "Special Revelation"

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On my analysis, "*special* revelation" is to what I distinguish as "*original* revelation" as "re-presentation" is to "presentation." Thus it points to the constitutive moment of any particular religion, which is constituted by some special re-presentation of what is originally presented to human existence as such, if only implicitly. This means that, for the particular religion constituted by a given special revelation, this revelation is also "*decisive* revelation." So, although from the standpoint of some other religion it may be merely one special revelation among others, from the standpoint of the religion it constitutes it is decisive revelation.

Within any given religion, however, one may also speak of "special revelation," meaning thereby a special re-presentation of what is decisively represented in the decisive revelation constituting the religion in question. Thus, for example, preaching the pure word of God or rightly administering the sacraments in the Christian community is a special revelation in this sense, in that it re-presents the decisive re-presentation, which, in this community, is Jesus Christ himself.

So understood, a special revelation is to decisive revelation as *an* authority is to the explicit primal *source* of authority -- original revelation being analogously related to the implicit primal *source* of authority, which is to say, strictly ultimate reality itself in its meaning for us. Thus, although, for someone outside the Christian religion, Jesus may be a special revelation in the sense of a re-presentation of original revelation, for anyone within the Christian religion, Jesus is rather decisive revelation in the sense of the decisive re-presentation of original revelation.

This is what I mean by saying that the Jesus who, from one standpoint, is *an* authority is also, from another standpoint, the explicit primal *source* of authority -- this being simply another way of expressing *the* Christian paradox.

Actually, Jesus is a special revelation, and so one authority among others, even for Christians insofar as his own preaching is authorized somewhat in the way in which prophecy is authorized by reference to himself as the explicit primal source of its authority. This, I take it, is what Luther means by Christ as *ex emplar/exemplum*, revealer of the law, and so on.

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