

At the heart of Bultmann's response to the question about the reform of theological studies is an understanding of (1) the relation between life and science; and (2) the proper office of the ministry that converges closely with my own. I find this convergence particularly clear in the following passage on the first point.

"Just as science receives its possibility of becoming practical from its growing out of a vital relation to its object, so life in all its relations to objects also contains a knowledge of them. And science is only the methodical development of the knowledge contained in the original vital relation. Of course, the assemblage and development of such knowledge is always in danger of losing its original vital relation to the object. But its whole point is precisely to retain it, to enrich it, and to deepen it. For the knowledge present in the actual relations of life must always be limited and one-sided. Genuine science, which assembles, sifts, and systematizes all knowledge, serves life precisely when it turns away from immediate purposes, when it does not detail all possible life-relations, occasions, and possibilities of application, but rather when it provides the knowledge necessary to all such possibilities, which, in actual practice, are always new and other than they are in a theory of praxis. To be sure, life can always be the critic of a science that has lost its vital relation to its object. But science, for its part, can also be the critic of a life that has become busyness, and whose knowledge is only incidental and accidental, presumptuous and unaware of its limits" (GV 2: 296).

But I also feel close to Bultmann in what he has to say on the second point:

"What should actually occur in the praxis for which the science of theology is the preparation? The minister as minister is not there for all sorts of loving activity, for Christian education, for counsel and consolation in all possible situations. In all such matters, if things are right, every person and Christian should be ready to be of help to the other. And if a claim to perform them is also often made on the minister, and if he does not wish to decline his service, he ^{still} ought to know that this is not his proper office. His proper office is the proclamation of Christian doctrine, preaching, even if, in modern life, this office can be discharged not only from the pulpit but in many

different forms. And, in fact, this is also what people basically want from the minister: not a practical service in the usual sense, but instruction, theology. They want to know how it is with a man and his soul, with God and the world, with life and death—not in order to be able to do something practical rightly, but in order to gain clarity about themselves, about the meaning of their life. Basically, they want to understand themselves. And in truth this is not at all a theoretical need in the usual sense, but a genuinely practical one. For without understanding oneself, one cannot live in a genuine sense, and one's life becomes a pointless busyness.

"In this respect, theology finds itself together with the other apparently 'impractical' human sciences, insofar as they, too, . . . have the genuinely practical task of clarifying human self-understanding. The more 'theoretically' this happens, i.e., the more it happens in abstraction from directly practical purposes, and thus the more purely scientifically, the better it is for praxis.

"But aren't there many people at present who expect, beyond what has been said, directly practical instructions about how one is to 'make it' in life—instructions about education, ordering the economy, politics? It is precisely because there are such people that the future minister has need of a theoretical-scientific formation, so as to know clearly what questions the church has to answer, and what not, so as not to be misled by the questions of people around him to forget his real job, but rather to make clear to them what they have to ask him about, and what not"(297).

Even so, I also have difficulties with Bultmann's response. Some of them are not different, I judge, from those voiced in the *Nachwort*, although I certainly share Bultmann's concern that such practical training as the church rightly requires of its candidates for ministry beyond their university education in theology must not be allowed to injure it or detract from its importance—as there are always pressures for it to do, from students as well as from church leaders. But my more serious difficulties are mainly two:

(1) Bultmann quite fails to distinguish clearly and sharply, as one must, between the indirect form of Christian witness properly called "Christian *teaching*," on the one hand, and "Christian *theology*," properly so-called, on the other. (I might add that, in this response, at least, he also fails to

distinguish sufficiently clearly between the direct and the indirect forms of Christian witness itself. It's one thing to proclaim "Christian doctrine," as he says, it's something else to proclaim "Jesus Christ," as he more typically says elsewhere. And it is not the first thing, but one of the two forms of the second that is rightly called "preaching"!)

(2) Bultmann quite fails to recognize, as one must, that the task of theology, as much as any of the other tasks he assigns to "every Christian," also belongs to the church as such, and so to each and every one of its members. (True as it may be that what people look to the minister for is "theology"—hopefully, as something distinct from, not simply the same as "teaching [*Belehrung*]"!—what they want, or, at any rate *should* want, is leadership in doing what they themselves must already be engaged in doing in direct proportion to the understanding and seriousness with which they are pursuing their calling as Christians.)

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