

Although asking about the fittingness of a particular instance of Christian witness to its situation is as proper a theological question as asking about its adequacy to its content (i.e., its appropriateness to Jesus Christ and its credibility to human existence), this is not the case with asking about either its efficacy or its effectiveness to a particular person. The adequacy of a witness to its content and its fittingness to its situation are both matters of validity and, as such, can be properly determined theologically, i.e., by a certain kind of critical reflection involving a certain kind of critical interpretation as well as a certain kind of critical validation. But the *validity* of a witness is one thing, its *efficacy* as well as its *effectiveness*, something else, in that neither can be determined by critical reflection, because both are dependent on the existence of a particular person—on her or his existential *experience*, in the case of efficacy, and on her or his existential *decision*, in the case of effectiveness.

This means, among other things, that the question I once raised (cf. September 1987), whether it mightn't be better to speak of witness's being "effective in its situation" than of its being "fitting to its situation" is misleading—and misled. This is so, at any rate, if one distinguishes "validity" from both "efficacy" and "effectiveness" in the way in which I've now come to do (cf. "On Efficacy as Distinct from Validity and Effectiveness," 31 December 2002).

(I seem to recall that I may have already dealt with this somewhere else, but I've not been able to locate it.)

24 August 2004

What is the claim, really, that any instance of Christian witness expresses or implies?

That it is the claim to be adequate to the proper content of witness and, therefore, both appropriate to Jesus Christ and credible to human existence I see no reason to doubt. But is it also, as I've argued, the claim to be fitting to the situation of witness or, more exactly, to the situation of the person(s) to whom the witness is addressed? This is now beginning to seem less certain to me.

At any rate, I need to think out more clearly than I as yet have what I mean, and do not mean, by "fitting to the situation" (I may have taken over the general idea here rather too quickly from Charles Wood.)

In this connection, I need to consider whether "effective in the situation" is simply another, although, perhaps, more appropriate way of saying "fitting to the situation," or whether it really conveys a rather different idea as to the claim that witness either expresses or implies. If it were the second, then, presumably, there would be at least one other way in which practical theology could still be conceived to be a distinct discipline in addition to the two I discuss in *On Theology*: 94-101. It could be conceived, namely, as asking about neither what one is to do in the particular situation in and for which one must here and now take responsibility if one is to actualize a Christian self-understanding, nor about what the church is to do representatively in the same situation and for the same reason, but rather about what one is to do in this same situation and for the same reason if one's act of witness is to succeed in evoking the response from the person(s) to whom it is borne that it claims to be able to do.

One related thought in this connection is that an act of witness is a means relative to the content of witness not only in one respect but in two: (1) in respect of this content's being conveyed; and (2) in respect of this content's being

6/22/2

responded to. If the first respect allows us to speak of the adequacy of the act of witness to its content, the second respect might be thought to allow us to speak of the effectiveness of the act of witness in its situation.

Of course, it's just possible that effectiveness in the situation is really to be understood as an aspect of, or element in, fittingness to the situation.

September 1987