

To what must appropriate witness be appropriate?

My writings make all too clear that I have not always given the same answer to this question. Sometimes I have said that it is *(formally) normative witness* to which appropriate witness must be appropriate; sometimes I have said that it is *the christological assertion* constituting (formally) normative witness explicitly as such; and sometimes I have said that it is *the self-understanding / understanding of existence of faith*.

But it's just as clear that the only right answer—and my only hope of avoiding the kind of misinterpretation set forth, for instance, by John Hick!—is to say that it is *Jesus himself* to whom appropriate witness must be appropriate—not, to be sure, in his being in himself then and there is the past, but rather in his meaning for us here and now in the present.

Thus, in formulating the validity claims expressed or implied by any act of Christian witness, I need to say that there are two such claims—to be *adequate to the content of witness*; and to be *fitting to its situation*—and that the first of these claims involves, in turn, two further claims: to be *appropriate to Jesus* in his meaning for us, either because it simply is (formally) normative witness or because it is in substantial agreement therewith; and to be *credible to human existence*, because it both confirms and is confirmed by any true account of what is always already presented implicitly through common human experience and reason based thereon.

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