

What is my own answer to the question as to “the foundation of faith (*fundamentum fidei*)”?

Simply accepting Hunnius’s threefold analysis of the *fundamentum fidei* as (1) *essentiale aut substantiale*; (2) *organicum seu ministeriale*; and (3) *dogmaticum seu doctrinale*, I should say that:

(1) *the essential or substantial foundation of faith* is the twofold reality of Jesus and God: Jesus as the *historical* reality through which transcendental, ultimate reality in its meaning for us is decisively re-presented; and God as the *transcendental, strictly ultimate* reality whose meaning for us Jesus decisively re-presents;

(2) *the organic or ministerial foundation of faith* is the earliest stratum of Christian witness, explicit as well as implicit, properly called “the witness of the apostles,” or “the apostolic witness”; and

(3) *the dogmatic or doctrinal foundation of faith* is the twofold constitutive assertion (or the two constitutive assertions) of the apostolic witness: the *christological* assertion that Jesus is the historical reality through which the meaning of transcendental, ultimate reality for us is decisively re-presented; and the *theological* assertion that God is the transcendental, strictly ultimate reality whose meaning for us Jesus decisively re-presents.

Ad (1)—Presupposed by this formulation of the essential or substantial foundation of faith is a distinction between *transcendental, ultimate reality, including strictly ultimate reality, in its meaning for us*, on the one hand, and the *historical reality through which the meaning of transcendental, ultimate reality for us is decisively re-presented*, on the other hand. The same distinction may also be made by distinguishing between the *implicit* primal ontic source authorizing our authentic existence, on the one hand, and the *explicit* primal ontic source authorizing it, on the other hand. Because the explicit primal ontic source is what it is asserted to be—namely, Jesus as the decisive re-presentation of the meaning

of transcendental, ultimate reality for us—God can be truly asserted to be the implicit primal ontic source. On the other hand, because the implicit primal ontic source is what it is asserted to be—namely, God as the meaning of transcendental, strictly ultimate reality for us—Jesus can be truly asserted to be the explicit primal ontic source.

Ad (2)—As for the organic or ministerial foundation of faith, the pertinent comment is that the earliest stratum of Christian witness, and so the witness of the apostles, both can and should be identified in two main forms, not merely in one. In addition to the *implicit* form of “the Jesus-kerygma” reconstructible from the synoptic gospels, there is the *explicit* form of “the Christ-kerygma” that can be reconstructed from the Pauline epistles. The importance of the first form is its witness to the subject of the christological assertion, Jesus, whereas the importance of the second form is its witness, through what it predicates of this subject, to Jesus’ decisive christological and theological significance. If there are good reasons, as there are, for assigning a certain empirical-historical priority to the first form of witness, there are also good reasons for insisting on the existential-historical importance of the second form.

Ad (3)—So far as the dogmatic or doctrinal foundation of faith is concerned, the important point is that the twofold constitutive *assertion* (or the two constitutive assertions) of the apostolic witness is (or are) not to be simply identified with any of its (or their) many *formulations*. Assertions, like implications and presuppositions, are one thing; formulations, like consequences and assumptions, something else. This distinction must be insisted upon, indeed, even in the case of the formally normative formulations of the apostolic witness itself. Even such formally normative formulations, together with all their assumptions and consequences, are at best but “useful means”—means of expressing, more or less adequately and fittingly, the only real dogmatic or doctrinal foundation of faith in such a way as thereby to assert faith’s only really essential or substantial foundation.

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What is my own answer to the question as to "the foundation of faith" (= *fundamentum fidei*)?

Accepting Hunnius's threefold analysis of the *fundamentum fidei* as (1) *essentiale aut substantiale*; (2) *organicum seu ministeriale*; and (3) *dogmaticum seu doctrinale*, I should say that:

(1) **the essential or substantial foundation of faith** is the twofold reality of Jesus as the one through whom God becomes event and of God as the One who becomes event through Jesus—the twofold reality of Jesus as the one who brings (or calls) us to faith in God and of God as the One to faith in whom Jesus brings (or calls) us;

(2) **the organic or ministerial foundation of faith** is the earliest stratum of Christian witness, properly called "the witness of the apostles"—"the apostolic witness"; and

(3) **the dogmatic or doctrinal foundation of faith** is the constitutive christological assertion that Jesus is the one through whom God becomes event, or who brings (or calls) us to faith in God, together with its theological implication that God is the One who becomes event through Jesus, or to faith in whom Jesus brings (or calls) us.

Presupposed by this formulation of the essential or substantial foundation of faith is a distinction between ultimate reality, including strictly ultimate reality, in its meaning for us, on the one hand, and the decisive re-presentation of the meaning of ultimate reality for us, on the other hand. This distinction can also be made by distinguishing between the *implicit* primal ontic source authorizing our authentic existence and the *explicit* primal ontic source authorizing it. Because the explicit primal ontic source is what (or who) it is, the implicit primal ontic source can be truthfully asserted to be God—the God who becomes event through Jesus, or to faith in whom Jesus brings (or calls) us. On the other hand, because the implicit primal source is what (or who) it is, Jesus can be truthfully asserted to be the one through whom God becomes event, or who brings (or calls) us to faith in God.

As for the organic or ministerial foundation of faith, the pertinent comment is that the earliest stratum of Christian witness, which is to say, the witness of the apostles, may very well be identified, not merely in one main form, but in two. In addition to "the Jesus-kerygma" reconstructible from the synoptic gospels, there is "the Christ-kerygma" reconstructible from the Pauline epistles. The importance of the first is its witness to the subject of the christological assertion; the importance of the second, its witness to the properly christological significance of the subject from the standpoint of Christian faith and witness. If there are good reasons for assigning a certain empirical-historical priority to the first, there are equally good reasons for insisting on the existential-historical importance of the second.

Finally, so far as the dogmatic or doctrinal foundation of faith is concerned, the constitutive christological assertion is not to be identified simply with any of its many formulations, including both the classical formulation, "Jesus is the Christ," and the formulations given here through which this classical formulation and all of its functional equivalents are, in a way, interpreted. In the same way, the theological implication of the christological assertion—or, if you will, the constitutive *theological* assertion—is not simply identified with any of the consequences or assumptions of any of its formulations. Assertions and implications, and also presuppositions, are one thing; formulations and consequences, and also assumptions, something else. This distinction must be insisted upon, indeed, even in the case of the formally normative formulations of the christological assertion in the apostolic witness itself. Even such formally normative, or "canonical," formulations, together with their assumptions and consequences, are at best only more or less "useful means," or "means of salvation," insofar as they serve to express the assertion and to bring about the experience of the twofold reality out of which the assertion and its implication arise and toward which they remain ever directed.