

What Michalson (as well as others!) completely overlooks is that, in my view, credibility, although, a *necessary* condition of the adequacy of witness and theology, cannot be a *sufficient* condition—because unless and until a witness or a theology is first determined to be appropriate, there is no point in even asking whether it is also credible. This, if you will is the "Barthian," really, "Bultmannian," moment in my way of thinking that sets it sharply over against many other so-called liberal or mediating thinkers, such as Kaufman, Ruether, Pailin, or Schüßler Fiorenza.

Thus, in my view, the *cura prior* of Christian systematic theology is always with the appropriateness of Christian witness. And this means that there is, in the nature of the case, a corresponding priority of Christian dogmatics/ethics to Christian apologetics as specialities of Christian systematic theology. Just as there is no point in asking the question constituting systematic theology a discipline unless and until one has already asked and answered the constitutive question of historical theology as a discipline, so there is no point in asking the question constituting apologetics as a speciality unless and until one has already asked and answered the constitutive question of dogmatics/ethics as a speciality.

In this strict sense, apologetics, in my view, can never be properly pursued as the *cura prior*, but always only as the *cura posterior*, of Christian systematic theology.

1 June 2000