

That Christian theology is properly thought and spoken of as "the understanding of Christian faith (*genitivus objectivus*)" in no way implies that it is the *only* thing that is properly so thought and spoken of. For Christian witness, also, in its way, or at its level, is quite properly thought and spoken of as "the understanding of Christian faith (*gen. obj.*)."

Christian faith itself is an understanding—"the understanding of Christian faith (*genitivus subjectivus*)." And Christian witness is an understanding, the first understanding, of this understanding of Christian faith *qua* object. Christian theology, then, is the second such understanding of Christian faith as object, which consists in critically interpreting its meaning and critically validating the claims to validity made or implied by the first understanding, i.e., by Christian witness.

Significantly, this appears to be only verbally different from the analysis I offered already in "Theology and Objectivity." All the various things comprehended under the term "witness," I argue, "represent a type of thinking and speaking distinct from the more original existential understanding of faith, on the one hand, and the more derived reflection of theology proper, on the other. The latter's distinctive character . . . is precisely its higher degree of generality as betrayed by its use of universal concepts and the greater abstractness of its language. Just when theology is true to its hermeneutical task of critically interpreting the church's witness in an appropriate and understandable conceptuality, it cannot but involve a more reflective and so more objectifying type of thinking and speaking than is represented either by the various forms of witness or by the still more existential phenomenon of faith itself" (*The Reality of God*: 82).

10 February 2009