

It now seems clear to me that I have been at cross purposes with myself, to some extent, in the different things I have had to say about "the constitutive christological assertion."

Correct as it may be to say that the constitutive christological assertion is "the assertion about Jesus, however formulated, that constitutes *christology* explicitly as such" (*The Point of Christology*: 22; italics added), it is, at the very least, misleading to say that "*the Christian witness of faith* is constituted explicitly as such by the christological claim concerning the decisive significance of Jesus" (*On Theology*: 2; italics added).

The second statement is misleading because it does not preclude the inference that the christological assertion is the *only* assertion constitutive of the Christian witness explicitly as such (again, as distinct from christology). But unless this inference is precluded, my analysis of "the question christology answers" (PC: 20-40) is fundamentally called into question, because there would then be no reason to accept my argument that, "contrary to the assumption typically made by revisionary and traditional christologies alike, the question christology answers is not simple but complex. It is not only a question about Jesus but also, and at one and the same time, a question about the meaning of ultimate reality for us" (39).

In the same way, it would no longer be possible to assume, as I have assumed all along, that my answer to the question of the *fundamentum fidei* is substantially convergent with Marxsen's, according to (my interpretation of) which, the *fundamentum fidei essentielle aut substantiale* is "the twofold reality of God as the One who becomes event through Jesus, and of Jesus as the one through whom God becomes event," even as the *fundamentum fidei dogmaticum seu doctrinale* is "the twofold assertion, in some concepts and terms or other, that Jesus is the one through whom God becomes event, and that God is the One who becomes event through Jesus" (*Doing Theology Today*: 252, 250). And, of course, the rationale for my interpretation of the distinction between "theocentric" and "christocentric" (*Is There Only One True Religion*. . .?:84) would be undercut.

The evidence seems clear that, up to now, I may have overlooked the incoherence of my formulations because of my distinction between "the constitutive christological assertion" itself, on the one hand, and "its [strictly] theological implication," on the other. In any case, this distinction clearly will not do; for if it were appropriate, one could not appropriately say, as I have said all along, that "[f]aith in God of a certain kind is not merely an element in Christian faith along with several others; it simply *is* Christian faith, the heart of the matter itself" (*The Reality of God*: 14). It would also be quite impossible to do justice to the orthodox distinction between "constitutive" (or "constituting") articles, on the one hand, and "conservative" (or "conserving") articles, on the other; for there is no question that orthodoxy is entirely justified in reckoning the constitutive (or constituting) articles to include strictly theological as well as properly christological ones, even if it is mistaken in too simply identifying these articles with certain classical doctrinal formulations, such as the tri-unity of God or the one person-two natures of Jesus Christ.

Incidentally, what fidelity to the insights of the Reformation requires is that the "moral" aspect of the existential question and of the Christian answer thereto—as well as, naturally, the moral (and political) implications of this answer—be given their full due—by recognizing that the assertion, in some concepts and terms or other, that we are justified by grace alone through faith alone is just as "constitutive" (or "constituting") as either the properly christological assertion or the strictly theological assertion.

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