

Is doing empirical-historical research necessary to bearing Christian witness, and, if it is, why is it?

Yes, doing empirical-historical research is necessary to bearing Christian witness, because it is necessary to doing Christian theology, which is necessary in turn to bearing Christian witness. This is so, for among other reasons, because there is no other way to establish critically that and why one of two necessary presuppositions of such witness is true or credible. I refer to the presupposition that the Jesus whom it attests to be the Christ, and who, as such, is the explicit primal ontic source authorizing it, is not a merely mythical, but a genuinely historical, figure, who lived and worked at a certain time and place in human history. The other reasons why doing empirical-critical research is necessary to bearing Christian witness all have to do with its being as historical as its explicit primal source, and as therefore also requiring to be understood empirical-historically if it is to play its proper role in authorizing Christian faith, witness, and theology.

Is there any other kind of secular research that must be done in order to bear Christian witness, and, if there is, what is it, and why?

Yes, there is—and for the same basic reason: it, too, must be done in order to do Christian theology, which itself must be done in order to bear Christian witness. Also thus necessary to bearing Christian witness is doing philosophical—specifically metaphysical and ethical—research, and one reason it has to be done is that it is the only way to establish critically the other necessary presupposition of Christian witness: that radical monotheism is justified in conceiving the strictly ultimate reality but for which there would be nothing real at all as "God." The other reasons why such philosophical research is necessary all follow from its being the only way by which other necessary presuppositions and implications of Christian witness can be critically validated as credible and so cognitively significant assertions about reality.

Question: To what extent, if at all, can the general principles implied by these two answers serve to answer parallel questions about the necessary conditions of bearing the witness of faith of religions in general?

The answer, I assume, depends on the extent to which my philosophical analysis of the constitution of religions generally is a valid analysis. On this analysis, "the constitution of a religious community has a threefold structure determined by two correlations. First, there is the correlation between *the religious object* and *the religious subject*; and then, second, there is the correlation involved in the religious object itself between its *transcendental aspect* and its *historical aspect*" (Notebooks, 1 June 1990; rev. 5 January 2001; 7 October 2003). If this analysis is sound—so that the object of any religion, simply as such, has a historical as well as a transcendental aspect—then, clearly, something very like what I have said about doing secular research, empirical-historical as well as philosophical, being necessary to bearing Christian witness is also to be said about bearing any other religious witness. See further, "A Philosophy of Religion: Some Theses," Notebooks, Winter, 2006; rev. 16 May 2008.

16 May 2008; rev. 8 November 2009