
ADDENDUM

This addendum is written as a brief critical reflection of the methodology that I have employed in compiling my thesis. During the defense of the thesis before a committee of the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, on the 27th of January 2012, the assignment for the writing of this critical reflection was given.

Cursory Overview of Practical Theology:

Practical theology was initially considered to be simply the application of the insights gained from systematic and historical theology to ministry practice, i.e. “applied theology”. It sought to find the points of application for Church practice derived from systematic and historical theologies. Consequently G. J. Planck in 1794 wrote that since practical theology concerned the practice of faith, and since it contributed no new religious knowledge to theological science, it was in fact not a scientific theology on the same level as the other philosophical theologies (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:8).

The method followed for practical theology was an inductive one. Systematic theology and church history were studied to form theological assumptions. Practical theology then simply sought to find the implications for best practice for the insights gained. Practical theology was also considered to be a separate process of finding ways to apply the insights gained to practice. It involved applying theology to practice and contributed little to the development of theory itself. One example of this view is Tidball, who defines practical theology as “an umbrella term concerned to relate theology to the practice of ministry” (1988:525). As a theology, it was assigned an inferior position among the theological disciplines.

Later practical theology evolved into a theology in its own right. It was no longer merely the final process of applying theology and no longer depended on

systematic and historical theology for its theoretical bases. Instead it incorporated the development of new theoretical insights that were gained from ministry practice. These insights gained from ministry practice were allowed to influence the way in which traditional theology was interpreted. New insights were also allowed to shape future ministry practice. In doing so, practical theology started to develop a new methodology for itself. Instead of a linear inductive process of drawing inferences for practice from systematic and historical theology, practical theology also gave more credence to the insights gained from the actual practice of ministry. Both theory and practice were viewed as existing in an interdependent relationship of mutual influence.

Initially practical theology focussed on the ministry of Christian leaders, i.e. the pastorate. However, in time it also broadened the scope of its enquiry. Frederich Schleiermacher centred practical theology around the activities of the church as a whole, and not just around the work of pastors or special ministers (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:87). He considered practical theology to be a science and the final process of preparation preceding the direct application of theology. This final application was complemented by the other two branches of theology, namely historical theology (Church history and exegesis) and philosophical theology (e.g. apologetics/polemics, and dogmatics or systematic theology) (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:87).

Despite the trend away from focussing on the work of Christian leaders, a model of practical theology developed in the early twentieth century that continued to focus on the ministry of church leaders. Although it followed the emerging trends of the methodology of practical theology, it was more accurately termed “pastoral theology” than practical theology. One early proponent of this “pastoral theology” was Edward Thurneysen in his work, “A Theology of Pastoral Care”. In it Thurneysen focussed on the role of preaching as the mediation of God’s Word to effect healing and hope. At the same time A.T. Boisen and Seward Hiltner founded what became known as the Pastoral Counselling Movement (Anderson 2001:25). Just as practical theology continued to develop its own method, pastoral theology followed a similar methodology and was regarded as “a science for pastors ... because it

concentrated mainly on their activities, such as preaching, liturgy and pastoral care” (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:2).

Some confusion still exists as to the distinction between pastoral theology and practical theology. Pastoral theology is more of a theology of ministry practice for church leaders that follows the methodology of practical theology. It remains focussed on the pastoral office, but does not depend on simple inductive processes to develop theory upon which to base practice. Instead it follows the methodology of practical theology by incorporating insights from the human and social sciences to develop theory for practice. It also follows the cyclical process of allowing practice to inform theory and for theory to inform practice in an on-going praxis. In his proposal for pastoral theology, Seward Hiltner distinguished two areas in theology – the “logic-centred fields” (exegesis, systematic theology, church history and the like), and what he termed the “operation-centred” fields. He divided the operation-centred fields into the three subsections of shepherding, communicating and organizing (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:89).

Concurrent to the developments of pastoral theology, practical theology continued to broaden its scope. In its evolution it moved from a focus on ecclesial and leadership practice to developing a praxis for the church in society at large. For example, in his work on practical theology, Gerben Heitink developed an emphasis for praxis that sought to develop the implications for theory and action for individuals in society in their everyday life, such as their relationships, marriage, family, and workplaces (Anderson 2001:25). It sought to equip believers to engage in all of life’s arena from the perspective of faith (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:2). In a similar manner, Don Browning defined practical theology as “the reflective process which the church pursues in its efforts to articulate the theological grounds of practical living in a variety of areas such as work, sexuality, marriage, youth, ageing and death” (1976:14). Practical theology therefore now sought to help all believers so that their religious actions in congregational life and in society could help communicate the gospel (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:2).

In its method, practical theology continued to interact with systematic and historical theology but in a way that was independent of them in developing its praxis. It incorporated a deductive methodology by surveying several sources for theology and then forming conclusions. These conclusions not only shaped practice, but practical theology also allowed practice to influence the development of new theories. Practical theology engaged with several disciplines to arrive at its “theology”. It interacted with the social sciences and human sciences and incorporated the hermeneutical perspective of the human sciences and the empirical perspective of the social sciences in its method (Anderson 2001:26). It also drew inferences from life experience and empirical research and allows real-life contexts to shape its opinions. It continued to take insights from politics, economics and culture seriously. Whereas in its infancy it followed linear processes of interpreting biblical text, church history and tradition and then developing practice, it no longer continued to do so. Instead it developed into a form of theology that is complex and dynamic. Since as a theology it engaged with so many spheres, all of which were themselves in a constant state of development, practical theology emerged as an approach to theology that was in constant state of fluidity.

During the 1960’s practical theology introduced another perspective into the development of its theology by considering the ramifications of God’s activity in the world (Campbell 2000:83-84). Theologians agreed that theology could no longer be approached from the perspective of an ecclesial bias as though God’s activity centred around the Church. Instead theologians recognised that God’s redemptive work eclipsed the parameters of the Church. God’s redemptive work was seen as expressing itself throughout the fabric of human existence and theologians sought to recognise God’s activity in society at large, and not just God’s work in and through the Church. Theologians sought to incorporate the phenomenon of God’s activity throughout society into theology.

This forced theologians to expand upon existing methodologies of theology and to broaden the parameters of theology. More credence was given to the effects that social, political and economic realities had on humanity. The effects of social, political and economic contexts and the human experience of these

conditions were brought to bear upon theology. Deductive processes were increasingly incorporated in the methodology of practical theology alongside the inductive processes of the traditional methodologies of systematic and historical theologies. This led to the establishment of political and liberation theologies, which approached theology with a bias to the poor and to a certain extent berated traditional theology for its bourgeoisie inclinations and its Eurocentricism. For this reason Gerben Heitink says that practical theology can in one sense also be understood as “a form of political theology” (1999:65, italics in the original).

The method of liberation theologies followed the assumption that all existing forms of propositional truth was influenced to some extent by cultural bias. Liberation theologians approached traditional hermeneutical processes with suspicion because of their role in maintaining oppression regimes, whether through practice or by default. The methodology of liberation theologies was to start with the praxis of living in the human experience of the life context of people and doing ministry in certain circumstances. Biblical texts and theory were then approached through the hermeneutic of the experience of life and ministry practice. This experience then became part of the hermeneutic through which to approach the biblical text. This methodology adopted by practical theologians is closely linked to the methodology used in the social sciences (Heitink 1999:1). However, even though it was during the 1960’s that this methodology emerged, Heitink traces the impact of political, economic and social realities on society and practical theology to the revolutionary political reforms that took place in Europe as early as 1848 (1999:51).

The Nature and Methodology of Practical Theology

Because of its dynamic nature, and the interdisciplinary approach it takes, practical theology is unique among its peer theologies. It is theology that remains in a constant state of flux and resists any attempts at long-term systemization.

Pattison & Woodward describe this as follows:

“Practical theology is unsystematic. Because it continuously has to re-engage with the fragmented realities and changes of the contemporary world and the issues it presents, much practical theology is not systematic or complete... As such it must always be flexible and provisional. This contrasts with some traditional kinds of theology that have claimed to be universally valid, complete, essentially unchangeable and unchallengeable, because of their historical role and authority in the life of the church” (Pattison & Woodward 2000:13).

In a similar vein, Campbell also says that:

“Practical theology must ... expect to be fragmentary and poorly systematized. Its ‘findings’ will be mostly in terms of concrete proposals that are transformative for restructuring individuals, communities, and society, whether within the church or outside” (Campbell 2000:78).

Campbell also notes that even amongst the other theological disciplines the constantly increasing volume of research and proliferation of alternative theories militate against the statement of a “position which will subsequently not be challenged” (2000:85).

The starting point of practical theology is often some kind of theoretical or practical concern that seems to demand attention (Pattison and Woodward 2000:12). Pattison and Woodward elaborate on this as follows:

“Sometimes practical theology starts with ideas and examines their implications for practice. Sometimes it starts with practice and looks at how this might affect ideas and concepts. This kind of process might be thought of as a kind of conversation between theory, theology and practice. In this conversation, all the conversation partners are changed by the interaction which occurs” (Pattison and Woodward 2000:13).

Once the issues that need addressing have been clarified, practical theologians employ a variety of methodologies to construct theology. Pattison and Woodward mention that, “Different issues or phenomena require different approaches and methods” (2000:9). Due to the broad scope that practical theology embraces in its subject matter, it is not uncommon for there to be several approaches to methodology used by practical theologians. In keeping with the ethos of practical theology, it is to be expected that the methodology for practical theology would change, since all the time the issue under examination determines the approach that will be used to develop a practical theology for it. The methods used in practical theology of necessity vary according to the issue(s) being considered.

The approach of practical theology in its methodology is an interdisciplinary approach. Ray Anderson (2001:22) says that:

“... practical theology is a dynamic process of reflective critical enquiry into the praxis of the church in the world and God’s purposes for humanity, carried out in the light of Christian Scripture and tradition, and in critical dialogue with other sources of knowledge”

Similarly Pattison and Woodward (2000:9) say:

“Practical theologians must be prepared to engage in interdisciplinary learning, because the theological tradition does not in itself provide all the information about the modern world that is needed to have a good understanding of many issues. Furthermore an important skill that is needed is that of selecting and interpreting appropriate evidence from many sources, including theological ones ... In practice, practical theologians use a wide variety of sources and methods in their work. Historical and textual methods may be used to understand and interpret theological insights and sources. Empirical methods such as surveys and questionnaires may be used to establish the nature of contemporary beliefs and behaviour, or the nature of a particular human need in a locality.”

The methodology of Rolf Zerfass is illustrative of the interdisciplinary approach of practical theologians. Heyns and Pieterse explain the methodology of Rolf Zerfass as follows:

Zerfass understood that through certain processes praxis can develop into new praxis. In order to develop new praxis, Zerfass consulted theological traditions and also conducted a situational analysis. Theological traditions concerned studying church traditions, church history and all other theological disciplines related to the initial praxis. In conducting a situational analysis, Zerfass proposed studying empirical data relating to the situation. He employed other sciences such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, philosophy and statistical analysis in doing his situational analyses. Zerfass then proposed that the findings of the theological traditions and the situational analysis be allowed to inform each other. The results of these findings can be applied to the original praxis and the findings can be used to develop a new praxis (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:35-36):

As mentioned previously in this section, practical theology has also employed empirical methodologies in developing theology. Heyns and Pieterse explain that “Empirical methodology enables us to define trends, associations, equations and the like in exact terms” (1990:69). Empirical research enables theologians to measure and quantify data more accurately and assign numerical and statistical values to phenomena. This is more accurate than verbal description (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:69). Empirical methodologies help explain the interrelationship of phenomena observed in praxis and render them intelligible. This in turn enables practical theologians to develop theories based on future trends or predictable outcomes, all of which serve to develop better practices which further the cause of the gospel (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:69). This approach to theology “differs from exegetical, historical, or philosophical approaches, which are distinctive for other subjects, even though practical theology does incorporate exegetical, systematic, and historical methods” (Heitink 1999:7). Gerben Heitink mentions that C.I. Nitzsch (1787-

1868) was the first practical theologian to incorporate an empirical approach in his methodology (1999:45).

Critique of My Methodology

Having revisited the subject of practical theology, a critique of this thesis can be made. One shortcoming that may be immediately apparent when reading the thesis is that I have not clarified the methodology that I have used to construct the Equipping leadership paradigm. In the introduction to the thesis I have not distinguished the method used to carry out my research and present arguments on the one hand, and the methodology I used to construct the theology of the Equipping leadership paradigm on the other hand.

The methodology I used leaned heavily on developing my thesis based on a review of literature at every stage of the thesis' development. In the thesis I examined several emerging societal issues which necessitate a revision of traditional leadership paradigms. I researched societal factors using mainly books and journal articles in my research. I did a historical-grammatical study of Ephesians 4:11-12 (and Eph. 4:1-16). I exegeted the text and looked at the historical developments of interpretations of the text. This was done using commentaries and other hermeneutical tools. Several plausible interpretations of the text were evaluated. I also researched other more contemporary material written about Christian leadership, paying particular attention to material that commented on Ephesians 4:11-12 and an Equipping-styled approach to leadership. An Equipping approach to leadership was also evaluated against other Christian leadership paradigms, using mostly books and journal articles as points of reference. In constructing the four major Equipping Identities of the paradigm predominantly written resources were consulted – books on leadership, journal articles, internet based resources and the like – whether written by Christian or secular leaders. When doing a cursory evaluation of the proposed leadership paradigm I once again consulted mainly printed and electronic written resources to evaluate whether there was any current trend towards an Equipping paradigm.

The above paragraph immediately shows that my research methodology has been too parochial. I concentrated too much on written resources and a review of literature from beginning to end. For example, in delineating societal trends I consulted mainly books on leadership which provided insights of societal trends from the perspective of Church leadership. I did not investigate societal trends from other perspectives (e.g. the viewpoint of economics, politics, social issues, etc.) and I limited my enquiry to (Christian) books and other similar publications.

Another fair criticism is that while I may've arranged my bibliography according to the type of resources used (i.e. books, commentaries, journals, etc.) I was not critical enough in evaluating my sources throughout the writing of the thesis. For example, I showed no clear differentiation between more scholarly works such as theological journals and books on the one hand, and popular magazine-type periodicals and internet blogs on the other hand. A large omission evident in my review of literature is that I did not consult enough resources on the subject of practical theology in particular. There is only one citation of the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. This is one journal that would have informed my methodology.

In testing my hypothesis, I again limited research to a review of literature on the subject matter throughout. I also used several internet websites to evaluate whether an Equipping paradigm was being applied by churches and leaders. While the Google searches that I conducted showed a trend towards an Equipping paradigm in church statements about their philosophies of mission and leadership, I did not test these statements against further critical analyses.

This highlights another significant oversight of my methodology, i.e. the lack of any empirical research. In order to evaluate my thesis' hypothesis, the results of my thesis would have been more beneficial to leaders and churches if I had done a survey of perhaps 50-100 churches to see if any had incorporated an Equipping paradigm into their philosophy of ministry and leadership.

I could have then evaluated the degree to which an Equipping paradigm is being implemented at all, and any insights that can be gleaned from these churches. There are approximately 600 churches in the Baptist Union (the denomination in which I currently serve), and to find 50-100 to participate in a survey would not have been too difficult. Part of the research could have taken the form of a questionnaire for churches to complete that evaluated whether churches were implementing key components of an Equipping paradigm for ministry and leadership. Had I established this as part of my methodology at the outset of my thesis, I feel that I could also have visited 25-50 churches and para-church organisations which expressly embrace an Equipping philosophy.

I could then have investigated what some of the key actions were of churches that were successfully implementing an Equipping approach to ministry and leadership. I could also have investigated what some common challenges were that were being experienced by leaders and churches working with that paradigm. I could also have interviewed leadership training institutions to research any trends in the training of leaders that indicated a movement towards an Equipping paradigm. Additional insights could also have been gleaned by conducting a survey of Christians who were in non-leadership roles to ascertain their experience of belonging to churches or ministries where an Equipping ethos to ministry was-, or was not being applied.

In hindsight I feel that were I to do my thesis again, I would amend my methodology. I would still include a review of literature throughout. However, I would include more material on the subject of leadership written specifically by practical theologians who have developed leadership paradigms using the methodology commonly applied in practical theology. Since most practical theologians already use an interdisciplinary approach, this would ensure a more holistic perspective of leadership by incorporating insights from other fields of study. I would also complement the theory derived from the review of literature with some form of empirical research. This research could be a survey plus interviewing leaders, trainers and other believers to find out their views and experience of equipping others for ministry.

In testing the implementation of an Equipping paradigm, I would do more research into the actual experience of leaders, churches and ministries which are attempting to develop an Equipping approach to ministry. These results would have been more beneficial to any persons wanting to explore an Equipping paradigm for leadership and ministry.