

"[I]nsofar as the Christian witness advances the claim to be true, it assumes an obligation [that] can be fully discharged only by a reflective justification of its claim. This has seemed particularly clear in our situation today, where the traditional statements in which this witness has found expression are fundamentally problematic as regards their meaning as well as their truth. Simply to repeat these statements without in any way trying to justify them is to deprive the Christian witness of a serious hearing and to reduce theology to cultural irrelevance" ("Present Prospects for Empirical Theology": 67 f.).

"[T]o make or imply a claim to validity on the primary level of self-understanding and life-praxis is in effect to issue a promise to all other members of [the] human community—the promise, namely, to submit one's claim to critical validation as and when it becomes problematic and needs to be critically validated. In this way, living on the primary level of living understandingly already anticipates living on the secondary level, which it makes both possible and, under certain circumstances, necessary" (*Doing Theology Today*: 23).

"In addressing any vital question, one makes or implies certain claims to validity, thereby in effect promising one's companions to validate one's claims critically whenever it becomes necessary to do so in order to remain in communication with them. In this sense, to make or imply any claims to validity is to anticipate both the theoretical question of whether they are, in fact, valid claims and the form of critical reflection constituted by this question" (40).

"Once the claims to validity that the act of witness necessarily involves have been rendered sufficiently problematic, there is nothing to be done if it is still to be performed except to validate its claims by way of critical reflection. The reason for this is that one cannot express or imply such claims in good faith except by assuming the obligation to validate them as and when they are seriously questioned. Consequently, to perform the act of witnessing obligates one to give reasons for its claims to be both adequate to its content, and so credible as well as appropriate, and fitting to its situation. What is properly

meant by 'theology' is either the process or the product of giving such reasons" (58).

"It is possible, naturally, that the need for theology's service may be less urgent in some situations than in others. As in the case of other speech acts, the validity claims expressed or implied by the act of witnessing may not have become problematic, or . . . problematic enough, to require moving to the level of critical reflection to validate them. In that event, the obligation assumed in making them can be discharged immediately, at the level of performing the act itself, simply by appealing to the standard praxis of ministry and to [what is agreed on as] normative witness or by invoking what is generally accepted as common human experience. But let the situation change enough, so that questions persist even after following these procedures, and the need for critical reflection becomes only too apparent" (64).

"[I]n answering our vital questions as we do, we perforce make or imply certain claims for the validity of our answers. Ordinarily, we can make good on the promises to others implied by such claims simply by appealing, on the same primary level, to what we and they, as members of our particular socio-cultural group, agree in accepting as valid, in the sense of true, good, beautiful, and so on. But whenever appeals on this first level are, for whatever reasons, insufficient to redeem our promises, we have no alternative, if we are to validate our claims so as to remain in communication with others, but to shift to the secondary level [of] 'critical reflection.' There the questions we have to pursue are no longer the *vital* questions we ask and answer on the primary level of self-understanding and life-praxis, although such questions do and must continue to orient our inquiries, but rather the corresponding *theoretical* questions about the meaning of our answers and about the validity of the claims that we make or imply in answering them as we do" ("Paul in Contemporary Theology and Ethics": 292).