

I have argued that Christian theology in general, or as such—as critical reflection on Christian witness and its distinctive claims to validity—is, in a broad sense, both “historical” and “practical” (*On Theology*: 98). But it seems to me that one may also argue that Christian systematic theology is, again, in a broad sense, both “historical” and “philosophical.”

Why?

Because history and philosophy are both involved in all three main phases of Christian systematic theological reflection. But whereas in the first (historical) phase, history’s involvement is dominant, philosophy’s recessive, in the third (philosophical) phase, the reverse is the case: philosophy’s involvement is dominant, history’s, recessive. In the second (hermeneutical) phase, both are involved in more or less equal measure, although the involvement of philosophy is dominant, that of history, recessive, in answering the first of the two questions that dogmatics has to answer, whereas the reverse is the case in answering the second question it has to answer: the involvement of history is dominant, that of philosophy, recessive.

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