

1. Systematic theology I have defined as critical reflection on the twofold claim to validity expressed or implied by the Christian witness in claiming to be both appropriate to Jesus Christ and credible to human existence.

2. The Christian witness, I have argued, is constituted explicitly as such by the christological assertion classically formulated as "Jesus is the Christ."

3. The question to which this assertion and the entire witness that it explicitly constitutes is addressed is the existential question about the meaning of ultimate reality for us.

4. As an answer to this existential question--or, as Christians attest--as the, i.e., the true, answer to it--this witness is the explicit gift and demand of a certain possibility of self-understanding or existence in relation to ourselves, others, and God. Otherwise put, it explicitly authorizes us to understand ourselves or to exist in a certain way.

5. Specifically, it authorizes us to understand ourselves together with all others as the objects of God's love, ^{and thus} ~~or~~ to exist in faith--in unreserved trust in God's love and in unqualified loyalty to God's love or to its cause, i.e., to be unqualifiedly loyal not only to God but also to the self and to all the others to whom God is loyal.

6. But now this self-understanding or existence in faith and, therefore, also in hope and in love has both metaphysical and moral implications, i.e., implications for what we are to believe about ourselves, others, and the whole (credenda) and implications for how we are to act and what we are to do in this same basic threefold relation (agenda).

7. Last semester, I was concerned--after offering an introductory treatment of the issues of Prolegomena--with spelling out the main

metaphysical, i.e., theological, cosmological, and anthropological, implications of Christian self-understanding or existence in faith, together with outlining at least some of its most fundamental moral implications.

8. In all of this, I tried to adhere strictly to one and the same theological method--of beginning with the constitutive christological assertion, interpreting and reformulating it, and then explicating both the self-understanding of faith, or existence in faith, and its metaphysical and moral implications.

9. But now this same christological assertion that has existential, and, therefore, metaphysical and moral implications, also has certain historical implications. Otherwise put, this christological assertion, whatever else it is, is an assertion about the historical figure or event called Jesus. Therefore, if it is true, it necessarily implies the truth of certain historical claims about this figure or event, which it asserts to be the decisive representation of the meaning of God for us.

10. The specific task of christology is to begin with the same christological assertion, and then to proceed by the same theological method, to interpret and reformulate the assertion, and then to explicate both the meaning of Jesus for us, given the self-understanding of faith, or existence in faith, and its necessary historical implications.