

Why is the earliest witness uniquely authoritative?

The earliest witness is uniquely authoritative because it is correlative with the event that is the coming into being of the church (Knox).

This event has two aspects—signified by Bultmann's speaking of "Jesus' word" in its *that* as distinct from its *what* as both "his having spoken it and [the community's] having been addressed by it," or by Knox's distinguishing within "the event" between "person" and "community." My own way of signifying the same two aspects is to distinguish between the "ontic" and the "noetic" sources (or components of the source) of authority, in order then to clarify the correlation between the primal source of authority that has these two components, on the one hand, and the primary authority authorized by it, on the other.