

Bearing Christian witness anticipates that theology is to be done; doing theology presupposes that Christian witness has been borne.

Doing historical theology anticipates that systematic and practical theology are to be done; doing systematic and practical theology presupposes that historical theology has been done.

Just as witness cannot be borne without anticipating that theology is to be done, so systematic and practical theology cannot be done without presupposing that historical theology has been done.

The reason that witness cannot be borne without anticipating that theology is to be done is that bearing witness gives an answer to the existential question, thereby making or implying the claims to be adequate to the content of witness as well as fitting to its situation. In thus making or implying these claims, however, bearing witness promises in effect to critically validate them insofar as they need to be thus validated; and theology is the form of critical reflection constituted to validate them.

The reason that systematic or practical theology cannot be done without presupposing that historical theology has been done is that doing systematic and practical theology critically reflects on the answer that witness gives to the existential question, thereby critically validating the claims that witness makes or implies to be adequate to its content and fitting to its situation. In thus critically validating these claims, however, doing systematic and practical theology presumes in effect that the answer to the question has been critically interpreted insofar as it needs to be thus interpreted; and historical theology is the discipline of theology constituted to critically interpret it.

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