

At an earlier stage in my thinking about "(doing) theology," I distinguished it from "(bearing) witness" in general as "conceptual." Thus I could say that theology's "proper task" is "to bear witness in the most adequate conceptual form now possible to the reality of God [that] is re-presented to us all in Jesus Christ" (RG: 70; cf. also 66, where I could use the phrase, "an appropriate theological witness"; and 68 f., where I could say that "with the resources provided by the new theism and, more generally, by a neoclassical metaphysics, . . . it should prove possible to bear witness not only through preaching and worship, but through theological formulations as well, to the peculiar paradox of Protestant Christianity").

In the same vein, I could summarily define "the present task of systematic theology" as "the task of stating in an adequate conceptual form in our particular situation the understanding of God, man, and the world re-presented in the witness of faith of Jesus Christ"; and could say that the systematic theologian "exists for the purpose of expressing as adequately as he can the faith of the historic Christian community" (188). "What [the systematic theologian] must seek to do," I could argue, "is to present a new critico-constructive interpretation of the witness of Christian faith that will enable the church to speak adequately in the present historical situation." And I could assure my reader that, far from disregarding "the unavoidably communal character of the theological enterprise, . . . I intend to speak within and, indeed, on behalf of the catholic Christian church" (189).

So I should be impatient with those who fail to distinguish "clearly and sharply" between "bearing witness" and "doing theology"?!

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