

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY IN ACTION
Christian Thinking in the Service of Church & Society
Paul Ballard & John Pritchard
SPCK 1996 (2nd edition 2006)

“Practical Theology is a particular field of theology.” p1. So:

Is it specialist field with own special practices or

Is all theol practical in its focus?

“Practical theology therefore is the place where the reality of all theology as a practical discipline is clearly manifest.” p6

Signs that it has moved into centre stage.

1. Academic: Bob Lambourne & Jim Backie, 1970 Manchester

Bob was first lecturer in Pastoral Studies at B’ham Uni.

1993 International Academy for Practical Theology (Princeton)

2. Pastoral care – standards and skills Clinical Theol Assn (now Bridge Pastoral Foundation – Frank Lake) Westminster Past Foundn (Kyle)

3. Church and Society – IMA, CAP, CCWA, ECUM, UTU, WTF.

- Cultural Shift: post-modern, post-Christian
- New Age, Eastern religions, Social Sciences offer caring professionals theory and skill.
- Contextualisation of Theology – context seriously, Kingdom outcomes.

Theology is: Faith Seeking Understanding – Anselm Practical Theol is this. [*But I much prefer to say Practical Theology is ‘faith seeking intelligent action LG]*

- Descriptive – what Xns have believed
- Normative – calling Xns back
- Critical – facing challenges
- Apologetic – implications

Definition of Terms

Practical Theology – the whole ambit

Pastoral Studies – social sciences, pastoral care by ministers

Pastoral Theology – underpins pastoral ministry
Ministerial Studies – usually part of Practical Theology
Pastoralia – nuts and bolts of ministerial practice
Pastoral – usually ordained personal care
[what about Political Theology?]

Deductive way – starts with truth above and deduced
Inductive way – starts with evidence. Both *then* ask – what now do I do?
Is faith only real in action?
But distinction between theory and practice disappears when learning about God is
in order to Know God in himself.

MODELS OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

1. Applied Theory

From the Enlightenment.

A: Applies results of social sciences (Rogerian Counselling)

B: Bible, Tradition, Natural Theology established by reason.

Schleiermacher: professional practice from good theory

Takes authority seriously but is clerical & always from theory to practice.

2. Critical Correlation

Dialogue between social question and theological answer. (Tillich)

Dialogue between pastoral concern and ethics. (Don Browning, Chicago)

Dialogue between shared meanings and diversity of culture and interpretations
(hermeneutics)

Story is key mode for Critical Correlation

3. Praxis Model

“Hermeneutic of suspicion”, Habermas. What’s really going on, who benefits?

Analyse everything – including analyst. Dialogues with gospel – new praxis.

Sees academy at disposal of people of God for the marginalised.

Can be tendency to activism, shortcuts, can become a new dogma.

4. Habitus Model – (Edward Farley)

Long training of heart and mind. Orthodoxy as ‘right glory’.

Formation of ministers, habit of prayer and devotion. The prayerful community gives rise to ethical norms and practice.

Chapter 6: Pastoral Cycle & Tools

Common ground.

Cardijn’s Catholic Association – see judge act.

[The book then describes the process of the circle.]

Types of Change Outputs:

- Cognitive Change
- Affective Change
- Behavioural Change
- Interpersonal Change
- Social & Political Change
- Spiritual Change

Spiritual Change:

- Engages suffering
- Depth and integrity
- Draws on the image of journey [?]
- Humility [postcolonial?]
- Values Narrative – we are writing God’s fifth gospel
- Corporate
- Mission-focused & ecumenical
- Celebratory

Practical Theology as an Hermeneutical Enterprise. There are, however, practical theologians who object to this strict empirical approach to the discipline because it mainly addresses the outward appearances of human action through questionnaires and quantitative methods. As a matter of fact, human acts are manifestations of thoughts, perceptions, interpretations, values, and assessments that lie "behind".³³ Fret calls practical theology a theological or practical-theological discipline of action; see J. Fret, "De plaats van de praktische theologie binnen de theologische faculteit" Practical theology is an academic discipline that examines and reflects on religious practices in order to understand the theology enacted in those practices and in order to consider how theological theory and theological practices can be more fully aligned, changed, or improved. Practical theology has often sought to address a perceived disconnection between theology as an academic discipline (also known as dogmatics), and the everyday-life and practice of the church. Practical Theology in Act has been added to your Basket. Add to Basket. Turn on 1-Click ordering for this browser. What I actually got was a complicated look at Practical Theology combined with the editors need to prove that there is such a practice as Practical Theology, so much so that one cannot see the wood for the trees. This is such a vital subject for today's Church and demands not more dry Theology but a devotional and practical approach. Disappointing! Read more.