

1. Does it make sense to argue that, just as the question of practical theology about the claim of any instance of Christian witness to be fitting to its situation would not even arise but for the other claim of any such instance to be adequate to its content, so the question of systematic theology about the claim of any instance of Christian witness to be credible to human existence also would not arise but for the other claim of any such instance, about whose validity systematic theology also has to inquire, to be appropriate to Jesus Christ?

2. Yes, I believe it does make sense to argue so. Just as it is the content of any instance of witness that alone makes it an act of *Christian* witness about whose fittingness to its situation it is practical theology's task to inquire, so it is also the content of an instance of witnessing that alone makes it an act of *Christian* witness about whose credibility it is the task of systematic theology to inquire. This becomes particularly clear if one keeps firmly in mind that by "practical theology" and "systematic theology" in this context is meant precisely, and only, *Christian* practical and systematic theology. Christian theology is Christian because of its object, the constitutive object of its critical reflection, i.e., the Christian witness of faith. And this witness is constituted explicitly as such by the constitutive christological and theological assertions, which any instance of witness must either express or imply in some formulation or specification or other or else it is not an instance of Christian witness and therefore does not belong among the privileged data of Christian theology.

3. To this extent, there is a definite priority, or preeminence, of the properly dogmatic task of systematic theology in relation both to its own apologetic task and to the task of practical theology (to say nothing of the tasks of historical theology and philosophical theology). Unless and until appropriate Christian witness is determined, the question of credible Christian witness, like the question of fitting Christian witness, does not and could not arise.

September 1987; rev. 1 February 2002