

Although it is solely the Jesus attested as the Christ in the earliest traditions who authorizes what they say (*solus Christus*), it is solely through what they say that we finally have to do with the Jesus Christ who is the source of their and, through them, all other Christian authority (*sola scriptura*). By its very nature, then, Christian faith is apostolic faith: faith *with* the apostles in the Jesus to whose being as the Christ they uniquely are the witnesses and who is himself uniquely present in their witness of faith.

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Since it is Jesus Christ alone who is the source of the apostolic witness's authority, it, too, is an authorized authority, even if it is not authorized by any other authority, properly so-called. But it must also be said, conversely, that the Jesus Christ who is Lord even of the apostolic witness, just as he is, in Luther's words, *rex scripturæ*, is none other than the Jesus whom this witness uniquely attests to be the Christ.

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The apostles are uniquely authoritative because being—in John Knox's terms—"the community" aspect of the decisive event of the church's coming into being, they are, together with Jesus as "the person" aspect of the event, co-constitutive of it. This means that just as there is no way of holding fast to the faith and witness of the apostles except by holding fast to the Jesus who is the explicit primal ontic source of their authority (their own experience of him as such being its explicit primal noetic source), so there is no way of holding fast to this Jesus except by also holding fast to the faith and witness of the apostles authorized by him as their explicit primal ontic source.

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The two concepts, "primary authority" and "primal source of authority" are correlative in that anything that is either may and must be defined in relation to whatever is the other. This puts more formally what John Knox characteristically expresses in

speaking of "the Church and the reality of Christ": "One way of describing the Church is to say that it is the community which remembers Jesus; but one can equally truly define Jesus (in the only really significant meaning of that name for the Christian) as the one who is remembered. It is only as he is remembered [*sc.* by the Church] that he has meaning for either Christian theology or Christian devotion. . . .[T]he human existence of Jesus, insofar as it has continuing being and importance, is a memory of the Church" (*The Church and the Reality of Christ*: 49; "The Church Is Christ's Body": 57). By the same token, if the sole primary authority of the apostles may and must be described as deriving solely from Jesus as its explicit primal ontic source, Jesus himself may and must be defined (in the only really significant meaning of "Jesus" for Christian faith, witness, and theology) as the explicit primal ontic source whence the original and originating witness of the apostles alone derives its primary authority.

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If the Christian witness is constituted as such by the assertions expressed or implied by the original and originating and therefore constitutive Christian witness, then this earliest witness is uniquely authoritative for all Christian witness. For even though it, in turn, is authorized by a source beyond itself—namely, by the decisive event of its own coming into being—it is just as true that the only necessary and therefore sufficient condition of any Christian witness's being authorized by this same primal source is that it agree in substance, even if not in form, with this earliest Christian witness.

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The claims made for any primary authority—to the effect that it is "pure," "perfect," "authentic," "inspired," "inerrant," and so on—are valid if, and only if, any such attribute is a function of the fact that, although the authority is indeed authorized solely by a primal source beyond itself, this authorizing source is available as such, finally, solely through *this* primary authority. In this sense, the validity of the claim

depends on defining the primal source of authority and the primary authority it authorizes correlatively, in correlation with one another.

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The explicit primal source of authority and the primary authority authorized by this source mutually condition one another and must be understood accordingly, which is to say, correlatively. So, while such authority as the primary authority has is derived entirely from its explicit primal source, what this source does and does not authorize can be determined, finally, solely by appeal to this primary authority. Thus to accept Jesus as the Christ is, in effect, to acknowledge the apostles' constitutive experience of him as the explicit primal source of authority and the witness of the apostles as the sole primary authority authorized by this source. But while such authority as the apostolic witness has thus derives entirely from Jesus as the apostles experienced him, what Jesus does and does not authorize can be determined, finally, only by appeal to their apostolic witness. For this reason, or in this sense, this witness may be said to be, among other things, inspired and inerrant, provided (1) it is interpreted as witness to Jesus as the Christ, which is to say, as of decisive significance for human existence; (2) the substance of the witness, in the assertions it makes or implies, together with their necessary presuppositions and implications, is clearly distinguished from its form, in the sense of the formulations of its assertions, their assumptions and consequences; and (3) the terms "inspired" and "inerrant" are understood simply as alternative and interchangeable ways of formulating its claim to unique authority, as distinct from somehow explaining either how it was authorized or the consequence of its authorization.

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What is right in the notion that scripture is inspired?

What is right is that the *fundamentum fidei essentielle aut substantiale* and the *fundamentum fidei organicum seu ministeriale*, although clearly distinguishable, can never be separated, but must always be defined in terms of one another as correlative concepts. If the *fundamentum organicum* is really that, then it utterly depends on the *fundamentum essentielle*. On the other hand, what the *fundamentum essentielle* really is and means for all Christians after the apostles utterly depends on the *fundamentum organicum* of the apostolic witness. Of course, no one today can any longer convincingly identify the apostolic witness with either the New Testament or scripture as a whole. But assuming that what one can and should identify it with is what we today can reconstruct as the earliest Christian witness, one can urge that the same relation exists between the essential foundation of faith, implicit and explicit, and this earliest and therefore, properly, apostolic witness. On the one hand, this witness depends entirely on a real foundation, or a foundation in reality, beyond itself, since were there no such real foundation, or were what is real otherwise than this witness asserts or implies it to be, the witness itself could no longer be the organic foundation of (authentic) faith. On the other hand, what this real foundation of (authentic) faith is for any post-apostolic knowledge or explicit understanding of it, has to be determined—but also can be determined—from the witness of the apostles and, in this sense, is entirely dependent on their witness.

n.d.; rev. 7 December 2008; 17 June 2009