

Bultmann argues that there is one assessment of Jesus' person that corresponds to his own intention—insofar, namely, as he is sent by God, "insofar as he is bearer of the word" (*Jesus*: 181). I take it to be clear that, in the purely formal concepts of W. A. Christian's properly developed philosophy of religion, to be "bearer of the word [*sc.* of God]" is to function as "the vehicle of a religious suggestion" (*Meaning and Truth in Religion*: 99).

According to Christian, "in the history of religion a great variety of things have functioned in this way." "Any natural object (like a vine, the sun, a stone), any human relationship (like sexual love, physical combat, parenthood, political authority), or any historical event (like a flood, the Exodus, Gotama's enlightenment, the death of Christ) might, logically speaking, function [as the vehicle of a suggestion]. . . . Such objects, relations, and events introduce, in a concrete way, answers to basic religious questions. They become paradigmatic [religious] symbols" (99). (What, I ask, is a "paradigmatic [religious] symbol" if not what I call "the explicit primal source of religious authority"?)

Christian also distinguishes, significantly, between "the content of the suggestion" and "the way it is conveyed," the second presumably being simply another way of saying, "the vehicle of the suggestion." It's likewise significant that he stresses that both "vary from faith to faith" (102).

An "effective suggestion," Christian implies, is "a starting point for thought" (95). I wonder whether this isn't pretty much the sort of thing Marxsen has in mind in analyzing the names, or, really, the naming, of Jesus. First, there is the encounter with Jesus' demand; then there is "reflection" on the significance of his demand—and, finally, of him himself as the demander.

I also find it interesting that what Christian means by "a basic religious proposal"—namely, a summary statement of the meaning of a religious suggestion (109)—sounds very much like what I mean by "the constitutive assertion" of a religion.

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